

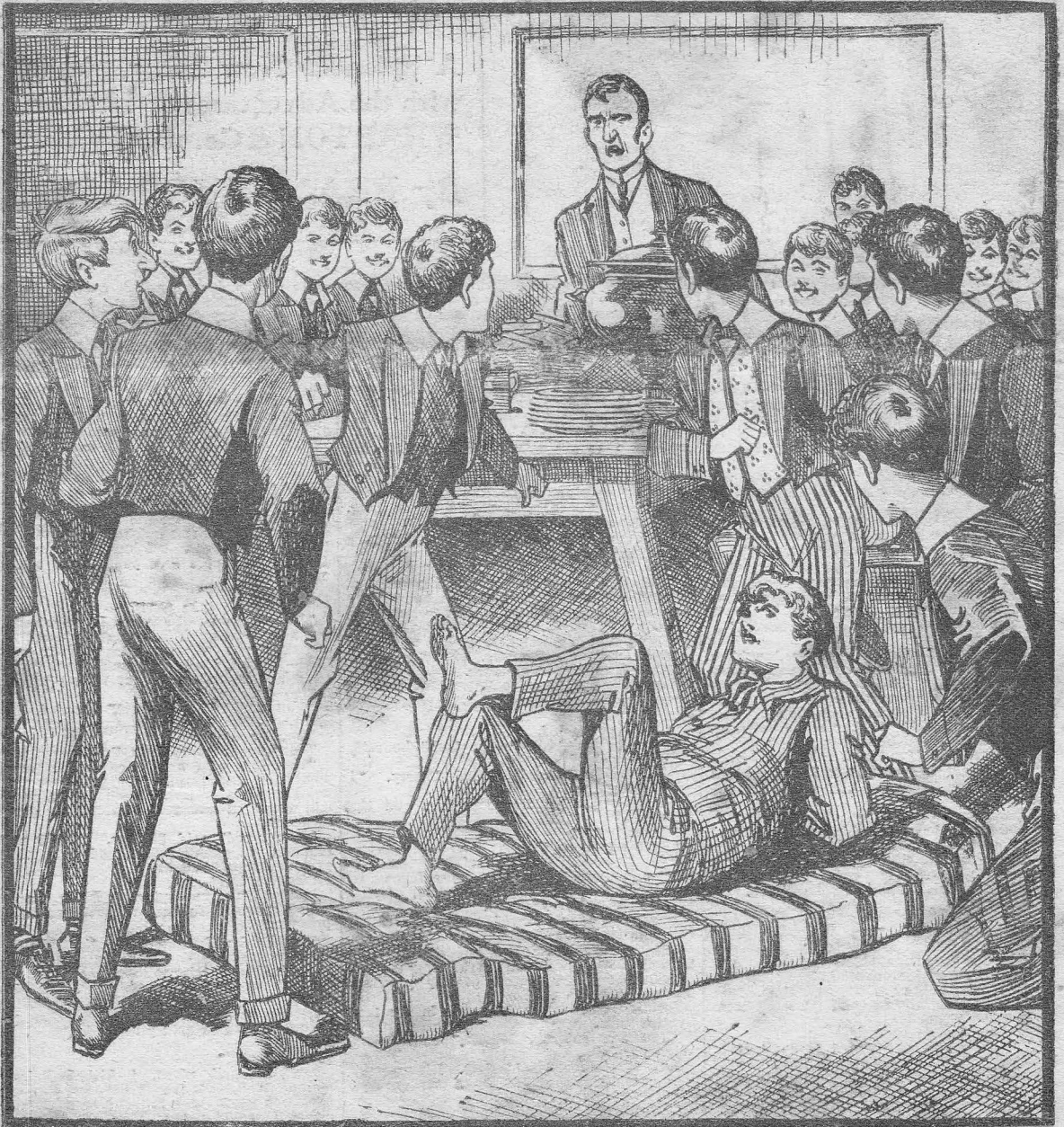
33
THREE NEW STORIES INSIDE!

The Penny **1½^D**
Popular

Week Ending
September 6th, 1919.

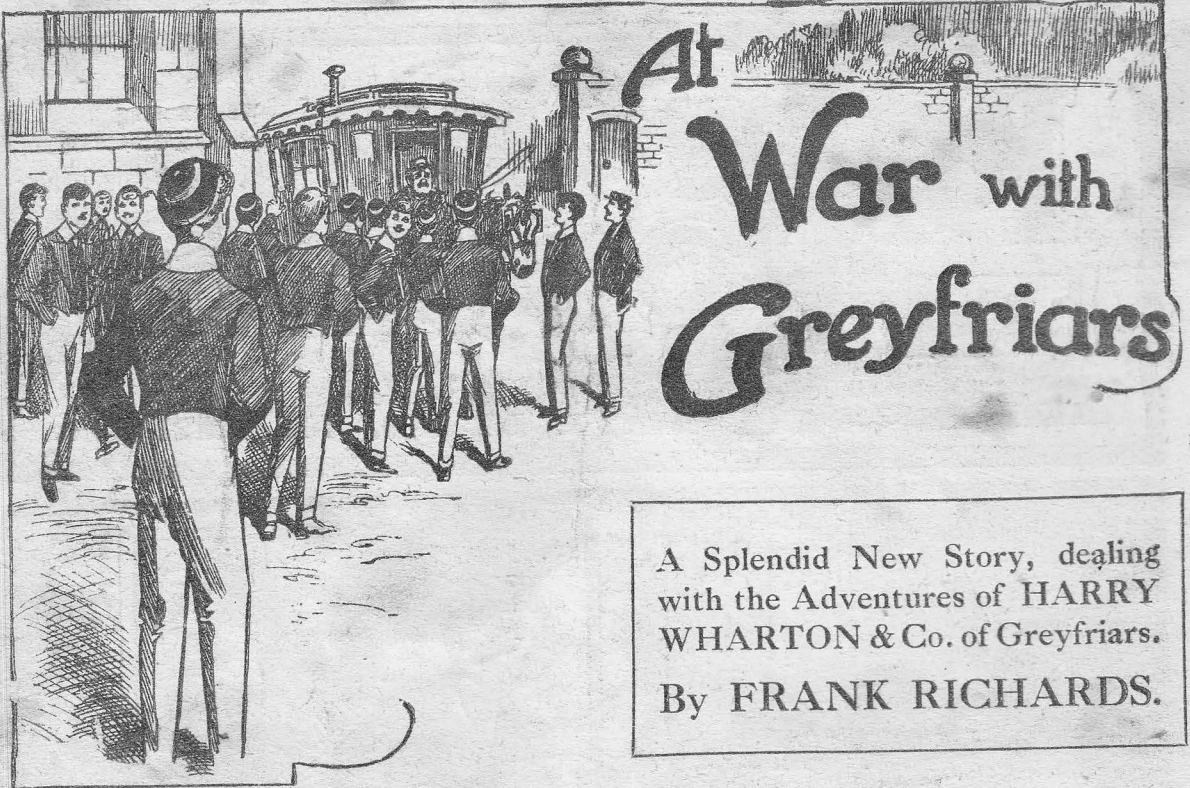
No. 33.
New Series.

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



LATE FOR BREAKFAST!

(A Thrilling Scene in the Magnificent Long, Complete Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars.)



A Splendid New Story, dealing
with the Adventures of HARRY
WHARTON & Co. of Greyfriars.
By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Running the Gauntlet!

TURN out, you fellows!" It was Vernon-Smith, of the Greyfriars Remove, who, gave the command, and Harry Wharton, the rightful leader, raised no objection. Candle-ends were lighted in the Remove dormitory, and pyjama-clad figures turned out in full force.

Even the slackers of the Form—Lord Maul-everer and Billy Bunter—took an active part in the proceedings.

The only fellow who remained in bed was Dennis Carr, the new boy, who was the cause of all the commotion.

Dennis watched the preparations of his schoolfellows without turning a hair, though his heart was beating quicker than usual.

"Listen, you fellows!" said Vernon-Smith, as the Removites lined up along the centre gangway between the beds. "We are giving up our beauty-sleep to-night in order to punish a beastly cad and a rank outsider!"

"Hear, hear!" "This new kid has got to be taught a severe lesson!" continued the Bounder. "In case any of you are not familiar with the facts, I will sum them up briefly. Carr has been two days at Greyfriars, and in that time he has been guilty of three big offences. Firstly, he kicked Bolsover major—"

"Confound him!" growled Bolsover.

"Secondly, he sneaked to Quelch because Wharton refused to give him a place in the touring-party—"

"Shame!"

"And lastly, he went behind our backs and wrote a letter to his pater, who is an education official, thereby causing all future tours to be cancelled!"

At this, a perfect babel of voices arose, "The cad!"

"The Hun!"

"The beastly traitor!"

"Slaughter him!"

"Toss him in a blanket!"

"Make him run the gauntlet!"

Dennis Carr spoke for the first time. "How jolly polite!" he said. "I don't seem to be exactly popular!"

Vernon-Smith frowned. "You'll have proof of that in a minute!" he said. "Yank him out of bed, you fellows!"

Violent hands were laid upon Dennis Carr. The bedclothes were thrown back, and the new boy was dragged out without ceremony, and bumped upon the floor.

It was thought that Dennis would offer no resistance against so many aggressors.

But the Removites had not made sufficient allowance for the new boy's fighting spirit. In an instant Dennis Carr was on his feet, fighting like a wild-cat.

He was a shrewd youth, and not an expert fighting-man, as his contest with Bolsover major had shown. But the unexpectedness of his attack caused his assailants to fall back.

"Yow!" gasped Ogilvy, caressing his nose, which was streaming red. "Hold him down, somebody! He's mad!"

For a time the new boy's fists did great execution, but only for a time.

The Removites attacked him in relays, and presently he gave way before their sweeping onrush, and measured his length on the floor.

"Sit on him!" panted Vernon-Smith.

"Yes, rather!" said Bob Cherry. "Bring Billy Bunter here!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter did not relish the task of pinning the new boy to the floor, but he had no choice in the matter. Frank Nugent and Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh dragged him forward, and his weighty, podgy form was dumped upon Dennis Carr, who was nearly suffocated under the pressure.

Vernon-Smith turned to Harry Wharton. "It's up to you to say what his punishment shall be," he said.

Wharton reflected. "Hanging wouldn't be too bad," he said, "but I believe it's forbidden!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "I believe it is!"

"Then, supposing we make him run the gauntlet?"

"Hear, hear!"

"Give him beans!"

The Removite being unanimous on the matter, Vernon-Smith ordered the fellows to arm themselves with pillows, bolsters, knotted towels, and other weapons.

Bolsover major dragged a sheet from his bed, and tied a hard slipper in one end of it.

The juniors then lined up in two rows, Dick Russell being posted on the landing to give warning of the approach of any prowling master or prefect.

Dennis Carr was nearly purple in the face by this time.

"You can get up, Bunter," said Harry Wharton.

Billy Bunter rose to his feet. His progress was considerably helped by a savage kick from Dennis Carr.

"Yaroooooooh!" yelled Bunter.

"Never mind, Bunt!" said Squiff. "We'll pay him back for that, with interest!"

Dennis Carr stood up—a handsome figure, in

spite of the damage which Bolsover major's fists had caused to his face.

The new boy faced his schoolfellows with flashing eyes.

"Go ahead!" he said contemptuously. "Let me have it hot! You'll be perfectly safe from retaliation, as you happen to be forty to one!"

"This is a Form punishment," said Harry Wharton sternly. "And in a Form punishment the numbers engaged don't count!"

"That's one of the queerest notions of fair play I've ever heard!" said Dennis Carr.

"Oh, let's get to business!" said Bolsover major impatiently.

"Come along, Carr!" commanded Harry Wharton. "You've got to run through these two lines. And the quicker you do it, the less likely you are to get hurt! All the same, I won't guarantee that you'll come through unscathed."

"I won't run!"

"Then we'll make you!"

"Every prisoner—I suppose I'm a prisoner—has a right to speak in his own defence," said Dennis Carr. "I've not been given a fair trial—in fact, I've not been given a trial at all! You haven't asked me for my explanation—"

"You couldn't give one!" growled Peter Todd. "At least, not a satisfactory one."

"Oh, yes, I could!"

There was a snort from Bolsover major. "He's trying to wriggle out of his punishment!" he exclaimed. "He wants to waste a lot of time in jaw, hoping that a master will come on the scene before we get to business!"

"That's so!" said Skinner. "We'll make him run the gauntlet first, and listen to his explanation afterwards!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton conferred for a moment with Vernon-Smith, and then turned to the prisoner.

"Go ahead with your explanation!" he said. "But we reserve the right to cut it short in the middle, if it's too long-winded!"

"Very well," said Dennis Carr. "I plead guilty to the three charges laid against me. At the same time, I maintain that I am perfectly justified in acting as I did!"

"Rats!"

"Cut it out!"

"In the first place, I kicked Bolsover major. Well, all's fair in love and war—and that was war! In a friendly bout with the gloves I should never dream of kicking my opponent. But that wasn't a friendly bout. It was the real thing. And a fellow who fights with kid-gloves on is a dashed fool!"

"I don't follow your line of argument at all," said Harry Wharton. "A fellow who kicks another, in whatever sort of fight, is acting like a slum hooligan!"

Dennis Carr shrugged his shoulders. "We'll agree to differ," he said. "The second charge against me is that I sneaked to Quelch. I did what any sensible fellow would have done in the circumstances. You refused to give me a place in the touring-party—in spite of the fact that you knew me to be worth one—and I appealed to a higher power, in the hope of getting fair play. That's that!"

"A fellow who carries complaints to a Form-master," said Harry Wharton, "is a sneak, and should be dealt with as such!"

"Hear, hear!"

Dennis Carr saw nothing but accusation and condemnation in the faces around him. But he went on steadily:

"The third, and what seems to be the most serious charge against me," he said, "is that I wrote to my father telling him there was more play than work in the Greyfriars routine. That was perfectly correct, and I defy anyone to contradict it!"

"Whether it happened to be correct or not," said Vernon-Smith, "it was a caddish thing to tell your pater. You knew that, being an education officer, he'd take the matter up, and cause the Head to stop all future tours. In fact, that's why you wrote the letter."

"I admit that."

"You admit writing to your pater by way of revenge for being left out of the team?"

"Certainly! If Wharton had given me a fair show, this wouldn't have happened. When I'm treated unfairly, I always hit back. It's a much better policy than turning the other cheek."

By this time the Removites were thoroughly impatient.

Dennis Carr had not quite finished his explanation; and he didn't have time to finish.

Half-a-dozen juniors dragged him forcibly to the end of the lines, and Skinner set the ball rolling by bringing down his bolster with a terrific force on the new boy's head. For a moment Dennis stood stunned.

"Run!" urged Mark Linley, the only fellow who recognised possibilities of good in Dennis Carr. "Don't stand still, man! Get it over!"

A couple of knotted towels, one on each side, came into execution; and Dennis stood not upon the order of his going, but went at once.

And, as he went, grim-faced juniors rained blow after blow upon his pyjama-clad figure.

"He, he, he!" cackled Billy Bunter. "Let him have it hot!"

"Biff! Thud! Whack!"

Dennis Carr staggered through the lines under a deluge of blows, heavy and stinging.

One or two fellows, who saw that the new boy was being punished to excess, discreetly held back. Among these were Mark Linley, Lord Mauleverer, Sir Jimmy Vivian, and the kind-hearted Alonzo Todd.

At the far end of the lines Bolsover major stood waiting.

No one had seen the bully of the Remove tie the slipper into his sheet, or his action would certainly have been condemned.

His face pale as death, his hands tightly clenched, Dennis Carr came on.

Bolsover carefully measured the distance, and then, swinging the loaded sheet behind his head, he brought it down with savage, relentless force on the victim.

The slipper struck Dennis Carr on the temple. The new boy threw up his hands, and pitched forward on his face.

In the general excitement, no one was aware, even at this pass, of the extent of Bolsover's brutality.

The majority of the fellows, furious at having been deprived of their sports tours, clamoured for Dennis Carr to be sent back through the lines.

"Send him back!" bawled Skinner.

"Yes, rather!"

"I missed him last time!"

"Same here!"

"Make him run again!"

In the midst of the clamour, Mark Linley ran to the spot where Dennis Carr had fallen.

The Lancashire lad dropped on one knee beside the prostrate junior.

"That's enough, you fellows!" Mark Linley's voice rose clear and ringing above the tumult. "He's fainted!"

"Bats!"

"He's only shamming!"

"That was only the first instalment!" said Bolsover major. "Pick him up and give him a fresh start!"

The Remove were out for scalps. Very few of the fellows realised that Dennis Carr was not in a position to receive further punishment.

Pillows and bolsters and knotted towels were swinging impatiently in the air.

Mark Linley rose to his feet and confronted the clamorous crowd.

"Stand back!" he shouted. "Don't be a set of cads! Can't you see he's had enough?"

The uproar grew in volume.

"Hark at him!"

"Hark at the factory cad!"

"He's backing up the new kid!"

"Birds of a feather of course!" sneered Skinner.

Mark Linley stood firm.

"Stand back!" he repeated. "You've overdone it already! If anybody lays a finger on Carr, he'll get hurt!"

Bob Cherry strode up to Mark Linley, and gripped him by the arm.

"Don't be an ass, Marky!" he muttered. "You can't fight the whole Form! Besides, that kid's only shamming!"

"He isn't!" said Mark Linley. "Look for yourself!"

Bob Cherry knelt down, and raised Dennis Carr's head. It sagged limply in his arms.

"Linley's right, you fellows!" exclaimed Bob. "Carr's fainted!"

This confirmation, coming from Bob Cherry, was good enough for most of the fellows. They lowered their weapons.

"Lay him on his bed!" said Harry Wharton, genuinely distressed. "We must bring him round somehow!"

Bob Cherry and Mark Linley lifted the new boy between them, and laid him on his bed.

The next moment Frank Nugent dashed some water into Dennis Carr's face, and he slowly revived.

"Oh, you cads! You cads!" he muttered. And his hand went to his temple.

"Why—Great Scott!" ejaculated Vernon-Smith. "Just look at this, you fellows!"

And, drawing aside Dennis Carr's hand, he indicated a dark bruise, caused by Bolsover major's slipper.

"My hat!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "What cad has done this?"

There was no reply.

Bolsover major discreetly untied the slipper, and replaced the sheet on his bed.

"This is too thick!" said Bob Cherry indignantly. "Somebody's had a stone or something knotted in his towel!"

Harry Wharton ordered a search to be made, but Bolsover had been too quick for him.

The search revealed nothing.

"I'm sorry this should have happened, Carr!" said the captain of the Remove.

Dennis Carr recognised the sincerity in Wharton's tone, but he was feeling too sore to acknowledge it.

"You're a low-down cad!" he said. "But you're only one of many. The Remove seems to be composed of cads. You've not given me a fair chance. You were down on me from the start. And I hate you—I hate you all!"

Harry Wharton made no reply to this passionate outburst.

"Back to bed, everybody!" he said.

And the juniors, having brought Dennis Carr to justice, and given him his deserts—and a little over—turned in, silent and subdued.

Dennis Carr turned in, too; but he was not destined to sleep until the first glimmer of dawn crept in at the high windows.

For hour after hour the new boy lay staring into the darkness. His head was throbbing painfully, and he was feeling very sore, mentally and physically.

And his thoughts, as he lay thus, were blacker than the darkness which enshrouded him!

THE SECOND CHAPTER. New Sleeping Quarters!

CLANG, clang!

The shrill notes of the rising-bell rang out on the morning air.

"Groo!" murmured Bob Cherry, rubbing his eyes. "I believe old Gosling gets up earlier and earlier every blessed morning!"

Most of the Removites were tired as a result of their energies overnight. They seemed in no great hurry to wash and

dress. Dennis Carr was awake, but he made no effort to get up.

The new boy's face was pale, and there were dark rings round his eyes, indicating lack of sleep.

There was also a bump the size of a pigeon's egg on Dennis Carr's forehead.

Bolsover major noted the result of his handiwork with a grin.

One by one the juniors turned out, until Dennis Carr was the only fellow still in bed.

"Time to get up, Carr," said Frank Nugent, not unkindly.

"Thanks! I prefer staying in bed."

"Quelch's dead nuts on early rising," said Bob Cherry. "I should advise you to tumble out, Carr."

"Yaaa, bedad!" murmured Lord Mauleverer, who had only just managed to struggle out himself. "Quelch's most ex-actin'. It's not nice to get up in the mornin', as the song says; but it's worse still to be caught in bed!"

"I didn't get to sleep till five o'clock," said Dennis Carr. "Consequently, I've made up my mind to stay in bed for a couple of hours."

"My dear fellow," said Mark Linley, "you're fairly asking for trouble!"

"Oh, let him alone!" growled Vernon-Smith. "I can see what his little game is. He's going to let Quelch find him in bed, and when he's asked for an explanation he'll sneak about what happened last night."

"I vote we make him run the gauntlet again, now that he's had time to recover!" said Skinner.

"That's a jolly good idea!" said Billy Bunter. "I only managed to slish him eight times last night!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pitch him out of bed!" said Bolsover major.

"That's enough!" cut in Harry Wharton. "I've got no brief for Carr, but he's had quite enough punishment to go on with. If you start piling on the agony, Bolsover, you'll have to answer for it to me!"

"Good old champion of the oppressed!" sneered Bolsover.

"I wonder he doesn't take the new kid to his bosom!" added Skinner. "It wouldn't be a bad wheeze to turn Study No. 1 into a reformatory, with Carr as the inmate and Wharton as the managing-director. He could reform Carr—"

"Even Alonzo Todd would find that job a bit above his weight!" said Hazeldene.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner was about to make a further remark, when he caught sight of the expression on Bob Cherry's face, and wisely remained silent.

The Removites were dressed by this time, and they left the dormitory.

No further efforts were made to induce Dennis Carr to get up.

The new boy's place at the breakfast-table was vacant—a fact which did not escape the gimlet eyes of Mr. Quelch.

"Where is Carr?" demanded the Form-master.

"He's in bed, sir!" said Billy Bunter promptly. "May I have his breakfast, sir?"

"No, Bunter, you may not!" said Mr. Quelch, compressing his lips. "You say that Carr is in bed?"

"Yes, sir."

"Bless my soul! Is he ill?"

"Not exactly, sir," said Billy Bunter; "but he hasn't recovered from the effects of—Yow-ow-ow! Cherry, you beast!"

Bob Cherry had trodden violently upon the fat junior's feet, in order to check Bunter's flow of oratory.

"Bunter," roared Mr. Quelch, "how dare you make such absurd noises at the breakfast-table!"

Billy Bunter blinked wrattfully through his spectacles.

"How could I help it, sir?" he demanded. "Bob Cherry's got a boot like a ton-weight!"

"Did you tread on Bunter's foot, Cherry?"

"Yes, sir."

"Take a hundred lines!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

Mr. Quelch beckoned to Hurree Singh, who sat at the head of the table.

"Go and tell Carr that I wish to see him at once!" he said.

The dusky junior departed on his errand. Ten minutes elapsed before he returned.

"Where is Carr?" asked Mr. Quelch, frowning.

"He is still restfully reclining in bed, honoured sahib!"

Mr. Quelch's frown grew blacker. "Did you not give him my message, Hurree Singh?"

The Nabob of Bhanipur nodded.

"And what did he say?"

"He told me to presentfully give his compliments to the esteemed teacher sahib, and to say that he was about to enjoy forty esteemed and ludicrous winks!"

There was a chuckle from the Removees. There was a murmur of amazement, too.

"That new kid's the giddy limit!" murmured Frank Nugent.

"Absolutely!" whispered Bob Cherry. "Now look out for squalls and cataracts!"

The thunderclouds gathered on Mr. Quelch's brow.

"Are you presuming to jest with me, Hurree Singh?"

"That is more than I should attemptfully dare to do, honoured sahib! I have faithfully interpreted the message given to me by the unworthy Carr."

"But this—this is outrageous!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "It is utterly unheard-of! Wharton—Nugent—Bull! Go at once to the Remove dormitory and bring Carr to me—by force, if necessary."

"Very good, sir," said Wharton.

"Shall I lend a hand, sir?" volunteered Bolsover major.

And about half the Remove chimed in.

"Let me, sir!"

"And me!"

"Same here, sir!"

Mr. Quelch remembered that Dennis Carr was inclined to be obstinate and perverse. He considered it quite possible that the new boy was a good fighting-man into the bargain, in which case the three juniors he had detailed might receive a rough handling.

"Vernon-Smith—Cherry—Todd!" rapped out Mr. Quelch. "Six should be quite sufficient, I think."

Certainly the Form-master could not have selected six more capable fellows for the job.

Harry Wharton led the procession up to the Remove dormitory.

Dennis Carr, his head resting on his hand, had dropped into a doze.

"The kid's got some nerve, and no mistake!" said Vernon-Smith. "He doesn't seem to care a rap for anybody!"

Harry Wharton stepped up to the sleeper, and shook him.

"Gerraway!" murmured Dennis.

"Out you get!" said the captain of the Remove sharply. "Quelch's waiting for you in hall."

"Bless Quelch! I wish you'd leave me alone."

"We've had orders to take you downstairs—by force, if necessary," said Peter Todd.

"You'd better come quietly," said Bob Cherry. "You've been damaged enough already. We don't want to give you another dose."

"I'm not coming!" said Dennis firmly.

"We're not going back without you!" retorted Harry Wharton.

"Plucky sort of fellow, aren't you?" sneered Dennis. "It's easy to talk like that when you're six to one!"

"Oh, come on!" growled Johnny Bull. "Don't let's waste any more time arguing with the bouncer!"

And Johnny advanced threateningly towards the bed.

"Hold on!" said Wharton. "I'd prefer to get him downstairs without laying hands on him, if possible."

Peter Todd gave a sudden chuckle.

"Supposing we carry him down on the mattress?" he said.

"Good egg!"

Peter Todd, Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, and Frank Nugent each took a corner of the mattress.

Johnny Bull wrenched away the sheets, so that Dennis Carr, in his pyjamas, lay upon the mattress, which was lifted off the bed.

The experiment did not prove a success at first.

Dennis Carr hit out, and Bob Cherry received an unexpected punch on the nose, which caused him to drop his corner of the mattress.

The new boy would have slid down on to the floor had not Vernon-Smith promptly taken Bob Cherry's place.

"Half a jiffy!" said Johnny Bull. "I'll soon stop his merry antics!"

And Johnny, by means of a towel and a great expenditure of strength, succeeded in binding the victim's hands behind his back.

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"Good man!" said Nugent. "That's fixed him all serene!"

With Dennis Carr helpless and impotent, the juniors marched out of the dormitory.

Going downstairs was rather a risky manoeuvre. The fellows in front had to hold their end of the mattress very high, to prevent the human burden from sliding down.

The bottom stair was reached without mishap, however, and the rest of the journey was plane-sailing.

Bob Cherry, clasping his injured nasal organ with one hand, threw open the door of the dining-hall with the other. Then the strange procession marched in.

A murmur of amazement ran through the hall.

"My only aunt!"

"What the thump—"

Straight down the gangway went the mattress bearers, and when they were in line with the Remove table they dumped their burden on to the floor.

Mr. Quelch gasped.

He tried to speak, but words refused to come.

Dennis Carr sat up on the mattress, and glared at Harry Wharton & Co. He realised only too clearly what an undignified spectacle he presented.

Most of the fellows were on their feet, craning their necks to get a glimpse of him.

"Great jumping crackers!" gasped Squiff. "Did you ever?"

"No, never!" said Dick Russell solemnly.

Mr. Quelch, who seemed to have been on the verge of an apoplectic fit, found utterance at last.

"Wharton," he rumbled, "what does this mean?"

"You sent us to fetch Carr, sir, and here he is!"

"Complete, with mattress!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "This is not a laughing matter, my boys!"

But the Removees seemed to think it was. A good many of them experienced considerable difficulty in turning chuckles into coughs.

"Carr," continued Mr. Quelch, fixing Dennis with his gimlet eye, "how dare you appear in public so sparsely clad?"

"I had no choice in the matter, sir."

"Why did you not dress and come down to breakfast in the usual way?"

"I wasn't feeling up to the mark, sir."

Mr. Quelch caught sight of the bump on the new boy's forehead.

He could hardly help catching sight of it, for it hit him in the face, so to speak.

"Have you been fighting again, Carr?"

"No, sir," said Dennis. "I met with an accident."

Harry Wharton & Co. drew a breath of relief.

They had fully expected Dennis Carr to sneak, and to acquaint Mr. Quelch with full details of the events which had occurred overnight.

"Did you fall down, Carr?" inquired the Remove-master.

"I came into contact with a hard object, sir," said Dennis.

And Bolsover major shifted uneasily in his seat.

Mr. Quelch frowned.

"Instead of sending me an impertinent message through the medium of Hurree Singh, you should have stated the facts, Carr. I should then have excused you from coming down to breakfast. You will take five hundred lines! The six boys who brought you here in this absurd manner will take two hundred lines each!"

And then Dennis Carr did an extraordinary thing, which sent him up with a bound in the estimation of his schoolfellows.

"These fellows are not to blame, sir," said Dennis. "I refused to get out of bed, and they were compelled to bring me down like this."

"Very well," said Mr. Quelch. "Their punishment shall be rescinded. Wharton, pray remove Carr's bonds!"

Harry Wharton stepped forward, and untied the towel with which Johnny Bull had made the captive secure.

"You will return to your dormitory, and get dressed, Carr," said Mr. Quelch. "I will arrange for Mrs. Kebble to reserve your breakfast."

"Thank you, sir!"

Dennis turned to escape from that sea of grinning faces.

"Take your mattress with you!" called Mr. Quelch.

Dennis Carr picked up the mattress, and beat a hasty and undignified retreat.

"The eads!" he muttered, as he emerged from the ordeal with burning cheeks. "They tried to make me look small in front of the whole school! It would have served them jolly well right if I had sneaked!"

And he went up the stairs to the Remove dormitory, dragging the mattress after him.

"I'm sick of this place!" he told himself. "Sick of this dormitory, at any rate. I mean to find fresh sleeping quarters, where I shall be left alone."

That, however, was a difficult proposition. Dennis would gladly have slept on Lord Mauleverer's couch, which in many respects was as good as a feather bed.

But Dennis remembered that Mauly had been decent to him, and he hesitated to take unfair advantage of the schoolboy earl.

For other reasons, too, sleeping in the study was out of the question.

"I must set my wits to work," reflected Dennis. "Blessed if I'm going to sleep in this hornet's nest any longer!"

An hour later he took his place in the Remove Form-room.

As a scholar, Dennis Carr was well above the average.

He had only two superiors in the Remove in this respect, and they were Mark Linley and Dick Penfold.

But on this particular morning the new boy's thoughts, like those of Eugene Aram in the poem, were "other where."

Mr. Quelch found Dennis Carr a most inattentive pupil, and his imposition of five hundred lines had leapt up to eight hundred before the class was dismissed.

But Dennis didn't care a jot.

His morning had not been wasted, for he had solved the problem of finding fresh sleeping-quarters!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Daring Venture!

"COMING down to cricket-practice?"

It cost Harry Wharton an effort to put the question to Dennis Carr, who was practically shunned by the Form.

But Harry remembered the scene in the dining-hall, and he was not ungrateful.

The captain of the Remove had no wish to be "up against" Carr, provided he played the game.

It was a half-holiday at Greyfriars, and the tail-end of the cricket season.

Dennis Carr's reply was brief and to the point.

"Blow cricket!" he said.

Wharton shrugged his shoulders and walked away. His overtures had been wasted on the new boy.

As a matter of fact, Dennis Carr would not have been averse to a game at the nets, but he happened to be otherwise engaged that afternoon.

Crossing over to the bicycle-shed he secured his machine—a brand-new Raleigh—and cycled out of gates and along the road which led to the wide expanse of waste land known as Courtfield Common.

Camping out on the common in the heat of the summer was a party of gipsies.

Roughly speaking, there are two types of gipsies—those who are little more than roving tramps, and those who are superior and well-educated.

This particular party belonged to the latter type. They lived a roving life in caravans, because the call of the open road was irresistible.

On reaching the camping-ground Dennis Carr approached the leader of the party.

"I want to buy a caravan!" he said in his direct way.

The gipsy chief stared.

"A furnished caravan," continued Dennis. "The more lavishly furnished it is the better. If you haven't one for sale I should like to hire one."

"You are not joking with me, young sir?"

"Not a bit of it! Are you game to sell one of your caravans?"

"The cost of a furnished caravan," said the man, "is eighty pounds."

"Pshaw!"

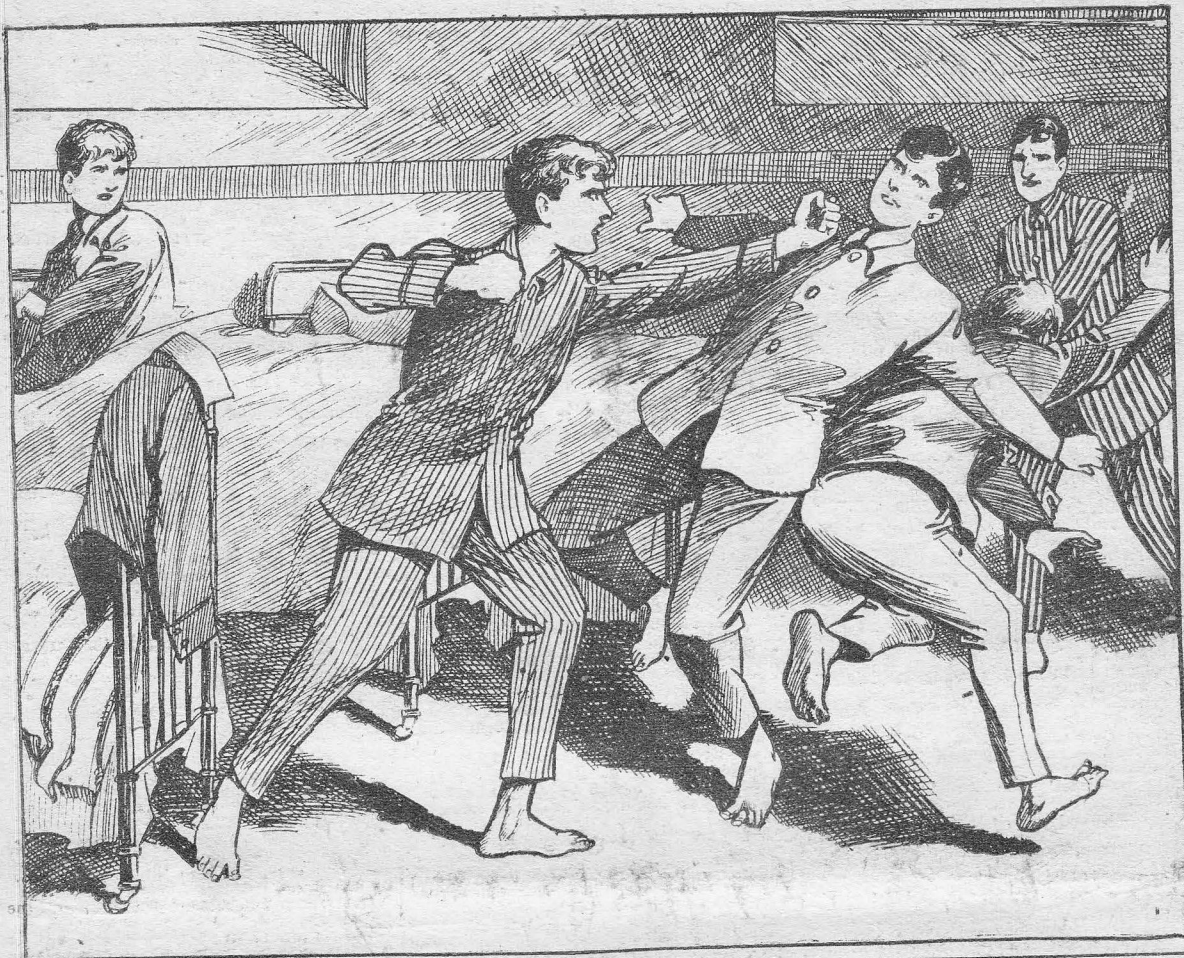
Dennis Carr was taken aback.

He received a liberal supply of pocket-money from his father, but eighty pounds was a sum altogether beyond his means.

"I say, that's pretty steep!" he said.

The man shrugged his shoulders.

"Caravans, like houses, have gone up in price," he said. "A few years ago one could



In an instant Dennis Carr was on his feet, fighting like a wild-cat. The unexpectedness of his attack caused his assailants to fall back. (See page 2.)

buy a caravan for a mere song. Times have changed.

"I shall have to hire one, then," said Dennis. "What is the charge?"

"We could hire you an ordinary caravan for fifteen shillings a week. An exceptionally well-furnished one would cost you a pound a week."

"Now you are talking!" said Dennis Carr. "Of course," said the man, with a smile. "I'm referring to the caravan only. We can't part with any of our horses."

"That's all right. I don't want a horse, except to take the thing up to Greyfriars."

Dennis was then conducted to one of the caravans—a stately-looking vehicle, with nicely- curtained windows.

The interior of the caravan was cosy in the extreme.

There was not much furniture, but what there was was good.

"This will suit me down to the ground!" said Dennis. "I'll pay you for the first week's hire in advance."

And the transaction was duly completed.

"Will you have the caravan sent up to the school for me?" asked Dennis.

"Certainly!"

"You'd better leave it till after dark, I think."

Dennis reflected that the arrival of the caravan in the daytime would create quite a stir at Greyfriars. By smuggling it in under the canopy of darkness publicity would be avoided. Dennis hoped so, anyway.

"Would eight o'clock suit you?" inquired the gipsy.

"First-rate!" said Dennis.

And then, having settled the question of his sleeping accommodation, as he thought, Dennis Carr cycled back to Greyfriars.

The notion of sleeping in a caravan appealed to him immensely.

Dennis was used to caravans. He had toured the country in them on his holidays; and solitude in a caravan, he reflected, would

be infinitely preferable to unrest in the Remove dormitory.

There were many difficulties in the way; but Dennis, in his impulsiveness, had not yet taken them into account.

The new boy spent the afternoon and most of the evening in the study which he shared with Mauly and Sir Jimmy.

These two came in to tea; and Dennis, rather to their surprise, joined them.

"Been playin' cricket, Carr?" inquired Mauly.

"No."

"I don't blame you, begad! Frightfully exhaustin' game, cricket. I played myself a few weeks ago, and I'm takin' a rest cure."

"You're lookin' very excited about somethin', Carr," remarked Jimmy Vivian.

Dennis grinned.

"There's something arrivin' for me this evening," he explained.

"An 'amper from 'ome," suggested Sir Jimmy.

"No. Some new sleeping-quarters."

Dennis Carr's study-mates stared at him in surprise.

"New sleepin'-quarters!" ejaculated Mauly. "You can't have new sleeping-quarters sent through the post, surely?"

"No, ass! They're coming by road. You see, it's a caravan."

"A kuk-kuk-caravan?" stuttered Sir Jimmy. Dennis nodded.

"You—you're goin' to sleep in a caravan?" stammered Mauly.

"Precisely!"

"My hat! This is the most excitin' tit-bit of news I've heard for a long time!"

"Ave you 'ad Quelchy's permission?" asked Sir Jimmy.

"I've got nobody's permission but my own."

"Great pip!"

There was silence in the study for some moments—the silence of blank astonishment. Then Mauly said:

"I don't want to be personal, but I must say you're a thunderin' lunatic, Carr!"

"Thanks!"

"You're fairly askin' for trouble!"

"I don't understand you. There's nothing in the school rules against a fellow havin' a caravan, is there?"

"No; but—"

"I've been told that Coker of the Fifth had a motor-bike, and somebody else had a typewriter. What's the objection to a caravan?"

"Quelchy will soon find an objection!" grinned Sir Jimmy.

"Carr, my dear fellow," murmured Mauly, "you ought never to have come to Greyfriars at all, begad! Hanwell or Colney Hatch would be a more fittin' destination."

"Now you're being rude!" said Dennis.

"What's the idea of sleepin' in a caravan, anyway?" said Sir Jimmy.

"I'm fed-up with sleeping in the dorm! A fat lot of rest I get! Look at last night. It's impossible to sleep amongst a rowdy set of cads—"

"Steady on!" said Mauly.

"Present company excepted, of course! You two, and Mark Linley, are the only fellows who have shown me a scrap of decency. I hate all the rest! I've got to put up with them in the daytime, but I mean to break away from them at night."

"Where are you goin' to stow this caravan?" inquired Mauly. "You can't hide it in your waistcoat-pocket, you know!"

"It's going on the cricket-ground, underneath the trees."

"And you intend to sleep in it every night?"

"Yes. It will be rather ripping, really. You see, I shall have a small spirit-stove, and I shall be able to make myself an early morning cup of tea. And I shall be able to stay up late at night, reading my favourite books."

"Sounds all right," said Jimmy Vivian. "But you'll be spotted at the first time of asking. When Wingate comes round to see lights out, he'll notice an empty bed, and there you are. You'll be browled out, fair an' square!"

"This was one of the little difficulties which Dennis had not foreseen.

"Oh crumbs!" he said. "I hadn't thought of that. The only way out is to go up to the dorm in the usual way, and slope off to my caravan after lights out."

"Too risky, by half," said Mauly. "You might manage it for a night or so, but somebody's sure to let the cat out of the bag, Bunter, for instance. He'll start gassin' about it, and it'll get to Quelch's ears."

"I'll chance that."

It was quite evident that Dennis Carr had made up his mind, and that the combined eloquence of Lord Maulverer and Sir Jimmy Vivian could not turn him from his purpose.

They left the new boy to go ahead with his unaided scheme, and started their prep.

Shortly before eight o'clock there was a rumble of wheels in the Close.

"Here it is!" said Dennis.

And he was out of the study in a twinkling. On emerging into the Close, he found that his fond dreams of avoiding publicity were ruthlessly shattered.

The Close was alive with fellows. Dennis could scarcely see the caravan because of the human circle which encompassed it.

The Famous Five were present, and their curiosity was fairly roused.

"A caravan!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Oh, no!" said Bob Cherry, with crushing sarcasm. "It's a disused Tank!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why on earth has it come to Greyfriars?" said Wharton.

"Perhaps it requires a Public School education," suggested Nugent.

Dennis Carr pushed his way through the crowd, and spoke to the man in charge of the caravan.

"For goodness' sake don't hang about here!" he said. "Get the blessed thing round to the cricket-ground. I'll show you the way!"

The caravan, drawn by a very solid-looking horse, jolted forward. The spectators formed a gangway through which it passed.

"Is this your property, Carr?" inquired Harry Wharton, indicating the caravan.

"It is!"

"My hat!"

"What's the idea of sending it round to the cricket-ground?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Are you going to roll the pitch?"

"I wish you fellows would mind your own business!" said Dennis.

Wharton frowned.

"We've every right to know what's going on," he said. "Have you bought that caravan?"

"I've hired it."

"What for?"

"Find out!"

"I mean to!" said Wharton grimly. "We're not going to have our cricket-pitch mucked up."

"Don't worry. This caravan won't be in your way. It's going to be pitched under the trees."

Billy Bunter sidled up to Dennis Carr in the dusk.

"Halves!" he whispered.

"Eh?"

"I'm going to share that caravan with you, Carr, old chap."

"First I've heard of it," said Dennis. "Why, it would be impossible to squeeze a fat barrel like you through the doorway, to begin with."

"Look here, you rotter—"

"Oh, buzz off!" growled Dennis.

And he gave the fat junior a shove which sent him sprawling.

As he passed on in the wake of the caravan, Billy Bunter's loud threats were borne to him on the evening breeze.

"That fat beast will give the whole show away!" muttered Dennis. "It's no use trying to keep this from the masters' ears."

A few moments later the caravan was safely deposited in the place indicated by Dennis Carr. The horse was then taken out of the shafts, and the man returned with it to Courtfield.

There was great excitement on the cricket-ground.

Fellows of all Forms were swarming like bees round the caravan.

They could not inspect the interior, because the key had been handed to Dennis.

The new boy listened to the buzz of conversation.

versation; and then a tall figure loomed up in the dusk, and a voice—the voice of Wingate of the Sixth—exclaimed:

"What's all this?"

Dennis Carr realised that he was in a tight corner.

Wingate would institute inquiries, and the result would be disastrous.

But there was still a way out. The quick-witted Dennis saw it, and he promptly sped away to Mr. Quelch's study. He was panting and breathless when he responded to the Form-master's sharp "Come in!"

"Well, Carr?" said Mr. Quelch. "You have brought me your lines?"

"Nunno, sir!" muttered Dennis, taken aback. His heavy imposition of eight hundred lines had, in the excitement of the past few hours, escaped his memory.

"I shall expect the lines to-morrow, Carr!"

"Very well, sir."

"Why have you approached me now?"

"I wish to ask you a favour, sir."

"Well?"

"Might I be allowed to keep a caravan here, sir?"

Mr. Quelch started.

Such a request was, to say the least of it, unusual.

"A—a caravan?" stuttered Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir. A four-wheeled, hut-like vehicle, as used by gipsies!"

"Do not be impertinent, Carr! I am fully aware of the meaning of the word caravan."

"I want your permission to keep one, sir," said Dennis.

He did not add that the caravan had already arrived at Greyfriars.

Mr. Quelch stared.

"That is a most singular request, Carr. For what purpose do you require a caravan?"

"I can make it a quiet little den of my own, sir," said Dennis. "I can do all my swotting there, and my prep, without being disturbed."

Dennis discreetly refrained from adding that he could sleep there. He knew that Mr. Quelch would taboo such a request at once.

"And where would you keep the caravan, Carr?"

"In a corner of the cricket-ground, sir."

"H'm!"

Mr. Quelch reflected for a few moments.

"Very well, Carr," he said, at length. "You have my permission to keep a caravan."

"Thanks awfully, sir!"

"But the privilege must not be abused. If your caravan should prove an obstruction, or a hindrance in any way, or if you make use of it at a time when you should be elsewhere, I shall be compelled to withdraw my consent."

"That's quite understood, sir."

"One moment, Carr. How do you propose to obtain this caravan?"

"I shall hire it, sir," said Dennis. He reflected that Mr. Quelch would have several sorts of a fit if he knew it had already been hired.

"Have you sufficient money for the purpose, Carr?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well."

Once outside in the passage, Dennis Carr drew a deep breath of relief. He felt that he had overcome a very big obstacle.

On his return to the cricket-ground he encountered Wingate.

The captain of Greyfriars peered at him closely.

"I understand you are the owner of that caravan, Carr?"

"The hirer of it, Wingate."

"Have you had permission to keep a caravan on the school premises?"

"Yes, Wingate."

"From whom?"

"From Mr. Quelch."

This ready reply rather took Wingate by surprise.

"I hope you are telling me the truth, Carr!"

"You can ask Quelch yourself," said Dennis off-handedly.

Wingate was satisfied that his leg was not being pulled.

"That's all right, then," he said. "Back into the building, everyone!"

And the crowd, still chattering excitedly about the arrival of the caravan, obeyed.

Dennis Carr turned back, too.

"That was a close shave!" he muttered to himself. "I went along to Quelch in the nick of time!"

And then, remembering his imposition, Dennis went along to his study and scribbled away furiously until bedtime.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Loyal Chum.

AFTER lights out, Dennis Carr tumbled out of his bed in the Remove dormitory. He was still fully dressed, except for his boots, which he carried in his hand.

"Who's that out of bed?"

It was Harry Wharton's voice.

Dennis Carr gritted his teeth with annoyance. He realised that it was impossible to leave the dormitory unnoticed and unheard.

"It's me—Carr!" he said.

"What's the little game?" asked Wharton.

"I'm going out!"

"Where?"

"That's my business!"

Harry Wharton sat up in bed.

"I've had enough of your cheek, Carr!" he said angrily. "The sooner you realise that you can't come and go just as you please, the better!"

"I sha'n't take any orders from a stuck-up prig like you!" retorted Dennis.

Wharton's anger increased—not unnaturally.

"Get back to bed at once!" he rapped out.

"Bow-wow!"

"My hat! I—I'll—"

"Oh, give him his head, Harry!" said Bob Cherry. "If he goes out on the tiles, and gets sacked from the school, it will be a jolly good thing for Greyfriars!"

"Hear, hear!" growled Vernon-Smith. "Let the silly ass go his own way, and be hanged!"

"Oh, all right!" said Wharton.

Dennis Carr quitted the dormitory without any further interference.

His destination was, of course, the caravan on the cricket-ground.

Leaving the school building by night was a very risky proceeding, especially to a novice. To Loder of the Sixth, and other night-birds, the thing was simplicity itself.

However, Dennis Carr had kept his eyes open during his brief stay at Greyfriars, and he knew that the best means of egress was the box-room window.

Making stealthy progress, he finally emerged into the Close.

Then he made a rapid and noiseless detour to the cricket-ground.

The caravan loomed up white and ghost-like in the gloom.

Dennis groped for the key, and unlocked the door.

"This is something like!" he murmured, as he surveyed what he hoped would be his future resting-place.

The bed was very small, but it was much more comfortable than the beds in the Remove dormitory.

"I'd better not light the lamp!" muttered Dennis. "The light will shine through the windows, and give me away. I think a candle on the floor will answer the purpose."

Having lit the candle, the solitary occupant of the caravan laid down on the bed without undressing.

Then he gave himself up to reflection.

Life at Greyfriars was proving anything but a picnic. He had made many enemies, and few friends. His hand was against every man, and every man's hand was against his; or so it seemed.

And why?

What had he done that he should be compelled to exile himself from the rest of his schoolfellows in this way?

Dennis could not understand that in kicking Bolsover major, in complaining to Mr. Quelch, and in writing that fateful letter to his father, he had been guilty of three almost unpardonable offences. He could see no harm in what he had done. He had acted according to his lights. He had come to Greyfriars intent upon doing his best, and winning for himself a high place in the Remove. And everything had gone wrong.

Had he but known it, his pride was at the bottom of it all.

Instead of profiting by his mistakes, he refused to admit that he had made any mistakes at all!

Perhaps the biggest mistake he made was this. He looked upon Harry Wharton & Co. as his natural enemies, little dreaming that they were ready and willing to be his friends, if only he would conform to their principles.

In treating the chums of the Remove with rudeness and contempt he was making a rod for his own back.

Dennis was still deep in his reflections, when there was a sudden tap on the door of the caravan.

The new boy started up in alarm.

Had Mr. Quelch or one of the prefects run him to earth?

And then he reflected that a master or a

prefect would not have troubled to knock, but would have walked straight in.

"Who's there?" called Dennis.

"It's me. Can I come in?"

The voice was Mark Linley's.

Dennis threw open the door, and the Lancashire lad stepped into the caravan.

"How did you know I was here?" asked Dennis.

Mark Linley smiled.

"I didn't need to be a Sherlock Holmes to guess where you'd gone. I should have been very surprised to find this caravan empty."

"And you've come to keep me company—what?" said Dennis. "That's the style! I can easily make room for two."

Mark Linley did not close with this sporting offer. Dennis noticed that his face looked serious in the candle-light.

"I came to fetch you back," said Mark.

Dennis clenched his hands.

"Are you an agent of Wharton's?" he demanded.

"No. I've come on my own account. I dare say you'll think it's like my cheek to interfere, but I'm not going to stand by and see you make a prize ass of yourself!"

"What do you mean?"

"I'll be perfectly frank with you," said Mark Linley, "because I'm your chum. At least, I want to be your chum. You're going the right way to get sacked from the school!"

"What makes you say that?"

"You're taking risks which a Vernon-Smith, in the days when he was a 'blade,' would think twice about taking," continued Mark Linley. "You've not got permission to sleep here?"

"No."

"Well, if Quelchy comes along and finds you here, you'll be hauled up before the Head in the morning."

"What's wrong with sleeping in a caravan, I should like to know?"

"It's equivalent to being out of bounds. Come back to bed, there's a good fellow, before anybody spots you. All the Remove are talking about you. They've begun to guess where you are."

Dennis Carr's jaw set stubbornly.

"I'm staying here," he said. "I've not hired this caravan for a blessed ornament! I'm going to sleep in it every night!"

"You're a silly young ass!" growled Mark. "I've a good mind to take you back to the dorm by force!"

"And you say you're my chum," said Dennis bitterly.

Mark flushed.

"It would be the most chummy thing I could do," he said. "It would save you from getting into a row anyway."

"Oh, I can face the music all right!" said Dennis. "I'm not a weakling! It's no use your arguing with me, Linley. I can see you mean well, but I'm not quitting this caravan! You might as well starve, and make a night of it."

"I'm not sickening for the sack!" said Mark Linley.

Then, moved by a sudden impulse, he stepped up to Dennis and laid his hand on the new boy's shoulder.

"Why don't you thump playing the giddy goat," he said, "and make an effort to pull well with the fellows?"

"I'm not going to eat humble pie to Wharton, if that's what you mean!"

"I should advise you to throw some of your silly pride overboard. You've a ripping chance of making good at Greyfriars. If you act decently, the fellows will soon forget the unfortunate things that happened when you first came. They'll even forget the cancelled sports tour."

Dennis was silent for a moment. Then he said:

"It can't be done, Linley! Barring you and Mauly, and that quaint little fellow Vivian, I hate everybody in the Remove! 'The fellows are prigs and cads!'"

"That's because you rub them the wrong way. If you'd only show yourself friendly, instead of jumping down their throats, things would be different. Won't you come back right away, and make a fresh start?"

There was an appeal in Mark Linley's tone, and an earnestness in his manner, which Dennis Carr found almost irresistible.

For a moment he wavered. And then his perverse pride rose up like a barrier, crushing his good intentions.

"It's no use, Linley," he said. "I appreciate your friendship, and—and I feel a cad not to do as you want, but I'm not going to knuckle under to Wharton and that crowd. That's final."

Mark Linley saw that further argument would be futile.

"Very well," he said. "I'm sorry you've

taken up this attitude, Carr. But if you ever need a helping hand, you'll know where to come. Good-night!"

Dennis put out his hand impulsively. A queer lump had risen in his throat.

"You're a brick, Linley!" he muttered. "Good-night!"

The caravan door was opened, and a rush of night air came in.

And then Mark Linley, the loyal Lancashire lad, who was prepared to stand by Dennis Carr, in spite of all his faults and failings, was swallowed up in the darkness.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. Falsely Accused.

By the time Mark Linley returned to the Remove dormitory, all the fellows felt convinced that Dennis Carr was spending the night in his caravan.

Harry Wharton was in favour of bringing the truant back by force; but his chums wouldn't hear of it.

"Let him get on with it!" growled Johnny Bull. "He's bound to be bowled out sooner or later."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Dry up, Bunter!"

"I wouldn't mind betting Carr's having a fine old feed in his caravan!" said the Owl of the Remove. "In fact, that's why he's gone there. I think I'll go along and keep him company."

There was a growl from Harry Wharton.

"If you attempt to leave the dorm, Bunter, we'll scrag you!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

Billy Bunter said no more. But he did not mean to be balked of his share in the feed.

Propping himself up on the pillows, the fat junior waited until the other occupants of the dormitory were asleep.

This was rather an achievement for Bunter, who was usually the first to doze off; but the prospect of a glorious feed in the caravan kept him awake.

"I say, you fellows!" murmured Bunter.

There was no reply. The Removees were in the arms of Morpheus.

Billy Bunter slipped out of bed—not very noiselessly, for Bunter's movements resembled those of a bull in a china-shop.

With many grunts he scrambled into his clothes, and rolled out of the dormitory.

"Groo! It's dark!" he muttered, as he went down the staircase. "And it's black as pitch outside, I expect. Still, I can't afford to miss that feed."

At the foot of the stairs Bunter again bemoaned the darkness. He found it difficult, almost impossible, to get his bearings.

And then, suddenly and without warning, the powerful rays of an electric-torch were flashed full upon the fat junior.

"Mum-mum-my hat!" gasped Billy Bunter, trembling in every limb.

"Bunter!"

It was the stern voice of Mr. Quelchy, who, clad in his dressing-gown, confronted the midnight prowler.

"Oh crumbs!" faltered Bunter. "I—I—"

"Why are you absent from your dormitory, Bunter?"

Inspiration came to the fat junior.

"I—I've got a raging toothache, sir," he said. "I was going to the study to get some stuff for it."

Mr. Quelchy looked grim.

"You have told me a falsehood, Bunter! If, as you assert, you were on your way to your study, you would not have troubled to dress yourself. The fact that you were fully dressed leads me to suppose that you were about to break bounds."

"Oh, no, sir!" stammered the unfortunate Owl of the Remove. "I—I shouldn't dream of doing that sort of thing, sir! I hadn't the slightest intention of visiting Carr in his caravan—"

"What!" almost shouted Mr. Quelchy.

"I think Carr's a silly ass, sir, to sleep in a quiet corner of the cricket-ground, where there are spooks and things, sir. I'm not a funk, but I'd draw the line at sleeping in a caravan!"

"Bunter! Do you mean to insinuate that Carr is at the present moment in his caravan?"

"That's so, sir!" said Bunter promptly. The fat junior hoped that by making things black for Dennis Carr he would divert Mr. Quelchy's attention from himself.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Quelchy. "Whatever prompted Carr to take such a ridiculous step?"

Billy Bunter became conversational. He wanted to get Mr. Quelchy absorbed in Dennis Carr to the exclusion of everything else.

"Carr has such a rough time in the dormi-

tory, sir, that's he's only too pleased to stow himself away in his caravan. He had a terrible time last night. They made him run the gauntlet—"

"Whom do you mean by 'they'?" demanded Mr. Quelchy.

"Wharton and the others, sir. I didn't take a hand in it, of course. I'm a very peaceable sort of chap, sir. But the other fellows put Carr fairly through the mill. He was black and blue by the time they had finished with him!"

Mr. Quelchy started.

"Are you romancing, Bunter?"

"Not a bit of it, sir! Didn't you see that bump on Carr's forehead? He said it was an accident, but it was nothing of the sort, sir. He got a crack on the nut white he was running the gauntlet!"

Mr. Quelchy compressed his lips.

"Do I understand that Carr has been persecuted in this way since his arrival at Greyfriars?"

"Yes, sir," said Bunter. "The fellows lead him the dickens of a dance! I—"

"That will do, Bunter. Go back to your bed immediately! I shall want to see you in my study after breakfast to-morrow morning."

"What—what for, sir?" stammered Bunter.

"I intend to cane you, Bunter, for being out of your dormitory at night without a legitimate excuse!"

"Oh crumbs!"

Billy Bunter beat a dismayed retreat to the Remove dormitory.

"Old Quelchy must be a blessed Pelmanist!" he groaned. "He can remember two things at once! I thought he'd forgot all about me in thinking of Carr."

Mr. Quelchy, meanwhile, was making hurried tracks for the cricket-ground.

A subdued light showed through the windows of Dennis Carr's caravan.

The Form-master, picking his way by means of his electric-torch, approached the spot. He rapped sharply on the door of the caravan.

"Who's that?" came a startled voice from within.

"It is I—Mr. Quelchy! Open this door at once, Carr!"

Dennis Carr had not expected Nemesis to overtake him so swiftly.

This would not only be his first venture in sleeping out, but also his last. Dennis realised this with a sinking heart.

But the junior pulled himself together and threw open the door of the caravan. He stood blinking in the strong rays of Mr. Quelchy's torch.

"What does this mean, Carr?" exclaimed the Form-master.

"You gave me permission to hire a caravan, sir—"

"On the distinct understanding that it was not to be put to any improper use!" said Mr. Quelchy sternly. "I did not give you permission to convert your caravan into a dormitory!"

Dennis Carr was silent.

"You are guilty of a grave breach of the rules, Carr! I shall not punish you on this occasion, because I have reason to believe that you acted under provocation. However, this caravan must be returned to-morrow to the person from whom you hired it."

"Very well, sir."

"You will proceed to your dormitory at once!" said Mr. Quelchy. "And if I discover you out of bounds again I shall take you before Dr. Locke!"

Dennis Carr stepped down from the caravan and reluctantly made his way to the school building.

"Is that you, Carr?" murmured Billy Bunter, as Dennis entered the Remove dormitory.

No answer.

"I say, Carr! Did Quelchy bowl you out?"

Still no answer.

And Billy Bunter, with a grunt, turned over and composed himself to sleep.

Next morning the Famous Five of the Remove were summoned to Mr. Quelchy's study.

Harry Wharton & Co. noted, with some surprise, that there was a frown on Mr. Quelchy's face and a cane on his table.

The cane had already been used with good effect upon Billy Bunter, whom the Famous Five had seen squirming in the passage.

"Wharton," rapped out Mr. Quelchy, "it has come to my knowledge that you have been guilty of bullying."

"I, sir?" ejaculated Wharton.

(Continued on page 16.)



CONROY'S TROUBLE!

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

BY OWEN CONQUEST.



THE FIRST CHAPTER. Cads in Clover!

"I SAY, Conroy!"
The Colonial junior stopped as he was entering the gates at Rookwood School, and turned to the speaker.

He saw Peele, Lattrey, and Gower, known throughout Rookwood as the cads of the Classical Fourth, and they were walking towards him.

Conroy frowned, and waited impatiently for them to come up.

"Well?" he asked shortly.

Peele & Co. chuckled.

"You may call it well, Conroy," said Gower cheerfully. "But I can't say we agree with you!"

Conroy stared.

"What are you talking about?" he demanded. "If you've got anything to say, say it and hop it. I'm not proud to be seen talking to you galoosts!"

Gower nodded calmly.

"No, I dare say not," he said. "We're a bit above you—what?"

Conroy turned on his heel, and strode away without making any attempt to answer.

But Peele and Gower caught him by the shoulder.

"Not so fast, Conroy!" said Lattrey coolly. "We want a word with you!"

Conroy, with a swing of his powerful shoulders, flung off the detaining hands, and flushed.

"I guess you won't want to talk for days if you feel the weight of my fists!" he said hotly. "Keep your hands to yourselves. What do you want?"

"Is it advisable to talk—shall we say, confidences—in the gateway?" asked Gower coolly. "We—"

Conroy caught Gower by the shoulders, and shook him until his teeth rattled.

"Say, I guess you won't want to speak!" he snapped. "That is, if you've any regard for your health or your personal appearance."

Gower struggled to free himself, but he might as well have tried to fly. Conroy's grip was like a vice.

But Peele came to his rescue.

"It's about that letter you had this morning, Conroy," he said hastily.

The effect on the Colonial junior was instantaneous. He let go of Gower as if he were a lump of red-hot iron, and faced Peele with gleaming eyes.

"Guess you'd better repeat!" he said icily.

Peele shrugged his shoulders.

"Of course, if you want us to let the whole school know the contents of the letter," he said. "I'll tell you here and now. But don't you really think it would be better if we went away a bit?"

Conroy, whose face had whitened visibly, turned on his heel and walked towards the playing-fields without a word.

Peele & Co. chuckled as they followed, arm-in-arm, and in high spirits.

"We're in clover!" said Gower delightedly. "I guess and calculate and reckon our Colonial chum is going to be useful!"

"What-ho!" assented the others.

"Hallo! Hallo! Are they going to have a punt with the ball, I wonder?"

The three cads turned.

Jimmy Silver, captain of games of the Classical House at Rookwood, was approaching the little gate that led into the fields.

With him were Raby, Newcome, and Arthur Lovell, his chums.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 33.

It was Jimmy Silver who had made the remark.

"Perhaps they've turned little 'Eric's' themselves!" chuckled Raby. "The age of miracles is not yet past, I'm told!"

Peele & Co. walked on. They had no intention of stopping to argue with Jimmy Silver & Co. They had business with Conroy, the Colonial junior.

"Rats!" growled Peele. "Who wants to play your rotten games?"

"Let them be!" snapped Gower.

"Yes, Conroy's reached the pav," whispered Lattrey.

Jimmy Silver & Co. hurled a few more witticisms and suggestions towards the cads of the Classical House, but they had no effect.

Conroy had disappeared in the pavilion, and Peele & Co. hurried after him.

Gower stopped suddenly as he was mounting the steps.

"Suppose Silver and his chums come this way?" he said hastily. "They'll hear all about it, and our game will be up!"

The Co. looked at one another uneasily.

"Risk it!" said Peele at last.

And as they mounted the steps they heard the cheery voices of Jimmy Silver & Co. as they kicked a football down the field.

Peele & Co. found Conroy sitting on one of the forms in the cubicle usually allotted to visiting teams. He looked up as they entered.

"Say what you have got to say!" he snapped. "And say it quickly!"

"I should think you've a very good idea as to what we have to talk about, Conroy," said Gower calmly. "You rose pretty quickly when Peele mentioned the letter to you down by the gates."

Conroy laughed ironically.

"Oh, I guessed you'd been up to your old games!" he said, with a slight sneer. "But I'm admitting nothing—I'm here to listen!"

Gower seated himself on a form opposite Conroy, and Peele and Lattrey joined him.

"We happened to find a letter in your study this morning," said Gower evenly. "How we found it has nothing to do with the case."

Conroy's hand flashed to his breast-pocket, fumbled for a moment, and then came out again—empty.

His face whitened again, and he stared almost dully at the three cads.

"Go on!" he said, in a low voice.

"We found it, and without thinking to look at the envelope to see to whom it was addressed, we read it," went on Gower. "It concerned a man who had been in prison—doubtless you know to whom I refer to?"

"Well?" said Conroy, non-committally.

"There should not be anybody at Rookwood who has prison acquaintances," pursued Gower. "So, for the honour of Rookwood we—"

"A lot you care for the honour of Rookwood!" interrupted Conroy. "Why, you three galoosts are about the biggest rogues in the district, never mind about Rookwood!"

"Look here—" began Gower hotly; but Lattrey thrust a hand over his mouth.

"Shut up, you idiot!" snapped Lattrey.

"Do you want the whole blessed school on top of us?"

Gower calmed himself quickly.

"Well, to cut the cackle and get to the hosses," he said sharply. "We know that your father has just come out of prison, and we want to know what it's worth to you for us to keep our mouths shut!"

Conroy, white of face, looked from one to another of the cads.

"Blackmail!" he said; and his voice was almost hoarse with suppressed emotion.

"That's what it is—blackmail!"

Gower shrugged his shoulders.

"Call it what you like!" he said coolly. "But—but don't you think you'd feel mighty uncomfortable if all Rookwood got to know that Conroy senior had just come out of prison?"

"Shut up!" exclaimed Conroy. "You fool! You're telling half the countryside already!"

"Then how much?" snapped Peele.

Conroy hesitated. He thought of braving the matter out, and facing the whole school. It would have been just as well had he done so, for Rookwoodites were no believers in that because a father was a rogue it followed as a matter of course that the son must be.

But Conroy, who enjoyed a great popularity among the juniors, did not care to face them.

He turned to Peele & Co.

"The minimum?" he asked, in a low voice.

"Thirty bob—a week," said Gower, after a moment's hesitation. "That's ten bob each."

Conroy rose without a word, and taking a wallet from his pocket, handed Gower three ten-shilling notes.

"Your blood-money!" he said, between his teeth. "I guess I'd like to—"

"Grub-money, please!" laughed Gower. "That sounds ever so much more pleasant."

Conroy turned on his heel, and left the cubicle.

On the steps, however, he found Jimmy Silver & Co. The Fistical Four had come to put away their ball.

They halted as they saw Peele & Co. and Conroy's white face.

"Hallo!" said Jimmy Silver sharply.

"What's the giddy game, Conroy?"

Conroy shrugged his shoulders hopelessly.

"Guess I've nothing to say, Jimmy," he said, and nodded towards Peele & Co. "Ask them—they might like to explain!"

"What's the game, Gower?" demanded Newcome. "Up to more of your caddish tricks, I suppose?"

"I don't know!" said Gower, with a chuckle. "Ask Conroy!"

And he went down the steps, followed by Peele and Lattrey. They linked arms as they reached the bottom of the steps, and strode across the fields, evidently in very high spirits.

"The cads have something up their sleeves!" snapped Raby. "I think we ought to bump them!"

"Good idea!" said Newcome heartily.

"Come on, you chaps!"

"Wait a tick!" said Jimmy Silver. "What are you going to bump them for?"

"I don't know exactly," admitted Raby. "But when Peele & Co. look so jolly pleasant somebody is sure to be feeling jolly unlucky!"

He looked significantly at Conroy as he spoke, but the Colonial junior merely shrugged his shoulders hopelessly, and walked slowly down the steps into the fields.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Jimmy Silver & Co. Investigate!

"SOMETHING will have to be done!"

Thus Jimmy Silver.

The Fistical Four had just closed their books, having finished the evening preparation. Raby, Newcome, and Lovell nodded.

"You refer to Conroy, of course?" said Raby.

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"I do," he said quietly. "And I repeat, something will have to be done."

"But what?" asked Newcome. "Here, push aside the rotten books, and let's talk the matter over!"

Jimmy Silver got up and locked the door,

after satisfying himself that nobody was about.

"Just to make sure there are no Peeping Toms," he said, as he resumed his seat. "I'm not keen on Tubby Muffin listening to all we've got to say."

The juniors nodded.

"Well, to begin with," said Jimmy Silver, "it's a dead cert that Peele & Co. have got a hold on Conroy. What that hold is I don't know, much as I should like to. I saw Conroy to-day walking about the quadrangle alone, looking as if he'd lost a bob and found a bad fever."

"Yes, I saw him, too," said Raby.

"Well, I tackled him, and asked if we could do anything for him. He said a lot of tommy-rot about being no end good fellows and all that, but he was sorry he could not speak just yet. I told him, pretty bluntly, that he was a fathead of the first water."

"And he felt cheered?"

"Rats, Raby! Don't try and be funny on a serious occasion like this. Now, seeing that we can't find anything out from old Conroy, is it up to us to investigate on our own, or does it savour too much of prying?"

The juniors hesitated. It was a delicate point.

"I think we ought to do our best for Conroy," said Lovell, at last. "There's only one way to do it."

"And that is?"

"We must tackle Peele & Co.," said Lovell firmly.

"How?"

"Where there's a floor there's a way!" said Raby quickly. "We'll bump it out of the cads!"

"Isn't—isn't that carrying it a bit too far?" said Jimmy Silver doubtfully.

Raby snorted.

"A bumping every day of their lives would improve them!" he said tersely. "I vote we go and see them."

Jimmy Silver, although still doubtful whether it was the proper course to take, nodded, and led the way out of the study and to Peele & Co.'s quarters.

The three cads were there when they arrived, and by the look of the supper-table Peele & Co. had been enjoying themselves. Jimmy Silver had never seen such a variety of comestibles in the study.

Peele & Co. looked up as the Fistical Four entered the study.

"Well?" said Gower shortly.

Jimmy Silver closed the door behind him before he turned to answer that curt and impolite inquiry.

"It isn't well," said Jimmy Silver. "And you jolly well won't be well if we have any of your cheek! Just understand that! We haven't come to argue or say pretty things to you rotters."

"Rather not!" assented the Co.

"What do you want, then?" demanded Peele.

"We want to know—and mean to know—this much," said Jimmy Silver sharply. "What is the hold you've got on Conroy?"

Gower looked at Peele, and Peele looked at Gower. Then the two looked at Lattrey.

"Have you a hold on Conroy, Lattrey?"

"Rather not! Have you?"

"What about you, Peele?"

The cads of the Classical House had no time to bandy further words with the Fistical Four. They were seized and thrown to the floor too quickly for that.

Bump!

Peele gave a howl of wrath as he met the floor with a bump.

"Ow! Yow! Wharrer you at, you fat-heads?" he shouted.

"Bump him!" said Jimmy Silver tersely.

Bump! Bump! Bump!

At each bump Peele gave a howl of pain. Jimmy Silver and Newcome were bumping him, whilst Raby and Lovell gave their attentions to Gower, who did not seem to regard it as an honour.

Bump! Bump! Bump!

"Yow!"

"Yaroo!"

The Fistical Four ceased at last, and Lattrey was seized and submitted to a like punishment. They sat up when they were released, dusty and dishevelled.

"What are you dummies at?" hooted Gower.

Jimmy Silver wiped his brow.

"That's just a start—to show you that we mean business!" he said tersely. "Are you going to answer our questions?"

"You're talking rot!" snorted Peele.

"Who said we had a hold on Conroy, as you call it?"

"Nobody said it. We know!"

"Then you jolly well ought to know what it is!" sneered Lattrey.

"Collar them, you chaps!" said Jimmy Silver. "They want some more of the same medicine!"

The cads were seized, and once more the study resounded with the noise of the bumping.

Bump! Bump! Bump!

"Wowow!" shouted Peele frantically. "Stop it!"

The Fistical Four stopped at last, almost exhausted with the effort the bumping rendered necessary.

"Yow! We haven't got a beastly hold on the beastly Colonial!" panted Gower furiously.

The Fistical Four looked at one another in dismay.

Peele & Co. were apparently capable of taking any amount of punishment that day, and if they expected the cads to give themselves away, Jimmy Silver & Co. were doomed to disappointment.

But it was fear that gave the cads the courage to refrain from blurting out the truth, realising that if it became known that they had blackmailed Conroy, their stay at Rookwood would be short and far from sweet.

They were bumped hard, but beyond nearly bringing the roof down with their howls, they kept silent.

"Blessed if I know what to do!" said Jimmy Silver. "We jolly well ought to have known long ago!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. left the study, and they were in no easy frame of mind. They wandered down the corridor and out into the quad, where they met Conroy walking moodily up and down.

"Say, Conroy!" called Jimmy Silver; and the Colonial waited for them to come up. "Can't you tell us the trouble, and let us help you out of it?"

Conroy hesitated, opened his mouth as if to speak, then closed his lips tightly.

"Well?" said Jimmy Silver encouragingly.

"No!" said Conroy. "I can't speak yet!"

And he pushed by the Fistical Four and went his way.

"Must be something jolly deep!" said Newcome, with a frown. "Old Conroy doesn't get the pip very often."

"We'll beat the cads yet!" growled Lovell.

"If we have to boil the rotters in oil, or—or bump them a hundred times a day!"

But the fact remained—Peele & Co., for the present, at least, held the upper hand; and, although Jimmy Silver & Co. racked their brains to find an answer to the problem, they went to bed that night with not the remotest notion as to the real cause of Conroy's trouble.

Next morning Gower and Peele made their way to Conroy's study, and, without taking the trouble to knock, opened the door and strode in.

Van Rys and Pons were there, and as soon as he saw who the visitors were, Conroy turned to them.

"Would you chaps mind leaving me for a few minutes?" he asked quietly.

Van Rys and Pons got up and left the study without a word. Peele and Gower could see that there had been "words" in the Colonial Co., and knew that Conroy's silence even to his own special chums was the cause.

Conroy waited until the door had closed behind his chums before he turned to Peele and Gower.

"Well?" he said shortly.

Peele hesitated, and looked at Gower.

"It's like this—" he began.

"You want more money?" interrupted Conroy coolly. "Say so, and don't hang about too long!"

Gower flushed.

"Well, we want more money," he said curtly. "We—we—we've decided you ought to pay another ten bob each."

"Do you think I'm made of money?" demanded Conroy.

"You've plenty for our purpose," said Peele calmly. "Dish out!"

Conroy moved his hand towards his breast-pocket, and the cads' eyes glistened expectantly.

But Conroy suddenly took his hand away again, and, although his face whitened, he remained perfectly calm.

"I shall not pay another halfpenny!" he said evenly. "Tell the school what you know, and be hanged to you!"

Gower and Peele reddened furiously.

"You rotter—"

Conroy got up quickly, and the cads stepped back a pace as they saw his clenched fists.

"Clear!" snapped Conroy. "Clear out while you're safe! I guess I'd like to have you out in my country for about five minutes—I'd show you how we deal with cads like you! Clear!"

"Look here, Conroy—"

"Clear out!"

And there was that in Conroy's tones that told Peele and Gower that it would be safer to put the door between the Colonial and themselves. They hurried from the study without another word.

Conroy sat down heavily in his chair, and waited expectantly for the sound of footsteps that would tell him that the Rookwoodites knew of the fact that his father was an ex-convict.

But there came no sound. Peele & Co. had other views on the subject, and had not given up hope of bringing Conroy to his knees.

The three cads sat in their study, with heads close together, talking over the new situation that had arisen in consequence of Conroy's refusal to pay for their silence.

The result of their confab was seen later on in the day, when a messenger from the village brought a note to Conroy. Jimmy Silver, who was near the Colonial, saw his face go white as soon as he had read the note.

Conroy read it through twice, and then twisted it into a ball, and crunched it in the palm of his hand.

"Conroy!" burst out Jimmy Silver.

Conroy started, and turned quickly.

"Hallo, Jimmy!" he said listlessly. "You may as well see this—you'll know pretty soon now!"

He handed the note to Jimmy Silver, who took it, and read it hastily.

It was very badly written on cheap paper, in pencil, and read:

"I'm coming to see you to-day.—FATHER."

That was all, but it told Jimmy Silver that Conroy's trouble was centred round his father. "Can't you stop him?" asked Jimmy Silver. Conroy shook his head, and walked away without a word.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Reward of Cads!

HERE he goes!"

It was Peele who made that remark, as he and Lattrey watched Conroy make his way out of the gates at Rookwood, and take the road to Coomb.

It was Saturday afternoon, and a half-day off at Rookwood. The majority of the juniors of both the Classical and Modern Houses at Rookwood were on the playing-fields or the river.

Conroy, however, dreading that his father would come up to Rookwood, had decided to pass over cricket and go down the road to meet him.

Peele & Co. had anticipated this move, and Gower, who had been induced to take the part of Conroy's father, had gone off immediately after morning lessons had finished.

Peele and Lattrey had remained behind, in case Conroy should wait. It would be as well to warn Gower.

But as soon as the Colonial junior had left the school, Peele and Lattrey lost no time in following him up. Conroy looked neither to right nor left as he strode quickly along.

Peele wiped his brow.

"That beggar does hop it!" he growled.

"Shouldn't smoke!" said Lattrey.

It was at times such as the present that Peele was heartily sorry for the little smoking-parties he enjoyed—or pretended to enjoy. Smoking, he found, did him little good.

Conroy, on the other hand, was a strong athlete, and the pace at which he was now walking called for little effort on his own behalf.

But Lattrey and Peele felt it.

Before a mile had been traversed they were both perspiring freely.

"Hang it!" muttered Peele. "Why the dickens didn't we let the beggar have a surprise by his father coming to Rookwood instead of warning him?"

"Too late to think of that now!" said Lattrey. "Perhaps we shall meet old Gower soon."

They were fortunate in that respect, for on turning the corner of the lane Conroy nearly walked into a small, tramp-like

individual, who was proceeding slowly to wards Rookwood.

"Conny!"

The tramp ejaculated the name in great surprise, and Conroy halted suddenly.

He stared, petrified, at the dilapidated figure before him.

"You—you're not——" he stammered.

"I'm your father, my boy," said the tramp, and sighed.

Conroy looked hastily about him, and Peele and Lattrey, who were hidden behind a hedge, chuckled. Their scheme was working perfectly.

"Come out of the roadway, father!" he said quickly. And he led the tramp behind the hedge.

Conroy sank to the ground, and lay on the grass, too overcome to do anything else.

It was fully three minutes—it seemed like years to the disguised Gower—before he sat up and looked again at his "father."

"What on earth has happened?" demanded Conroy. "Have you lost all your cash as well?"

Gower—otherwise "father"—started.

"Y-y-yes!" he stammered, taken aback.

He had not thought, at the time of fixing the details of the scheme, of the possibility of Conroy's father having money.

"Y-yes, Conny, it was all gone when I got back," he said quickly. "It—it—it was that——I came for help, Conny."

Conny looked queerly at Gower.

"You've altered, father," he said—"altered no end!" I guess when I saw you last time you——"

"That was years ago, wasn't it?" sighed Gower.

"Yes; but you're smaller, and—and—and you don't talk the same; and you had no beard then," went on Conroy. "I can't——"

Gower flushed under the false beard which he wore.

"Prison—alters one so—especially our prisons, Conny," he said; as if the memory were painful to him. "I—I—I fear I'm not half the man I used to be!"

Peele and Lattrey had crept up in time to hear that observation, and they chuckled gleefully.

"Gower is simply top-hole!" chuckled Peele. "Blessed if I know how he thinks of things so quickly!"

"He's got brains; we—you haven't," said Lattrey, at the imminent risk of getting his head punched.

But Peele kept his wits about him. To act at the moment was to spoil the whole scheme, so he contented himself by simply glaring at Lattrey.

Lattrey merely chuckled.

"You want money, father?" said Conroy suddenly.

"Yes. I'm sorry to have to ask my own son," said Gower. "But—but I must live; I cannot get work yet."

Conroy shuddered.

He took out a pocket-wallet, and extracted a piece of paper that crackled in his fingers. It was a five-pound note!

Gower's were not the only pair of eyes that gleamed at the sight of the five-pound note. Peele and Lattrey, from behind the hedge, fairly gasped with surprise.

"A five!" gasped Peele. "Oh, my hat!"

Gower took the proffered five, and slipped it into his pocket, with many expressions of gratitude, all the more realistic by reason of his genuine feeling of thankfulness.

Even then the enormity of his crime did not appeal to Gower. This was blackmailing with a vengeance.

"Let me know when you want some more,"

said Conroy, jumping to his feet. "I'll—I'll always do my best, father!"

"Good!" said Gower, and nearly gave the game away by speaking so fervently.

But the next moment he felt far from being happy. For, coming along the inside of the hedge, arm-in-arm and whistling merrily, was Jimmy Silver & Co.!

Conroy flushed, and Gower whitened under the dirt on his face.

"Here come some real good pals of mine," said Conroy confusedly. "I'll—I'll introduce you, father. They're not stuck up, like some rotters at Rookwood are!"

Gower felt his knees knocking together in fright, and made as if to run for it.

"No; stick to your guns, father!" said Conroy, laying a hand on Gower's arm. "They're decent chaps."

Jimmy Silver came up with his chums, and Conroy signed to them.

"This gentleman is my father," he said, with an effort.

Jimmy Silver & Co. politely raised their caps. It mattered not to them what manner of man Conroy senior was—he was Conroy's father, and as such was to be respected.

They shook hands with the tramp-like individual in turn, Jimmy Silver being the last to do so. He held on to Gower's hand far longer than he need have done, and Gower almost snatched it away.

"You'll excuse us——" began Lovell.

But Jimmy Silver cut him short.

"No hurry, old scout!" he said calmly, and seated himself on the grass.

"But——"

"Say, Conroy," said Jimmy Silver, "you don't mind if I ask your father a question, do you?"

Conroy started.

"A—a—a question?" he stammered.

"Yes."

"N-n-no, of course not."

Jimmy Silver turned to Gower almost languidly, whilst his chums looked down at him in amazement.

"Say, Mr. Conroy, will you tell me how it is that, although your hands are absolutely filthy, you still manage to keep your nails clean and neatly cut and polished?"

The juniors gasped, and Gower felt like fainting.

"I—I—I——" stammered Gower, and turned to Conroy appealingly. "This—this friend of yours, m-m-my boy——"

"And through a hole in your trousers I notice a pair of really decent silk socks," interrupted Jimmy Silver. "Who have you been robbing?"

"Silver!" gasped Conroy.

"I'm sorry to cause you pain, Conroy," said Jimmy Silver earnestly. "But I really must get to the bottom of this, as a law-abiding citizen. As Sherlock Holmes would say, things look suspicious!"

The juniors gasped in amazement, and Gower had as much as he could do to keep on his feet. His knees felt so shaky as to be almost incapable of keeping him upright.

But he knew the game was up. Conroy, worried and anxious, had failed to see what Jimmy Silver's keen eyes had taken in at once.

"Your father is also quite short for a man who has spent most of his life in a country where big men rule," went on Jimmy Silver. "He looks almost the size of—Gower!"

"Gower!"

"My hat!"

"Silver, you're mad!" shouted Conroy frantically. "I tell you——"

"And I tell you that I saw Peele and Lat-

trely follow you out of the gates," interposed Jimmy Silver coolly. "Where was Gower, and why were they taking such an interest in your movements? Because they knew that your father was supposed to be coming to Rookwood, having sent a note to you for that purpose!"

Gower, unable to undergo the strain any longer, fell to the ground and whined in terror.

"Conroy, it's only a joke!" he gasped. "We——"

Conroy, almost staggered by the suddenness of the cad's undoing, stared at him dully.

"It is Gower, then!" he said hoarsely. "My hat! I guess——"

Jimmy Silver leapt to his feet in time to intervene between the irate Colonial and Gower.

"Let go!" shouted Conroy furiously. "I'll half-kill the cad!"

"No, steady yourself!" said Jimmy Silver, retaining a tight hold. "We'll——"

He was interrupted as Lovell made a sudden dive in the hedge, and there came sounds of a scuffle the next moment. Raby and Newcome sprang to his assistance, and between them they dragged out Peele and Lattrey, who, fascinated, had remained to listen to Jimmy Silver's condemnation of Gower.

"Now we've got the three beauties!" said Jimmy Silver, who was undoubtedly the calmest of the juniors present. "Are you going to hand them over to the police?"

"Certainly!" snapped Conroy.

"Oh, Silver—Conroy!"

Peele & Co., terror-stricken, fell on their knees, and pleaded and begged for mercy.

Conroy looked down on them with contempt.

"You out-and-out bounders!" he said, with a bitter sneer. "You're not worth mixing with convicts! I'll lick the hide off you, and then turn you over to Jimmy Silver to do as he likes with you!"

"Good!" said Jimmy Silver heartily.

And there and then Conroy fought the three cads, one after another; but they took little punishment in the way of blows. Almost before he touched them, they fell to the ground to plead for mercy.

Conroy cut a switch from the hedge, and administered such a punishment as seldom fell to the lot of juniors at Rookwood. And by the time he announced himself satisfied, Peele & Co. were blubbering with pain, but glad to escape with so light a punishment.

"I'll see to you to-morrow," said Jimmy Silver, with withering scorn. "To-day you've had enough, but not more than you deserve. Scoot!"

Jimmy Silver & Co., without more ado, took Conroy off with them for an afternoon on the river.

Peele & Co. were tarred and feathered the next day, and although the juniors who helped never knew exactly why the punishment was meted out, they took Jimmy Silver's word for it that it was well deserved.

It transpired afterwards that the man who had been in prison was not really Conroy's father at all, but had acted as his guardian since Conroy's own father had died when Conroy was an infant. Moreover, he proved his innocence of the crime for which he had been committed to prison, and the Press duly made the fact public.

Conroy stood a handsome feed to the Fistical Four for the part they had taken in unmasking Peele & Co., and in celebration of the end of his troubles.

THE END.



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THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Right Thing—Too Late!

“WHAT do you want, Kerruish?”
Eric Kerruish, of the School House at St. Jim's and the Fourth Form, stood before Mr. Ratcliff, the master of the New House, and those words were snapped at him in a manner not at all calculated to make him feel more comfortable.

And Kerruish was really not feeling comfortable, to start with.

He had never been brought into close contact with Mr. Ratcliff before; and he would not have been surprised if that gentleman had failed to recognise him.

That might have been rather disconcerting. But it would not have been more so than this snappish inquiry was.

Kerruish had to interview the New House master on a very delicate matter. He had gone across at a time when the quad was deserted, all the fellows being in the playing-fields or out of the gates, because he did not want anyone to know of his visit.

He had thought himself lucky to find Mr. Ratcliff in.

Now he was not so sure of that.

Kerruish's nerves were all on edge, and he hardly knew how to start on the confession he had to make.

“What do you want with me, boy?” came a second snapped query.

Kerruish pulled himself together, and took the plunge.

“I've come to tell you something, sir,” he said.

“I trust you have not come to waste my time with rubbish of no importance!” snorted the master.

“I don't think you will consider it that, sir,” replied Kerruish.

“Out with it, then!”

Did Mr. Ratcliff guess what was coming? Kerruish fancied he did. And he fancied too—though that seemed an absurd notion—that the master did not want to hear it; would have been better pleased had he kept silence.

“Somebody bar-knocked you over on the staircase here the other day, sir,” he began.

“Well?”

“It was me—I mean, I, sir.”

“You, Kerruish?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You, with a painted face, disguised as a woman?”

“I wasn't exactly disguised as a woman, sir.”

“You were in something resembling a hat—a preposterous and—and loathsome hat—and a skirt!”

“The skirt was an old tablecloth, sir, and the hat was really only a waste-paper basket.”

“H'm! You surely do not imagine that those facts offer any extenuation of the offence of which you were guilty?”

“Not at all, sir. But I wasn't disguised as a woman.”

“Do you expect me to believe that you rigged yourself up thus?”

“No, sir.”

“Ah—h'm! H'm—ah! Who dealt with you in that manner?”

“I don't think there is any need for you to ask me that, sir.”

If Kerruish had not understood before why the New House juniors hated old Ratty, as they called him, he would have begun to understand now.

Not thus did Mr. Railton, Kerruish's own Housemaster, conduct an inquiry or receive a confession.

He knew that a decent fellow confesses his own misdemeanours, but keeps a close mouth about those of others.

It mattered little in this case, for Ratty already knew that Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn had been responsible for the School House junior's plight.

Mr. Ratcliff breathed hard and looked thunderous.

“It sounds to me very like impudence, Kerruish,” he said. “But we will waive that matter. For what reason did Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn deal with you in that improper way?”

“I'd played a trick on them, sir.”

“Oh, you had played a trick on them, had you? Very well—very well, indeed! Er—you are not trying to shield Kerr in coming to me now?”

“No, I'm not!”

“Why have you come?”

“Because it seemed to me the straight thing to do.”

Kerruish was growing very short in his answers, and Mr. Ratcliff did not fail to notice the fact.

“You had better address me with proper respect, Kerruish!” he said acridly.

“Yes, sir.”

“Why did you not make your confession to Mr. Railton?”

“I—I—I don't know, sir! Of course, I know that I ought to have done.”

“There is something about this I cannot comprehend, Kerruish! Has any pressure been put upon you to make you come to me?”

“I— Really, I don't quite see what you mean, sir.”

Kerruish was by no means sure whether pressure had been put upon him. Certainly there had been no open pressure at the time when the confession should have been made, or since then. But he had been given pretty clearly to understand that the Fourth and Shell did not approve of his hanging back.

“Have you come merely to set yourself right with the other juniors? That is my meaning, Kerruish.”

“No, sir, I haven't!”

Easy enough to answer that! Kerruish had come there chiefly to set himself right with Mr. Ratcliff. He did not even intend to tell the other fellows.

“They have not forced you to come?”

“They know nothing about it, sir, and I have no intention of telling them about it. I came because I felt—well, that it was up to me.”

“I am not sure that I understand that expression. But I gather that you feel that

you owe me an apology, and have come to make it.”

The Manx junior let that pass in silence. He had not thought particularly of apologising to Mr. Ratcliff, but if the master liked to take it that way he had no objection.

“In those circumstances, Kerruish, I will consent to keep your secret. I will not report the matter to Mr. Railton, who would most assuredly be annoyed with you for not answering when he asked the guilty boy to stand forward. And, of course, I shall not mention it to any of the boys.”

Again Mr. Ratcliff paused.

Kerruish was not at all sure that this was what he wanted. But that was partly because he really did not know what he did want.

He had not acted entirely on impulse, for he had waited nearly twenty-four hours before coming to Mr. Ratcliff. But he had not thought out what he expected from making his confession to that gentleman.

“I must punish you, naturally, Kerruish. An offence like yours cannot be allowed to pass unpenalised. But once I have punished you, the matter will be at an end. I will keep your secret.”

It was on the tip of Kerruish's tongue to say that a secret which something like a hundred other fellows shared was hardly worth keeping.

But it was not exactly his guilt that made the secret—he knew that.

It was his confession.

But did he want that kept secret?

He had not meant to tell anyone—not even Dick Julian, his best chum—what he had done.

But he had a curious feeling that a net was being cast over him, entangling him in its meshes. He hated the notion of sharing a secret with Ratty.

“Hold out your hand, Kerruish!”

He held out his hand, and Mr. Ratcliff kept him waiting with it extended while he carefully selected a cane.

If he had taken two seconds longer it doing that, Kerruish would have protested. He would very much have preferred taking his gruel from Mr. Railton, even though he had had to face the scorn in the School House master's eyes for the belated confession.

But before he had quite made up his mind the cane had been chosen, and the first cut fell.

It was a hard cut. Mr. Ratcliff was an expert with the cane, and made up in knack what he lacked in muscle.

Three across each hand Kerruish took, biting his lips to force himself to keep silence.

“That will do!” said Mr. Ratcliff sourly. “I have let you off more lightly than you deserve, Kerruish, I know.”

The junior did not in the least agree with that pronouncement; but it was not a matter for argument.

“You can go. I accept your apology, and I trust that you will feel the benefit that accrues from the clearing of a guilty conscience,” said the master.

Kerruish did not feel it yet. He did not

think that he was going to feel it, either. This confession and punishment seemed to him, after all, a very inconclusive business.

And a vague doubt haunted his mind. Had he done any good to Figgins & Co.? He did not know that he wanted to be kind to them. He still felt resentment against them.

But he knew that the other fellows thought it rough on those three that Ratty should be so down on them, and he was not at all sure that Ratty was going to be less down on them because he knew now that Kerr had not been the fellow who had tumbled him over.

As he went out Kerruish met Redfern—alone for once. The scholarship junior had come in from the playing-fields to get a handkerchief.

Redfern stopped. Kerruish's face still bore the marks of his fists, and his face still bore the marks of Kerruish's. But the School House junior was by far the worse marked. He had been no match for Dick Redfern.

"I say, Kerruish!"
"Well, what is it?"
"Don't be snappish! You don't bear malice, do you?"

"It would be rather caddish if I did, wouldn't it?" returned Kerruish bitterly. "You butt into an affair that's no bizney of yours, go out of your way to force a fight on me, knowing you can lick me, and then ask me whether I bear malice! I don't bear malice—you're not worth it! But I never want to speak to you again, Redfern—that's the straight tip!"

"Sorry I spoke!" said Redfern stiffly. "I've been mistaken in you, it seems, Kerruish. I always thought you a particularly decent sort. But I shall never think that again!"
"I never did think it of you!" retorted Kerruish.

Then he hurried away. That last speech of his was a lie, and he knew it.

He had always thought Redfern just what Redfern had thought him; and at heart he held the New House junior in higher esteem than ever.

But he did not want anyone's pity, or anyone's sympathy—so he told himself.

He had done the right thing at last. It looked as though he had done it too late. But he did not care—so he told himself.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. One Faithful Chum.

"SURE, an' I wouldn't be worryin' after the fellow, Dick!" said Patrick Reilly.

There were only three in Study No. 5 on the Fourth Form passage now.

Kerruish had not changed out. There was no other study open to him. But he had shifted all his books to the Form-room, and he took tea in Hall.

He avoided No. 5 completely, and passed his chums without even a nod.

"I can't help worrying about him, Pat," replied Dick Julian quietly. "I don't mean to give him up, if you two do!"

"Ow can we 'elp giving 'im up when the silly fathead won't even speak to us?" demanded Harry Hammond hotly.

"That's his pride," answered Julian.
"Faith, an' he'd better be after puttin' his pride in his pocket!" said Reilly. "It isn't such a heap he has to be proud of, anyway."

"Everyone else has sent him to Coventry, I know," Julian said. "But that doesn't cut any ice with me. They all think they would have behaved better in Eric's place. I'm not so jolly sure!"

"Most of them would," replied Hammond. "Not rotters like Racker, or Crooke, or Mellish, of course. But Tom Merry, or Blake, or you, or Talbot, or old Grundy, or Clive, or Gussy—"

"Or anyone that is worth a rap, bedad!" broke in Reilly.

"You forget that Eric is still feeling beastly sore with Figgis & Co.," Julian said.

"That's no excuse, not really," said Hammond. "E played a trick on them, an' they caught 'im out an' got 'ome fairly on 'im. Well, then? That was quits, as I see it."

"But not as Eric sees it," persisted loyal Dick Julian.

"Sure, Dick, an' what is it ye're after wantin' us to do?" asked Reilly.

"Yes, that's it!" said Hammond. "E won't speak to us. E turns up 'is 'aughty nose when we pass. What 'ave we done to offend 'im? We can't go down on our bended

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knees an' ask 'im to please be so kind as to take a little notice of us, can we?"

Julian sighed.

How can he persuade his chums? What could they do? What, indeed, could he do?

Kerruish was sulking. Julian could see no other way of stating the case that stated it fairly.

He was angry with everyone, and with his chums most of all. They did not see things his way—that was their offence in his eyes.

"So, at least, it seemed even to Julian, who made every possible excuse for him.

But Julian did not know all. There was some resentment against them in Kerruish's mind. But it was less than a determination that they should not share his unpopularity that kept him away.

Tap!
"Oh, come in! We don't expect to 'ave a minute to ourselves in peace!" snapped Hammond.

It was Sidney Clive who entered, in response to that cordial invitation.

Clive was wont to brag about his tact and judgment, after the manner of Arthur D'Arcy.

But he really had a fair share of tact, and he showed it now by taking no notice of Hammond's rudeness.

He knew that these three were under the weather, and he had come along to give them what he believed to be good tidings.

"I say, you chaps, I suppose you've heard that old Kerruish has done the right thing, after all?" he asked eagerly.

"What? Been to Raitton?" asked Julian.

"No. It was a bit too late for that, wasn't it? But he's been to Ratty. Comes to the same thing. Must say I'm glad, too. I always liked Kerruish, and it wasn't his real form to behave that way."

The three looked at one another.
"He hasn't told us," said Julian.

"Are you sure, Clive?" asked Hammond.
"I don't think it can be wrong. Cardew was looking out of our window, and he saw him go across—saw him come back, too. He spoke to Redfern just outside. I dare say Reddy knows."

"Why didn't Cardew come and tell us, then?" inquired Reilly.

"Said it was no bizney of his. It's none of mine, come to that; but I thought you fellows would be glad to know."

"We are," replied Julian. "Thanks no end, Clive! You're a good chap!"

"Rats!" returned Clive as he went.

"Think it's right, Dick?" asked Hammond.

"I think so. Look here, you two, I'll go and see if I can find Eric!"

"Sure, an' you can tell him that if he's owned up to Ratty, he's just got to come back to this study, an', whatever the other fellows may say, we mean to stick to him through thick an' thin!"

"Ear, 'ear!" cried Hammond.
Julian smiled upon them, and went.

Kerruish was not in the Form-room. Julian looked into the junior Common-room; but that was empty. He went into the quad.

As he passed out he became aware of sounds that resembled those made by a herd of geese.

They proceeded from a dozen or so members of the Third Form, and the hissing was directed at Kerruish.

He was trying his hardest to look as though he did not hear. But the attempt was a long way of being a success.

"Stop that!" cried Julian angrily.
"Why should we stop it? He's a cad, and we've a right to hiss cads!" answered Jameson of the New House cheekily.

Jameson was one of Wally D'Arcy's little band. But Julian was glad to see that Reggie Manners was the only other of that brotherhood of seven present. He would have been disappointed to find Wally and Frank Levison and Joe Frayne kicking a fellow when he was down.

"He's not a cad!" replied Julian.
Kerruish was walking away, as if the altercation was no affair of his.

"What do you call him, then?" demanded Manners minor.

"A long sight better fellow than you are, or ever will be, young Manners!" retorted Julian hotly.

"I'm not a saint, I don't pretend to be," Reggie said, his tones sulky. "But if I were in Kerruish's place, I'd own up. It's the only decent thing to do."

"He ought to own up, you know, Julian," said Jameson. "Figgis and those other chaps are in a frightful row through him. Ratty's playing up to get them sacked."

"Who says it's through him they're in a row?" asked Julian.

Kerruish had moved away a few yards, but he was still within earshot.

It was hardly dignified for a Fourth-Former to be arguing with these kids. Julian felt that, and Julian had some real dignity—a rather unusual possession for a fellow of his age. But the feeling that he had something up his sleeve made him go on.

They were decent youngsters, anyway, and he knew they would be sorry for kissing Kerruish when they heard the truth.

"Oh, come off it!" replied Jameson. "If he hadn't barged into Ratty—"

"But it was their fault he was there to barge into Ratty!" broke in Julian.

"No, it wasn't! It was his fault he was there—trying to play a silly trick on them, the fatheaded ass! Not that it matters about a chap being a fathead—plenty of them about—but—"

"Kerr played just such a trick on our fellows," said Julian.

"That's different," Jameson replied.
"Why is it different? I don't see it."

"Because—oh, because he brought it off, you know!"

"But if he hadn't, and if—"

"He did! And if he hadn't, and anything like that had happened, Kerr would have owned up like a shot. He's not a sneaking coward."

"That's right!" cried Reggie. "Kerr's not a sneaking coward!"

The eyes of all the fags were turned upon Kerruish. It was plain that they considered he was "a sneaking coward."

"Kerruish has owned up," said Julian quietly.
Kerruish started, and went pale.

"Rats!" replied Jameson.
"We know he hasn't," Reggie said.

"But I know he has," persisted Julian.
"How do you know?" demanded Butt.

"That's not your business. It's enough that I do know."

"But we don't know that you know. We only know you say so," Jameson objected, not without acuteness.

"Isn't my word good enough for you?" asked Julian, very quietly.

His manner impressed the fags. They all knew that Dick Julian was dead straight.

"Ye-es," said Jameson hesitatingly. "We know you wouldn't lie about it, Julian. But we know you wouldn't have farked it—see?"

"If you'll tell us how you know—"

It was Kerruish himself who broke in upon the speech of Reggie Manners.

"There's no reason why he should tell you!" snapped Kerruish. "But I think I've a right to ask that he should tell me."

"I ask you kids to believe me," Julian said.

Then he turned away from them to Kerruish.

He took his chum by the arm, and led him farther from the group of Third-Formers. Kerruish suffered himself to be led away; but as soon as they were well out of hearing he wrenched free his arm.

"What are you giving them, Julian?" he said roughly.

"The truth, Eric. At least, I believe it's the truth—I hope so. I think you know that I wouldn't have said it otherwise."

"What do you think has happened, then?"
"That you have been across and confessed to Ratty."

Kerruish laughed harshly.
"Who's been stuffing you up with that yarn?" he demanded.

"Isn't it true?"
"That's not what I asked you!"

Julian paused a moment. He had made up his mind not to get angry with Kerruish, but he did not find it easy to keep cool.

"Clive said that Cardew had seen you go across," he replied at length.

"I'll punch Clive's head, and Cardew's, too! Suppose I did go over the way? Does that prove that I saw Ratty—or that I went to see him? Isn't it just as likely that I went across to tell those three sweeps that I hadn't any intention of giving myself away, but they could give me away if they wanted to?"

What perversity prompted Kerruish to that speech he did not know himself. He felt almost sorry for it when he saw by the face of his loyal chum what Julian thought of it.

"Is that so?" asked Julian.
"You can take it so!" answered Kerruish.
"Now you have done with me, I suppose?"
"No, I haven't. You can't choke me off, Eric, whatever you do or say."

"I thought you were proud!" sneered Kerruish.
The hot colour flooded Dick Julian's handsome face from brow to chin.



Before anyone guessed what he meant to do, Kerruish's hand shot out and smote Clive hard on the cheek. "Seize the silly ass, he's potty!" roared Blake. (See page 14.)

"I think I am," he replied. "But I don't keep my pride for my friends."
 "Perhaps you'll be able to find enough of it for me when I tell you that I'd rather you left me alone."
 "I'll go, Eric," Julian said, with a choke in his voice. "But this doesn't finish it. You hardly know what you're saying now, I think. When you want me again—"
 "It will be a long time first!"
 "However long it is, I'll be there!"
 Julian turned away, his head down.
 Kerruish turned away, too, and there were scalding tears in his eyes.
 Reggie Manners caught Julian by the sleeve.
 "Well?" he asked tauntingly.
 "I've nothing to say to you, Manners minor."
 "Has he owned up?"
 "I tell you I've nothing to say to you!"
 "He hasn't! Anybody can see that with half an eye! It's only that you don't want to chuck the cad, Julian!"
 Reggie was in grave danger of getting hurt at that moment. All that saved him was the fact of his being so far below Julian's weight.
 The Fourth-Former plucked away his restraining hand, and walked on.
 Behind him the storm of hisses broke out again.
 He did not turn his head.
 What more could he do? How could he help a fellow who apparently would not help himself?

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

"His Hand Against Every Man."

"CARDREW!"
 "Hallo!"
 Ralph Reckness Cardew turned round to face Kerruish.
 No one else was near at the moment. That fact made no real difference to Cardew, who went his own way in defiance of popular opinion when he could not see eye to eye with it, as often happened.
 But it suited Cardew's whim to pretend that it made a difference.
 "I've a word to say to you!" snapped Kerruish.
 "Say it quickly, sweet youth," replied

Cardew. "There's no one lookin' just now, so it's of no consequence for the moment. Otherwise I should have to point out to you, gently but firmly, that you are in Coventry, that it's dashed unfashionable to speak to fellows in Coventry, an' that I'm nothin' if not fashionable, by gad!"
 "I'm in Coventry, am I?"
 "So they say, dear boy. But don't shout at me; I didn't put you there, y'know."
 "Would you fight a chap in Coventry?" demanded Kerruish, breathing hard and clenching his hands.
 "Now, is that an abstract question, or is it a challenge?" asked Cardew, with his head on one side.
 "You can call it which you like, but I'm jolly well going to smack your face!"
 "That," drawled Cardew, "is very nearly sure to settle any doubt there may be on the point. One moment, however, Kerruish, if you don't mind! I trust that I shall not seem unduly inquisitive if I ask, why are you goin' to smack my face? It can't be merely because you don't like it, for you've put up with it quite a long time without raisin' special objections to the thing."
 "I'm going to smack it because you've been talking about me!"
 "But why single me out?" inquired Cardew blandly. "My dear chap, you may take my word for it that scores of fellows have been talkin' about you. As a current topic, you stand at the head of the poll just now. You are on all the bills, so to speak. On the whole, I think I've done rather less talkin' than most. I'm not puttin' in a plea for mercy; it simply happens to be the case, that's all."
 "You told Clive that I'd been across to the New House to confess to Ratty!"
 "Not exactly. I said that I saw you go across. The rest was much more the inference of the charitable Sidney than it was mine. If you tell me that you went for another purpose, I should believe you without hesitation. I regret to say that I take a lower view of human nature in the bulk than the dear Clive does, an' that I shouldn't even be particularly disappointed. Clive would."
 "I'm not going to tell you anything, one way or another! But I'm going to punch Clive's head, too!"

"Will you do me a favour, Kerruish?"
 "What do you mean? Why should I do you a favour?"
 "Oh, there's no real reason why you should, of course. But I should be glad if you would, nevertheless."
 Kerruish stared at him. He found Cardew, not for the first time, very difficult to understand.
 "What do you mean?" he snorted.
 "Punch Sidney's head before you slap my face, that's all! I don't know that the dear Sidney is nuts on fightin'. I shouldn't call him a quarrelsome chap, anyway. But he'll fight if you punch his head—I'm sure of that."
 At this moment Clive and Levison major emerged together from the School House. Cardew saw them, but Kerruish did not.
 "What difference would that make? I should go for you afterwards," answered Kerruish.
 Cardew shook his head.
 "No, dear boy," he said blandly. "You would be laid up for repairs, by gad! Isn't that so, Ernest?"
 Kerruish swung round with a start to see those two.
 He felt more furious than ever with Cardew.
 The fellow must have known they were close at hand. But he would not say anything about it till they had come up.
 "Isn't what how, ass?" asked Levison, his brow contracting as he met the angry glare of Kerruish.
 "Wants rather a lot of explainin', an' the weather's dashed hot, which is one reason why I'm not anxious to have the gloves on with Kerruish here."
 "Does he want you to?" snapped Levison.
 "He does. He also wants Sidney to put up his little fists. I suggest that Sidney should be the first victim—or otherwise. But I think it would be otherwise, an' that would let me out. I'm not sure whether our friend here meditates a technical assault, with a view to battle later, upon you also, Ernest—"
 "The chap's in Coventry!" Levison snorted.
 "You've never been there, have you?" sneered Kerruish.
 "I have—several times!" returned Levison.
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"I don't take much stock in Coventry, and I shouldn't see that it really barred a chap from challenging anyone to fight. But what on earth have we done to you, Kerruish? I think we've said rather less than most fellows have."

"Sidney from natural chivalry, an' Ernest an' I because, havin' been there ourselves, we don't feel that we can throw stones at another black pot!" added Cardew.

"Don't, Ralph!" said Clive.

He had more pity for Kerruish than the other two.

Cardew or Levison might have been in Kerruish's place. Both were capable of being very awkward and very resentful.

Clive could not have been. Clive was one of those fellows who almost always see their duty as a dead-sure thing, and go for it as surely.

But it was he who seemed to understand best how Kerruish felt.

"I'm not a chap who can afford to preach to you, Kerruish," said Levison. "But I'll say this. You're an absolute fool if you think scrappering with fellows who say you're wrong can put things right; and you're worse than that if you pick a quarrel with Clive."

"What did Clive mean by putting it about that I'd been over to confess to Ratty?" demanded Kerruish furiously.

"Oh, bai Jove! I am vevy glad indeed to hear that, Kewuush!"

It was the voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy which chimed in thus.

Blake and Herries and Digby were all with Gussy. And only just behind them came the Terrible Three—Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther—and Talbot.

"Hear what?" roared Kerruish.

He was so worked up now that he was ready to deny the truth of the story.

What right had they to take things for granted about him?

"That you have confessed to Watty, of course, deah boy," replied Gussy. "Though why you should think it necessary to woad in that fashion, I weally cannot imagine. I wish you would not, for it puts me all in a fluttah!"

"Who says I've confessed?" snapped Kerruish.

"Did you not say so yourself, deah boy?"

"No, I didn't! And—"

"Oh, hang it all, let's have some sense about this!" said Blake, breaking in ruthlessly upon Kerruish's speech. "There's a heap too much fuss being made about Kerruish, to my mind. We all think he ought to have owned up when Railton put the question to us, but—"

"Even his own chums say that," put in Digby.

"I haven't any chums!" said Kerruish bitterly.

"Serves you right if you haven't!" snorted Manners. "Julian stuck by you as long as you'd let him, anyway."

"His hand against every man, and every man's hand against him," quoted Lowther.

"Ishmael, wasn't it?" asked Levison.

"Yes, this chap is rather like Ishmael, I think."

"To me, the point seems to be whether he's in Coventry, or whether he isn't," Tom Merry said, with reason. "If he is, it's pretty silly of us to hang round like this jawing to him."

"Well, is he?" Talbot inquired.

"I don't know," replied Tom. "I hadn't anything to do with sending him there, if he is. I rather agree with Blake that there's too much fuss being made over it."

"Here, Tommy, old chap, none of that!" said Blake warmly. "If you're going to claim that you agree with me, you'd better know how I feel about it first."

"Well, there's nothing to hinder you from telling me," Tom said quietly.

"I'll tell you. But I want to ask Kerruish something first."

"Ask away!" retorted Kerruish. "But I don't promise any answer."

"Is this yarn true that's going about?" demanded Blake.

"What yarn?" returned the Manx junior.

"Oh, you know well enough! That you've owned up to Ratty, then, if you must have it."

"That's no business of yours, Blake!"

"Oh, yes, it is! It's everybody's business—everybody in the Fourth, anyway."

"Hear, hear!"

Kerruish glared first at one and then at the other of them. His mood just then was hardly a sane one. It was to him as

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though he were hemmed in on every side, as though everybody was his enemy; whereas there was not a single fellow there whose attitude towards him was not at base a friendly one.

Side by side stood Clive, looking unusually serious, and Cardew, with that slightly superior smile which people found irritating at times upon his handsome face.

The contrast between the two angered Kerruish yet more. He was as much annoyed with Clive for feeling sorry as with Cardew for feeling superior.

Before anyone guessed what he meant to do, his hand shot out and smote Clive hard upon the face.

And as Clive staggered back in surprise Cardew got it—a smack that could have been heard at the gates.

"Seize the silly ass! He's potty!" hooted Blake.

"Leave me alone!" panted Kerruish, clenching his hands now. "I'll—"

A dozen hands were stretched out to grab him.

He hit with all his force. Arthur Augustus got it on the nose, and Manners on the chin. But Herries and Blake and Tom Merry seized Kerruish and got his hands behind him.

Even then he struggled. He lashed out with his feet, and Tom received a nasty kick on the shin.

"Oh, frog-march him!" yelled Lowther.

But Talbot interposed.

"Let him go!" he said. "Kerruish, old chap!"

The quiet, measured tones had their effect upon the half-maddened junior.

He ceased to kick. When his hands were released he let them hang by his sides. He stood with drooped head, trembling in every limb, but no longer half insane with rage.

Talbot laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Will you come with me?" he asked.

And, to the surprise of all, Kerruish went.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Talbot and Julian Take Counsel.

FIVE minutes later Talbot sought out Dick Julian.

He found him in No. 5, alone, and plunged at once into his subject.

"I hope you won't think I'm butting in, Julian," he began.

"You're about the last chap I should be likely to think that of, Talbot," replied Julian.

"That's nice of you. It's about Kerruish I want to talk to you."

"I guessed as much."

"I'm sure you haven't chucked him."

"Well, I don't know how you're sure, Talbot—"

"I know you, you see."

"My turn to say 'That's nice of you,' isn't it?" Julian said, smiling. "But you're right, anyway. I haven't, and I'm not going to. He says he doesn't want me, but I've told him he'll find me waiting when he does."

"You're the right sort of chum."

"That's nothing. Eric and I have been chums for a long time. But it's different with you, Talbot."

"Oh, I've always liked Kerruish—all your crowd, in fact, if I may say so. Look here, he's in for a bad time. He's smacked the faces of both Cardew and Clive, and—well, I know you'll hate to hear it, but the silly bouncer kicked out when he was collared, and landed Tom Merry a nasty one on the shin!"

"My hat! That's pretty rotten!"

"Tom doesn't matter so much. He won't be nasty about it. But you can't expect Cardew and Clive to stand having their faces smacked. The kick was more or less an accident, but those two are bound to take what was done to them as a direct challenge."

"Oh, of course! Eric will have to fight them. Clive will lick him, too; not sure about Cardew."

"I'm pretty sure about Cardew. But that isn't all. He went for Gussy and Manners as well; and he'd have gone for others if I hadn't got him away."

"I'm glad you got him away, then! It was more than I could have done, I know."

"Lowther quotes Ishmael—'his hand against every man, and every man's hand against his, you know.'"

"Poor old Eric! But it isn't quite as bad as that. You're not against him, Talbot, and I'm not. Afraid he feels that everyone is, though."

"Yes. He let me get him away, but he wouldn't talk."

"He was rude to you, I suppose?"

"A bit; but that doesn't matter. Julian."

There was open admiration in Dick Julian's look as he heard that.

"What makes you so different from other fellows, Talbot?" he asked.

"Didn't know I was. Rather hope I'm not, if it comes to that. But if I am—well, not quite so hard as some on a fellow who's down on his luck, I think it's because I've had a good deal of trouble of my own."

Silence for a moment after that. Then Talbot said:

"This yarn about Kerruish's going to Ratty. Think there can be anything in it?"

"He's practically denied it."

"Has he actually denied it? That's what matters."

"Well, he didn't to me. He only said that his going across to the New House didn't necessarily mean that."

"But I think it did mean that," said Talbot.

"He said to Blake, when the question was put direct, very much what he said to you—that it was no business of his."

"If he has owned up, why should he keep it dark? It would set him straight with everybody. Of course, it's not quite the same thing as speaking out when Railton asked; but no decent fellow's going to make a fuss about the difference."

"My notion is that he feels it doesn't set him straight with himself. False pride, if you like; but I can understand it."

"So can I. Is there any way we can find out?"

"Short of going to Ratty himself, I can't see how," replied Talbot.

"Oh, we can't do that! Suppose we're wrong; we should be giving him away!"

"That might not be such a bad turn to him, either."

"But it's the sort of thing a fellow couldn't do. At least, I couldn't make up my mind to do it, I know that."

"Wait a minute! If he has owned up, Figgins and Kerr must surely know it by this time," Talbot said thoughtfully.

"Yes, I suppose they would, though Ratty's such a queer old bird, that it isn't a dead cert."

"Oh, I can't see how he could keep up his game after Kerruish had confessed. The chief thing he has against them seems to be that it must have been Kerr who barged him over, if it wasn't a School House fellow. When he knows it was—"

"That ought to settle it, certainly. Shall we go across and see those three? Or will you go? I will if you like, Talbot, but—"

"Let's both go, old chap."

They went across to the New House at once.

At the door they met Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence coming out.

The three stopped.

"Is there any news about Figgy & Co.'s case, Reddy?" asked Talbot.

"Not that I've heard. What is there likely to be?"

"There's a yarn going round that Kerruish has owned up to Ratty, you know, Dick," said Lawrence.

"Oh, that! I don't believe it! He hasn't the decency to do it."

Julian flushed and bit his lip. But he said nothing. He had not the right to resent that on his chum's behalf.

"Where had he come from when you met him?" Owen inquired.

"How should I know? I only know that he snapped my head off when I tried to make it up with him. I've done with Kerruish!"

And Redfern & Co. passed on.

"It doesn't look very hopeful, Talbot," said Julian.

"We'll go up, anyway. Figgy and Kerr and Fatty can do with a little cheering up, I should think."

"You may be able to give it to them; I can't."

"Cut back if you don't feel like it. I can't see that there's any real chance that the yarn's true."

And Julian, almost as miserable as Kerruish himself, turned back.

Talbot proceeded on his way upstairs to the study floor.

He met Monteith, head prefect of the New House, on the landing.

"Hallo, Talbot!" said the Sixth-Former.

"I'm on my way to see Figgins and Kerr," said Talbot. "Any objection?"

Monteith shrugged his shoulders.

"Not as far as I'm concerned," he said.

"I'm not Ratchiff's policeman exactly. I've told him as much. I don't doubt he'll be unpleasant if he catches you there."

"Oh, I'll risk that!" replied Talbot lightly.

He went on, and in another couple of seconds was tapping at the door of Figgins & Co.'s study.

"Don't come in, unless you want to get into a row!" called Kerr, in reply.

Talbot pushed open the door at once. "I don't mind about any row there may be," he said. "How are you fellows getting on?"

"Still alive and kicking!" answered Kerr, cheerily enough.

"Fed up!" groaned Figgins. "That's a jolly sight more than I am!" said Fatty Wynn pathetically. "We're not allowed to go to the tuckshop, Talbot, and the fellows here have been told they mustn't bring anything in for us. It's awful! Couldn't I do a nice steak-and-kidney pie!"

"So you shall!" Talbot said. "We'll smuggle some grub in for you, one way or another. The sentence goes on, then? No change?"

"What change should there be?" asked Kerr. "We're kept away from the Form-room, but we're getting off nothing in the shape of work, and we're not allowed to go to the Head yet."

"Does he mean to take you before him at all?"

"I don't know. Must, I should think, or he'd never dare keep us from classes so long."

"But doesn't he know now who did barge him?"

"How should he? Kerruish wouldn't own up when Railton asked, the sweep!" returned Fatty bitterly.

"Oh, you've heard about that, then?"

"We get some news," Fatty said. "Nobody's supposed to come near us, but some of them do."

"We heard about Reddy thrashing that cad," Figgys chimed in. "Of course, Reddy was butting in. We can look after ourselves. But it was decent of him."

"You think Kerruish needed a hiding, Figgys?"

"Yes, rather! Don't you?"

"I'm not so sure as you are."

"I'm not, either," said Kerr. "I think Figgys' too much down on the fellow."

"Well, whether Kerruish deserved that hiding or not, it looks as if he was going to get another now," remarked Fatty, from the window. "A whole crowd of chaps are going to the gym, and Julian's talking to Kerruish, and Kerruish is trying to shake him off. Julian wants to be his second again, I suppose. Blessed if I would! I'd let the silly ass sulk!"

The other three were at the window long before Fatty made a halt in his speech.

"It's either Clive or Cardew," Talbot said. "Kerruish has quarrelled with them both."

"What about?" asked Kerr. "Anything in particular, or just the general situation?"

"Something in particular," answered Talbot. "And the same thing that really brought me across here to see you fellows. Cardew saw Kerruish come over here, and told Clive; and it seems that Clive told Julian and Hammond and Reilly that Kerruish had owned up to Ratty."

"Nothing in that for him to get his rag out about," observed Figgins.

"It's giving him credit for being more decent than he is," said Fatty.

At that moment the door opened suddenly, and the lean, sour-face of Mr. Ratcliff showed itself.

"Ah! What are you doing here, may I ask, Talbot?" said the Housemaster unpleasantly.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Kerr Takes a Line on His Own.

"I CAME to see these fellows, sir," replied Talbot.

"Then I presume you were not aware that they are—in detention, and not allowed to receive visitors?"

Talbot looked Mr. Ratcliff straight in the face.

"I'd heard something of the sort, sir; but I supposed that would be all over now," he said.

"And why should you suppose that it would be all over now, Talbot?"

"I'd heard that the fellow who ought to have given himself up before had done so at last, sir."

"Oh, indeed! And may I ask who the boy in question is?"

Kerr gave a barely perceptible shake of the head. Figgins stared hard at Talbot. Fatty stood with his mouth open and his eyes wide.

"I don't consider myself at liberty to say, sir," was Talbot's quiet answer.

"It is, I assume, quite an open secret?" snapped the master.

"A good many fellows know it," replied Talbot.

"And yet it has been kept from me! This

is a fair sample of the respect accorded to a master in this school!"

Nobody answered that. It was not the kind of remark that seemed to any of them to call for an answer.

"Did the boy himself inform you that he had confessed to me, Talbot?" snapped Mr. Ratcliff.

"No, sir."

"But no doubt you heard it from someone whom he had told?"

"No, sir."

"In fact, then, you are not aware that he has told anyone so?"

"No, sir."

"Ah! You appear to have accepted an inference in lieu of a fact. I may consider it necessary to report to Mr. Railton your behaviour in coming here in defiance of me, Talbot."

"Very well, sir."

Mr. Ratcliff glared at the Imperturbable Shell fellow.

Then he turned to Figgins & Co.

"You will rejoin your Form to-morrow, you three," he said sourly.

"Yes, sir. Are we to see the Head?" returned Kerr.

"That I will consider further before coming to a decision. In fact, I will consider the whole affair in all its bearings, and send for you again when I have made up my mind what to do about it."

"I'm not satisfied with that, sir," replied Kerr boldly.

Fatty gasped. Figgins and Talbot stared hard at the Scots junior.

Mr. Ratcliff stood like one dumbfounded. For fully twenty seconds no word came from him.

When words did come they were words full of wrath.

"I have never heard such abominable impertinence in all my career!" he cried, fairly spluttering with rage. "What can you mean, Kerr?"

"You called me a liar, sir. I am not satisfied to be punished for anything you may think I've done till the Head has heard about that, and said whether he thinks it's all right. If he does think so I shall ask my father to take me away from here—that's all."

"Oh, that is all, is it? Perhaps you will think better of this attitude of rebellion when you have had a night to sleep upon your extraordinary resolve, Kerr!"

"I don't think so, sir."

Mr. Ratcliff flounced out of the room, snorting.

"I say, Kerr!" protested Figgins.

"It won't do, you know, old man," said Fatty tremulously. "Of course, the Head doesn't agree with chaps being called liars. He's a gentleman. But he's simply bound to back up Ratty more or less. You can't—"

"I'm not going in to classes to-morrow morning. I'm not going in to classes at all until this thing's settled," answered Kerr doggedly.

"See here, Kerr, we—well, you know, this is jolly serious," said Figgins, almost as agitated as Fatty.

"Figgys, dear old boy, I'm not asking you or Fatty to do as I do," Kerr said. "It isn't quite the same for you."

"Oh, isn't it, though!" gasped Fatty. "Do you think we are going to desert you?"

"My hat! You must be a silly ass if you do!" said Figgins emphatically. "Whatever comes of this we're going to stand by you!"

"Right-ho!" replied Kerr cheerily. "I think it will turn out all serene. In fact, I rather expect Ratty to beg our pardons, and ask us to look over it."

"By Jove, you aren't half hopeful!" said Talbot. "Kerr, you rascal, you've something up your sleeve!"

"Nothing more than you fellows might have, too, if you only noticed things and did a bit of deduction," Kerr said.

"What is it, old chap?" asked Fatty.

"Only that something has happened that has very gravely weakened Ratty's position," answered Kerr. "It will be weaker still by to-morrow morning unless he—but he won't do that. He hasn't guessed that I've twigged."

"Twigged what?" asked Figgins, in bewilderment.

"Yes, that's it. Tell us what you've twigged, Kerr!" pleaded Fatty.

"Can't be done. It's just possible that I may be wrong; and in that case I should be leading you badly astray."

"But you'll be doing that if you don't tell us," argued Figgys.

"No. Because if I don't tell you there's nothing but your pig-headed resolve to stand or fall with me to keep you from doing as Ratty orders."

"Oh, hang it all, what are we to do, Talbot?" demanded Figgins.

"Can't advise, old fellow. But I know you won't be able to move Kerr. The best thing might be to do as he tells you."

"That would mean his going on only against Ratty alone," groaned Figgys.

"Yes, I'd prefer that," admitted Figgys coolly.

"Then you jolly well won't do that, I prefer!" snorted Figgys. "It's good for all for one and one for all with us, always has been."

"Right-ho!" said Kerr again. "Anyway, as I suppose our detention's at an end, let's cut over to the gym, and see what's going on there."

"But the old beast didn't say that it was over."

"He told us that we were to rejoin our Form to-morrow, and that he'd consider the matter in all its bearings, and send for us again—same thing, Fattibus," said Kerr.

"But we're not going back to the Form to-morrow," Figgins argued.

"Ratty doesn't know that."

"Oh, come along! May as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb!" said Figgys desperately.

He and Fatty went ahead. Kerr followed with Talbot.

"Will you tell me what it is, Kerr?" asked Talbot.

"Ahem! Wouldn't be quite the thing, old top, when I've refused to tell those two, would it?"

"Well, perhaps not. Still—"

"I'll give you a hint. When Ratty was talking to you, didn't you notice how he went all round it?"

"Went all round— Oh, I see now! If he had had Kerruish's confession, and wanted to keep it dark— But surely Kerruish wouldn't agree to that?"

"Not knowing, can't say, dear boy. It would seem muddling silly of him. But as far as I can make out he is behaving in a muddling silly way all round. See here, Talbot, I've nothing against Kerruish."

"So I've understood it all along."

"Figgys and Fatty think they have. But I can't see things quite their way. We did put the poor boulder through it, and I don't wonder he still feels sore with us, Talbot, old fellow, if you can do him a good turn—if you'll stand by him now—"

"Needn't say another word, Kerr. I was willing to do it, any way. If Kerruish will be an Ishmael, it's his own fault. Julian hasn't thrown him overboard, and I don't want to. I'll help him all the more readily if he'll let me, because you ask it, though."

"Thanks, Talbot! I do ask it. Oh, this will all come out in the wash, you know! Kerruish is hard up against it now, but it won't last much longer, you see."

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

And Kerruish Takes a Hiding.

TALBOT had been at least a quarter of an hour with Figgys & Co.—quite long enough, he had reckoned, for either Clive or Cardew to settle Kerruish.

But when the former reached the gym they were surprised to find that the fight had not even begun.

"Is it off?" asked Figgins.

"Depends upon which 'it' is," replied Monty Lowther.

"Kerruish's scrap, of course!" Fatty said.

"They're all Kerruish's scraps, every blessed one of them! Hallo! My only Sunday hat, I'm forgetting things! You fellows are released from durance vile, then?"

"Ass!" snorted Figgins.

"Turn round, Fatty!" said Lowther.

"Whaffor?" asked Fatty, doing as he was told.

"Oh, it's all right, dear boy! I perceive that Ratty didn't have it clipped."

"Have what clipped, idiot?"

"Your wool. Likewise Kerr's and Figgys'."

"Why should he, chump?"

"Well, it's usual in quods and places where they sing—no, that's choirs, not quods—my mistake. I see Kerruish has made up his mind at last, and it's from Clive he's taking his gruel."

"He'll let Talbot second him, then. He wouldn't have Julian," remarked Roylance. "Was that it?" inquired Figgins. "Well, I'm not surprised that no one was keen on seconding the chap."

"That was it, to some extent. But that wasn't all of it," replied Lowther. "There was also the unsettled question of whom Kerruish was to meet. When we started out it was either Cardew or Clive, or Gussy or Manners. By the time we'd got here, Levison, Blake, and Herries had been added to the list. So far I've escaped, and so has Tommy. And Dig refused—said he was too young to die, or something of that sort."

"Do you mean that that silly ass has been smacking faces all round?" asked Figgins.

"I don't think he's smacked all their faces, but it's a fact that he's challenged all those I've mentioned, and there may be a few more," answered Lowther, looking more serious. "It's funny in a way, and yet it isn't altogether funny, either. The fellow is like anyone gone fighting mad. I can't make him out a bit."

"Figg, old chap, I—I don't like this!" muttered Fatty. "Can't we do something? Kerruish is a decent fellow, really, you know, and we were a bit rough on him. And Kerr's not down on him as you are for not owning up. Kerr's generally right, you know. I'm not saying you're wrong, but Kerr generally is right, isn't he?"

"What's Fatty burbling about?" demanded Lowther.

"Nothing to do with you!" returned Figgins, with rough good-humour. "I don't want to be hard on the fellow, Fatty. But what can we do? They won't listen to us if we tell them that we aren't keen on Kerruish's owning up; and we can't say that we're all right, anyway, because as far as I can see we're going to risk the giddy sack to-morrow."

"How's that?" asked Lowther, who had heard all that Figg said, though he had missed Fatty's muttered speech.

"Oh, you'll know time enough! Shut up now! They're starting!"

It was not chiefly the difficulty of settling who should meet Kerruish which had delayed the fight, though if the Manx junior got what he was asking for he would have to meet at least half a dozen members of his own Form and the Shell sooner or later. Clive was to be his opponent now, though Clive was far from being keen.

The chief difficulty had been about a second. All agreed that it was out of the question that Kerruish should dispense with one, as he wanted to do. He had refused point-blank to have Julian—refused in a manner that would have made anyone but that loyal chum want to punch his head. Reilly and Hammond had refrained from offering themselves, which was not to be wondered at in the circumstances. Then Talbot had come forward.

Why Kerruish accepted Talbot's offer no one knew, perhaps not Kerruish himself. Indeed, there was some reason for thinking that the unlucky junior hardly knew what he was doing. More than one there thought he was nearly off his head with worry and rage.

Tom Merry caught sight of the New House trio, and came over to them at once.

"Settled the trouble, you fellows?" he asked.

"Not exactly," replied Kerr, who had just rejoined his chums. "But we're out for the time being. What made you think it was settled, Tommy?"

"There's a yarn that Kerruish has owned up to Ratty. If that was true— But I suppose it can't be true?"

"Ratty didn't tell us so when we saw him just now," Figgins answered. "But surely the chap himself would say if he had, wouldn't he? That would set him straight. We don't want any more fuss made, I'm sure."

"Can't make Kerruish out," Tom said, shaking his head. "He doesn't say that he has, and he doesn't say that he hasn't. But he can't have done, I suppose. Ratty would have been sure to tell you."

"Is that so certain?" asked Kerr. "Ratty's a sly old rascal, and he's got his knife into us."

"Well, it's too late to stop this now, anyway," Tom said, shrugging his shoulders. "But it's a rotten bizny. There's no doing anything with the fellow. If I have my way,

though, we'll have no more scrapping after Clive's licked him."

And Tom Merry moved away, looking very determined.

The fight had already begun. Kangaroo of the Shell refereeing, and Levison seconding Clive.

That Kerruish had little chance everyone present felt certain.

The first round saw Kerruish, his face still bearing the marks of Dick Redfern's fists, attacking hotly, and Clive on the defensive.

Clive looked really troubled. He did not want to thrash Kerruish. He was not in the least angry with him, and he was quite sincerely sorry for him. There was far less animus against Kerruish in the two Forms than he imagined. The decent fellows, who had always considered him as one of themselves, were bitterly disappointed with him; but, even without the confession he had made and was concealing, he could have lived the trouble down.

But he would never live it down like this. He was making fresh trouble for himself all the time.

He got home one or two punches that stung Clive up, and in the second round Clive began to punch also. Human nature was having its way.

"Finish the silly idiot off, Sidney!" said Levison.

"Be cruel to be kind, dear boy!" urged Cardew.

"I'm not sure that it isn't the kindest thing to do," Clive said. "But I hate doing it. I've no real quarrel with the fellow at all, and shouldn't have had anyway, if he'd only let me alone."

"Nobody really hates him. It's he who hates everyone," murmured Cardew.

"Make this round the last if you can, Clive," said Durrance.

"I think I can," Clive said quietly.

And he did it. Kerruish, in his rage, gave any number of openings for a fellow who cared to take them.

Clive took one of them, and Kerruish went down with a thump, and, hard though he tried it, could not struggle up before he was counted out.

He was on his feet two seconds later, however, and stood glaring round him wildly.

"Licked, am I?" he said bitterly. "All right! I don't care! I shall be ready for another of you to-morrow! You, Blake or Cardew—or Manners!"

"Quite unnecessary!" said Cardew coolly.

"I won't fight you!" snapped Manners.

"Because I'm in Coventry, I suppose?" panted Kerruish.

"No. Because you're a silly ass!" retorted Manners.

"Come away, Kerruish!" said Talbot.

Kerruish turned away, gulping down something that stuck in his throat.

But Kerr stepped in his way.

"Look here, Kerruish, I've reason to believe that you've owned up to Ratty, but are too proud to admit it," he said. "Will you tell us whether that's the case? If it is—"

"Do you suppose I should keep it dark if I had?" broke in Kerruish.

It was a foolish answer, and he knew it even as he spoke.

There was only one construction that could be put upon it—at least, there seemed only one to him. And possibly Kerr was the only fellow there who did not adopt that construction.

And Kerruish was not sure that anything he had said to Mr. Ratcliff, or anything Mr. Ratcliff had said to him, made him in honour bound not to tell, though the House-master's talk of it remaining a secret between them had its weight with him, too. But chiefly it was wounded pride and fierce resentment that prompted his reply.

Kerr fell back.

"If you won't tell me, you won't," he said. "But I think we shall see to-morrow."

A sound of hissing was heard, but it came from one corner only—the corner in which Racke and Crooke and Scrope and Mellish, and a few more of their kind, had gathered. And it ceased when Talbot and the Terrible Three and Kangaroo and Grundy started to push towards the fellows responsible for it.

Kerruish went—alone.

But it was his own fault that he was still playing the roll of Ishmael, and Kerr was right in thinking that he could hardly go on playing it much longer.

THE END.

AT WAR WITH GREYFRIARS!

(Continued from page 7.)

"All of you!" said Mr. Quelch. "I understand that the new boy, Carr, was made to run the gauntlet, as you call it, in the Remove dormitory?"

"That's so, sir," said Wharton, flushing. "I don't call that bullying, though. We were simply punishing a cad as he deserved."

"Hear, hear!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"I cannot believe that Carr did anything to warrant such an excessive punishment," said Mr. Quelch. "He was very roughly handled, and the blow on his forehead was a severe one. The whole Form took part in the affair, I presume?"

"Led by us, sir," said Wharton quickly. "Then you boys admit having been the ringleaders?"

The Famous Five nodded their heads. Mr. Quelch picked up his cane.

"You had no right to take the law into your own hands," he said sternly. "Masters and prefects are alone empowered to inflict punishment. It seems to me to have been a flagrant case of bullying. Wharton, hold out your hand!"

Harry Wharton obeyed, and he received six stinging cuts with the Form-master's cane—six cuts which even the captain of the Remove could hardly endure without flinching.

Bob Cherry came next, and Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Herree Singh followed in turn.

In each case six stinging cuts were administered.

"There," panted Mr. Quelch at length. "Let that be a lesson to you! I am determined to put down anything in the nature of bullying with a firm hand. You may go."

And a dismal procession filed out of the Form-master's study.

Once out in the passage, the juniors exchanged glances.

The same thought was in the mind of each. It was Frank Nugent who put it into words.

"Carr sneaked!" he said fiercely.

Harry Wharton nodded.

"He must have complained to Quelch that we'd been bullying him," he said. "My hat! The awful cad!"

"We'll make him sit up for this!" growled Johnny Bull savagely.

The Famous Five were in a towering rage. They had been grateful to Dennis Carr for not sneaking when questioned by Mr. Quelch in the dining-hall. But it seemed that the new boy had merely been biding his time.

"What are you going to do about it, Harry?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"There's only one way to punish the cad. We must send him to Coventry."

Shortly before morning lessons commenced, the following announcement appeared on the notice-board:

"NOTICE!

"Carr of the Remove, having again been found guilty of sneaking, is sent to Coventry forthwith.

(Signed) HARRY WHARTON."

Dennis himself was the first to read this curt notice.

The new boy's face flushed angrily. He hurried along to Study No. 1.

"I've seen your precious notice, Wharton," he exclaimed, "and I want to know what you mean by it!"

Wharton did not reply.

Dennis Carr saw nothing but accusation and contempt in the faces around him.

"I'm waiting for your explanation," he said heatedly.

Silence!

"Very well," said Dennis, turning on his heel. "So it's war, is it? Now we know where we stand!"

And, slamming the door of Study No. 1, he strode away down the passage, with bitterness in his heart—at war with the Remove, and at war with Greyfriars!

THE END.