

LONG STORIES OF GREYFRIARS, ROOKWOOD AND ST. JIM'S.

The
Penny $1\frac{1}{2}$
Popular

Week Ending
December 6th, 1919.

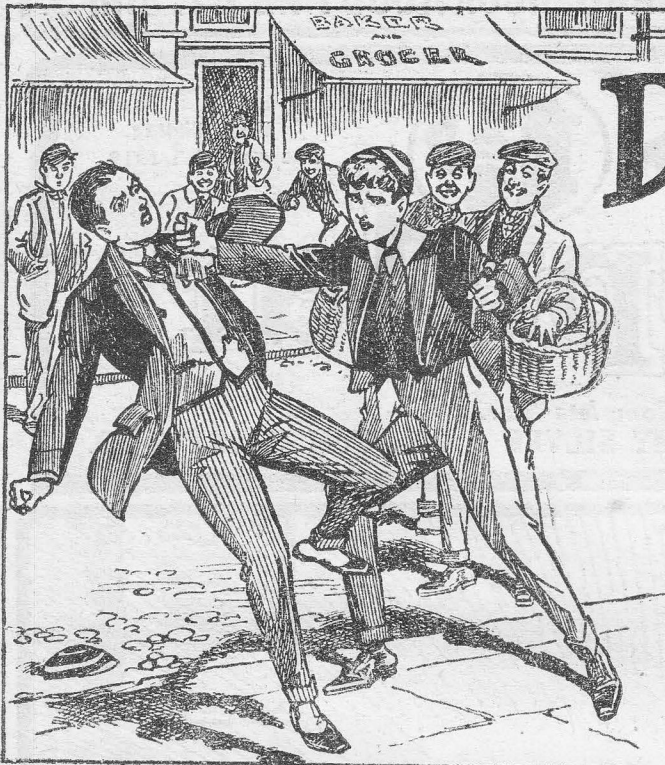
No. 46.
New Series.

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



DICKINSON'S MIDNIGHT VISITOR!

(A Thrilling Incident in the Magnificent Long Complete School Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars.)



Dennis Carr's Return!

A MAGNIFICENT LONG
COMPLETE STORY OF
HARRY WHARTON & Co.
OF GREYFRIARS.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Surprise for the Famous Five!

"I WISH—" began Bob Cherry of the Greyfriars Remove.

"Dry up, Bob!" growled Johnny Bull. "You're always wishing!"

"I wish somebody would write—"

"So do I!" said Harry Wharton. "I haven't had a letter or a remittance for ages!"

Bob Cherry glared at his chum.

"Will you let me finish?" he roared. "I wish somebody would write a book—"

The other members of the Famous Five stared at Bob Cherry in astonishment.

"Well, that's a jolly curious thing to wish!" said Frank Nugent. "Personally, I wish nobody would write a book, and then we should have a chance to read those that have already been written!"

"Hear, hear!" said Johnny Bull. "Book-writing used to be a rare achievement, but it isn't now. Everybody's doing it. Quelchy's writing one; the Head's already written several; and I believe Loder of the Sixth intends writing a sequel to 'When It Was Dark.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But nobody's written the particular book that I'm clamouring for," said Bob Cherry.

"I want somebody to write a book called 'A Thousand-and-One Ways of Spending a Half-Holiday.'"

"That's easily done," said Wharton.

"I'm not so sure. It's easy enough to think of a dozen ways of spending a half-holiday, and that's where you come to a full-stop."

"I agree," said Nugent. "We've exhausted every possible way of spending a half-holiday. There's foeter, there's boating, there's a country walk, or a ramble by the old caves, but it's jolly hard to hit on anything novel. It's a half-holiday now, and five of us are cooling our heels in this study for want of something better to do. Just think of it!"

Harry Wharton looked thoughtful.

"There's something in what you say," he agreed. "We haven't a foeter fixture, and it's too cold to go boating on the river. A country walk's rather too tame, and we've rambled round the caves until we're tired of it. The question is, what can we do by way of a change?"

"I proposefully suggest," said Hurrec Singh, "that we put on our best togful apparel, and totterfully walk over to Cliff House for tea."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"There's only one drawback to that," he said.

"Namely, my worthy chum?"

"We've not been invited!"

"Oh!"

"We can't plant ourselves on the society of the Cliff House girls without being asked," said Nugent. "That's unthinkable."

"What price a swim?" suggested Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton regarded his chum more in sorrow than in anger.

"Swimming in November may agree with you, Bob," he said, "but it doesn't agree with me."

"Fathead! There are some hot-water baths at Courfield—"

"They can jolly well stay there, then! They may be hot-water baths, but they leave me cold."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five were in a quandary. They had, as Nugent said, exhausted every possible way of spending a half-holiday. There seemed to be nothing fresh, nothing novel.

As a rule, half-holidays were spent on the playing-fields; but although Harry Wharton & Co. were keen sportsmen, it was possible to have too much of a good thing. Even football becomes monotonous when it is indulged in every day.

The juniors were still discussing the problem, but without much success, when Billy Bunter floundered into the study.

There was an excited gleam in Bunter's little, round eyes, and it was easy to see that he was the bearer of tidings.

"What's the latest, porpoise?" inquired Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter paused impressively before delivering his news. Then he said:

"I say, you fellows, there's a new chap coming, and they've gone on strike!"

The Famous Five stared.

"Who's gone on strike?" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "The new kid?"

"Of course not!"

"Pr'aps the masters have struck at the prospect of a new kid coming?" suggested Nugent.

"Don't be an ass!" growled Bunter. "It's a railway strike!"

"Oh!"

"We had one railway strike a month or two back," said Harry Wharton. "Don't tell us we're booked for another!"

"It isn't general," explained Bunter. "It's

purely a local affair. I happened to hear the Head telling Quelchy about it. No trains are running on the branch line between Folkestone and Friardale. The men have got a grievance—"

"They're fed up with seeing you travel without paying your fare, I suppose?" said Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—I heard the Head say that the men belonging to the Courfield Cattle-truck Union have demanded an extra seven quid a week, and everybody else on that line came out in sympathy."

"They're likely to get more sympathy than quids!" said Johnny Bull.

"The Head said they were justified in striking," said Billy Bunter. "Their wages have only been increased sixteen times since the Armistice. Besides, they're still drawing the war bonus at the same old rate, whereas most men have had it doubled since the war stopped."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, what does the rotten old strike matter, anyway?" said Nugent.

"Don't you see, you duffers?" said Bunter excitedly. "The new kid will go stranded!"

"Oh!"

"He'll be able to get as far as Folkestone, and that's all. How he's going to get to Greyfriars from there?"

"Is that a conundrum?" asked Bob Cherry.

"It is."

"Then I think I know the answer. Because one rode a horse, and the other rhododendron!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course," said Harry Wharton thoughtfully, "it's a pretty awkward position for the new kid. I think it's up to us to help him out."

"How?" asked Nugent, in surprise.

"Well, we might bike as far as Folkestone, and see that he gets a vehicle of some sort to bring him to the school. You know what most new kids are like. They haven't an ounce of savvy, and this fellow may hang about outside Folkestone Station for hours! Even if he does have the sense to approach a taxi-driver, the man may not have heard of Greyfriars."

"Such is fame!" sighed Bob Cherry. "We're in the same county, and yet the people of Folkestone know us not!"

"I say, you fellows!" chimed in Billy Bunter. "I think that's a jolly good wheeze of Wharton's to bike over to Folkestone.

We'll meet the kid there, and take him into one of the fashionable teashops—"

"In order that William George Bunter can stuff himself to his heart's content," said Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The esteemed Bunter has a chopperful axe to grind, as your English proverb has it," said Hurree Singh.

"Look here, you nigger—"

If there was anything Hurree Singh resented, it was being called a nigger. With a deft movement, he caught up a cushion, and buried it with all his force at Bunter.

The fat junior went whirling through the open doorway, and the cushion accompanied him in his flight.

"Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter, as he landed against the opposite wall of the passage.

The Owl of the Remove would have re-entered the study, but the door was slammed in his face, and five voices requested him to keep his distance.

The Famous Five continued to discuss Wharton's scheme, and it was finally agreed that they should all cycle over to Folkestone and relieve the stranded new boy.

As the juniors pushed their bicycles down to the school gates, they beheld Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, who was also going out.

Mr. Prout was fearfully and wonderfully attired. He sported a suit of blue overalls, and his head was adorned by a cloth cap. He also carried a gun.

"Great pip!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Wonder which pawnshop Prouty got those overalls from?" said Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Prout paused in the gateway. With considerable difficulty, the juniors stifled their laughter.

"Good-afternoon, my boys!" said the master of the Fifth.

"Good-afternoon, sir!" said the Famous Five respectfully.

"Going shooting, sir?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"I trust, Cherry, it will not prove necessary for me to shoot. I am a dangerous man with a gun!"

With this latter remark the Famous Five heartily concurred. Mr. Prout was, as a matter of fact, a constant source of danger to the community, owing to his erratic marksmanship.

"I am about to offer my services as a volunteer," explained Mr. Prout. "These unreasonable strikers must be replaced at once, or the food supply of the nation will fail. I understand there is a congestion of cattle-trucks between Courtfield and Friardale, and it is to relieve that congestion that I am now faring forth."

"My hat!"

"Should any of the strikers interfere with me in the discharge of my duties," continued Mr. Prout, "I shall be compelled to shoot. And when I shoot, I shoot to kill!"

"Hup!" sobbed Bob Cherry.

"I trust that you boys are about to render assistance in connection with the strike?" said Mr. Prout.

"We are, sir, in an indirect way," said Harry Wharton. "We're going to Folkestone to meet a new boy, who will be stranded there."

"Excellent!" said Mr. Prout, beaming. "I trust you will be able to convey him to the school in safety."

The Famous Five mounted their machines and rode away. They could not have lingered a moment longer in the vicinity of the school gates, or they would have exploded with laughter. Mr. Prout's appearance was, as Bob Cherry remarked, a sight for gods and men and little fishes!

"Poor old Prout!" chuckled Johnny Bull. "He's always volunteering for something or other, and just as often putting his foot into it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The ridiculous figure in the blue overalls and cloth cap was soon left behind.

Harry Wharton & Co. were expert cyclists, and their bicycles fairly skimmed over the familiar road.

They were through the little market town of Courtfield in a flash, and presently a signpost announced: "To Folkestone, 10."

"Let 'em rip, kids!" said Harry Wharton.

"Come to think of it, this is a lopping way of spending a half-holiday!"

"Yes, rather!"

On and on went the cyclists, with the dust whirling behind them.

"Here we are!" said Bob Cherry, at last.

"Folkestone, by Jove!"

"Which station will the new kid be arriv-

ing at?" asked Johnny Bull. "The Central or the Harbour?"

"The Central, of course," said Wharton. "Come on!"

The party dismounted at the railway station, and pushed their bicycles through on to the platform.

"Is the London train in yet?" inquired Harry Wharton of a porter.

"No!" came the reply, in a surly grunt.

"How polite these jannies are!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"It's understandable," said Nugent, who was willing to make concessions. "They've had the busiest year of their lives."

The juniors waited patiently for the London train, and presently it came.

"Keep your peepers open for the new kid!" said Johnny Bull.

Quite a crowd of people alighted from the train, and the porters shouted at them as they did so:

"No trains running on the Courtfield and Friardale Line!"

Not many people seemed to mind, for the majority were not bound for Courtfield or Friardale.

There was such a congestion at the exit that the Famous Five, although they kept their eyes open, could not locate the new boy.

"He must be arriving by this train," said Bob Cherry. "There isn't another till late this evening."

Harry Wharton looked puzzled.

"I suppose we've missed him," he said. "Let's go and look outside."

The Famous Five passed through the exit, and as they did so a fair-haired, good-looking fellow, dressed in Etons, advanced towards them.

The juniors stopped short in astonishment.

"Do I dream?" gasped Bob Cherry, rubbing his eyes. "Why, my only aunt, it's Dennis Carr!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Another Surprise.

"CARR!"

The Famous Five rapped out the name simultaneously.

"How are you, old fellow?" asked Harry Wharton, when he had recovered in some measure from his astonishment.

"First-rate, thanks!" said Dennis; and he looked it.

"It's awfully queer that we should bump into you like this!" said Johnny Bull. "We were expecting a new kid. Bunter said—"

"I expect Bunter got hold of the wrong end of the stick, as usual!" said Dennis, with a laugh. "He must have heard the Head jawing about me, and thought he was referring to a new kid."

"We're awfully glad you've come back, anyway!" said Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton & Co. surveyed Dennis Carr with interest.

Dennis had left Greyfriars, several weeks before, a physical wreck. He had been, in fact, at death's door. And now he was a vigorous, robust specimen of healthy boyhood.

There was a history attaching to Dennis Carr—rather a melancholy history.

He had come to Greyfriars as a spoilt and wayward boy, and had declared war on the Remove within a few moments of his arrival. Stormy scenes had followed, and Carr had been persecuted—rather relentlessly, perhaps—by his schoolfellows.

This persecution had made him wilful and reckless, and he had joined forces with Ponsonby & Co., of Highcliffe. The result was that he got heavily into debt, and had stolen ten pounds from Harry Wharton's desk.

In desperation, the wretched junior had appealed to Mark Linley to help him, and Mark had suffered expulsion in his stead.

Everything had come to light eventually, and Dennis Carr had redeemed the past by saving Harry Wharton's life at the risk of his own. Wharton had been accidentally knocked over the cliffs, and in going to his rescue Dennis Carr had been severely injured. He had been taken away from Greyfriars to recuperate, and now he was coming back, not to the old life of folly and dissipation, but to a clean and healthy existence.

Harry Wharton & Co. were prepared to give Dennis every chance. He would not be taunted with the past, which was over and done with; and the future was his own, to make or mar, as he wished.

"Are you thoroughly fit now?" inquired Wharton.

"Perfectly sound in wind and limb," replied Dennis.

"Good! There's a beastly strike on, as you know, but we'll get some sort of conveyance to take you to Greyfriars."

"Thanks," said Dennis, "but I've already hired a taxi. Here it is! I'll see you fellows later."

"Mind you drop into Study No. 1 for tea!" said Nugent.

"All serene!"

Dennis Carr stepped into the taxi, waved his hand to the Famous Five, and was whirled away on his journey.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" gasped Bob Cherry when he had gone. "You could have knocked me down with a feather!"

"Same here!" said Nugent. "It wasn't a new kid, after all. It was Carr!"

"I'm jolly glad he's come back," said Wharton. "I can't help thinking we were rather hard on the fellow before. We've got a good deal to make up to him."

"Yes, rather!"

"Carr will be quite an acquisition—"

began Bob Cherry.

"Where did you get that word?" demanded Johnny Bull.

"I heard Quichy use it the other day."

"Thought you'd cribbed it from somebody. Go on!"

"As I say, Carr will be quite an acquisition. He's a stunning footballer, and he's got tons of energy. He ought to turn out to be a valuable supporter of yours, Harry. I almost wish we could take him to our bosoms, and make him one of the Famous Five!"

"In that case," said Harry Wharton, laughing, "it would be the Famous Five no longer. We should have to call ourselves the Stalwart Six, or something like that."

"Better start back, I think," said Frank Nugent, anxiously scanning the sky. "Looks like a storm coming up."

"And we have no coats wherewith to keep off the rainfall downpour!" said Hurree Singh.

Pausing only to partake of light refreshment at a small shop, the Famous Five pedalled briskly out of Folkestone, and were soon skimming along the highway.

"Carr will be home hours before us!" remarked Johnny Bull, as they flashed along.

But when, after a long and exhausting ride, the juniors reached Greyfriars, they found that Dennis Carr had not yet arrived.

When he did arrive, half an hour later, he was wrathful and fuming.

"What's happened, old chap?" asked Bob Cherry.

"This—this imbecile," said Dennis, indicating the driver of the taxi, "didn't know the roads—at least, he pretended not to know them. We've been all over Kent, and once we crossed the Sussex border!"

"My hat!"

"What's the damage?" asked Dennis, turning to the taxi-driver.

"Three pounds two-and-six, sir!" said the man.

"What! You're going to make me pay for your own silly blunders?"

"Three pounds two-and-six is the amount registered, sir," said the driver firmly.

"Great Scott! Is there a Profiteering Committee in Friardale, you fellows?"

"Yes," said Bob Cherry, with a chuckle. "All the well-known profiteers are on it themselves!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Dennis Carr snorted.

"I've a good mind to give this merchant two-and-six, and let him whistle for the remainder!" he said.

"Which I have a wife an' family to keep —" began the taxi-driver.

"If you go on at this rate," granted Dennis, fumbling for the money, "you must earn enough to keep fifty wives and families! Here's your beastly money, and I hope your taxi goes on strike when you've gone a hundred yards!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The taxi-man pocketed the money, dumped Dennis Carr's luggage in the Cloc, and drove off.

"The country seems to be full of bloated profiteers!" growled Dennis Carr.

"Never mind!" said Bob Cherry soothingly. "We'll give you a hand with your luggage."

And the Famous Five, like willing servants, piloted Dennis Carr's bags and portmanteaus into the building.

"Which study are you going into, Carr?" asked Harry Wharton.

"My old one—with Mauly and Sir Jimmy Vivian."

"Good!"

Lord Maulverer and Sir Jimmy were both pleased to see Dennis Carr back again.

"When Dennis had been their study-mate before they had cut him dead. But they now saw that Dennis had not been given a fair chance, and they meant to make amends for their former treatment of him.

"Glad to see you lookin' so fit, begad!" remarked Lord Mauleverer. "Welcome back to Greyfriars.

Dennis Carr was touched by Mauly's sincere greeting. He tried to stammer out a few words of thanks, but they refused to come. Nevertheless, Mauly understood.

"We'll get you some tea, Carr!" said Jimmy Vrian.

"You'll do nothing of the sort!" interrupted Bob Cherry. "We're cooking the fatted calf in Study No. 1. Carr's our guest for the evening!"

"Hear, hear!" "I seem to be in great demand!" said Dennis, laughing.

And he was in greater demand than ever a few moments later. The news of his return had spread through the Remove, and as he accompanied the Famous Five to Study No. 1 fellows rushed up from all sides and shook him warmly by the hand.

"Good old Carr!"

"Awfully glad you're back!"

"Come along and have tea in my study!" said Vernon-Smith.

"No, no! In mine!" said Peter Todd.

"Mine, be jabbers!" insisted Micky Desmond.

But Bob Cherry waived all these invitations.

"Carr's our guest, and you can go and eat cake!" he said.

Shortly afterwards Dennis occupied the arm-chair in Study No. 1, while Harry Wharton & Co. hustled about and made themselves generally useful. A cheerful fire was soon sputtering and crackling in the grate, the kettle was put on, and a feast of good things was set out on the table.

"It's good to get back!" said Dennis, as he watched the human beehive around him.

"What's happened since I went away?"

"Lots of things!" said Bob Cherry. "For one thing, Harry Wharton isn't captain of the Remove any longer."

"What?"

"It was like this," said Johnny Bull, as he poured out the tea. "One night we were raided in our dorm by the Highlife eads. They painted, our chivvies, and stuck feathers in our hair, and made freaks of us generally. The fellows were awfully ratty about it, and they clamoured for Wharton to resign from the captaincy. He wouldn't resign, but soon afterwards Quelchly made him."

"My hat!"

"Then it was decided to have a contest for the captaincy," explained Johnny. "There were five candidates—Smithy, Toddy, Dick Russell, Wharton, and Bunter!"

"Bunter?" gasped Dennis Carr.

"Yes."

"But—you don't want the Form to be governed by a life-balloon!"

"It won't be!" chuckled Nugent. "Set your mind at rest on that score. Bunter made a hash of things, of course; and so did several of the others. Each candidate had a trial week, you know, and now that all the trial weeks are over the election will be held."

"This is news, and no mistake!" said Dennis.

"Smithy had a good week," continued Nugent, "but he came a cropper at the finish. The Highlife eads sent a fellow here disguised as a Form-master, and Smithy was nearly lynched for not detecting the jape."

"How did Peter Todd get on?"

"He didn't! He made a fearful hash of things. Dick Russell had a fairly successful week, but Wharton went one better."

"Yes, rather!" said Bob Cherry. "To my mind, Wharton's certain to be re-elected. I shouldn't be surprised to see him romp home by a crushing majority!"

Dennis Carr looked thoughtful. And he did not lose his thoughtful expression during tea, which was a very cheery and delightful meal.

"Pie in!" said Bob Cherry, handing round the muffins. "Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow— Well, you never know what's going to happen from one day to another in this show!"

Dennis Carr made a hearty meal, and joined in the conversation with interest. Then he rose to his feet.

"Excuse me—" he began.

"Not going, surely?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Afraid I must. I want a word with Quelchly."

"With Quelchly!" ejaculated Johnny Bull.

"But—but you're not a new kid! Therefore it doesn't matter about seeing Quelchly."

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Dennis smiled.

"It matters very much," he said. "You see, I want to hand in my name—"

"Hand in your name!" echoed Bob Cherry.

"What on earth for?"

"As a candidate for the captaincy of the Remove!"

The Famous Five understood at last.

Dennis Carr had exploded a bombshell. His schoolfellows sat blinking at him in astonishment.

"You—you're really going to have a shot at the captaincy?" gasped Wharton.

"Why not? I'm fit and strong, and bursting with energy. If the position's going begging, I don't see why I shouldn't stake a claim for it!"

"No; but—"

"But what?"

"You won't stand an earthly!" said Johnny Bull.

"You will be beaten at every twistful turn!" said Hurree Singh.

"We shall see!"

Dennis Carr spoke with resolution. Within five minutes, as it were, of his return to Greyfriars, he was up and doing. The Famous Five could not but admire his enterprise.

Dennis made his way to the Form-master's study. Mr. Quelchly accorded him a hearty greeting.

"I am pleased to see you back, Carr. I trust all is well with you?"

"Yes, sir; thanks!" said Dennis. Then, plunging abruptly into his subject, he added: "I understand that the captaincy of the Remove is vacant, sir?"

"That is so, Carr?"

"In that case, I should like to have a shot for it, sir."

Mr. Quelchly looked surprised.

"I did not think you were a very ambitious boy, Carr—"

Dennis flushed.

"I don't suppose you had anything but a bad impression of me when I was here before, sir," he said. "You couldn't help it. But things are different now. I mean to turn my schooldays to good account."

"That is a very commendable resolve, Carr. But do you feel capable of carrying out the many and onerous duties which fall to the lot of a Form-captain?"

"I'd do my best, sir, if I was elected."

"Very well," said Mr. Quelchly. "Your name shall be added to the list of candidates, and you will commence your trial week from to-day."

"Thank you very much, sir."

Dennis quitted the Remove-master's study with a feeling of satisfaction. And when he had gone, Mr. Quelchly murmured to himself:

"There are possibilities in that lad. I must confess that I feel most interested in his welfare, and I sincerely hope that he makes good."

Was Mr. Quelchly's hope destined to materialise?

Time alone could say.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Catching Coker!

"WHAT'S the verdict?"

Bob Cherry asked the question as Dennis Carr emerged from the Form-master's study.

The Famous Five had been unable to resist the impulse to go along and see how Dennis had fared.

"I'm a candidate," said Dennis.

"Good!"

"And I start my trial week at once."

"Better still!"

Dennis glanced at the juniors.

"You fellows will back me up, I take it?"

"Within reason," said Johnny Bull. "We'll lend you a hand whenever you like, but you can't expect us to vote for you, you know. We're voting for Wharton."

"To a man!" said Nugent.

Dennis smiled.

"If I have a better week than Wharton had, will you vote for him?" he asked.

"That depends," said Bob Cherry. "Still, you won't have a better week than Wharton, so the question doesn't arise."

There was great excitement in the Remove that evening when the news became generally known.

Most of the fellows admired Dennis Carr's pluck, and urged him to "go in and win."

But there were some—among whom Bolsover major and Skinner were conspicuous—who had not quite overcome their old animosity towards Dennis, and they told him that in

setting up for the captaincy he was acting like a prize idiot.

But even Bolsover and Skinner soon saw that Dennis was in earnest. He took command in the Remove dormitory that evening, and he expected his orders to be obeyed.

Skinner happened to get into bed with half his clothes on, and this did not escape the keen eye of Dennis.

"Get out and take those togs off, Skinner!" he rapped out.

"Go and eat coke!" growled Skinner.

"Get out!" repeated Dennis.

"Not for you, Carr, or for all the Roths Royces in the world!" said Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Dennis Carr frowned.

"If you're not out of bed in two ticks, you'll find me alongside!" he said.

Skinner continued to bluster.

"Why can't I get into bed with my togs on, if I like?" he said.

"Because it means that you intend to break bounds, and I'm not going to allow that sort of thing!"

"Bravo!" said Bob Cherry.

"To hear Carr talk," sneered Skinner, "one would imagine he'd never broken bounds himself! Does he forget the nights when he used to go on the razzle with Bousonby?"

"Shame!" said Mark Linley. "It's a mean trick to taunt a fellow with what is dead and done with!"

"Hear, hear!"

With burning cheeks, Dennis Carr strode towards Skinner's bed.

"For the last time, will you get out?" he exclaimed.

"No, hang you!"

"Then I must pitch you out!"

So saying, Dennis wrenched off the bed-clothes, and, with a strength which surprised not only Skinner, but the whole dormitory, he hurled the cad of the Remove on to the floor.

"Yaroooooh!" roared Skinner.

"Take those things off!" ordered Dennis.

Skinner looked up in a dazed sort of way, and he caught sight of the expression on Dennis Carr's face. It was the expression of a fellow who meant to be obeyed.

Sullenly Skinner got to his feet and removed his clothes. Then he returned to bed in his pyjamas.

That was Dennis Carr's first triumph—a small enough triumph, perhaps, but sufficient to make an impression on his schoolfellows.

Skinner did not break bounds that night. He had an idea that Dennis Carr might be awake, and he knew that he would receive short shrift from Dennis if he was caught in the act of vacating the dormitory.

When the rising-bell rang out Dennis Carr was again in evidence.

There were certain fellows in the Remove—notably Billy Bunter and Lord Mauleverer—who believed in taking an extra forty winks. On this particular morning, that luxury was denied them.

"Shake a leg!" said Dennis. "No slacking allowed!"

"Oh, really, Carr—" came in a feeble protest from Billy Bunter.

"Tumble out!"

Lord Mauleverer had sufficient sense to obey, but Billy Bunter remained in a state of sloth.

"Try the sponge, Carr!" suggested Bob Cherry.

But Dennis Carr's ways were more drastic. He tilted the bed sideways, and bedclothes and Bunter were deposited on to the floor in a confused heap.

"Yow-ow!" gasped the fat junior. "Where am I?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"In future," panted Dennis, "you'll oblige me by turning out at the first note of the rising-bell."

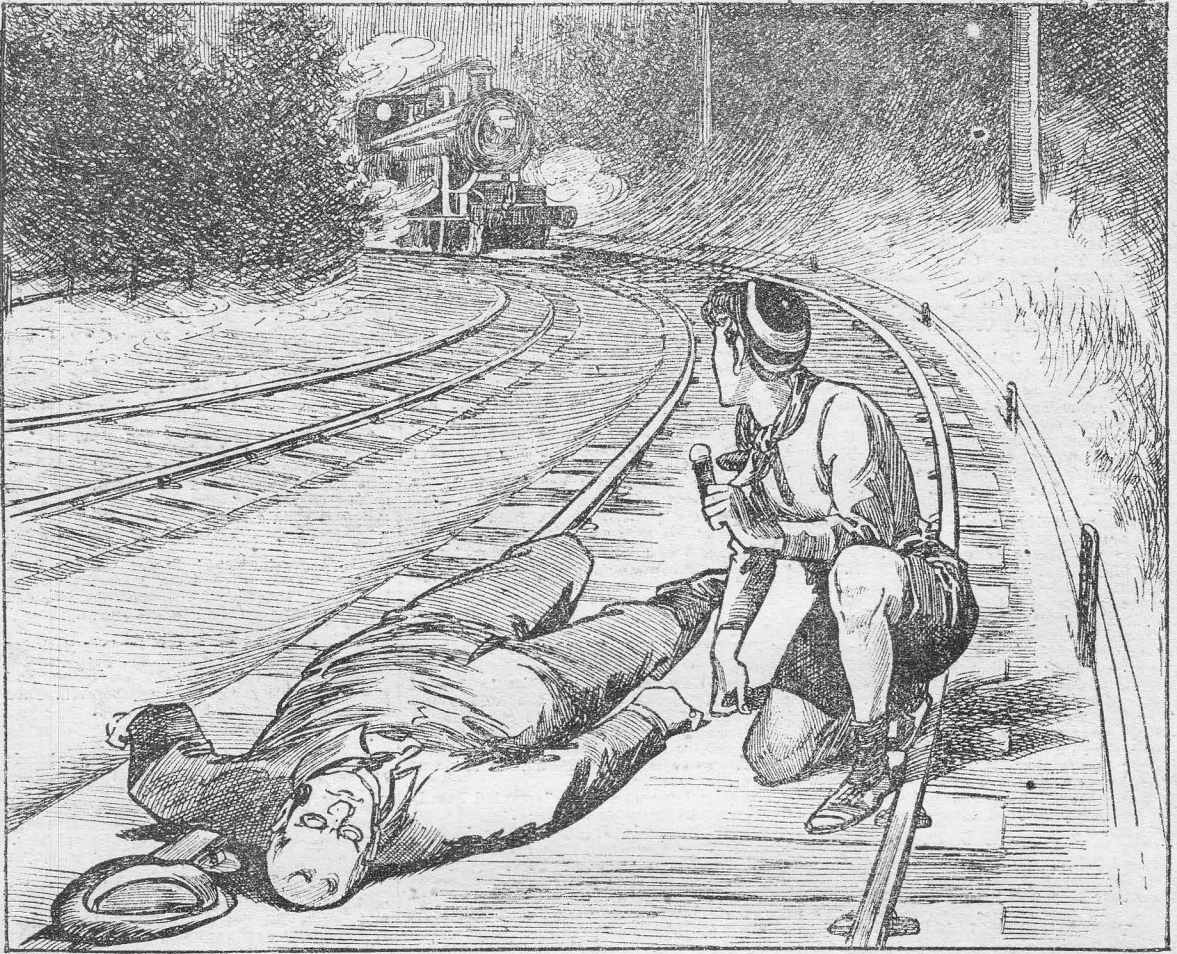
"Groop!"

Dennis ran his eye over the rows of beds, to see if any other fellows required his assistance. But everybody was up and doing.

In the Remove Form-room that morning Dennis Carr retained his prestige. He was a brilliant scholar, and he was repeatedly told by Mr. Quelchly to "go up one." Such was his progress that he eventually found himself at the top of the class—a position usually occupied by Mark Linley or Dick Penfold.

During afternoon lessons desperate efforts were made to deprive Dennis of his position, but he successfully defied all comers, and his face was flushed with triumph when the class was dismissed.

"Carrying favour with Quelchly!" sneered Bolsover major, as the juniors trooped into the passage.



Dennis dropped on one knee and examined the prostrate figure by the light of his electric torch. The man was Mr. Prout, and he was unconscious. "Good heavens!" panted Dennis. An approaching train swung round a curve! (See page 6.)

Dennis Carr turned quickly.

"What was that?" he demanded.

Bolsover proceeded to hum a little ditty, as follows:

"I'm a good little boy
At the top of the class;
I'm Quelch's pride and joy,
And a bit of an ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Skinner & Co.

Dennis Carr did not laugh. He shot out his fist, and it crashed into Bolsover's leering face.

The bully of the Remove retaliated, of course, but without success. A further blow from Dennis sent him reeling against the wall, and he lurched away without renewing the combat.

"My hat!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "You've learnt how to hold your own since you've been away, Carr!"

Dennis smiled. "I took lessons from an old hand at the game," he explained. "I knew precious little about boxing when I was here before, but I fancy I shall be able to keep my end up now."

"Ripping!" said Frank Nugent. "By the way, what's the programme for this afternoon?"

"We'll go and see how the railway strike's getting on," said Dennis.

"Good idea!" said Harry Wharton.

All Greyfriars was interested in the strike, because it was holding up their letters and hampers, and because several of the masters were acting as volunteers to relieve the situation.

The Famous Five accompanied Dennis Carr to the little railway-station at Friardale.

"The strike's over!" shouted Bob Cherry suddenly. "Hurrah!"

"How do you make that out, you ass?" said Johnny Bull.

"Because there's a train in!"

"So there is, by gum!" said Dennis Carr.

The juniors quickened their pace, and joined the little throng of people on the platform, who were staring in surprise at the first train seen in Friardale Station for days.

There were several familiar faces on the platform.

Coker & Co., of the Fifth, were there, and they frowned loftily at the Removites.

"So that young whipper-snapper Carr's come back, has he?" said Coker.

"Why, you cheeky ass," said Harry Wharton, "you're not fit to tie Carr's bootlaces!"

Coker glared. "I—I'll wipe up the platform with you in a minute!" he threatened.

At this juncture the guard strode along the platform, with the green flag gripped in his hand.

The Greyfriars fellows gasped when they saw that guard. For he was none other than Mr. Larry Lascelles, the mathematics master.

"Larry!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"My only aunt!"

Mr. Lascelles smiled at the juniors.

"Has the strike ended, sir?" asked Wharton.

"No, my boy. One man has returned to work, and that is all. He is the driver of this train—the only train that will run to-day. I have volunteered to act as guard. Mr. Prout is also volunteering. He is engaged on the—er—cattle-trucks further down the line."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors could not repress a roar of laughter as they pictured Mr. Prout in his blue overalls.

Mr. Lascelles turned away.

"Take your seats, please!" he commanded. Dennis Carr ran to the front of the train, and had a few words with the driver. A

close observer would have seen that money changed hands.

A moment later Dennis rejoined his school-fellows. Winking at them, he said, in a voice which was perfectly audible to Coker & Co.:

"I think we might travel by this train, don't you, kids?"

"All serene!" said Harry Wharton.

And the juniors clambered into one of the carriages.

Coker & Co. evidently did not mean to be left out. They conversed together, and as a result of a hurried consultation, they, too, got into one of the carriages.

The guard waved his flag, and the train moved off to the accompaniment of loud cheers on behalf of the loyal driver.

Midway between Friardale and Courtfield the train slowed up very perceptibly.

"Hop out!" muttered Dennis Carr.

"What the thump——" began Bob Cherry.

"Don't ask questions! Hop out!"

Greatly wondering, the juniors followed Dennis Carr out of the carriage and on to the metals. Then the train, gathering speed, rumbled away towards Courtfield.

The Famous Five stared blankly at Dennis Carr.

"Now perhaps you'll explain what the little game is!" said Wharton.

Dennis chuckled.

"That train," he said, jerking his thumb in the direction of a distant trail of smoke, "is a non-stop to Folkstone—and Coker & Co. are inside!"

For a moment, Harry Wharton & Co. stood dumbfounded. Then they burst into an uncontrollable roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old Coker!"

"It's too funny for words!"

Bob Cherry clutched Dennis Carr by the arm.

"How did you work the oracle?" he asked. "It was easily done," said Dennis. "Coker didn't know it was a non-stop to Folkestone—and I did! I told the driver we intended to board the train, and I tipped him half-a-crown to slow up just here, so that we could hop out on to the line. Meanwhile, Coker's gone careering off to Folkestone!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't like to be hard on anybody," said Dennis; "but I do object to being called a 'whipper-snapper'!"

"You'll be called something worse later on," said Bob Cherry. "During the walk home from Folkestone Coker will be able to think out some choice expressions."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was not until late that evening—locking-up time, in fact—that Coker & Co. returned to Greyfriars.

They had been furious when they discovered that the train was a non-stop to Folkestone, but they had consoled themselves with the reflection that Harry Wharton & Co. were also on the train. They had not seen the juniors clamber out on to the metals. To the immense surprise of the Fifth-Formers, Harry Wharton & Co. were nowhere to be seen when the train reached its destination.

"Here's a pretty go!" grunted Coker.

"What are we going to do?"

"We've got plenty of cash," said Potter. "We'll hire a taxi to take us to Greyfriars."

But that was found to be impossible.

Earlier in the day there had been plenty of taxis about, but they had all been commandeered now owing to the strike.

There was nothing for it, therefore, but to set out on foot; and the trio of Fifth-Formers, who were not walking champions, fumed and raved as they plodded along.

They got to Greyfriars on the instalment system. After walking four miles, they were given a lift in a market-cart; and after trudging a further six miles a kindly motorist gave them a lift as far as Friardale.

It was a very dusty and dishevelled trio that eventually lurched in at the gates of Greyfriars.

"Where's that cheeky young cub, Carr?" demanded Coker. "I—I'll puncture him!"

But for the remainder of that evening Dennis Carr very wisely kept off the grass!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. Dennis Carr's Pluck!

"FOOTER this afternoon?" inquired Bob Cherry, after lessons next day.

Dennis Carr, to whom the question was addressed, shook his head.

"Saturday's footer day," he said. "We're going for a cross-country run this afternoon."

"As you wish, O chief!"

On this crisp November afternoon, with the ground hard and a nip in the atmosphere, a cross-country run seemed just the thing.

Quite a number of juniors donned their running-shorts and joined the Famous Five and Dennis Carr in the Close.

Mr. Prout passed the runners as they lined up at the school gates. He nodded to them pleasantly.

The master of the Fifth still sported the blue overalls and the cloth cap, and his appearance was, as Bob Cherry remarked, enough to make a cat laugh.

"Still volunteering, sir?" inquired Frank Nugent.

"Yes, Nugent," said Mr. Prout. "The strike is still in progress, although the general situation is much improved. The non-stop to Folkestone which ran yesterday will also run to-day, the only difference being that it will start two hours later."

"And you're still working on the cattle-trucks, sir?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Yes, Cherry. My energies are still being devoted in that direction. I am at present in charge of the rolling-stock."

"My hat!"

"Bunter ought to be among that lot!" murmured Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Prout ambled away, leaving the juniors clucking.

"Old Prout's not a bad sort," said Peter Todd. "But he will persist in making an ass of himself!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ready, you fellows?" inquired Dennis Carr.

There was a chorus of assent.

"You know the route, I suppose? Through Friardale Wood, across to Wapshot, and back over the fields and railway embankment. Is that clear?"

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 46.

"Clear as mud?" said Johnny Bull.

"Off you go—everybody!"

The runners moved off in a solid phalanx along the road, and presently plunged into the wood.

The route which Dennis Carr had set was a very stiff one, but Harry Wharton & Co. told themselves that if Dennis could stick it so could they.

Dennis himself was content to linger in the rear. He was holding his energies in reserve, with the intention of putting on a big spurt later.

But that big spurt never came.

When the outlying district of Wapshot was reached, Dennis stumbled over a loose stone in the roadway, and twisted his ankle. He did not twist it badly, but it was enough to prevent him from running any more.

"What rotten luck!" muttered the junior, as he dropped into a walk.

He was a good many miles from Greyfriars, and there were several ploughed fields to negotiate. The other runners had left him far behind, and no help was at hand.

From time to time Dennis scanned the little by-roads to see if there was any sign of a vehicle, but he drew blank.

The early winter dusk began to fall. A few stray stars glimmered in the sky. And still Dennis Carr trudged on, with no hope of reaching his goal until locking-up time.

"Wonder which is my unlucky star?" murmured Dennis, scanning the heavens. "I was born under one of those bounders, I know!"

Finally, weary and exhausted with much tramping, the junior reached the railway embankment.

"Oh, help! This is going to take some crossing!" he told himself.

It would be necessary for him to descend a steep slope, and to cross the railway-line. That part of the business was easy enough, but there was another steep slope on the other side, which he would have to climb. And it was easier to go down than to go up with a damaged ankle.

"Suppose I must tackle it," grunted Dennis, "or I shall be out here all night!"

Advancing cautiously, the junior lowered himself down the slope. An exclamation of relief escaped him when he reached the bottom.

"Here endeth the first part of the programme!" he murmured. And then he started to cross the metals.

As he did so his foot stumbled against something—something soft and inanimate.

Dennis saved himself from falling, and looked down to see what the obstruction was.

Then the junior gave a gasp of horror, and a thrill ran through his frame.

Lying across the metals was the figure of a man!

For a moment Dennis was utterly bewildered.

He could in no way account for the presence of a man on the railway-line at this time of the evening.

Then, as he dropped on one knee and examined the prostrate figure by the light of his electric torch, two startling facts were revealed to him.

The man was Mr. Prout, and he was unconscious!

"Good heavens!" panted Dennis.

Blood was trickling from a wound in Mr. Prout's forehead. It might have been a serious wound; it might not. Dennis was not sufficiently qualified to tell.

Anyway, the master was unconscious, and Dennis Carr set his teeth hard.

"This is the work of the strikers!" he thought.

Mr. Prout was in danger lying there in the chilly evening air.

But another and a graver danger soon made itself apparent.

There was an oncoming rumble, the metals vibrated, and Dennis Carr turned his head, with a start.

"The non-stop to Folkestone!" he muttered.

The approaching train met his gaze. It swung round a curve, with a red glow from its engine, and a spurt of flying sparks.

Dennis saw that there was not a second to be lost.

Mr. Prout's senseless form lay in the path of the approaching train.

The junior acted at once.

Headless now of his damaged ankle, he lifted the master bodily from the metals, and with a herculean effort managed to drag him on to the border of green grass at the foot of the embankment slope.

Dennis was only just in the nick of time.

He collapsed on the grass, sobbing for breath, and the night train thundered by.

"Safe!" muttered Dennis.

When he had recovered his breath he supported Mr. Prout's head on his knees.

"How on earth am I going to get him back to the school?" he asked himself.

At that moment the master opened his eyes. They rested dazedly for a moment on Dennis Carr; then Mr. Prout spoke.

"Bless my soul!" he murmured faintly. "What has happened?"

"It's all right, sir!" said Dennis, trying to make his voice cheerful and reassuring. "You've had a nasty knock, but you'll soon pull round."

Mr. Prout said nothing for a moment. He appeared to be trying to recollect what had gone before.

"Ah! It is clear to me now," he said at length. "I was too stunned to think for a moment."

"Buck up, sir!" said Dennis. "You can rest assured that those scoundrels will get it in the neck for this!"

Mr. Prout blinked at the junior.

"Scoundrels!" he repeated. "What scoundrels?"

"The brutes who bowled you over, sir!"

The master smiled faintly.

"You appear to be under a misapprehension, Carr," he said. "I was not bowled over, as you express it."

Dennis gave a start.

"Weren't you attacked by the strikers, sir?"

"Good gracious, no! I was walking back to the school, after duty, when I lost my footing on the top of the embankment, and came crashing down on to the metals."

"Oh!"

"I was extremely fortunate in not being run down by a train," said Mr. Prout.

He rose to his feet with an effort, and glanced at his illuminated wrist-watch. Then he looked curiously at Dennis Carr.

"Carr!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir!"

"The—the Folkestone train has already passed, and yet I am uninjured! Why, bless my soul, you must have carried me to safety!"

Had not Mr. Prout made this discovery for himself Dennis would never have told him.

"It—It was nothing, sir!" said the junior.

"Nothing!" echoed Mr. Prout. "Why, you have saved my life!"

"If you prefer to put it melodramatically, perhaps I may have done something of the sort, sir," said Dennis. "But it required no great effort or heroism, I can assure you. What I'm worried about now is how we are going to get back to the school."

That problem was soon solved.

There was a gleam of lanterns from the path at the top of the embankment, and Dennis Carr raised a shout.

"Help!"

There was an answering shout, and a moment later half a dozen stalwart Sixth-Formers scrambled down the embankment slope.

Wingate, who was leading, stopped short in utter astonishment at the sight of Mr. Prout and Dennis Carr.

"My hat!" he exclaimed. "We were sent out to look for you, sir, but we didn't expect to find you like this! What has happened?"

Mr. Prout recounted his unfortunate experience to the seniors, and he laid stress on Dennis Carr's gallantry.

"Well played, kid!" said Wingate, when the Form-master had finished. "Greyfriars will be proud of you when this becomes common knowledge."

"Rats! It was nothing, Wingate—nothing at all!" said Dennis.

"I'm inclined to think otherwise," said the captain of Greyfriars. "And so will the others be when they know!"

"Are you much hurt, sir?" inquired Gwynne, turning to Mr. Prout.

"I think not," said the master. "With your assistance I shall be able to walk back to the school."

"Good!"

Mr. Prout and Dennis Carr were assisted up the steep slope in turn, and the party made their way back to Greyfriars.

Although it was past locking-up time quite a crowd was waiting in the Close as the procession streamed in.

Voices became audible in the darkness.

"Here, they are!"

"If this is your idea of cross-country running, Carr, I must say it's a jolly queer one!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "We've been back hours!"

"My ankle gave out," explained Dennis.

"Oh!"

Dennis Carr would have pushed his way through the surging throng into the building, but Wingate's stalwart form prevented him.

"One moment!" said the captain of Grey-



.. THE ..
**CONVERSION
 OF DICKINSON
 MINOR!**

A Magnificent Long
 Complete Story of JIMMY
 SILVER & CO., the Chums
 of Rookwood.

BY
OWEN CONQUEST.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Looking After Dickinson Minor.

"WHERE'S Dickinson minor?"
 Jimmy Silver asked the question. And Arthur Edward Lovell replied emphatically: "Blow Dickinson minor! Let's get down to the footer!"
 Jimmy Silver grunted.
 "I want Dickinson minor!"
 "Bless Dickinson minor!" growled Raby. "He's stuck somewhere with a Yankee gore-book! Let's get down to the footer!"
 "Dickinson's coming down to the footer, too," explained Jimmy.
 "Oh, he won't come!" said Newcome.
 "He don't care for footer. Come on! We're waiting for you, fathead!"
 But Jimmy Silver did not go.
 "It's because he doesn't like footer that he's coming," he said. "He's going to take up footer, whether he likes it or not. See?"

Whereupon Lovell and Raby and Newcome exclaimed in chorus:
 "Blow — blow — blow Dickinson minor!"

But Jimmy Silver did not heed. Jimmy had made up his mind. And when Jimmy had made up his mind wild Huns could not have dragged him away from his purpose. Jimmy had determined to befriend Dickinson minor, the new boy in the Fourth, whether the said Dickinson liked it or not. The chances were that he wouldn't like it, but that could not be helped.

"Seen Dickinson minor, Oswald?" he called out, as Dick Oswald came down with a coat and muffler on over his footer things.

Oswald grinned.
 "He's in the dorm," he replied.
 "Changing?" asked Jimmy.
 "No jolly fear! Sprawling and slacking!" said Oswald.
 "Come on!" said Jimmy.
 He started for the stairs. Lovell and Raby and Newcome growled, and followed. They were growing fed up with Dickinson minor.

The Fistical Four entered the Fourth Form dormitory. Two or three fellows

were there changing for the footer. Dickinson minor also was there. He was sprawling on his bed, resting on an elbow, and intently engaged upon a book with a lurid cover, which represented, in many colours, a trapper being burned at the stake by Red Indians. He did not look up as the chums of the Fourth came towards him. He was deep in the adventures of the Black Chief of the Red Raiders.

Jimmy Silver sniffed as he looked at him. Dickinson minor's taste for lurid American literature was the joke of the Form, but Dickinson did not mind. Chaff and chipping could not lure him from "Deadshot Bill" and "Blood-stained Dave." Dickinson's dreams were of the time when he would scour the prairie on a coal-black mustang, or rove the ocean in a rakish schooner.

Dickinson major of the Sixth had bestowed brotherly likings upon him without avail. Jimmy Silver & Co. had raided his library of lurid volumes, and burned them to the last page out of sheer friendship, and they had thought that that would be the end of it. But lo and behold! in a week, or less, Dickinson minor had accumulated a fresh stock of gory volumes, and was wallowing in them as of old. Nearly all Dickinson's pocket-money went in that direction.

He would go into class with "Dead-hot Bill" hidden under his waistcoat, to be snatched out and enjoyed when Mr. Bootles' back was turned. Even at calling-over he would sometimes forget to answer to his name, being deep in the adventures of the "Boy Pirate of the Southern Seas," or "Nobby Nick of New York."

"Dickinson!" roared Jimmy Silver.
 The new junior did not look up.
 "Go away!" he said, without taking his eyes from his volume.
 "Get up!"
 "Oh, go away!"
 "Do you hear?"
 "Rats!"
 "You're coming down to the footer!"
 "Go and eat coke!"
 "Get into your togs—quick!"
 "Oh, leave me alone!"

"Let the silly idiot alone!" growled Lovell. "He can't play footer! He can't do anything except read Yankee bohr! Leave the pasty-faced chump alone!"

"He's going to play footer," said Jimmy Silver. "I've told Dickinson major that I'll make him play footer."

"I won't play footer!" roared Dickinson minor. "Hang the footer! Look here! I'll lend you a book if you like! I've got 'Buffalo Bob, the Black Burglar,' here—"

"Oh, you ass!"
 "And here's 'Gold George, the Cool Cutthroat!' or the 'Forty Raiders of the Rockies!'"
 "You silly chump! Gerrup!"
 "Bah!"

Jimmy Silver wasted no more time in words. He had promised Dickinson major that he would do his best for his extraordinary minor. He meant to keep his word. He grasped the new boy, and rolled him off the bed with a bump.

Dickinson roared.
 "Yow-ow-ow! You silly ass! Unhand me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 Dickinson sat up and glared.
 "If I had a trusty rifle—" he gasped.
 "Or a rakish schooner!" grinned Raby.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get into your footer things!" said Jimmy Silver, frowning. "I'll trusty rifle you, you burbling duffer! Get into your things, and come down to the footer—sharp!"

"I won't!"
 "Take his feet, Lovell!"
 "Right-ho!"

Bump, bump, bump!
 Dickinson minor smote the floor of the dormitory hard. He roared and wriggled in the grasp of Jimmy Silver and Lovell. He might as well have struggled in the hug of a grizzly bear. He knew all about scalping-knives, trusty rifles, and rakish schooners, but very little about scrapping.
 "Now are you going to change?" demanded Jimmy.

"Bah!" howled Dickinson.
 Dickinson always said "Bah!" because it was the favourite reply of Deadshot Bill, his chief hero.

"Till bah you, you bleating baa-lamb!" growled Jimmy. "Three more!"
 Bump, bump, bump!
 "Yaroooh! Help! Yowp!"
 "Now are you going to change?"
 "Yow-ow-ow! Yes!"
 "Buck up, then!"

Dickinson minor rose somewhat painfully, with a black brow. If he had possessed such a thing as a trusty rifle, he would certainly have been tempted to use it then. But trusty rifles were off. The new junior suddenly changed into footer attire.

"Now come on!" said Jimmy, taking his arm.

"Bah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Dickinson minor was marched out of the dormitory, wriggling. Lovell and Raby and Newcome brought up the rear, grinning, and occasionally helping the new boy with their footer-boots when he lagged.

"Look here, you catiffs!" said Dickinson. Dickinson had a weird language all his own, which he had learned from his favourite volumes. "Look here, you hoodlums! I've got an important appointment this afternoon, and I've no time for silly games."

"Going to meet Deadshot Bill?" chuckled Jimmy Silver. "Or is the blood-bedabbled buccaneer waiting for you round by the bandstand?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"P'haps that ain't so far from the truth as you suppose!" snorted Dickinson.

Jimmy Silver halted, and stared at him.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Bah! You little know!"

"We—we little know!" gasped Lovell.

"Oh dear! Is the chap really going right off his silly rocker?"

"It looks to me as if he is," said Jimmy Silver quite soberly. "What he wants is open-air exercise—plenty of footer. This way, you born idiot!"

"Unhand me!"

"Bow-wow!"

Dickinson minor was marched out of the School House. In the quadrangle he made an effort to tear himself away.

"Carry him!" said Jimmy.

Dickinson minor was whirled off his feet, and, with his arms and legs wildly flying, he was rushed down to Little Side.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Dickinson is Mysterious.

"GREAT SCOTT!"

"What's the little game?"
 There were a good many of the Fourth on Little Side at practice. They stared at Dickinson minor as he was plumped down on the ground.

He lay there gasping.

"All serene!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Dickinson didn't want to come down to practice. But he's come!"

"Bah! I won't play!" roared Dickinson. "Don't I keep on telling you I've got an appointment this afternoon?"

"Deadshot Bill can wait," grinned Jimmy Silver. "Now, I'm going to keep an eye on you. Get up!"

"Bah!"

"Jump on him, Lovell—you've got the biggest feet—"

Dickinson minor jumped up.

"Now," said Jimmy, "there's the ball. That's called a football—see? You've got to kick that ball through those posts. Those posts are called a goal—see?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Every time you don't kick I shall kick you—see?"

"Bah! I won't! Yarooop!"

"Better wire in!"

"Yow-ow-ow! All right!"

Dickinson minor submitted to the inevitable.

It seemed to him a wicked waste of time to be punting a leather ball about when he did not yet know whether Trapper Bill had escaped from the torture-stake to which he had been bound by the Black Chief of the Red Raiders. But there was no help for it. Jimmy Silver didn't care twopence for Trapper Bill or Black Chief either, and Jimmy's word was law.

For a quarter of an hour Dickinson minor was kept at goal practice, and there was always a friendly boot at hand to help him when he slacked. Dickinson began to feel sore in body as well as in mind, and he wired in at last with something like energy.

Had he not been in an exasperated frame of mind he would have realised that the healthy exercise in the keen winter air was making him feel better than slacking indoors.

But as it was Dickinson minor was only waiting for an opportunity of escape.

His chance came at last.

"You're improving," Jimmy Silver told him. "Now, let's see what you can do. We're going to play seven a-side."

"Bah!" mumbled Dickinson.

But he took his place in the impromptu match. Although it was only practice, Jimmy Silver & Co. were keen enough about it, and they soon forgot Dickinson in the excitement of the game.

Oswald was captaining the opposite seven, and Jimmy Silver led an attack on Oswald's goal. He put the ball in, and then, remembering his protege, looked round for him.

The youthful disciple of Deadshot Bill had vanished!

"Where's Dickinson?" roared Jimmy Silver.

Lovell pointed to a fleeing figure that was just dodging into the School House in the distance.

"He's gone! Blow him!"

Jimmy Silver gave a snort like an angry war-horse.

"He's got to stick to it, ass! I've told his major I'll look after him. I'll fetch him back by his ears."

And Jimmy Silver started for the House.

But he sought in vain for Dickinson minor.

In the dormitory of the Classical Fourth he found the new boy's footer-things thrown carelessly on the floor.

Jimmy Silver grunted angrily.

The junior must have left again by a back door.

Jimmy Silver descended to the quadrangle again and looked towards the gates.

There was Dickinson minor, just going out, but he was too far off for recapture.

"Dickinson!" bawled Jimmy Silver.

The new junior did not look back. He ran out of the gates and disappeared.

Jimmy, in a decidedly wrathful mood, returned to the footer-ground.

Dickinson minor had finished with football for that afternoon. After all the trouble the captain of the Fourth had taken on his account, it was very ungrateful, and Jimmy mentally promised him a thick car when he came back from his mysterious excursion.

After the footer the Fistical Four went to the end study for tea. They were busy with that well-earned meal when Tommy Dodd of the Modern side looked in.

Lovell picked up the loaf for use as a missile, but Tommy Dodd held up his hand in sign of pax.

"I've seen your tame lunatic," he remarked.

"He's here!" growled Lovell, with a nod towards Jimmy Silver.

Tommy Dodd laughed.

"I mean the other one—that new Classical ass Dickinson. The chap with the Yankee gore-books."

"Oh, bother him!" said Raby. "This study is fed up with him, only that fat-head Jimmy will take the duffer under his silly wing!"

"That's why I've looked in," said Tommy Dodd. "Tain't my business, of course, but if the silly ass has a friend here, I want to give that friend the tip to look after him a bit. I don't know whether I ought to mention it to his major, really, only—well, his major's a prefect, and a chap can't tell a prefect things."

"What the dickens has he been doing?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"I've passed him on the footpath from Coombe. He was talking to a slouching ruffian—a regular peaky bouncer," said Tommy Dodd. "Chap who looked like a born criminal. I spoke to him, and he said 'Avaunt!'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If we had him on the Modern side," continued Tommy Dodd, "we'd soon knock the fatheadedness out of him. But I suppose on this side one silly ass more or less isn't noticed!"

"You cheeky Modern worm!"

"Well, I thought I'd give you the tip, as I hear you've taken the howling ass under your wing," said Tommy Dodd.

"That acquaintance won't do you young cheerful any good, and you'd better talk to him. If Bootles saw him talking to such an awful-looking character there would be a shindy. Ta, tá!"

And Tommy Dodd walked off, slamming the door to show his contempt for Classics generally.

"Cheeky ass!" said Newcome.

Jimmy Silver looked worried.

"I say, this is rotten!" he said. "The howling duffer said he had an appointment this afternoon. What on earth can he want with such a fellow as Dobby described? He's dotty enough to get himself into trouble."

"Let him rip!" grunted Lovell.

"I'll talk to him when he comes in," said Jimmy. "He isn't a bad sort if he wasn't such a silly ass. Why don't the Government prohibit the importation of Yankee gore-books—what!"

Jimmy Silver said no more, but he was thinking very seriously. The new junior was so extremely peculiar in his ways that there was really no telling what mischief he might get into. And the good-natured Jimmy was concerned about him.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Jimmy Keeps an Eye Open.

JIMMY SILVER did not see the new boy again till the evening, when he found him in the Common-room.

Dickinson minor was lolling in a chair, reading, of course, a volume with a lurid cover. He had started reading by candle-light in the Dormitory when he first came to Rookwood, but hurtling boots and pillows had put a stop to that. He was reading in the Common-room now, under difficulties, the thread of his perusal being interrupted by chipping remarks.

Fellows asked how Deadshot Bill was getting on, and whether he had made arrangements for the purchase of a rakish schooner, and whether he would begin his piratical career by making old Bootles walk the plank.

Dickinson's ambition to become a pirate when he grew up was well-known, and was the subject of great merriment in the Fourth, though Dickinson's mind wavered sometimes between the attractions of a piratical career and those of

the life of a scalp-hunter of the Far West. But whatever his future career might be, it was settled that he was going to have a trusty rifle and a faithful band. Indeed, in a confidential moment Dickinson had offered to make Jimmy Silver second-in-command of his trusty band—an offer that was received with a yell of laughter by the ungrateful Jimmy.

Dickinson's eyes were glued upon his book as the captain of the Fourth came up to him in the common-room. The Black Chief of the Red Raiders was putting Trapper Bill to the torture, and the heroic William was hurling defiance in his teeth.

Jimmy jerked the book away, and there was a yell from Dickinson that would have done credit to the Black Chief himself.

"Yah! Gimme my book, you beast!" "Tain't a book; it's a black-pudding!" said Jimmy Silver. "I want to speak to you, young Dickinson."

"Well I don't want you to. I want my book! Beware!"

"Don't be a silly ass, old chap! Why can't you talk sense?" urged Jimmy.

"Bah!"

Dickinson's dramatic "Bah!" always made Jimmy Silver grin. It was not much use being angry with such a duffer. "Who was that chap you met to-day, Dickinson?" asked Jimmy, in a low voice.

"You little know!" replied Dickinson. "Well, that's why I'm asking you, kid."

"My lips are sealed."

"Can't you talk English?" hooted Jimmy Silver.

"Bah!"

"Look here, you born idiot, will you tell me who that chap was?"

"Never!"

"Was it Deadshot Bill?" chuckled Lovell.

Dickinson sneered.

"It may have been a rover, and it may not," he said disdainfully.

"A—a—a what?"

"A rover," said Dickinson.

"A rover!" said Jimmy Silver faintly.

"Oh, my hat! You silly cuckoo, don't you know that there aren't such things as rovers outside Yankee gore-books?"

"You little know!" sneered Dickinson.

"No one understands me here. But the day will come! You will see. What will you say when the fame of Deadshot Dickinson rings far and wide?"

"Have you ever fired a firearm of any sort?" asked Jimmy Silver, controlling his merriment.

"Not yet. I'm going to learn, though. Mysterious Jim is going to teach me."

"Who? Which? Who's that?"

"Never mind!"

Jimmy Silver and Lovell exchanged glances. The thought had come into both their minds at once that the duffer of the Fourth was really and actually "potty."

"Dickinson, old chap," said Jimmy Silver gently, "don't jaw like that. You make me feel creepy!"

"Ha, ha!" said Dickinson.

He said "Ha, ha!" because the Boy Pirate of his favourite fiction said "Ha, ha!" It was supposed to be a sardonic laugh.

"Mad as a hatter!" murmured Lovell.

"Wait!" said Dickinson. "At midnight's hour we meet!"

"Eh?"

"While all are sleeping Mysterious Jim will come with stealthy tread."

"Will he, by gum?" said Lovell.

"Look here, Jimmy Silver, we ought to tell Bootles about this silly idiot! He ought to be seen by a doctor."

Jimmy Silver was silent. He said no more to Dickinson, but he was very

thoughtful during the remainder of the evening.

When the Classical Fourth went up to their dormitory, Jimmy kept an eye on Dickinson minor.

He noted that the new boy did not fully undress before he turned in. He removed only his outer garments before he slipped on his pyjamas. Under his bed a pair of rubber shoes had been placed.

"That silly ass is going to get up again to-night, Teddy," he said, in a low voice.

"Eh—how do you know?"

"It's plain enough. Look here, you remember his idiotic gas about Mysterious Jim?"

"Yes. He's dotty!"

"Pretty nearly, I think; but there's something in it," said Jimmy quietly.

"You know Tommy Dodd saw him talking to a ruffianly fellow, and he's been talking about Mysterious Jim, and meeting him at midnight's hour, and the rest—"

"Only his silly piffle!" yawned Lovell.

"I tell you there's something in it! It looks to me as if some rascal has found out what a dummy he is, and is taking him in. He's dotty enough for anything!"

"But what—"

"What could anybody want to meet the babbling idiot at midnight for?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"There's something on—something afoot, as the ass would say himself, in his queer lingo. Don't go to sleep, kid!"

"Look here, I'm jolly well not going to stay awake till midnight's hour, or any other blessed hour, on account of that dummy!"

"Well, I am! I'll call you, then."

"Suppose we give him a hiding now?" suggested Lovell.

"Fathead! We've got to find out what's on. He may be letting a burglar into the school for all we know."

"Oh, my giddy Aunt Selina! He wouldn't!"

"He would if the man called himself Mysterious Jim, and said he was a pirate."

Lovell exploded. He could not help it.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shurrup, you ass! Don't say a word to the fathead, but keep mum, and keep your eyes open."

Lovell turned in, chuckling. But he determined to stay awake. Jimmy Silver did not close his eyes after Bulkeley of the Sixth had turned the lights out. He was really alarmed for the duffer of the Fourth.

It was not easy to keep awake, but Jimmy Silver was determined.

Lovell soon dropped off, but Jimmy's eyes did not close.

In the glimmer of starlight in the dormitory, too, he could see that Dickinson minor was sitting up in bed, evidently for the purpose of remaining awake.

Twelve tolled out from the clock-tower on the Modern side of Rookwood at last.

Before the last stroke had died away Dickinson minor had slipped out of bed, and he began dressing hastily.

Jimmy Silver's heart beat a little faster.

He slipped from his bed, and moved towards the dormitory door.

Dickinson minor did not observe him. He finished dressing, and put on the rubber shoes, and stole towards the door.

Jimmy was standing with his back to the door. As the new boy came up, Jimmy's hand dropped on his shoulder with a grip like iron.

Dickinson uttered a shrill, terrified cry.

"Yow!"

"Stop, you fool!" said Jimmy grimly.

"Oh, it's you, you ass!" panted Dickinson. "I—I thought—"

"Hallo! What's the row?" yawned Lovell, waking up.

"Let me pass!" hissed Dickinson.

"Not just now," said Jimmy. "You're not going out, my pippin!"

"You fool! Let me pass! He's waiting!"

"Who's waiting?"

"Never mind whom! Let me go!"

Instead of letting him go, Jimmy Silver compressed his grip, and marched the new boy back to his bed.

The weedy disciple of Deadshot Dave was as an infant in Jimmy's powerful grasp.

"Sit down!"

"Bah! I won't—I—Yooop!"

Dickinson minor sat down forcibly.

"Get a light, Lovell!" said Jimmy quietly.

A match flickered in the gloom of the dormitory.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Mysterious Jim.

LOVELL stepped out of bed and lighted a candle-end. Raby and Newcome and Oswald were awake now, and several more of the Classical Fourth. They sat up in bed and stared at the strange scene.

"What's the trouble?" yawned Raby.

"What's the duffer dressed for?" exclaimed Topham. "Goin' out on the tiles, Dickinson? My hat!"

Dickinson minor wriggled in Jimmy's grip. But there was no escape for him.

"Now, Dickinson," said Jimmy Silver, very quietly but very firmly, "you're going to tell me where you were going, and why?"

"I won't!"

"Then I'll take you down to Mr. Bootles at once!"

"Wha-at!"

"Come on!" said Jimmy, with deadly determination. "You're not quite safe, you dotty duffer! I'm going to take you to Mr. Bootles!"

"I—I—I— Don't!" yelled Dickinson. "I—I say, I'll tell you, if you like!"

"Buck up, then!"

"I'm going to meet a comrade," said Dickinson sulkily.

"Not a pal!" snorted Lovell. "A giddy comrade!"

"Who is it?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"Mysterious Jim!"

There was a cackle of laughter from the juniors sitting up in bed. But Dickinson's face in the candle-light was quite serious.

"Who is Mysterious Jim?" asked the captain of the Fourth quietly.

"A—a—a pirate!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tell us all about him," said Jimmy patiently.

"Well, I don't mind," said Dickinson. "Swear to keep the deadly secret—"

"Don't be a silly ass! Go on!"

"Well, it's really a deadly secret," said Dickinson. "I came to know the chap last week. I was reading 'The Boy Pirate!' on the stile when he spoke to me. I—I thought he was a footpad at first, but—but he asked me about that story, and I told him, and then I told him a lot of things, you know, about my wanting to be a pirate when I grew up, and so on, and he—he—"

"Laughed?" said Raby.

"No, he didn't!" said Dickinson indignantly. "He said it was a ripping thing, and that I was just the build of a boy pirate."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"He told me that he ran away from school when he was my age, and became a pirate," went on Dickinson. "Then he asked me to meet him again, and I've met him twice, and he's given me a lot of tips about being a pirate."

"Great Scott!"

"What was he pulling the silly duffer's leg for?" said Oswald, in wonder.

"He wasn't pulling my leg," said Dickinson. "He told me he was a pirate, and had sailed the Spanish Main for years and years. He said what he's been wanting to meet was a lad of spirit like—like me!"

"Like you! Oh, Julius Caesar!"

"And he's asked you to meet him to-night!" said Jimmy.

"Yes. He said he'd like to see those books I've told him about. I've got a lot in the box-room, and he asked me to let him in to-night. Of course, it's a dead secret. Bootles would cut up rusty if he knew."

"I fancy he would!" assented Jimmy Silver. "So you were going out to let that man into the house? Who is he?"

"He's known as Mysterious Jim, he told me."

"I don't suppose he's very mysterious to the police. I dare say they know him quite well?" said Jimmy. "And he wasn't going to do anything but look at your precious Yankee gore-books, when you let him in?"

"He's going to bring me a revolver, too. He said he would!"

Jimmy looked fixedly at the duffer of the Fourth. Dickinson's faith in his practical acquaintance was evidently complete.

"Jolly lucky I was keeping an optic on you, I think," said Jimmy Silver.

"Where are you to meet him?"

"I'm going to help him over the school wall under the old beech."

"And he's there now?"

"He was to be there at midnight."

"Good! So he's expecting you?"

"Yes. The password is 'Blood and Bones!'"

"Oh! There's a password, is there?"

"Yes. I've got to whisper 'Blood and Bones,' so that he'll know it's me. And now you can let me go, Jimmy Silver. I'm not going to keep Mysterious Jim waiting to please you!"

"Stay where you are, you burbling idiot!" Jimmy Silver pushed the new boy back on the bed. "I'm going to explain to you. In the first place, your Mysterious Jim is what you took him for—a footpad. He's found out from your silly babble that you're half-mad, and he's fooled you with those yarns, because he wants to be let into the school, and the only thing he can want here is to rob the place. Do you understand now?"

Dickinson gasped for a moment.

"Bah!" he said at last.

"If you'd let him in," resumed Jimmy Silver, "most likely the first thing he'd have done would have been to knock you on the head, so that you couldn't give the alarm."

"Oh, I say!"

"And then he'd have robbed the place, and taken everything he could lay his hands on, and you'd have had to explain to the Head in the morning!"

"Oh dear!"

"Do you understand now, you crass idiot?"

"I—I don't believe it!"

Lovell was slipping on his clothes.

"I'm jolly well going to wake Bootles," he said. "If that scoundrel's hanging about the school, the police ought to be telephoned for."

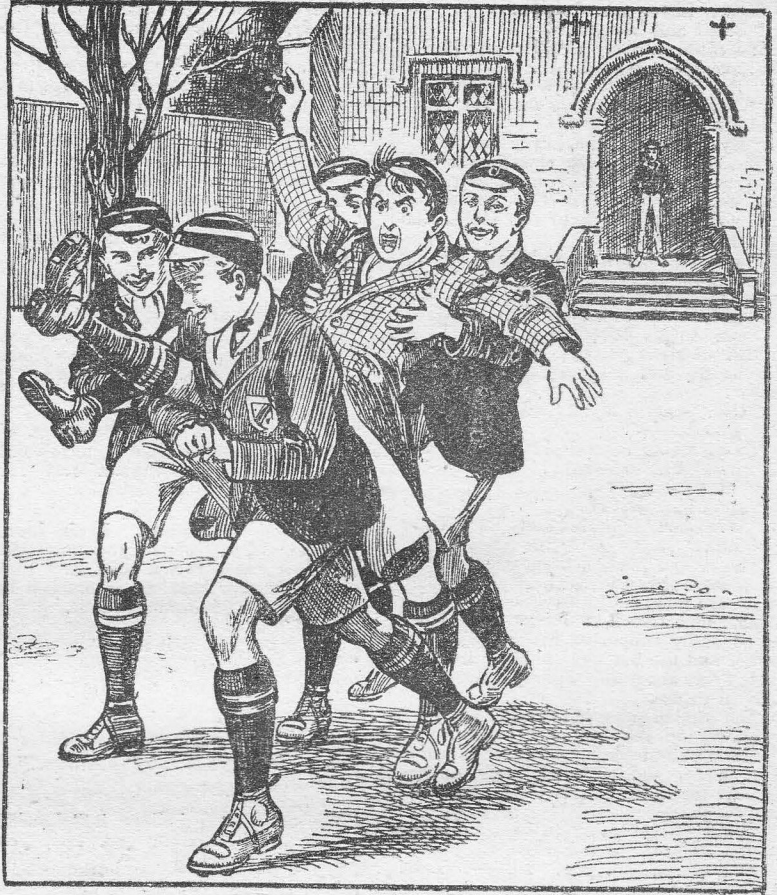
"Hold on!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Look here, Jimmy, you don't want the house to be burgled, I suppose?"

"I don't want Dickinson minor sacked for being a silly idiot. As for that matter, we can deal with him. We know where he is, and we can tackle him. We four can do it!"

"But—but—"

"We'll get a cricket-bat each, and give



Dickinson minor was whirled off his feet, and, with his arms and legs wildly flying, he was rushed down to Little Sids. (See page 9.)

him the password, and then bash him on the cocoonut!" said Jimmy. "He will be fed up with Rookwood then."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You won't!" yelled Dickinson. "I won't let you! I tell you—"

"You look after this burbling chump, Oswald. If he makes a row, take him by the neck and march him down to Mr. Bootles' room, and explain!"

"You bet!" said Oswald.

Dickinson minor collapsed. Whether his mysterious friend was burglarious, or only piratical, he knew what view the Form-master would take of the matter.

The Fistical Four dressed themselves quickly, and quitted the dormitory. All Rookwood was sleeping and silent. The four juniors, with their hearts beating a little faster than usual, crept silently down to their study.

But for the consequences to Dickinson minor, Jimmy Silver would have called the Form-master at once. But the inevitable result would have been the "sack" for the duffer of the Fourth. Jimmy naturally shrank from that.

And the Fistical Four had no doubt about being able to deal with the ruffian, who had taken advantage of the new boy's simplicity. They were quite assured that when they had done with him, Mysterious Jim would not want to hang about Rookwood any longer. He was evidently not a professional burglar, or he would not have needed the assistance of the new junior. He was undoubtedly a footpad, who had seen in Dickinson's folly a chance of getting into the house, there to steal all that he could lay his greedy hands upon.

In the end study, Jimmy struck a match, and sorted out his cricket-bat. Raby and Newcome took a stump each, and Lovell the poker.

"If Mysterious Jim gets this little lot on his napper, he will feel like chucking up the business of a pirate," grinned Lovell.

"What ho! Follow your leader!" said Jimmy Silver.

The match went out. The Fistical Four stole silently from the study.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Ragging a Rascal!

JIMMY SILVER & Co. were soon outside the house, dropping silently from a back window. As a matter of absolute fact, they had left the house in a similar manner before, though never on such an errand. This time it was not a "rag"; it was grim earnest.

They scudded quickly across the shadowy quadrangle.

It was well past midnight now, and if the footpad had kept his appointment, he was undoubtedly lurking outside the school wall at that moment.

Quietly, the four juniors drew themselves up the wall in the shadow of the overhanging beech. At that spot under the tree the darkness was dense.

But the light sounds they made in climbing evidently caught a pair of sharp ears, for they heard a movement in the road.

A dark figure was lurking close to the school wall.

Jimmy Silver peered down.

"Blood and bones!"

He could scarcely avoid a chuckle as he gave the password.

"Here I am, sir!" said a husky voice.

"Come on, then; give me your hand, and I'll pull you up."

"Ay, ay!" said the husky voice.

The dark figure drew close to the wall just under Jimmy Silver. The ruffian had no suspicion that the whispering voice did not belong to the foolish lad he had duped.

He reached up his hands, and Jimmy Silver grasped them. With the junior's aid, the ruffian scrambled up the wall, and got his elbows on it.

Then, to his astonishment and alarm, a pair of strong hands grasped each of his wrists, and another fastened on his collar.

"Ow!" gasped Mysterious Jim. "Wot the thunder—"

"You rotten scoundrel!" said Jimmy Silver. "You're caught!"

"Oh, my hoye!"

"Hold him, you chaps!"

"What ho!" chuckled Lovell. "We've got him!"

The ruffian made a desperate effort to drop back into the road. But he could not. He was held by both wrists and his collar, and Lovell and Raby and Newcome easily supported his weight. The poker and the bat were not required. It was a cricket-stump Jimmy Silver proceeded to use.

The ruffian was held with his chest grinding on the top of the wall. He could not climb higher without the use of his hands, and he could not escape. Jimmy Silver sat astride of the wall, and leaned over.

"Now you're going to have a lesson, you scoundrel!" he remarked.

"I'll smash you yet! I'll— Yah! Oh!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yaroooh!"

Whack, whack, whack!

Jimmy Silver laid on the cricket-stump across the ruffian's back and shoulders, with all the strength of his muscular arm.

Mysterious Jim wriggled and struggled and gurgled and yelled.

"Yaroooh! 'Eip! Yow-ow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Pile in, Jimmy!"

"I'm piling in, ain't I?" gasped Jimmy Silver. "I'm giving him jip! I'll Mysterious Jim him! Take that, you rotter, and that—and that—and that!"

"Oh—ow—yow—yoooop!"

The rascal struggled desperately, yelling with anguish. But Jimmy Silver did not cease till his arm was aching.

"Now drop the beast!" he panted.

Crash!

The ruffian went down in the road with a terrific concussion. He rolled over, gasping and yelling. He scrambled to his feet, a torrent of curses pouring from his lips.

"Better call the porter now to help him to the lock-up!" said Jimmy Silver cheerfully.

The groaning ruffian heard that remark, and he was on his feet in a moment, and running down the road.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mysterious Jim vanished into the shadows, his piratical designs on Rookwood completely frustrated.

The Fistical Four dropped from the wall.

"I fancy he won't come hanging round Rookwood again!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "Now for the dorm! I wonder if anybody heard him; he made row enough. Come on!"

Chuckling over their success, the Fistical Four scudded back to the house.

In a few minutes they were inside it.

and the weapons were disposed of in the end study, and they tiptoed back to the dormitory.

"Well, what luck?" asked Oswald, as they came in, and Jimmy Silver carefully closed the door.

Jimmy chuckled.

"Lots!" he said cheerily. "He was there, and he's had the licking of his life. I fancy he's got more lumps on him than he could count in a week!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you rotters!" said Dickinson minor.

"And he's gone—at record speed!" chuckled Lovell. "You won't see Mysterious Jim any more, Dickinson!"

"Better give him a wide berth if you do," said Raby. "He's bound to think you planted this on him, my pippin!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bah!"

"Now let's give Dickinson some of the same," suggested Lovell. "He's not going to spoil our night's rest for nothing!"

"Good egg!"

"Hold on a minute! Look here, Dickinson, do you understand now that that fellow was a rotten thief, and that you've jolly near been an accomplice in a burglary?" said Jimmy Silver.

"No, I don't!"

"You don't believe it now?"

"No!"

"Then you want a hiding," said Jimmy. "Spreadeagle him!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Spank, spank, spank, spank!

"Do you believe it now, Dickinson?"

"Grooooh!"

Spank, spank!

"Yaroooh! I—I believe it!" howled Dickinson. "Anything you like, you beast! Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And remember there's some more of the same to come when you chum up with any more Mysterious Jims!" said Lovell warningly.

"Yow-ow-ow! Grooooh!"

Dickinson minor turned in, mumbling, but still probably unconvinced, in spite of Jimmy Silver's drastic methods of carrying conviction. But, at all events, he was not inclined for any more piratical adventures that night.

The Fistical Four returned to bed, feeling that they deserved well of Rookwood and their country generally, and slumber at last reigned in the dormitory of the Classical Fourth.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Jimmy's Idea.

DICKINSON minor was in a sulky temper the following day.

He scowled at the Fistical Four when he met them, without diminishing in the slightest degree the cheery spirits of those merry young gentlemen.

Some of the Classical Fourth looked upon him now as really "cracked"; and, indeed, probably he was not far off it, owing to the influence over his foolish mind of the pernicious American trash he was constantly devouring.

He was caned that morning in the Form-room for reading "The Black Chief" under his desk, and Mr. Bootles warned him seriously that if he found such papers in his hands again he would report the matter to the Head.

He refused savagely to come down to the footer after lessons. He took himself off to the box-room, where he had a fresh supply of lurid books concealed.

Jimmy Silver watched him go with a thoughtful brow, but with a glimmer in his eyes.

"He ain't cured yet," he remarked to his chums.

"Bother him!" said Lovell. "I'm done with him!"

Jimmy shook his head.

"I'm not done with him. He's not a bad sort, really—only fatheaded. Besides, his major is very decent, and it simply makes old Dickinson wriggle for his minor to be the butt of the Lower School. It's rough on Dickinson major!"

"He doesn't lick him enough," said Raby.

"He licks him nearly every day," said Jimmy. "It makes him simply raged when the young ass talks about a trusty rifle. A fellow would have thought that what happened last night would have cured him."

"Well, it hasn't. He won't be cured till he's sent to a home for idiots!"

"I've got a wheeze."

"Oh, blow! What about the footer?"

"Never mind the footer now, my sons," said Jimmy Silver mysteriously. "I've got a wheeze for really curing Dickinson minor!"

"Oh, rot! He's past cure!"

"You see, he's got all that Yankee bosh about scalp-hunters and deadshot desperadoes fairly grained into him," said Jimmy. "He doesn't realise that a pirate is a dirty thief, like any other thief. He wants to be a pirate, but he wouldn't steal anything—you know that."

"I don't see how he's going to be a pirate without stealing anything!" grinned Raby. "You don't get paid by the hour as a pirate!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You see, he hasn't reasoned it out; I suppose he hasn't brains enough," said Jimmy. "It's all just gas, you know, and he doesn't understand it. He wants to be a blood-stained scalp-hunter, but he wouldn't hurt a mouse really. He wants to be a buccaneer, but you could trust him with your watch. It seems to me that if he could be made to realise what an idiot he is, it would cure him!"

"But how—"

Jimmy lowered his voice.

"Suppose a masked robber chief asked him to join his band—"

"Eh?"

"And made it a condition that he should prove his quality by committing a few murders to start with—"

"Wha-a-at!"

"Then I believe Dickinson would understand that he ain't built to become a blood-bedabbled buccaneer," said Jimmy, with conviction.

"You silly ass!" roared Lovell. "It can't happen, can it, when there ain't such a thing as a robber chief?"

"Dickinson believes there is."

"But there ain't, all the same."

"My dear chap, it's as easy as any thing to manufacture a robber chief. It only needs a black cloak and a mask."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"At midnight's hour," said Jimmy Silver, in a thrilling whisper, "Black Jack the Scalp-Hunter will appear in the dorm. He will awaken Dickinson minor, and call on him to follow the black flag. He will demand a few murders as an earnest of good intentions, and will plunge a deadly knife into a chap to show how easily it is done. When he sees Jimmy Silver—that's me—murdered before his eyes, Dickinson minor will understand that it isn't all lavender to be blood-bedabbled. He won't know till afterwards that the robber chief is me, and that the murdered Jimmy Silver is only a bolster and red ink. What!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Co. were almost doubled up at the idea.

"If that don't cure him, nothing will."

grinned Jimmy. "We'll try it, anyway. And we shall have to let the other chaps into it, of course—everybody except Dickinson minor. He will know afterwards!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

That evening it might have been observed that there was an amazing amount of whispering and chuckling among the Classical Fourth.

Dickinson minor did not observe it. He was deeply immersed in the gory adventures of Black Bill, the Terror of the Rockies.

Before bedtime all the Classical Fourth were in the secret, and chuckling over it. When the Robber Chief made his appearance in the dormitory, all the Fourth would be asleep—at least, would appear so. Dickinson minor would be left to deal with that dread apparition on his own.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER. Dickinson Minor's Chance.

A WAKEN!"

Dickinson minor started, and opened his eyes.

It was close on midnight.

Dickinson had been fast asleep, dreaming that he was chasing Red Indians on the boundless prairies.

A shake of the shoulder had awakened him, and he started up in bed, his eyes growing wide and round, and blinking in the light of a candle.

Beside his bed stood a form draped in a black cloak, the face concealed by a mask of jetty blackness.

Through the eyeholes of the mask the eyes of the mysterious figure gleamed down at him.

"Grooh!" gasped Dickinson, in dire terror.

"Awaken!" said a deep, thrilling voice. "The hour has come!"

"Help!" shrieked Dickinson.

"Silence, on your life!"

"Oh dear!"

"Utter not a sound!" went on the deep voice, growing more thrilling.

"Would you awaken the youths who sleep here? Would you give the alarm and betray into the hands of the police Black Jack, the Robber Chief?"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"The hour has come! Arise, Dickinson minor, and follow me!"

Dickinson sat in bed and quaked.

From the other beds in the dormitory came no sound. All the Classical Fourth, apparently, were sleeping the sleep of the just.

Only Dickinson minor sat up in bed, his staring eyes fixed upon that dread figure.

It was not much taller than Dickinson himself, but to the new boy's startled eyes it looked almost gigantic.

On the washstand close by the bed a candle burned. Dickinson was too dazed to realise that it was a curious proceeding on the part of the midnight marauder to light a candle in the dormitory. Perhaps the masked Robber Chief had not wished to frighten him too much.

The candle-light flickered on the cloaked figure, the masked face, and the gleaming eyes. Dickinson minor quaked.

"Who—who—who are you?" he stammered through his chattering teeth.

"Have you never heard of Black Jack, the Midnight Marauder of the Mask?"

"Ye-es; but—but—"

"But what, craven?"

"I—I didn't know he was—was real!" gasped Dickinson. "I—I say— Oh dear! Lemme alone! Go away! Oh—ow!"

"Bah!"

Dickinson started. So like to his own disdainful "Bah!" was that contemptu-

ous "Bah!" from Black Jack the Marauder.

"Craven!" hissed the Robber Chief. "Hearken! From my trusty lieutenant, Mysterious Jim, I have heard of you. Listen! One of my band has fallen. He has been hanged—"

"Grooh!"

"But not," hissed the Robber Chief—"not till he had slain seventeen minions of the law, and seen them rolling and wallowing in mud and blood."

"Wow!"

"Daredevil Dick has fallen. His place must be filled. Hence am I come. His place shall be taken by Daredevil Dickinson."

"Wow-wow!"

Dickinson minor did not look much like a daredevil at that moment. He was shaking like a jelly, and his face was like chalk, and his eyes almost bursting out of their sockets.

"Hearken!" pursued the masked robber. "Without, my horses wait. They paw the ground, ready for the wild ride through the lowering midnight. Rise, Dickinson minor, and follow your chief! Ere long your hands shall be as red with blood as mine own!"

"Grooh!"

"Do you shrink, Dickinson minor? What mean, then, the bold words uttered to my trusty lieutenant, Mysterious Jim? Are you not prepared to rove the boundless ocean, to ride the midnight through the moaning forest, to tear the scalps from heads that shriek in vain for mercy? Are you not prepared to wade in crimson blood and scarlet gore?"

"Oh dear—oh dear! G-g-g-go away!" mumbled Dickinson minor. "I d-d-d-don't want to c-c-come!"

"A-ha! You tremble! But the order has gone forth, and you must come! Think, Daredevil Dickinson—think! In a few hours we join my trusty band, and you shall share in a raid! Blood will be spilt by the pint—the gallon! Treasure shall be ours, reeking with gore! Do you hesitate now?"

"Oh! Ow-wow!"

Dickinson minor not only hesitated; he was glued to his bed.

Why did he not jump up with alacrity to accept that flattering offer of the Robber Chief? It was the hour of which he had dreamed, for which he had longed—the hour when he, Dickinson minor, should no longer be a fag at school, but a bold rider and a reckless marauder. His dream had come true. Here was the Robber Chief summoning him to a life of lawless freedom. Dickinson minor ought to have jumped at the chance.

But he didn't. He shivered in bed.

"Pi-pip-p-please go away!" he murmured faintly. "Oh dear!"

"Ha, ha!" It was the sardonic laugh of which Dickinson had read so often, which he had often pictured himself uttering upon the deck of a rakish schooner. "Ha, ha! You flinch from the test, Daredevil Dickinson! But it is too late! To gain admittance here, I have slain the porter—"

"G-g-goodness gracious!"

"Behold the trusty blade that has drawn his blood!"

From under the black cloak a carving-knife was thrust, and to Dickinson's horror, he could see red drops glistening on it.

He shrank back to the other side of the bed.

"Arise, Dickinson minor! Dickinson minor no longer, but Daredevil Dickinson of the Black Band!"

"Grooh!"

"The hour is come! Follow me, or this trusty blade—"

"I—I—I'll get up!" panted Dickinson.

"Look sharp, then—I mean, tumble up, you swab!"

Dickinson crawled out of bed on the further side. He was trembling in every limb. If only the other fellows would have awakened! It was curious that they had heard nothing! But not a fellow moved, and from several of the beds snores proceeded. Dickinson minor had the Robber Chief all to himself.

"Hither, Daredevil Dickinson!"

"If—if you please—"

"Hither!" hissed the Robber Chief in so terrifying a voice that Dickinson fairly scuttled round the bed to him.

"Last night," hissed Black Jack, "at midnight's stilly hour, my faithful lieutenant, Mysterious Jim, was beaten like a dog."

"I—I didn't—I—I wasn't—"

"By whose hand was the fell deed done? Give me the name of the cut-throat!"

"It—it was Jimmy Silver; b-b-but—"

"Then he dies!" Dickinson shrieked.

"I—I say—don't! I say, wake up, your fellows!" yelled Dickinson desperately.

"Ha, ha!" Again that fiendish laugh from the Robber Chief. "They cannot wake. They are drugged!"

"Dud-dud-drugged!" gasped Dickinson, in dismay.

"Ay, ay! By the orders of Black Jack the potion was administered. They sleep. They cannot wake!"

Dickinson minor blinked along the row of white beds in the flickering candle-light. Certainly the Robber Chief's statement seemed to be correct, for his yell had failed to awaken a single fellow in the dormitory.

"Take this trusty blade and drive it to his heart as he sleeps!"

"I c-c-can't!"

"Listen! No member is admitted to the Black Band who has not proved his faith by dyeing his hands deep with gore."

"I c-c-can't!"

"Trembling wretch! You are not worthy of a place in the Black Band! You shall see how easy it is. Behold!"

The Robber Chief strode towards Jimmy Silver's bed. Dickinson minor watched him in horror. The outlines of a sleeper could be seen under the bed-clothes, and the wretched junior almost fainted as the carving-knife was raised.

"Behold! He dies!"

Up went the carving-knife!

But at that moment the Robber Chief met with the surprise of his life. Dickinson minor, hardly knowing what he did, grabbed a pillow from his bed, and hurled it. He had forgotten his desire to become a robber and a pirate—quite forgotten that only that evening he had longed to be mounted upon a coal-black horse, stained with blood for preference.

He hurled the pillow fairly at the masked face of the Robber Chief.

Taken completely by surprise, the Robber Chief staggered back, and sat down on the dormitory floor with a bump.

And his next remark was an extraordinary one for a Robber Chief and a Masked Midnight Marauder.

"Oh, scissors! You silly ass! Yew-wow-wow!"

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER. Quite Cured.

HA, ha, ha!"

The Fourth-Formers were all awake now.

They sat up in bed, chortling with delight. Dickinson minor gazed at them with

distended eyes. He could not understand how the Classical juniors had so suddenly recovered from the supposed drug, or why they laughed at that tragic moment.

"Help, you fellows!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's going to kill Jimmy Silver!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly asses!" shouted the Robber Chief, scrambling to his feet. "You've spoiled the whole game with your blessed cackling."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Dickinson minor wondered if he was dreaming. How on earth was it that Jimmy Silver's voice was proceeding from under the black mask of the Robber Chief?

Black Jack jerked off the mask. Dickinson minor gave a yell.

"Jimmy Silver!"

Jimmy grinned.

"Yes, you fathead!"

"Oh, dear!"

It was evident that the figure in Jimmy's bed, which had so nearly received the fatal blow, was only a bolster and pillows.

Dickinson minor understood.

He realised that his leg had been pulled by the cheerful Jimmy, and his face became crimson.

"You—you silly ass!" he stammered.

"You—you're not Black Jack at all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not quite!" grinned Jimmy Silver.

"No more than you are Daredevil Dickinson!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't make such a blessed row, you chaps—you'll have Bootles here!" said Jimmy Silver. "It's all right, Dickinson, you won't have to ride a coal-black horse to-night, and old Mack is still in his lodge safe and sound."

"There—there—there was blood on the knife—" stammered Dickinson.

"Yes—from a red-ink bottle."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you spoofing beast!" said Dickinson. "Of course, I—I wasn't afraid—"

"Not at all," chuckled Jimmy Silver.

"Only trembling like a jelly. But you've got more pluck than I supposed, or you wouldn't have bunged that pillow at Black Jack, and saved the life of this bolster!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver threw off the black cloak. He was in his pyjamas underneath it. He blew out the candle and turned in, chuckling. The Fourth Form dormitory was in a cackle from end to end.

Dickinson minor was glad for the darkness to hide his blushes as he crept back to bed. He felt—as indeed he was—the most ridiculous idiot imaginable. It was a long time before Dickinson minor slept

again. He had food for thought—deep thought. And he was not thinking about robber bands and pirate schooners.

The next day Dickinson minor was observed to be unusually thoughtful.

Jimmy Silver & Co. eyed him curiously that day, wondering whether the "jape" in the dormitory had had its effect. After his ludicrous refusal to follow the lead of the Masked Marauder, even Dickinson minor couldn't go on believing that he really wanted to be a robber chief, Jimmy considered. After dinner, Dickinson minor sneaked away to the box-room as usual. But he reappeared soon, with traces of soot on his fingers and smoke on his face. He came up to the Pistical Four in the quadrangle, looking very sheepish.

"I—I say, you chaps—" he said hesitatingly.

"Go ahead!" said Jimmy Silver tersely. "You're torn yourself away from your lurid tosh quick to-day."

"I—I've burned the lot!" stammered Dickinson.

"Oh!"

"I—I've been thinking a bit," said

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Dickinson. "I—I've been a silly idiot, Jimmy Silver—I can see it now—"

"Time you did!" agreed Lovell.

"I—I'm never going to read any more of that rot," said Dickinson. "And—and I don't want to be a pirate. I—I'd like you to teach me how to play football."

The captain of the Fourth grinned, and clapped him on the shoulder.

"Right you are, fathead! You're sure you don't want to ride a coal-black horse?"

"I—I say, look here! If you're going to chip me—"

"Well, I won't," chuckled Jimmy. "Come down to the footer, and I'll show you how to take a goal-kick."

It was several days before Dickinson of the Sixth observed the change that had come over his minor. But he observed it at last, and was rejoiced accordingly. And he roared over the story of how Jimmy Silver cured the Duffer.

THE END.

READERS' NOTICES.

BACK NUMBERS WANTED, etc.

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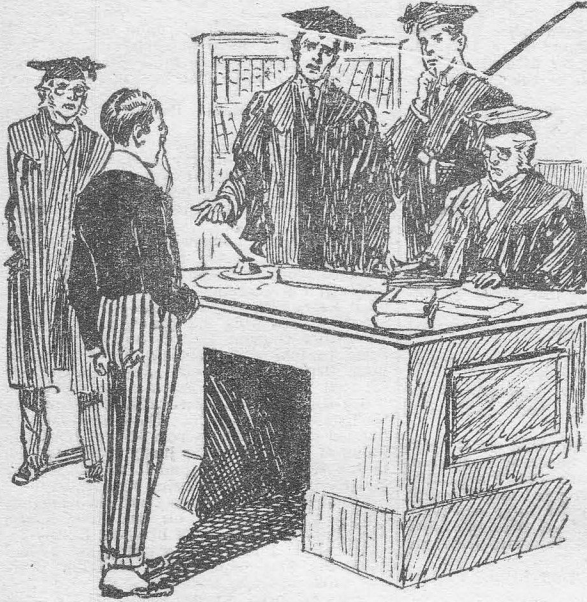
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THE FIRST CHAPTER. Trapped!

"I SAY, you fellows!"
It was Fatty Wynn, of the New House at St. Jim's, who exclaimed thus, and he addressed his chums, Kerr and Figgins.

Fatty's face was full of excitement, and his mouth was full of grub. The grub got rather in the way of the expression of his excitement, for he began to splutter.

"Here's a chance!" he managed to get out, in a voice muffled by bun.

"I don't quite see it," returned Kerr, with a meaning look at the empty paper-bag in Fatty's hand. "You seem to have wolfed the giddy lot!"

"Oh, I don't mean that!" explained Fatty. "Tom Merry and some more of the School House bounders—nine or ten of them—have locked themselves in the woodshed!"

"Well, what about it? We can't get at them while they're locked in, ass!"

"What are they doing there?" asked Kerr. "It's something up against us, of course," said Fatty. "You can be jolly sure of that. They've been lying low for the opportunity to score over us, and now one of them has thought of something."

"Who were there?"

"Tom Merry—"

"You've mentioned him once, duffer!"

"Manners and Lowther—"

"Sure to be there, as Tommy was, chump!"

"Blake, Herries, Digby, and Gussy and Kangaroo and Julian, and that lot."

"And you say they've thought of something?" snapped Figgins.

"Yes, I do! And—"

"Rot! There isn't one of them that's capable of thinking! Now, if Talbot had been there, or Levison or Cardew—"

"Or almost anyone who wasn't, eh, Figgy?" put in Kerr, grinning. "You're a trifle morose to-day, my son. Now, I wouldn't say myself that the good Thomas or Blake or Kangaroo or Julian wasn't capable of thinking, though, of course, their best efforts in that line fall miles below ours. But I don't quite see how we're going to do anything while they are locked in."

"We could see to it that they didn't get out just when they wanted to," replied Fatty, smiling expansively.

"My hat! Fatty's had an idea! I won't say those chaps can't think. If Fatty can, anyone can!"

"I can think as hard as you can, Figgy, and my brains are as good as yours—and a blessed sight better!"

"Only you use your jaws instead, as a rule!" said Kerr. "What are you going to do to keep them in?"

"Oh, that's easy enough! Just tie a rope to the handle of the door, and fasten it somewhere. The door opens inwards, and they can pull for all they're worth—they can't get out, unless the rope breaks."

"Let's find a rope and cut along to the woodshed!" said Kerr, always practical.

The New House juniors had lately worked off two or three small japes upon their School House rivals; and when that sort of thing happened on either side, the other side was always in a hurry to even matters. The choice of the woodshed as a place of meeting was somewhat suspicious in itself. The woodshed was certainly less comfortable than a study, but was generally considered to offer more secrecy.

A rope was soon found, and the three cut off to the woodshed. From within came the murmur of voices, though no words—or only a word here and there—were distinguishable.

"That does it!" said Kerr, after the rope had been securely fastened round the trunk of a tree some five yards away.

"Let's tell 'em!" said Fatty eagerly.

"Tommy! Are you there?" shouted Figgins.

"Yes!" came the answer from within.

"Blake, are you there?"

"Yes, ass!"

"Are you there, Kangaroo? There, Gussy? Herries—Manners—all you other chumps?"

"Yes, you idiot!" came a chorus of voices; and footsteps neared the door.

"Well, stop there, then!" roared Figgy.

"Ha, ha, ha!" cackled Kerr and Fatty. There came a tug at the door.

"They've locked us in, the wottahs!" exclaimed Gussy.

"No, they haven't, fathead!" snapped Blake. "The key's inside, and I've just turned it. But the door won't budge!"

"Tied!" explained Kerr, without waste of words.

"What have you silly idiots done that for?" inquired Tom Merry politely.

"Just to show you School House duffers who are top-dogs—that's all!" answered Figgins.

"Like any tea, you fellows?" asked Fatty, with a deep, long chuckle.

"Of course, we should—and we're jolly well going to have tea, too!" rapped out Herries.

"To-morrow, perhaps—not to-day, dear boy! We're going to keep you here till prep," said Kerr.

"And it isn't so blessed certain that we shall let you out then!" added Fatty.

"That's what you get for plotting against us!" Figgins said.

"We weren't doing anything of the sort!" yelled Digby.

But the New House trio did not hear that. Already they had moved away.

There was anger in the woodshed. The meeting had had, as it chanced, nothing to do with the House feud. But it was natural enough that Figgins & Co. should think it had. What chiefly annoyed the prisoners was that they would not take Dig's word to the contrary. That would have been good enough for them had they heard it, though it would not necessarily have meant immediate release for the fellows trapped.

"Oh, let's get on with the washing!" said Dig.

"We'd practically finished," replied Herries. "There's nothing left to settle but the date of the concert."

"Except whether it's to take place," said Blake, who lacked his chum's keenness for anything in the musical line.

"Ass! Everyone but you agrees to it, and I don't know why you're here at all. You always want to crab this sort of thing!"

"Don't squabble, children!" Tom Merry said. "Let's see whether a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull all together will break their giddy rope!"

But it did not. In fact, several pulls failed to do that. Tempers began to get hotter in the woodshed.

Meanwhile, Figgins & Co. were at tea. It was rather an unusually good tea, for Fatty had had a remittance, and when he had bought the half-dozen buns as a stopgap, he had also laid in supplies for the coming meal.

"You've done us proud, Fatty!" said Figgins. "I couldn't eat another blessed mouthful if I was paid to do it."

"It was all right," Fatty said, "because I'd laid in supplies for six. I'd meant to ask Tom Merry and those two bounders over. But finding them plotting in the woodshed put the kibosh on that idea. So it worked out just nicely for us three."

"My hat! Sounds like pains under the waistcoat for us!" said Figgy. "Where are you going, Kerr?"

"To let those chaps out, of course. I'd forgotten all about them until Fatty mentioned them, and it's time for prep. Coming along?"

"No; I can't. It will be as much as I can do to get any prep done, after wolfing another chap's whack as well as my own," said Figgins.

"Right-ho, old scout! I'll go myself!"

And George Frances Kerr left the study with the intention of releasing the prisoners.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Letting Them Out.

"MY word, they aren't half making a giddy row!" said Kerr to himself, as he neared the woodshed.

The captives certainly were making themselves heard—or, at least, were being vocal, for there was nothing to show that anyone but Kerr heard them.

Though the woodshed was not an officially recognised place for meetings, there was no heavy penalty attached to being found in it; and as the time for prep had come near Tom Merry and the rest had shouted to be released. But the place of their captivity was rather out of the way, and at this time of an evening in late autumn few fellows were out of doors. If anyone had heard their cries no one had answered them.

Kerr paused, smiling broadly, to listen.

"Hi, hi! I say, there! Let us out!"

"Hi, hi! Some silly ass has shut us in here! Let us out!"

Kerr recognised the voices of Herries and Manners. Neither of those two was a specially patient person.

As Kerr drew near the door of the wood-

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 46.

shed he saw that someone was ahead of him.

"Who's in there?" asked the voice of Percy Mellish.

"What's that matter, you fathead?" returned Blake. "The point is that we want to get out!"

"Well, you needn't get calling a fellow names when you want him to do something for you," replied Mellish sulkily.

"Clump! Don't stand there arguing—cut that giddy rope!" roared Herries.

"Didn't know there was a rope. What did you tie yourselves in for?" Mellish said.

"We didn't, you imbecile!" snorted Manners. "The New House bounders did that."

"Oh, I see! I'll—"

"No, you won't, Mellish. I'll let them out," Kerr said.

But Mellish was already cutting the rope. It would have been more prudent on Kerr's part if he had gone then. But the captives were swarming out before he realised that.

They came with such a rush that Mellish was bowled over.

"Yow-ow!" he yelled, and as he fell he clutched at Kerr, and brought him down.

It was not by intention that the released juniors trampled both the fellow who had released them and him who had come to do so, underfoot. The darkness was partly responsible, and their hurry accounted for the rest. Someone's foot came down hard upon Kerr's hand, hurting horribly; and Kerr grabbed the leg to which that foot belonged, and clung on to it like grim death.

"Yooop! Let go my leg, you boundah!" rapped out Arthur Augustus.

But Kerr clung on.

"Will you let go my leg?" howled Gussy. The rush ceased, but not before someone's foot had taken Kerr under the chin. It was not intentional, of course; there was no fellow there who would have done such a thing out of malice. But it hurt, and Kerr was angry.

"What's the row?" asked Tom Merry.

"Someone has grabbed my leg, an' I will not let go!" answered Gussy furiously.

"I've grabbed your silly leg, and I'm not going to loose hold of it till I find out what you've done to my hand!" said Kerr. "You seem to have busted it, as far as I can make out."

"I am vewy sowwy, Kerr; but it was your own fault."

Everyone had stopped now.

"Is your hand really hurt, Kerr?" asked Lowther.

"You need not be in the least afraid that I shall attempt to wun away if you release my leg, Kerr," Gussy said.

The New House junior loosed his hold and got up.

"You fellows are like a blessed herd of wild cattle," he said. "I came to let you out, and you rush all over me and stamp on me!"

"I let them out!" piped up Mellish, unwilling to lose the credit of an unusual good action.

"And it was Kerr who fastened us in—helped to, anyway," Blake said. "No one meant to hurt you, Kerr; but you fairly asked for what you got, I reckon."

"We shall be late for prep if we don't get a move on us," Kangaroo said.

Some of them began to move off. Kerr did not like it a bit. His hand was really painful, and it seemed to him that apologies were owing which no one offered.

"Weally, Kerr, while I am extremely sowwy if you are hurt—"

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Kerr. "Get along in to prep, all of you! I came to let you out so that you shouldn't get into a row for being late, and, of course, it doesn't matter a scrap what you've done to me! I shall know better next time. And I'll get even with you for this, D'Arcy! I didn't think you were the sort to trample on a fellow and tell him it served him right."

"Neithah am I, Kerr, an' I considah that you might know me bettah than to suggest such a thing! I—"

But Blake and Herries seized the arms of Arthur Augustus, and forced him away.

"Not a bit of use stopping there to argue with Kerr while you've both got your rags out," said Blake, wisely enough. "You'll have forgotten all about it by the time you meet again, both of you."

"Kerr said somethin' about gettin' even with me. I have nevah known Kerr to be wewyengeful, but—"

"Oh, come on, and stop your chin-wagging!" growled Herries.

The School House crowd had all cleared.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 46.

off before Kerr made his way slowly and almost sullenly to the New House. If anyone had suggested to him half an hour earlier that he could have been so hotly angry with Gussy he would have laughed. Kerr was not quick to anger with his chums, and he counted the swell of the Fourth one of his best chums.

But his hand was very painful indeed, and he had a rankling sense of injury apart from that.

As he passed in he had the misfortune to encounter Mr. Ratcliff.

"What does this mean, Kerr?" he snapped. Kerr was silent. He did not care to explain.

Mr. Ratcliff looked at his watch.

"Five minutes past the hour for preparation," he said. "And you have no right out of the house at this time of night at all. Two hundred lines, Kerr!"

Kerr was positively furious when he reached his study.

Figgy looked up from the work on which he had just started.

"Why, what's the row, old chap?" he asked. "You're muddy, and your left hand's bleeding!"

"I've been trampled on by that ass D'Arcy, and I believe one of my fingers is dislocated. Those bounders didn't care—didn't even stop to find out what was wrong! And I've got two hundred from Ratty for being out after prep-time. Serve me right—I shouldn't have been such a fool! But Gussy—it licks me how he—"

"Let's have a look at your hand," Figgins said.

It was the gravel that had made Kerr's hand bleed, and the bleeding did not matter. But the top joint of the little finger was swollen, and looked as though it might be dislocated.

"Does that hurt?" asked Figgy, feeling it gently.

"Of course it hurts, fathead!" returned Kerr. "But it's no use leaving it like that. By to-morrow it would be ever so much worse. Pull it into place!"

"That's going to hurt, you know," Fatty remarked.

"Never mind that! Go on, Figgy!"

Figgins did what was asked of him, while Kerr set his teeth. It was rough-and-ready amateur surgery, but the pain of it was not greater than it would have been had a surgeon done the job, and the joint was best got into place again at once.

Kerr was silent till prep was over. Then he let Figgy look at his hand again, though he growled in a very un-Kerr-like way at the suggestion that it should be examined.

It was badly swollen. Gussy's foot had come right down upon it, and had ground it into the gravel, while the little finger must have got twisted underneath.

"You won't be able to play in the match to-morrow with a hand like that," said Figgy.

"I don't want to play with half a dozen of those sweeps on the side!" answered Kerr. Then he left the study.

"I've never seen old Kerr so angry," said Fatty, with his china-blue eyes wide open.

"You'd be the same if it had happened to you, porpoise, though I don't mind saying that there aren't two better-tempered chaps than you and Kerr in all St. Jim's," replied Figgins.

"He'll get over it before to-morrow," Fatty said confidently.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Spool!

AND Kerr had got over it before the next day, though he did not say so.

The pain of his hand and his chin kept him awake the greater part of the night. To a fellow whose nature was of the kind that bears grudges, that would have meant being angrier than ever in the morning.

But it did not mean that to George Francis Kerr.

The Scots junior had a reasonable and logical mind. He knew, when not hot with wrath, that Arthur Augustus was absolutely incapable of doing such a thing as that purposely, even to an enemy, let alone to a friend. He knew that his grabbing of Gussy's leg and holding him to accountability as if it were something other than an accident was bound to put up the back of a sensitive fellow who prided himself on never doing a dirty thing.

Gussy's apology had been qualified; but, still, he had apologised. As for the rush

which had upset Kerr, that rush had been the most natural sequel imaginable to the sudden release.

So Kerr arose with his mind quite cleared of anger. But pain and sleeplessness had made him disinclined to talk, and both Fatty and Figgins fancied that he was still nursing his wrath.

Over in the School House someone was nursing his.

Any imputation upon the honour of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy wounded him far more than a physical hurt, and, though Gussy could not fairly be described as salky, he was slower to get over a personal affront than Kerr.

"Going to get even with Gussy, old top?" asked Figgins, as the three went over the quart to morning lessons together.

"Yes, I'm thinking out a plan now," replied Kerr, with a grim smile.

Arthur Augustus did not approach Kerr. He rather thought that it was for Kerr to come to him with apologies for misjudging him. Perhaps it was not altogether wonderful that Kerr did not see it quite that way.

But Gussy inquired after classes concerning the extent of Kerr's hurts. The injured lad had hurried off to speak to Tom Merry about the filling of his place in the junior eleven for the match that afternoon, and it was of Figgins and Fatty that the inquiries were made.

"Hurt him? I should say so!" said Figgins.

"Why, you dislocated his left little finger, and made his hand bleed like—oh, like—"

"Weally? I am vewy sowwy, an' I shall take the first oppatunity of tellin' Kerr so," broke in Gussy anxiously.

"Oh, no need to do that!" Fatty said. "Old Kerr means to get even with you, my son."

"If Kerr is so wewyengeful—"

"You can't blame him for that," said Figgy, grinning.

But Arthur Augustus did blame him. He felt that it was very wrong of Kerr, and he went off shaking his head.

Figgins and Fatty considered his attitude a joke.

They only saw Kerr for a minute or two before they had to go off with the rest of the team, including Gussy, to catch a train for Westwood, where the St. Jim's junior team was to meet a private school eleven that afternoon.

"What shall you do with yourself while we're away, Kerr?" asked Figgins.

"Oh, I can find plenty to do, you bet!" replied Kerr.

Already he had in mind a vague scheme for scoring over Gussy. It was to be quite a humorous score, without any malice in it; but Kerr fancied he could make the swell of the Fourth sit up.

After dinner he got to work upon his lines. It was no good thinking of putting them off, because Mr. Ratcliff was not likely to think with him if he did that.

After that he went back to the New House, and overhauled the props of the N.H.J.A.D.S.—that is to say, the New House Junior Amateur Dramatic Society.

He soon found what he wanted—a dark, glossy, and nicely parted wig, a fancy waistcoat, and an eyeglass.

Also, he hooked out his best Sunday trousers.

He contemplated them rather doubtfully. Kerr, though he always looked neat enough, was not a dandy.

"There's a crease, certainly," he told himself, rubbing his chin contemplatively. "It's hardly up to Gussy's standard, but it's an undeniable crease. And the bags I've got on haven't one. So I shall have to change."

He did so. He put on the dark wig over his own closely-cropped Auburn hair. He toned down the freckles by such arts as all who practise make-up know. Then he brushed his Eton jacket very carefully, put it on over the fancy waistcoat, and looked at himself in the glass.

"Something wanting!" he murmured. "Oh, I know! I've forgotten the giddy monocle!"

He stuck the eyeglass into one eye, and took another look at his reflection.

"That will do, as long as the light isn't too good," he said.

Then something occurred to him.

"That tie isn't up to Gussy's mark," he murmured. "Not sure that any of my ties are, for that matter. But there's that new one of Figgys'. He's only worn it once, when cousin Ethel was here. That ought to do."

The tie was got out and put on very carefully. Kerr remembered that Gussy did not consider himself properly dressed for out-of-doors without gloves, so he bagged a new pair of Fatty's. Fatty's hands were bigger



Swish! Right in the face that stream of water—muddy water from the horse's mouth—took the Master of the Shell. He gave a wild yell. His foot slipped, and he tumbled face downwards in the trampled mud.

than Kerr's, and the left glove went on easily enough over the injured finger.

Kerr sallied out. He had not yet made up his mind what he was going to do. For that he must wait upon circumstance. But it was to be something to raise a laugh against Gussy. To that end the swell of the Fourth himself must be avoided, but other fellows must be encountered. Kerr thought it lucky that under a cloudy sky the night was falling early.

No one was in the quad as Kerr made his way to the gates, but as he passed out he saw Cardew approaching. Two hours or more of footer was not in Cardew's line. Levison and Clive were with the team, and he had cut the game altogether for that day.

"Hang it all!" muttered Kerr. "That hounder's jolly keen when he likes. But he's seen me. I must put a bold face on it."
"Hallo, D'Arcy!" said Cardew. "Thought you were over at Westwood, gettin' muddy an' tired, an' deludin' yourself that it was enjoyment."

"Couldn't go, deah boy!" replied Kerr in quite a good imitation of the voice of Arthur Augustus.

He passed on, and Cardew looked after him in rather a puzzled way.

"Sounded like the voice of my noble kinsman," he said to himself. "But the walk is hardly the stately gait of Gussy."

Then he dismissed the matter from his mind for the time being. He had known that D'Arcy was down to play, but he had not seen the team start, and, of course, it was quite possible that the swell of the Fourth had not gone to Westwood after all.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Fire!

IT'S all wight, Tom Mewwy. No need for ewwybody to wait," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy at Rylcombe Station.

The junior eleven had just got out of the

train, and Blake had had to be helped out. Three minutes before the end of the game at Westwood, and a second before the tenth goal scored by his side—a goal which he had shot—Blake had gone down in a charge, and had got up with his right leg rather badly crooked.

It was nobody's fault, and Blake did not make a fuss about it. But he was quite unfit to walk. At best he could only hobble. A side-car had taken him to the station at Westwood, and now he and his chums were looking out for the one antiquated hack that was usually to be found at Rylcombe.

"We'll stay with him," Herries said. "Trumble says the hack ought to be here in a few minutes. Hallo! What's that?"
"Bai Jove! It looks like a flash somewhere!"

"It is a fire; no doubt about that," said Talbot.

"It's in the direction of the school, too!" Kangaroo said.

"But nearer than that, old fellow. Let's cut off and see if we can be of any use."

Herries, Digby, and Gussy were left with the wounded hero.

"You fellows needn't stay if you don't want to," Blake said. "I know I wouldn't jolly well miss that fire if it was one of you were crooked!"

Herries and Digby looked at one another. They did not quite like going, but the lure of the fire drew them.

"I will stay with Blake," said Gussy, generous as ever.

Off after the rest rushed Herries and Digby.

"I wish that contraption would come along!" Blake said irritably. "If it would only hurry up we might see something of the fire, anyway."

"Shall I go an' see where it has got to, deah boy?" asked Gussy. "Old Twumble seemed so vevy positive that it could not be more than a few minutes, but—"

"Oh, cut along!" snapped Blake. "I shan't have to put up with your jaw then!"

Arthur Augustus looked at him in reproach. But he saw Blake's face fairly drawn with pain, and he said nothing.

There was some excuse for Blake's snappishness. It was not only the pain that worried him. He did not know how bad his injury really was, and he feared it might mean no more footer that term, and perhaps lying up during the holidays fast approaching.

Gussy spoke to Trumble, the old porter, on his way out of the station.

"Vassir—yuss, Master D'Arcy—it's a fire all right," said Trumble.

"That is vevy obvious, Twumble. But where is the flash?"

"Smithson's stackyard, they do say, sir; but I only knows what they says."

Gussy hurried off. He wanted to get to the fire. But it was another case in which more haste meant less speed, for he had not been gone three minutes before the hack appeared. The driver had had an old maiden lady as a fare, and told Trumble that he had spent "upwards of 'arf an 'our" in settling with her what she should pay.

Blake waited a minute or two, and thought he had waited ten minutes. He wanted to get to St. Jim's, and bathe and massage his swollen knee.

"Blessed if I can wait any longer!" he said. "I suppose the feather-headed ass has cut off to the blaze and forgotten all about me!"

So he got in, and the hack drove off.

Meanwhile, a crowd of St. Jim's fellows had reached Smithson's stackyard. The school team was playing at Wayland, and had not yet returned; but there were a dozen or more seniors there, and the fellows who had been playing a lengthy practice game on Little Side had come along to a man. The Third was well represented, too, and members of the Shell, Fourth, and Pitt

who had not been playing looter swelled the throng by twos and threes.

Now Tom Merry, Talbot, Noble, Levison, Clive, and Lowther came up. But Figgins and Patty Wynn were not with them. Those two had somehow managed to miss the train at Westwood.

Kerr was upon the scene by this time. But he did not mingle with the crowd. He was trying to make sure whether Gussy was about. Two Gussies would be one too many, and Kerr did not flatter himself that he could stand a close comparison with the fellow whom he was impersonating.

"Stand back, there—stand back!" cried P.-c. Crump. "You byes are only in the way. Stand back, I say!"

But the worthy Crump was incapable of controlling the crowd.

There was not much chance of helping; the new-comers saw that at once. The fire had been discovered early, and the engine from Rylcombe had been on the scene in good time. One stack was hopelessly doomed, but luckily it was a fair distance from any of the others, and the firemen had dealt with and quenched a slight outbreak in another. Now they stood by in case they might be needed again, having given up hope as to the first stack.

Into the crowd Messrs. Linton and Latham pushed their way. The masters of the Shell and Fourth had been taking a walk together, and had chanced upon the fire on their way home.

"Ware, hawks!" said Lowther. "I spy Linton and Latham! Let's get out of their sight. They're sending fellows home."

Herries and Digby had joined the rest of those from the station, and Julian & Co. were also with them.

They moved away, and Kerr saw them come.

He dodged round a stack, and saw lying at his feet a hoespipe.

Temptation assailed him at once.

Most of the fellows who had been in the woodshed the evening before, and had rushed out over Kerr's prostrate body, were within twenty yards, and the means of getting even with them lay to his hand.

There was no malice in what he did. It was merely a rough joke, such as any of them might have played upon him.

He snatched up the hose, moved a yard or two to the corner of the stack, and turned the nozzle full upon them. Only his hand and part of his arm appeared round the stack.

It was a pity he did not give another glance before he turned on that stream of water.

For Tom Merry and the rest had bolted down the narrow passage between two stacks. Mr. Linton was in chase, and they had hopes of dodging him in the confusing light.

He was not more than two yards from the hindmost of them as they dodged.

Swish!

Right in the face that stream of water, muddy water from the horse-pond, took the master of the Shell.

He gave a wild yell. His foot slipped, and he tumbled face downwards into the trampled mud.

Kerr glanced round the angle of the stack.

"Oh, my hat!" he gasped. "I've got Linton!"

He did not wait to find out what had become of those for whom the stream of water had been intended. He dropped the hose and bolted, and as he bolted, the eyeglass, with its string attached, fell unnoticed from the buttonhole to which he had fastened it.

But at the other end of the stack he had to turn and bolt back for Tom Merry and the rest were almost upon him. He dodged behind another stack unperceived by anyone, as he fancied.

There he was wrong, however. For Mr. Latham, panting behind his colleague, had come up just in time to get a glimpse of him.

"D'Arcy!" cried the master of the Fourth.

But Kerr did not hear, and perhaps would not have heeded had he heard. He had scrambled over the stackyard fence, and was sprinting as hard as he could go for the school.

As he saw it, the one thing to be done was to get back unperceived and drop the Gussy impersonation as quickly as might be. And if he did not make all speed he might run right into a crowd of the fellows being shepherd back by the two masters. For it was not likely that Messrs. Linton and Latham would allow them to stay on the scene of the fire after what had happened.

THE PENNY POPULAR—No. 45.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Accused!

"MY dear Linton, I trust that you are not hurt?" panted little Mr. Latham.

"I am soaked to the skin and covered with mud!" snapped Mr. Linton. "No, I am not actually hurt; but this is an outrage for which I shall insist upon exemplary punishment. Merry, did you see who was guilty of this abominable action?"

"I didn't, sir," replied Tom.

"I am very loth to believe that it could have been D'Arcy, but I am sure I saw him running away the moment after it happened," Mr. Latham said. "I called to him, indeed."

"Yes, I heard you call, Latham," said the Shell master.

"It couldn't have been D'Arcy," Talbot said. "He would be about the last fellow who would do a thing like this."

"I saw him!" averred Mr. Latham, with unusual snap in his tones.

"Are you sure you weren't mistaken, sir?" asked Harry Noble. "We left D'Arcy at the station, with Blake and Herries and Digby. Blake got his knee hurt, and couldn't walk."

"But Herries and Digby are here, so there seems no reason to doubt that D'Arcy may be, too," Mr. Linton said crossly.

"We left him with Blake," Digby replied. "I'm sure he couldn't have done it, sir. He wouldn't leave Blake. Besides, he'd never have treated you like this."

"I can hardly believe it possible of D'Arcy, and yet—"

"Stuff and nonsense, Latham!" snorted the Shell master. "I could believe it possible of any of these boys, and—"

"But, my dear Linton, D'Arcy—"

"D'Arcy, Latham, is a boy, with quite his share of boyish folly and impertinence, and I cannot hold him innocent because some people think it impossible he should be guilty!"

They could all see Mr. Linton's point of view. Certainly Arthur Augustus could be foolish enough at times, and he was often guilty of what seemed to masters impertinence, because he wanted to argue matters with them as between man and man. But he never meant to be impertinent, and they were all sure that he would have considered this deed an outrage, even as Mr. Linton considered it.

"I am almost sure that I saw D'Arcy," Mr. Latham said, wavering again.

"You were quite sure a moment ago!" snapped Mr. Linton.

"Yes, that is true. And I am still—"

"Oh, don't change your mind once more, please! If this had happened to you, Latham, it would have been a different matter, I suppose!"

The master of the Fourth felt that unjust. He would have been angry had it happened to him, naturally; but he did not think that his wrath would have made him quite so testy and unreasonable as Mr. Linton was.

"Will you allow me to assist you home, Linton?" he asked humbly.

"I do not need assistance, thank you, though I must get home at once, or I shall be taking a chill. You would be better employed in seeing that these boys went back to the school at once, so that they should not get into further mischief!"

And with that Mr. Linton stalked away.

Perhaps Mr. Latham did not feel equal to the task of rounding up the crowd. Anyway, he did not attempt it. He remarked mildly to Tom Merry that it would be as well if they all started home at once, and then he followed Mr. Linton.

A fast-growing crowd discussed the situation.

"Couldn't have been Gustavus," said Digby. "He respects all masters too highly to do anything so wicked to one of them."

And Dig grinned. Dig would not have done it himself, but he was amused.

"I am not so sure that it could not have been D'Arcy," said Grundy of the Shell in his heavy, solemn way. "It seems to me that instead of standing here talking idly we might look for some clue as to the culprit. I don't approve of such treatment of masters. After all, they are entitled to some respect."

"Grundy doesn't approve! Let the culprit be found, and immediately hanged, drawn, and quartered!" gibed Lowther.

"Grundy the 'tee! Go and find a clue, Grundy!" said Kangaroo.

The great George Alfred stalked away in high dudgeon. But within half a minute he was back.

"Look here!" he roared. "What do you think of that for a clue?"

He dangled something from his right hand. A flickering gleam from the fire, which still

burned, showed them an eyeglass with the glass smashed.

"My hat!"

"Must have been that silly ass!"

"No one else wears one of those blessed things!"

"Where did you find that, Grundy?" asked Tom.

"Behind that stack, close by the hoespipe!" yelled Grundy triumphantly.

"If Gussy did it," said Dick Julian, "he never meant it for Linton, that I'm sure of!"

A chorus of assent greeted that pronouncement. It was much easier to believe that Arthur Augustus had made a mistake than that he had wilfully douched a master.

But the new theory was not allowed to prevail for even a minute. For Gussy arrived upon the scene in time to hear what Julian said.

"What is it that I am supposed to have done, Julian, dear boy?" he demanded. "If it is anything that concerns Linton, I can only say that I have not, to my knowledge, seen him since yesterday."

"Linton's had a hoespipe turned on him, and the evidence points to you as having been the sinner at the other end of the said hoespipe, Gussy," answered Lowther.

"Me! Oh, bai Jove, I would nevah dream of doin' a thing like that! I weally think you should all know me bettah than to accuse me of it!"

"Is this yours, D'Arcy?" snapped Grundy, exhibiting the monocle.

"Yaas, I suppose so. No, I weally do not think it can be, for I left mine behind."

"Left it behind when you scooted, I dare say!"

"What do you mean, Gwunday?"

"When you bolted from behind that stack after drenching Linton!"

"But I was not behind the stack, an' I nevah did anything of the sort—I declaah on my honah that I did not!"

"Look here, it's no use having a lot of words about it," said Herries. "I shouldn't doubt Gussy, anyway. But, as a matter of fact, it doesn't depend on his word. He was with Blake, and Blake can prove that he couldn't have been here."

"But I was not with Blake, Hewwies! I went to look for the hack, an' when I came back it had wolloed up an' Blake had gone off in it."

"You weren't with anyone, then?" said said Digby.

"No. But I do not see that that mattahs. Stably my word is good enough—"

"It's good enough for me, Gussy!" said Tom Merry.

"And for me!" said Talbot.

"Same here!" chorused a dozen voices.

"Latham says he saw D'Arcy," Grundy said doubtfully.

"Nobody else did," put in Wilkins. "And I'd sooner believe that Latham made a mistake than that Gussy is lying about it."

"I am obliged to you, Wilkins," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "Now, Gwunday—"

"I don't say you're lying, D'Arcy," said the curly Shell fellow. "You're not that sort. But this thing—"

"Even if it is mine, which I do not admit, I could not have dropped it, for I was not there to drop it, Gwunday!"

"Well, I take your word, and I'll let the matter drop. I must say that, with all your faults, you're a truthful chap, D'Arcy."

It was all very well for Grundy to let the matter drop. But it did not depend upon Grundy, and his view of it really made very little difference.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Trouble!

"MASTER D'ARCY to go to the 'Ead at once, if you please," said Toby, the School House page, appearing at the door of Study.

No. 6 on the Fourth Form passage half an hour later, just after the crowd had got in.

"Stick to your guns, Gustavus!" said Blake, busy massaging his knee by the fire. "You didn't do it, and that's all about it. It's not your fault if Latham sees fellows who aren't there, and old ass Grundy finds a monocle with its window smashed, is it?"

"We know you wouldn't lie about it, and the Head ought to know," Dig added.

"I'll come with you if you like, Gussy," volunteered Herries.

Arthur Augustus declined that friendly offer, but he went to his trying interview in better heart because of the faith of his chums. He would have held his head high in any case; but, as it was, there was more

"I don't think it will be the sack for me," Kerr said.

And next morning Dr. Holmes was fetched down in his dressing-gown to see a New House junior on urgent business.

He listened with a very grave face to Kerr's story, and asked him several questions.

Then he said:

"I shall not punish you, Kerr. But you must make an instant apology to Mr. Linton, and you must take whatever punishment he thinks proper to inflict. You may tell him that I left it to him. You should also apologise to D'Arcy."

"Oh, of course, sir!" answered Kerr, with heart immensely lightened. "I should have done that anyway."

"You are not usually so foolish, Kerr, or I might not have been able to overlook this," said the Head.

"I'm ever so much obliged to you, sir, and I don't think I shall be so silly again."

Then Kerr went to find Mr. Linton, and had to wait till that gentleman had finished dressing. The consequence was two hundred lines from Mr. Ratcliff for being late for breakfast. Kerr did not explain; it was hardly worth while. The two hundred lines were small by comparison with Mr. Linton's punishment.

"I say, what's up, Kerr?" asked Redfern, as they filed out from the hall. "Gussy was hunting everywhere for you before breakfast, as mad as a hatter about something or other."

"Was he?" returned Kerr. "I'd better find him and soothe him, I think."

And he went out into the quad. Figgins, Fatty, Redfern, Owen, Lawrence, and a dozen more followed him. Only Kerr's chums understood, but the rest were interested and excited.

"Oh, there you are, Kerr! I have been lookin' for you!"

It was Arthur Augustus who spoke, of course; and with him were a score or more of School House Juniors.

"Have you?" returned Kerr, smiling. "I've been looking for you, too. I want to tell you that you're not guilty."

The smile added fuel to the fire of Gussy's wrath, which the night had not lessened.

Before even Digby guessed what he was going to do, his hand shot out, clenched, and struck Kerr on the head.

"Take that!" cried Gussy.

"Oh, you silly fathead!" said Dig.

"Never mind, Dig!" Kerr said, still smiling. "I've taken it, D'Arcy. Now will you tell me what it's for?"

"You wot! You dived yourself up to look like me, an' made Lint' think that I had been guilty!"

"He doesn't think so any longer. I've explained to him, and to the Head, too. I'll explain to you as well, if you'll let me," said Kerr patiently.

Gussy's eyes dilated, and his lips trembled. "If you tell me that you never meant to

vengeance yourself upon me by gettin' me into a wot, Kerr—" he began.

"Of course I didn't, you burbling bandicoot! I meant to do some silly thing or other, and make everyone think that you had done it—that's why I logged myself up. But the shower-bath was never meant for Linton at all—it was meant for Tommy and the rest. Linton got in the way—that's all."

Arthur Augustus did not doubt. Kerr's words carried conviction to all who heard.

"An' you've explained to Linton an' to the Head!" he gasped. "An' I— Oh, why don't you punch my silly head, Kerr? I deserve it for evah thinkin' that— Oh, punch it, do, an' then we'll shake hands an' be quists!"

And Gussy advanced his head to be punched.

To the amazement of all who saw, Kerr's right hand clenched, and he punched at the head of Gussy, who never flinched.

But at the moment of impact all the force was held back, and Kerr's fist merely touched the forehead of the swell of the Fourth.

"Honour is satisfied, Gussy, and we can shake now!" said Kerr, smiling more cheerily than ever. "I'm not guilty of what you thought. And if anyone doesn't think it's quite all right, let him speak now, or henceforth hold his peace!"

But everyone seemed to think that it was. The bell rang for classes, and Kerr and Gussy went in arm-in-arm.

THE END.

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