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**RUPERT THURSTON**, a young Englishman, and friend of Lord's.

**HAL HONOUR**, known as the man of silence, engineer of Ferrers Lord's wonderful submarine. Honour has invented a marvellous paint which causes things to become invisible when painted with it. He has also built a new kind of aeroplane which he calls a helicopter, and which is covered with this new paint, but which is destroyed by

**KARL VON KREIGLER**, a mysterious professor, who has great power in Germany, and who holds the secret of Germany's great treasure-chest. Ferrers Lord has ferreted out one or two of the professor's secrets, and Von Kreigler realises that Lord is a very dangerous man. After this attack, Ferrers Lord despatches Rupert Thurston, with Honour and Ching Lung, with a message to Kreigler.

However, they succeed in escaping to a cavern, finding a high aperture in which to hide. The Germans give chase, but fail to find the fugitives.

(Now read on.)

**A Prisoner!**

**HAL HONOUR** moved the cloth and looked down. He received a shock. There was only one man below who was carrying a torch, an iron bound with rags soaked in paraffin wrapped round. He was a thick-set man, and he was staring up attentively, and Hal knew that he could not be staring so intently at nothing. He came closer, and scrutinised the sandstone, and picking something off it at which he peered closely.

Stepping back, he again looked up. The engineer was confident that with such a poor light as the torch gave the Hun soldier could not see as high as the cave; but it was obvious that he was suspicious. Suddenly he gave the blazing torch a swing and sent it whirling upwards. It rose a yard or more above the cave as the engineer withdrew his head, dropped back with a jangle to the ground below, and went out.

"Anybody there?" whispered Ching Lung. "One man—suspicious," muttered the engineer.

The soldier was more than suspicious. What he had picked from the rock was a

shred of grey wool that had been rubbed off from one of Thurston's socks. He struck a match and relighted the torch. He had a flat face and two remarkably keen eyes, and the keen eyes still gazed upwards. He put his hand to his mouth as if to bawl for assistance, but changed his mind, and to Hal Honour's relief started to walk away, only to alter his mind again and walk back.

"Mischief!" said the engineer, touching the prince's arm and pointing down.

The soldier propped up his torch between two pieces of rock, spat on his hands, and began to climb—and he was a good climber.

"Jolly awkward if he means to stick to it," said the prince, in a hushed tone. "What can we do with the enterprising beggar, Hal?"

The engineer grunted. They could not see the man now as he climbed the face of the rock, but they could hear the scraping of his boots against the sandstone and his heavy breathing. The engineer pushed Ching Lung gently aside, and began to remove the boulders.

The torch was beginning to burn dimly and smokily. Hal Honour passed the last boulder back to Ching Lung and stretched himself flat on his chest, his hands hanging down over the edge of the cliff. He wriggled forward an inch or two till he could use his eyes. The torch was a mere flickering spark. In the gloom, judging the climber's position more by hearing than his sight, the engineer waited, and the man came up between his hands as the dying torch made a last effort to blaze up. It showed Hal Honour a ghostly face level with his own.

"Good!" grunted the engineer.

He took the astounded climber by the throat and one shoulder and dragged him into the cave. His clutch was so sudden and unlooked-for that the man had no time to utter a cry. The barricade was down, and without the lamp it was practically impossible to rebuild the barricade.

"The cloth!" said Hal Honour.

"What for?" asked Rupert. "Do you want a gag?"

"No; over the hole!" answered the man of few words. "Quick!"

The half-suffocated prisoner began to wriggle and kick till a firmer squeeze on his windpipe warned him that resistance was pure folly. Ching Lung had nothing with which to fasten the cloth, so he held it over the mouth of the cave with both hands. Someone was bawling down the gallery.

"Hermann Trubner! Trubner, you fool! Ach, blockhead, where are you?"

Hal Honour's prisoner had been missed,

and one of his comrades, if not more, had come back to look for him. Thurston, Ching Lung, and Hal Honour felt that their fate was hanging in the balance. The climber's iron-shod boots must have left plenty of traces on the sandstone that would attract even an unobservant eye. The man came clattering along with a lantern, and kicked against the iron rod of the torch.

"Ach, the big fool; he has lost himself!" he said. "Hermann Trubner! Ach, blockhead! Ach—"

Hermann Trubner had not only lost himself, but he had lost his field-cap and his rifle, for the rifle, with the cap on top of it, was leaning against the side of the gallery. And to lose his rifle was almost as deadly a crime as to lose himself. There was treachery here; foul play, perhaps—the worst of those cursed Englishers and their unholy witchcraft.

The soldier whipped out his whistle, and then suddenly gave way at the knees and sank slowly forwards on his hands, shaking his head to and fro in a foolish, drunken way.

**Ferrers Lord's Message!**

**T**HE collapse of the German was due to a blow from a lump of sandstone thrown by Ching Lung. Had the prince been a fraction of a second later the man's whistle would have been pealing through the subterranean galleries of Schloss Schwartzburg. By some chance, lucky or unlucky, the lamp he had brought with him had not gone out, though it had overturned. By its light they could see the Hun sprawling there, and Ching Lung understood that he was a very unpleasant and dangerous neighbour.

"That, though I say it myself, was a very fine shot," he said; "but it will cause trouble. I shall have to shift him."

That was essential, and it had to be done promptly before the soldier recovered consciousness. To leave him there would certainly bring disaster. The engineer grunted something, and Thurston groped his way to Honour's side. Ching Lung climbed down. He was small and slight, but his muscles were of the best quality. He lifted the German and carried him along the gallery and then went back for the prisoner's cap and rifle and the lantern. Nor did he forget the lump of sandstone, for the prince was very thorough in what he did. As the concussion of the machine-guns might easily have dislodged the sandstone from the roof it might lure suspicions. At any rate, when the Hun came to himself he would not be in a

condition to offer a very lucid explanation of what had happened to him.

Ching Lung climbed up without a slip or mishap. As all was quiet and Hal Honour had trussed and gagged the prisoner, the lamp was lighted, and they hastily blocked up the entrance and covered the barrier with the cloth.

"I say, Fritz," said Thurston, prodding the prisoner gently with his toe, "do you know any way out of this bunch of cellars?" The soldier blinked his eyes and shook his head.

"You're an inquisitive nuisance, Fritz," said Ching Lung. "If you hadn't been so mighty curious, you wouldn't have been here."

"And the chap you bowled over has wakened up, Ching," said Rupert Thurston. "I can hear him bellowing."

The engineer smoked his pipe. Something was happening below. The man had brought himself of his whistle, and was blowing it. For the next twenty minutes they waited with eager ears, listening to the dull sounds and murmurs of voices. Once more all was still.

"They've cleared off again!" said Ching Lung. "How glad I shifted the fellow with the sore head. But have they done with us yet?"

"Poison-gas!" said Hal Honour. "Who knows?"

The prince laughed. "Why don't you say something cheerful on the rare occasions when you venture to talk at all, Hal?" he said. "They may hate us enough to try that, but I don't think they'll flood the galleries with poison-gas; it would hang about too long."

"A fellow who can suggest poison-gas isn't a nice person to know," said Rupert Thurston. "Can't you do anything better than that, you pessimist?"

"Eat!" said the engineer.

They did eat, but sparingly, and then Ching Lung made a tour of the cave, but could find no other outlet. It seemed that nothing could be done except stay where they were and await the next move on the part of Professor Karl von Kreigler and General Goltzheim. The engineer consulted his big silver watch and wound it up. From another pocket he took what looked like the watch's twin-brother. Shaking his head, he replaced it.

"Too dangerous!" he said.

"So that's your precious wireless?" said Ching Lung, who had examined the delicate and clever instrument before. "Could you reach the Lord of the Deep with it?"

"Too dangerous!" repeated the engineer. "Too cunning!"

The thick sandstone and the granite outer walls of Schloss Schwartzburg could not hold back the electric wires, but others would pick up any message the engineer sent out. There was probably no code that human ingenuity could invent that Von Kreigler's experts would be unable to decipher. The prisoner kept staring and blinking in a way that annoyed Hal Honour, so he picked up the man and turned him round.

Once more the silence of the cave was broken by dull sounds. The man-hunt had been resumed.

"I've been thinking of your pocket wireless, Hal," said the prince. "Of course, we know why you don't want to use it, for these Huns are pretty smart at deciphering codes. I've got an idea that we could beat them! It's a thousand, pounds to sixpence they haven't a man in Schloss Schwartzburg who understands a word of Chinese. The Chief can speak it, read it, and even write it; and to write Chinese isn't as easy as cracking nuts."

"Good!" grunted the engineer. "What shall I say, Rupert?" asked the prince. "Hal likes the notion."

"I don't see what there is to say, except that we've broken out of our cell and are hiding here in the galleries under the Schloss," said Thurston. "But won't the very name give us away. If you start calling up the Lord of the Deep the professor will smell a rat at once."

"Not if I give the Chinese name, and code it, too," said Ching Lung. "I'll write the Chinese words in English. What's the code, Hal?"

Hal Honour wrote it down from memory. It took the prince twenty minutes to prepare the message. In plain English it read:—

"Hiding in cave under Blackrock Castle. Fit and safe as yet. Determined attempts to murder us have failed. Can you help?"

Coded and in Chinese, it looked a complete mystery but Hal Honour ticked it off without much difficulty. He placed the instrument under the lamp. The prince and Rupert Thurston lay down and tried to sleep, and after looking at the prisoner to see that he was secure, the engineer went on smoking his pipe.

At last Hal Honour reached for the little instrument. The brass finger on the dial had become agitated and was jerking backwards and forwards. Honour shook the prisoner, who sat up with a prolonged yawn, and gave him a piece of paper, on which he had pencilled some letters.

"Carry on!" said Ching Lung, translating it. "That's what it means, Hal, and that's all of it."

This was Ferrers Lord's answer, brief and terse, that had forced its way into the almost impregnable fortress of Schloss Schwartzburg. "And like the Chief, too," said Rupert, when they awakened him, "we'll have to carry on. I don't think it would be wise to send any more messages. Von Kreigler must have our message and the answer, though he may not dream where either come from. The very fact that his experts can't read them will stir him up. Nothing makes people so suspicious as a thing they can't understand. Sooner or later he'll get it ferreted out for him."

"Then let us hope it will be a lot later," said Ching Lung. "I'm pretty confident the professor's best expert will want a bag of ice on his head before he discovers what the wireless means. I feel enormously better, thank you kindly! It's as good as a tonic to know we're in touch with the Chief."

The prisoner began to utter choking sounds, so Hal Honour ungagged him and gave him a drink of wine.

"Warn him!" he said, clenching his hand.

"The big gentleman who is showing you his fist wishes to warn you, Fritz," said Rupert, speaking German. "He is showing you his fist to impress upon you what will happen to your neck if you make a noise. We did not ask for your company, but as you have forced yourself upon us, you must be very good and keep quiet. You are a great nuisance, Fritz, and we wish you had stopped away."

"Another mouth to feed, and I suppose we can't let the beggar starve," said Ching Lung. "Do you know this place, Jerry?"

"Ja," answered the soldier.

"Do you know a way out?"

"Nein; the only way out of Schloss Schwartzburg is the way you came in," said the Hun soldier. "When General Goltzheim needs you he will find you. Ach, he is a terrible man. He did not find you, but he knows you are here, and safe. If he does not need you, he will wait and starve you out. Ach, a terrible man he is when he is in a temper! You cannot escape, and he knows it. You are in a trap."

"We seem to have noticed something of the kind ourselves," said Rupert. "Can you tell us why, after bringing up machine-guns, the general is so quiet all at once?"

"For another drop of wine, Herr Engländer. The gag has dried my tongue so that I can scarcely speak. I think I know, and for another drink will tell you."

"There's just a drain or two in the bottom of the bottle," said Ching Lung, "so let him have it. And take all he says with a grain of salt."

After extracting the last drop of liquid from the bottle the prisoner cleared his throat.

"Schloss Schwartzburg has a secret," he said. "There is a gallery we call the Devil's Gallery, and no one is allowed to go there except his excellency, Herr von Kreigler, the general, and the lieutenant, who is Von Kreigler's nephew. To go there is to be shot. When he could not find you, the general thought you had gone there. What the secret is I cannot tell, but for any but those three to learn it is death. Perhaps the general thought you had learned this secret. Ach, yes, it must be that, for his excellency was not in favour of killing you at first; but when the general spoke to him, he did not refuse the machine-guns. But they have found you did not learn the secret, and so what does it matter? There is only the way out and that is guarded. We have a saying in our language that the greatest force in the world, stronger than high explosive, is a man's stomach. Hunger will compel you to surrender."

"Very probably, but in that case you

look like being unlucky, too, Fritz," said Ching Lung. "And how did you happen to find us?"

"Ach, I used my eyes! It is a little bit of wool that clings to the sandstone above my head. It tells me someone has climbed, and from that I know there is either a hole or a ledge up here. Of course, I am mad and reckless. The general offers ten thousand marks to the man who finds you first, dead or alive. I am to be married, and I wish for the reward, for it is much money for a poor soldier. Ach, you truly say that I am unlucky!"

Thurston translated some of the conversation for the engineer's benefit.

"Devil's Gallery," grunted Hal Honour.

"Where?"

Rupert Thurston put the question to the German. It was the third gallery on the right.

"That's what the lieutenant kid was talking to old Goltz about, Hal," said Ching Lung. "I'm not believing everything Fritz tells me, but there may be some little truth in it. Von Kreigler did not want us shot, and then suddenly altered his mind; and I don't think he altered his mind because you tapped the general on the nose. Fritz suggests that Von Kreigler agreed to have us exterminated because he thought we had discovered some secret. We didn't discover it, so now they're merely marking time till starvation makes us march out and shout 'Kamerad!'"

The engineer frowned. He pointed at the captured rifle and then at his head. Honour meant that he could not understand how any secret mattered. A bullet would make the secret safe, whether they knew it or not. If General Goltzheim was certain of capturing them, as the soldier stated, it could make no difference. It was more likely that Goltzheim had called for the machine-guns in a fit of passion, due to Hal's knock-down blow than to anything else. The engineer scraped the loose sand together to make a pillow for his head, and went calmly to sleep.

The lamp began to burn dimly. There was no water in the reservoir, though they had plenty of carbide, and without water they could not produce the gas.

"This won't do at all," said Ching Lung. "We can hang out for days on our rations, but I don't relish the thought of being here for days in pitch darkness. That would be a bit too awful. There's plenty of water down there, and I'm going after some, so here goes to dig another hole in the wall."

"You'll break your neck, or else get collared, old man!" said Rupert. "It's too jolly dangerous. Hadn't you better ask Hal Honour first?"

"Not likely! Don't waken him, Ru, for he'll either say 'No,' or insist on going for the stuff himself," said the prince. "That lamp won't last much longer. I shall be as right as rain unless old Goltz takes it into his head to start pumping more bullets about. Give me a hand here!"

In the dimming light they removed the stones. Rupert Thurston was reluctant and uneasy, but Ching Lung had made up his mind. He threw out the cloth, put the empty wine bottle in his pocket, and began to climb down. Even in the intense darkness it was not very difficult, and the silence was as intense as the darkness.

Ching Lung put the cloth over his head. Though they had come as rapidly as they could, Ching Lung was sure that the branching gallery on the left would take him to the water. He kicked against something that rattled and hurt his foot, and found it was a lantern. Though he was afraid to light it then, he took it with him. He was ankle-deep in the water before he thought he was within a hundred yards of it. He filled the wine bottle.

Through the arch came splashing and sound of voices. Then lights gleamed, and he saw torches. Three men were advancing—General Goltzheim, a soldier, and Professor von Kreigler himself, his shabby trousers concealed by wading-boots, and the light of the torch the general was carrying gleamed in his spectacles. Ching Lung moved away like a shadow, and then, remembering that he was wearing his magic cloak of invisibility, he stopped and listened.

"Yes, yes!" said Von Kreigler. "They have found some hole, but the few provisions they have will soon be ended, for they are greedy eaters, these English. It is as well

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## 4. Have You Secured Your Copy of "The Holiday Annual"?

you did not shoot them, general. It is a delicate matter—a dangerous matter. Bluff is good, but it is not always possible to bluff. We must find them and hand them over to the Allies."

"Ten thousand murders! I cannot follow that brain of yours!" roared the general. "It goes round and round and across and across like the threads in a spider's web! It goes this way and that way and every way except a straight way. Give them up to the Allies! Ach, what fresh insanity is this?"

"It is not insanity, but extreme wisdom," said Von Kreigler gently. "Do not deceive yourself, general. I have a very good brain. When you told me they might have penetrated to the Devil's Gallery, you frightened me. Leave all this to me. I have thought it out, and I will have it so. Give me that megaphone!"

He spoke to the soldier, and then his quiet voice, magnified into a bellow by the megaphone, boomed down the dark gallery.

"Gentlemen," cried Professor von Kreigler, "we do not know where you are hiding, but I offer you an honourable surrender. I promise that you will not be harmed in any way, but handed over immediately to the officer in command of the British Army of Occupation. Gentlemen, do not deceive yourselves that it is not foolish to make yourselves uncomfortable. I implore you to accept the honourable surrender I offer you."

Four or five times the professor shouted the same thing with a slight change of words. And then it dawned on Ching Lung that he had done something very foolish. As the three men advanced the prince had kept on advancing in front of them. He knew he must have passed the turning that led to the cave. Surrender was now impossible since Ferrers Lord had sent them his message to carry on, whatever terms the professor cared to offer. The prince's camouflage was excellent, but he was afraid to turn back, and if he came to a dead-end, or a cul-de-sac, and the three cornered him, something would happen.

### The Secret of Schloss Schwartzburg.

"ACH, they are stubborn people!" said Karl von Kreigler, giving the megaphone back to the soldier. "They have heard, no doubt, for sound carries far in these tunnels. They will talk it over, these pig-heads. I will wait one day and then send for the British general. Perhaps they will surrender to him."

Ching Lung was compelled to keep on. All at once the general barked something at the soldier, who stood still. Goltzheimer and Von Kreigler walked on slowly. Watching over his shoulder through the eyelet-holes of the cloth, Ching Lung noted that the general's nose was still bandaged, and that he carried a formidable-looking revolver as well as the torch. The professor held a leather attache-case in his hand.

"Only two to fight at once, and that's better," thought Ching Lung, grasping the wine bottle by the neck.

He had been touching the wall with his fingers. His greatest dread was a dead-end, when he would be compelled to face the two men. Probably he might take them by surprise and fell them both with his only weapon, the wine-bottle, but if he did not succeed in silencing them both, there would be the soldier to deal with. Even then the soldier would probably be looking that way, and would see the torch fall. He was a man to be respected, for he had a loaded rifle and a bayonet. And Ching Lung was doubtful about Goltzheimer. Though Hal Honour had knocked him out, the prince was doubtful that a hock bottle, even when filled with water, would make much impression on the Prussian's thick head, especially as he was wearing a helmet. There was another difficulty. He dare not hit the Prussian first for fear of smashing the bottle on his helmet and leaving himself weaponless when his turn came to deal with Professor von Kreigler.

These thoughts passed through Ching Lung's brain in a flash. His fingers missed the wall. There was a shallow embrasure there. Except for the soldier, Ching Lung might not have declined a tussle with Goltzheimer and Von Kreigler. He pressed himself into the hollow, his heart beating a

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good deal faster than its normal pace. The professor's attache-case actually touched him. And then Goltzheimer dropped the torch and stamped it out with the heel of his wading-boot, and all was as black as the inside of a camera with the shutter closed.

An electric-torch flashed out. Again the two men went on, the light of the torch dancing in front of them to show the way.

"They've got explosives down here," thought Ching Lung—"perhaps a tremendous arsenal of stuff they're hiding from the Allies—and that's why he stamped the other light out."

Could that be the secret of Schloss Schwartzburg? Much could be hidden in that roomy labyrinth. Perhaps Germany's surplus of munitions of war she was supposed to have handed over to the Allies or destroyed was concealed there. Ching Lung

tune had kept them from coming that way in their dash for liberty.

"Hallo, hallo!" thought the prince. "Anybody who ventures into the Devil's Gallery is shot if he isn't blown sky-high beforehand. I'm on the wrong tack. They don't guard explosives by mines or bombs, for the whole lot would go up in the air. It's no secret arsenal, that's certain. Hallo!"

The electric-torch shone on granite. They had reached the dead-end at last. Ching Lung's eyes widened.

"Is it the old story of 'open sesame' and the forty thieves over again?" he muttered. "Hallo! Is it rock, or is it only sham rock, and not Barry O'Rooney's sweet, green little shamrock of Ireland? Yes, it's the yarn of the forty thieves!"

A door swung back, carrying the imitation granite with it. Then came the click of a key, and Ching Lung stole nearer. He



The Professor handled the jewels as if he loved them, shaking them to make them flash in the light. And in the doorway, Chung Lung, clothed in the wonderful cloak, watched in silence. (See page 5.)

could not go back, for he had no hope of being able to pass the soldier unseen, so he followed.

"Wait there, Excellency, till I make things safe for you," he heard the general say. "Ach! A million murders! I hate the risky work, but there is no one we can trust."

Ching Lung peered forward eagerly. The general was stooping down, but what he was doing the prince could not tell.

"Right!" he growled. "It is intact, so nobody has been this way. They would have gone sky-high. We alarmed ourselves about nothing, and it was your fault."

"My dear general, do not let us deceive ourselves," said Von Kreigler. "It is true in this case I was alarmed and without cause, but this engineer of Ferrers Lord is a fiend of a man. He will find out things no other man would suspect. Are you sure it is all safe? I am not a soldier, and not understanding as a soldier does, I am a little nervous. There is no danger now, then?"

"None at all," said the general, hiding the contempt in his voice. "I have disconnected the batteries."

Ching Lung pricked up his ears at the word batteries. Batteries suggested something unpleasantly explosive, as did Professor Karl von Kreigler's nervousness. Only good for

dropped flat on his face. The general had pulled down an electric switch, and a dazzling light streamed out of the open doorway. As Ching Lung began to wriggle back away from the light he raised his head. The general and the professor were walking down a kind of aisle formed by metal boxes piled one on the other, and every box was locked, corded, and sealed. Such boxes did not contain explosives, he was sure. As the two men disappeared Ching Lung sprang up again. He felt reckless and intensely curious. He crept in, keeping close to the wall of metal trunks. There seemed to be thousands and thousands of them in the great vault. They were piled neatly in squares and rectangles, and each bore its own particular label. The professor was peering at one of the labels through his spectacles. He said something to Goltzheimer, and the big man dragged out the box and lifted it down for him.

"From Poland," said Von Kreigler. "A poor country, perhaps but it yielded good things. There was much loot in Poland, general, as you well know."

"Ach, I was not fool enough to take my share!" growled Goltzheimer. "These go to America for sale, yes?"

"Yes, it is easier and safer in America," answered the professor. "Those cursed Eng-

NEXT FRIDAY!

"GUNNER TURNS UP!"

A GRAND STORY OF THE ROOKWOOD CHUMS. BY OWEN CONQUEST.

lish police have long noses for loot. - You remember the pearls that were taken from our agent and claimed as loot from Belgium. Yes, these English have sharp noses. A pity—a pity! They are so beautiful, general."

"Von Kreigler had unlocked and opened the box. He held up a couple of magnificent diamond necklaces that shimmered and sparkled in the electric-light with a hundred prismatic hues. The professor handled them as if he loved them, pulling them through his fingers and shaking them to make them flash before dropping them reluctantly in the attache-case. When the case was filled it must have contained jewels worth a king's ransom.

"And all to be spent on propaganda," said the professor, "to bribe journalists of foreign papers to write little paragraphs saying how poor and honest we are, and how hard-working, and how cruel and greedy the Allies are to us. Ach, it is sad!"

"They both began to laugh, and then Goltzheimer lighted a cigar.

"Yes, it is great bluff—great bluff!" he chuckled. "We have no money, no treasure, only our wretched little paper notes, of no value. Only notes—and this!"

He flourished the cigar to indicate the huge array of boxes.

"A bankrupt nation, my dear general," said the professor. "No one can obtain blood from a flint or fill a wine-glass from an empty bottle. But they do not know, they do not dream. I twist them round my finger, and they do not dream who is twisting them."

"Not that swinehound, Ferrers Lord?" "It is different, but even Ferrers Lord is only guessing," said Von Kreigler, blinking his pale eyes. "Do not deceive yourself that if he did know, general, he would be a hard man to fight. And I am a fighter! Ach, yes, I am a good fighter! Ferrers Lord will lose, but I must play my own game, and play it to the end in my own way! In this I will have no interference. A swine-pig of a man is Ferrers Lord; but do not deceive yourself that I will not beat him!"

As the professor snapped the attache-case together and locked it Ching Lung felt that it was time to go. He was astounded. If each of the boxes in the monstrous vault contained only a hundredth part of the treasure contained in the one the professor had opened, here was colossal wealth, far beyond the dreams of human avarice. He did not wonder that it was death to attempt to pry into this amazing secret, and that

the Devil's Gallery was forbidden ground to the most trustworthy of Von Kreigler's followers. Here was wealth that would make the Count of Monte Cristo with his millions feel like a pauper, and King Midas, at whose touch all things turned into gold, feel utterly outclassed.

"I don't suppose the rank and file of the Huns guess a word about this, only the gang at the top," Ching Lung thought. "Well, here's news! They'd flood the galleries with poison-gas quickly enough if they knew I'd been here. That would put the lid on Von Kreigler's honourable surrender, for they daren't let any man, especially one of the Allies, leave Schloss Schwartzburg except to go to his grave, with this secret inside his head."

"Why, thunder and murder, you didn't shut the door!" roared the general. "Have your Excellency's wits gone wool-gathering, then?"

"It was for you to shut the door, my friend," said the professor mildly. "Do you speak so roughly? As you entered behind me it was for you to shut the door."

Goltzheimer choked back an oath, and his big moustache bristled.

"Ach, perhaps it does not matter!" he said. "There is only the man, and he would not stir without orders. If I thought he had seen I would blow his brains out; but he has not seen."

He pushed the door, with its covering of sham granite, and Ching Lung heard it shut with a hollow clang.

The prince was trying to find the useful depression in the wall. If he missed it, he would be between the general and the professor and the soldier with the bayonet. Goltzheimer's flash-lamp was more dangerous than the torch he had extinguished, for it threw its light farther ahead. The cloth only reached to the prince's knees, and he was aware that his wet undergarments were well sprinkled with sand that might render them dangerously conspicuous if the light happened to shine on them. And ahead a red blur in the darkness marked the position of the soldier.

"I'm in for it!" thought Ching Lung. "I must have over-run the place. If they get me it will be my back to the wall and a file of rifles."

He was too close to the treasure-vault to hope to escape with his life if they captured him. Although Von Kreigler was getting on in years and a physically weak man, they were two to one. It would not have been difficult for the prince to have stalked the sentry and knocked him down. Even then

he had to discover the turn of the gallery leading to the cave. That gallery, he knew, had a dead end. With the general and his revolver and the electric-torch in hot chase, he could not hope to clamber up to the cave in time. His grip tightened on the bottle and his eager fingers kept touching the wall, hoping against hope to find the hollow.

He crushed himself against the wall, trying to shrink his size and make himself as small and inconspicuous as possible. A choked cry echoed down the gallery, and the light of the torch was gone when the prince looked that way. And then in German came an anguished voice shouting: "Treason! Help!"—a voice that was immediately strangled into silence by a clutch of iron on the man's throat.

General Goltzheimer whipped out his revolver and began to fire into the darkness. He switched off his lamp when he had emptied the weapon. Ching Lung was well aware that either Hal Honour or Expert Thurston had grown anxious and climbed down from the cave in search of him. He guessed it was the engineer, and with the unpleasant prospect of feeling a bullet tearing into the flesh of his back when Goltzheimer had reloaded he made a plunge into the gloom, ducking low.

"Hal!" he gasped. "Hal! Where are you?"

"Choking this fellow!" said the engineer's voice.

There was sound of thuds. It was no time for gentle deeds, and the engineer for his own safety and Ching Lung's had to quieten the German. Then Ching Lung felt the engineer grip his arm and drag him away. They were just entering the side tunnel when General Goltzheimer began to shoot again and also to bawl and bellow for help. His barking voice was almost as loud as the reports of his revolver. He did not attempt to follow, from prudent motives, but he stood shooting and bellowing.

"A light, a light, Thurston!"

The flickering of a match showed the mouth of the cave. Other voices were shouting now in addition to the general's. Hal Honour climbed up behind Ching Lung, and they built the barrier up again as well as they could in the gloom.

"I'm sorry, boys," said Ching Lung, "but it's bound to be war to the knife now, war to the bitter end. I've discovered the secret of the Devil's Gallery and Schloss Schwartzburg, and old Goltz and the professor will never rest till they've taken our scalps."

(To be continued.)

## A WORD WITH YOUR EDITOR.

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Address: Editor, The "Popular," The Fleetway House, Farringdon St., London, E.C.4.

### For Next Friday!

I am pleased to be able to announce the details of another splendid programme for next week. The first grand, long, complete school story will be entitled:

**"YOUNG COKER OF THE SIXTH!"**  
By Frank Richards,

and it deals with the arrival of Coker minor at Greyfriars. Not a little sensation is caused when it becomes known that young Coker is going into the Sixth Form, and not a few seniors and juniors resent it. However, the Head says that Coker minor is to go into the Sixth, and into the Sixth he goes!

This is a splendid story, written in Mr. Richards' inimitable manner, and one you will very much enjoy reading.

The second long, complete school story deals with the adventures of the chums of Rookwood, and is entitled—

**"GUNNER TURNS UP!"**  
By Owen Conquest.

In this story we learn that the convict Gunner, of whom you have been reading this

**NEXT FRIDAY: "YOUNG COKER OF THE SIXTH!"**

week, actually turns up. Needless to say, his turning up makes things decidedly awkward! However, you'll learn all about Gunner when you read this splendid story, which will appear in our next issue.

### EXTRA-SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT.

There will be an extra-special supplement next week, for although Billy Bunter's four fat subs have got on strike, the fat junior of the Remove sets about turning out his paper in really creditable fashion. In fact, next week's issue of "Billy Bunter's Weekly" is an ALL-BUNTER number.

This brief information will, no doubt, give you the impression that the next supplement is going to be a scream—well you're right. The issue is a scream from beginning to end, and probably the issue you will enjoy more than any other that has so far appeared.

### RESULT OF POPLETS No. 26.

Space does not allow me to publish the prize-winners' efforts in the above competition. The prizes of Five Shillings each have been awarded to the following readers:

Miss Elsie Houlden, 7, Malvern Road, West Kilburn, London; J. Dyke, 42, Field Street, Bradley, Bilston, Staffs; W. Arthur, 32, Morningside Road, Edinburgh; L. J. Lillcrap, 27, Bedford Road, Tottenham, N. 15; A. Chapple, 16, Winns' Terrace, Walthamstow, E.17; L. Joinson, 29, Terret Road, Liscard, Cheshire; L. Collier, 155, Ashley Road, Bristol; W. Morrow, Reading Dept., Messrs. Cassell & Co., La Belle Sauvage, E.C.4; Eric Beebe, 2, Persehouse Street, Walsall, Staffs; and L. C. Grey, 173, Main Road, Handsworth, nr. Sheffield. Prizes will be forwarded during the week.

### "POPLETS" COMPETITION No. 32.

Examples for this week's competition:

Loading Food. Generally Accepted.  
Getting Up Early. That.  
The Shining Lights. Never Did Pay.  
What Counts Most. Ask Skinner When.  
When Coker Fights. Work For Nothing.  
Billy Bunter's Poetry. Successful Competitors.  
Asking Too Much. Say.

Read the following rules carefully, and then send in your postcard. Readers should particularly note that TWO efforts can be sent in one card, but no effort may contain more than FOUR words.

Select two of the examples, and make up a sentence of TWO, THREE or FOUR words having some bearing on the example. ONE of the words in your sentence must commence with one of the letters in the example.

1. All "Poplets" must be written on one side of a POSTCARD, and not more than two "Poplets" can be sent in by one reader each week.

2. The postcards must be addressed "Poplets," No. 32, The "Popular," Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4.

3. No correspondence may be entered into in connection with "Poplets."

4. The Editor's opinion on any matter which may arise is to be accepted as final and legally binding. This condition will be strictly enforced, and readers can only enter the competition on this understanding.

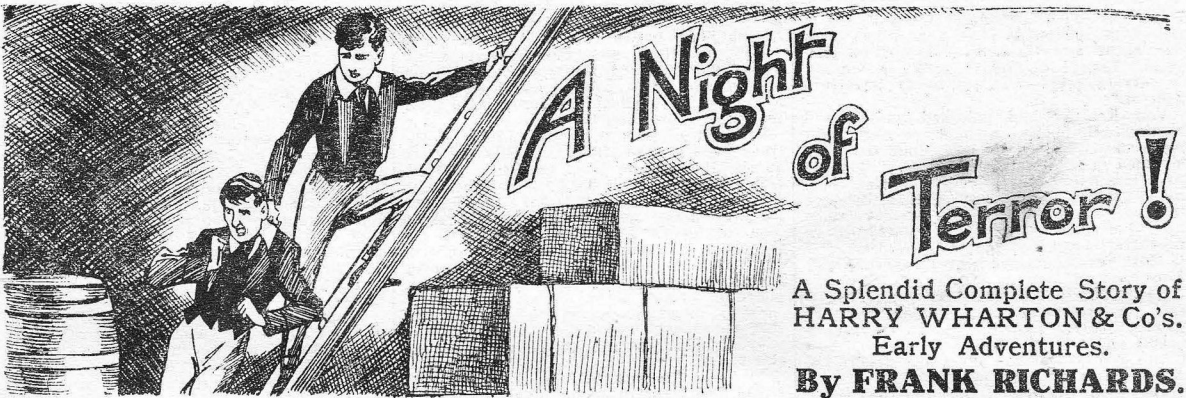
5. I guarantee that every effort will be thoroughly examined by a competent staff of judges, PROVIDED that the effort is sent in on a POSTCARD, and that it is received on or before September 15th.

TEN PRIZES OF FIVE SHILLINGS EACH to senders of the ten BEST "POPLETS."

**YOUR EDITOR.**

THE POPULAR.—No. 138.

A SPLENDID TALE OF THE JUNIORS OF GREYFRIARS.  
By FRANK RICHARDS.



A Splendid Complete Story of  
**HARRY WHARTON & Co's.**  
 Early Adventures.  
 By **FRANK RICHARDS.**

**THE FIRST CHAPTER.**  
**The Alarm!**

**H**ARRY WHARTON rolled uneasily in his sleep. Beside him lay Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull of the Remove Form at Greyfriars, and Coker of the Fifth. But they were not in the dormitory at Greyfriars.

The four juniors had boarded a stranded ship, had found her without a crew, and were set upon claiming salvage for the vessel. But they had discovered that there was something on board—and that something was an enemy. As yet they had not seen the enemy.

Keeley, a longshoreman from Pegg, together with several ruffianly friends, had attempted to board the vessel and drive the juniors off. They had succeeded in driving the juniors to the cabins, but they themselves had been driven off the ship by the mysterious enemy.

Then Coker had arrived, and had been drawn into the adventure.

Harry Wharton & Co. had come to call the enemy the "Thing." And, with the door of the cabin bolted and the porthole closed, the chums had turned in to sleep. But sleep for the nerve-wracked juniors was a long time coming.

One by one they dropped off, and Harry Wharton was the last to find that happy state. How long he slept he did not know.

He awoke suddenly.

He awoke with a strange, low, soft sound in his ears—a sound that seemed to be within the cabin itself.

He sprang to his feet, his heart throbbing, his eyes starting. His gaze went to the door; it was still fast. There was no sound in the passage without. He gazed wildly round the cabin. Whence came that soft, rubbing sound, as of a soft body upon glass? He turned to the porthole and stood staring at it, with the blood freezing in his veins.

It was the Thing!

Outside, in the sky, the stars were glimmering; but the light burning inside the cabin made the night seem blackness itself outside the glass.

The porthole was a black, circular patch, with a glimmer of light from the lamp upon the glass.

Outside, in the blackness, a blacker shadow moved.

It was there!

What was Wharton did not know; he could not see. The thickness of the glass, the darkness outside, prevented him from discerning what it was. But something was rubbing on the glass—rubbing and twisting as if seeking entrance.

The boy stood shuddering.

What was it?

Was it something that could pass

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through the porthole, if it were open—something that only that disc of glass kept out of the cabin?

If the glass broke—

He uttered a choked cry. Bob Cherry sat up, panting.

"Harry! What is it?"

Wharton could not reply; his tongue was cleaving to the roof of his mouth. He raised his hand and pointed to the porthole. Bob Cherry scrambled up.

"Oh! Good heavens!"

The other fellows awakened. They stood in a shuddering group, their starting eyes fixed upon the porthole. Outside the black, shapeless shadow moved, and the soft rubbing continued. The Thing was seeking entrance.

The juniors could not speak; could not move. They knew that the porthole overlooked the big rock beside the steamer, but at a height above it which made it utterly impossible for any human being to reach the porthole from thence. And below was the smooth side of the ship, impossible even for a monkey to climb.

How had the Thing reached the porthole outside? Could it be a being of this earth that was seeking entrance there?

"Oh! My heavens!" murmured Nugent.

The dark shadow on the dark glass disappeared; the sound ceased. The Thing was gone; it had failed to enter. But if Wharton had not fastened the window—

It was impossible to think of sleep again that night.

The juniors stood, or moved restlessly about the cabin, waiting and praying for dawn.

It seemed centuries before a glimmer of silver lighted up the darkness without and the porthole glass glimmered in the early rays of the sun.

It seemed to the imprisoned, wearied juniors that it was the face of a friend looking upon them as the blessed daylight climbed the sky.

"Light! Thank Heaven!" muttered Wharton.

Day had come.

Since the attempt to enter at the closed porthole, there had been no sound—no sign of the mysterious foe of the derelict.

It had retired, perhaps, to some hidden recess of the ship, where doubtless it had been hidden at the time the juniors boarded the steamer and searched it. It was gone now. But for how long? It might be hidden in some recess of the hold, or it might be lurking in the passage outside, waiting for the prisoners of the state-room to show themselves now that the dawn had come.

The boys looked at one another with haggard faces.

They were silent, troubled, only feeling comforted as the sun rose higher, and

the dawn of a summer's morning glimmered upon the sea and the rocks and the cliffs.

If the Thing had come to the window again they could have discerned it now, but it did not come.

"It—it may not show itself in the daylight," muttered Johnny Bull.

Harry Wharton nodded.

Strong-minded, and free from superstition as he was, he could hardly persuade himself that the hidden horror of the derelict was not a being of another world. For if it was of the earth, how had it reached the outside of the porthole, inaccessible to man or animal?

"We—we shall have to risk opening the door, and make a bolt for it," muttered Coker.

"I suppose so."

"Shall we go?" asked Bob Cherry.

The juniors hesitated.

No one was anxious to open the door. The juniors listened, but there was no sound from without. But that might only mean that the enemy was lying in cunning ambush.

Harry Wharton looked from the porthole. Below he could see the rock, and, farther on, the sands and the great cliffs of the Shoulder. The tide was going out and the bows of the grounded steamer were dry.

A sudden sound struck upon his ears. It was a clear whistle from the distance. Someone was coming along the sands, early as the hour was. Across the bay, in the fishing village, the fishermen were doubtless astir. But on the side of the bay where the billows broke in foam on a wilderness of rock and sand all was solitary; the broken and dangerous waters at the base of the Shoulder were always solitary and deserted.

Harry Wharton looked out of the porthole, guessed that the new-comer was a fellow from Greyfriars, drawn out thus early by curiosity to see the derelict.

A Greyfriars cap came into view among the rocks. Harry Wharton swung the round glass of the porthole open as wide as he could. There was not room for Wharton to put his head out, but he waved his handkerchief through the opening to attract the attention of the new-comer.

"Give him a yell!" said Bob Cherry.

"Hallo!"

A shout came back. Another cap appeared by the first over the rocks; there were two of the Greyfriars fellows.

"Hallo!" came back the shout. "You fellows awake?"

"I guess they are!"

They were the voices of Tom Brown and Fisher T. Fish of the Remove. Tom Brown came scrambling over the uneven rock towards the side of the steamer, and the American junior followed him. Harry Wharton shouted again.

"Hallo! Stop!"  
Tom Brown looked round in surprise.  
"Where are you?" he called out.  
"Here! Stop! Don't go aboard!"  
"Eh?"  
"There's danger!"  
Tom Brown looked up at the porthole. The rock sloped away from where he stood towards the sea, so that, if he had walked along the side of the ship towards the porthole he would have had to descend, and the opening would have been far above his head. He stood where he was, and looked across the intervening space at the porthole, where he could now partly make out Harry Wharton's face.

"Danger!" he repeated, in amazement.  
Fisher T. Fish chuckled.  
"I guess they're pulling our leg," he remarked. "I'm going aboard. I guess there ain't any danger."

And he ran to the highest part of the rock and scrambled over the rail of the grounded steamer. Tom Brown hesitated.

"Make him come back!" yelled Wharton. "It's not safe aboard!"

"What's the matter?"  
"Danger!"

"But what's the danger?"  
"I—I— There's something there! Keep off!"

"Why don't you come on deck?"  
"It's not safe!"  
Knock!

The juniors in the state-room swung round towards the door. There were footsteps outside, and Fisher T. Fish was knocking on the door.

"Here I am!" shouted Fish. "Open the door! What are you locked in for?"  
Bob Cherry gasped.

"He's there! Then he hasn't seen it!"  
"Open the door—quick!"

The juniors tore away the table from the door, dragged back the bolt, and threw the door open. Fisher T. Fish looked in upon them with a nod and a grin.

"I guess you can't fool me!" he remarked. "Jevver get left?"

"You ass!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Get on deck—quick!"  
"But—but what—"

The grin died away from Fish's face as he saw the white, stricken faces of the prisoners of the cabin. He looked at them in amazement and alarm, his jaw dropping.

Harry Wharton caught him by the arm and rushed him back to the deck. Fisher T. Fish went unresistingly. The juniors followed from the state-room, and in a few seconds they were on the open deck again, with the fresh breeze blowing in their faces. Tom Brown had climbed over the rail, and he met them there, his look showing how astonished he was.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked about them with sharp, nervous glances, but there was no sign of the mysterious foe. Whatever it was, all sign of it had vanished with the daylight.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Vanished!

HARRY WHARTON drew a deep, deep breath.

The horror of the long and terrible night was still upon him, and his heart was still beating painfully.

But the worst of it was over. If danger came now, the way lay open for flight to the shore. Tom Brown and Fisher T. Fish eyed him in astonishment.

"What on earth's the matter here?" asked Tom Brown. "If you are not japing—and you certainly don't look like it—what's the matter with you?"

"I guess they're stuffing us," said

Fisher T. Fish. "But they can't pile it on me."

"It's not a jape," said Harry Wharton. "I wouldn't go through a night like that again for a shipload of sovereigns! Thank goodness it's over!"

"But what's happened?"

"I—I think we'd better get ashore," said Nugent. "I should feel a bit safer on the rock there, anyway."

"But what for?" demanded Tom Brown. "What are you afraid of?"

"I'm not afraid," said Coker angrily. "But I'm not going to stay here. I'm going jolly well straight back to Greyfriars. I've had enough of this horrible place!"

"But—but what—"

"I advise you fellows to clear off, too," said Coker, as he put his leg over the rail. "I'm fed up with it. Get off while you're safe!"

And Coker tramped away swiftly over the big rock, and disappeared, and his footsteps died away on the pebbly shore.

Tom Brown stared after him blankly, and then looked at the Famous Four. He could not understand in the least what was the matter with Coker. The Fifth-Former was evidently in a state of utterly shaken nerves, and that was all he could see.

"What is it?" exclaimed Brown. "What on earth has happened here? Is the giddy ship haunted?"

"I guess they've been japing Coker," said Fish.

"Is that it, Wharton?"  
Harry Wharton shook his head.

The chums of the Remove hesitated to explain. Now that they stood in the fresh air and the sunlight the events of the past night seemed like some horrible dream that was over. How could they expect the juniors to believe the strange story they had to tell? And yet it was no dream, and there was fearful danger on board the derelict. Otherwise, why had Keeley and his gang fled without returning?

"Well, what is it all about?" demanded Tom Brown impatiently. The New Zealand junior was puzzled and a little alarmed. "Have you been having nightmares?"

"It seems like one," said Harry Wharton, looking about him involuntarily.

"I—I hardly know how to tell you. There's somebody—something—on board this ship—I don't know what, but—but—"

"Have you seen it?"  
"No!"

"What is it?"  
"I don't know."

"We've heard it," said Nugent, with a shudder.

"Heard it! What was it like?"

"It was moving about just outside the door, and—and it made a sort of soft, dragging sound, like—like a cat creeping

Fisher T. Fish chuckled.  
"I guess you had a bad dream," he said.

"We were awake, ass!"

"Oh, fellows have the nightmare sometimes, if they're awake, if they're in a state of nerves," said the American junior airily. "Pity I wasn't with you. I'd have bucked you up!"

The Famous Four glared at him.

They felt that it was the only reception they could expect for their strange story. The hidden horror had vanished; and a fellow who had not been through the terrible experience with them would not understand it, and think it incredible. Their fearful adventure would be set

down to nerves—to the effect of solitude and darkness upon their imaginations. It was inevitable.

"Tell us all about it," said Tom Brown quietly.

Wharton did so. He told of the attack of the longshoremen, and their sudden flight—for no explained cause. Proof of that part of the story, if it was needed, was close at hand; for one of the ruffians in his hurry had left his cap lying on the deck where it had fallen in the struggle, and there were a couple of cudgels there, too. Tom Brown and Fish looked at them curiously.

"And they never came back?" asked Brown.

"No!"  
"And after that you heard the sounds you spoke of?"

"Yes."  
"At the cabin door, and then at the porthole?"

"Yes," said Harry, with a shiver.

"Well, it's jolly queer," said the New Zealand junior. He hesitated. "I say, you know, I don't doubt your yarn for a moment; but—but are you sure you didn't dream it? You might have been half-asleep, and heard the water swishing against the side. The tide makes queer sounds sometimes, you know, among these sunken rocks—"

"I guess that was it."

The Remove chums shook their heads.

"That was not it," said Harry Wharton steadily. "There is something—some fearful and unknown thing—hidden on the ship. I suppose it's hidden itself again now it's daylight. But if there wasn't something, why did Keeley and his gang run?"

"They might have been frightened by a shadow, you know, or—perhaps they felt they were going too far."

"They wouldn't have gone without stealing the valuables in the cabins, if they hadn't been scared out of their wits," said Bob Cherry.

"Are there valuables there?"

"Yes. Every cabin is just as it was left. There's money in the pockets of some of the clothes, and a gold watch hanging up in one cabin over a bunk, and other things like that. The passengers and the crew took nothing away with them when they went. You can see the boats are all here."

"It's extraordinary how the steamer was deserted without the boats going," said Tom Brown. "Blest if I can make it out!"

"They saw the—the Thing!" said Nugent, shivering. "Either it killed them, or—they were frightened into jumping overboard."

"Well, if it's on board, let's hunt it out," said Fisher T. Fish, picking up one of the cudgels left by the longshoremen in their flight. "I'll take the lead, if you've still got a fit of nerves on. Follow the Star-spangled Banner!"

"Come back, you ass!"  
"Nope! I'm going to search the ship!"

And Fisher T. Fish ran below before he could be stopped. The Famous Four looked worried and troubled. Tom Brown followed Fisher T. Fish.

"The idiots!" growled Bob Cherry. "If they happen upon it—"

"We can't let them face it alone!" muttered Wharton. "Come on!"

"But, I say—"

"It's no worse for us than for them. Come on!"

"Oh, all right!"

And the Famous Four followed Brown

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BY FRANK RICHARDS.

and the American into the interior of the steamer. They descended with their weapons in their hands, and their eyes on the alert.

**THE THIRD CHAPTER.  
Face to Face!**

UP and down through the derelict the juniors went—Tom Brown and the American junior leading the way. They were full of the excitement of exploring the deserted ship; and it was plain that they did not feel any alarm. Indeed, as Harry Wharton & Co. followed them, they began almost to think that the events of the night had been some fearful dream. For of the unknown foe there was no trace. The juniors explored the chart-house, and the fore-castle, and the state-rooms. Nothing to alarm them was to be seen; and there was no track, no trace of a footprint; no sign of any foe, save the marks that had been left by Keeley and the gang of longshoremen.

"Nothing so far!" grinned Fisher T. Fish. "I guess you chaps will have to admit now that you were dreaming. Jever get left?"

"There doesn't seem to be anything, really," said Tom Brown.

"We haven't found it yet," said Wharton.

"Perhaps it's gone ashore," suggested Fish, with a grin; "or vanished into thin air. It may have flown away. You see, it must be able to fly, or it couldn't have got at the cabin window in the way you described."

Tom Brown laughed. The chums of the Remove turned red. In the daylight, and after the failure to find any trace of the hidden horror, and with the ridicule of the American junior poured upon the whole matter, it seemed to them that perhaps they had exaggerated the terrors of the night.

"It may have been a stray dog left aboard by the crew," said Tom Brown. "That would account for what you heard in the ship."

"A dog couldn't have got at the porthole outside," said Nugent tartly.

"Well, no; but—"

"Besides, where is the dog now?" said Bob Cherry.

"Might have gone ashore after the longshoremen."

"Oh, rot! There's something—"

"Well, we haven't found it," said Fisher T. Fish. "Of course, if there is something, we must find it. I should like to carry it back to Greyfriars, and keep it stuffed in the study."

"Oh, shut up!"

The Yankee junior chuckled.

"Well, I'm going to search the hold now," he said. "If you chaps feel nervous, you can stay up here."

Wharton grasped his shoulder.

"You sha'n't go down there!" he exclaimed sharply.

"Why not?" demanded Fish.

"Because—because it's bound to be there, as it isn't in any other part of the ship."

"Well, I guess I want to find it, you know."

"Suppose it corners you in the hold—you can't get up that ladder very quickly—"

"I guess I sha'n't want to."

"Look here—"

"Oh, I'm going!"

"I tell you—"

"Rats!"

Fisher T. Fish jerked himself away. But Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry caught him by the arms and stopped him.

"You sha'n't go down there," said Harry sternly. "You can cackle as much as you like, but you sha'n't run into danger."

"I guess—"

"Cheese it! You're not going!"

"Chuck him off the ship!" said Nugent. "I've had enough of his funny ways. Take him and pitch him over the rail!"

"Good egg!"

Fisher T. Fish struggled.

"Hold on!" he exclaimed. "Look here, I'm not in a blue funk, if you are. I guess I'm going down. Come on, Browney!"

"The steamer belongs to these four chaps!" grinned Tom Brown. "They sallyed it. Must obey owners' orders."

"I guess not!"

Fisher T. Fish gave a sudden wrench, and tore himself loose, and before the chums of Greyfriars could grasp him again, he made a leap into the open hatchway of the hold, and went down three or four steps at a time.

"Ow!"

He lost his footing on the steps, and rolled to the bottom.

"Groo! Oh!"

Fisher T. Fish sat up at the bottom of the steps in the semi-darkness below.

The chums of the Remove looked down at him angrily.

"Come up!" shouted Harry Wharton. "If we have to come down and fetch you, we'll give you a jolly good bumping, you idiot!"

Fisher T. Fish did not reply.

A sudden and fearful change had come over his face.

He was staring into the darkness of the hold, and the juniors, as they looked down upon him, saw his face become white and fixed and terrible.

Bob Cherry choked.

"He sees it!"

"Good heavens! It's there!"

"Fish! Fish! Run for it! Come up—come up!"

The juniors could not see what Fisher T. Fish saw. He was looking into the recesses of the hold from where he sat paralysed at the bottom of the ladder.

What was it that he saw in the midst of the cargo, in the deep dusk of the hold?

"Fish!"

"Come up!"

No reply.

The junior remained where he was, transfixed with terror.

"Good heavens!" muttered Tom Brown. "There must be something—"

Harry Wharton, clenching his teeth, stepped upon the ladder to descend. Bob Cherry grasped his arm.

"Harry! Stop—stop!"

"I must get him out!"

"But—Oh, Heaven!"

Wharton ran down. He did not stop to look about him; he grasped Fisher T. Fish by the collar, and lifted him by main force, and dragged him up. Fish did not make a movement to help himself; he was powerless with the fearful terror that gripped him, mind and body. With an exertion of strength he would not have been capable of at any other moment, Harry Wharton dragged the American junior out to safety.

There was a sound below!

A slow, gliding sound, as of a body dragging itself along—the sound the juniors had heard outside the state-room in the dead of night.

Fisher T. Fish fell helplessly beside the panting Wharton. He had fainted.

"Run!" gasped Nugent.

The sound from below was louder.

Wharton raised Fisher T. Fish in his arms. He felt that there was no time to get him to the deck above. He dragged him away along the alleyway, into the state-room the juniors had occupied the previous night. It was the nearest refuge. In a few seconds they were within, and Wharton let Fish roll to the floor, where he lay fainting, groaning faintly to himself. Wharton whirled round to the door. Bob Cherry had already slammed it, and was shooting the bolt.

"Where's Nugent?" shrieked Wharton.

He and Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull were in the cabin with Fish. But Frank Nugent was not to be seen. Wharton sprang to the door, but Bob Cherry jammed the bolt home, and dragged him back from it.

"Franky's all right!" he gasped.

"And Tom—"

"They're both all right; they've bolted."

Wharton panted.

"They're off the ship?"

"Yes."

Wharton ran to the porthole and looked out. On the rough, uneven rock beside the steamer he caught sight of Tom Brown and Frank Nugent. They were scrambling away from the steamer at top speed, evidently under the impression that the others were running, too. Harry Wharton shouted from the porthole.

"Franky! Tom Brown!"

The running juniors stopped, and looked back.

"Oh!" gasped Tom Brown. "They— they haven't come!"

"We're all right!" shouted Wharton. "We've bolted in! Run for it!"

"Right! We'll bring help!" yelled back Nugent.

And they ran on.

They disappeared in another moment among the rocks, and their hurried footsteps died away in the distance along the wet sand.

Harry Wharton turned back from the porthole. Fisher T. Fish lay on the floor, his face white and strained, his eyes closed, his lips moving. Whatever it was that he had seen, it had overcome him with terror. Bob Cherry had jammed the table against the bolted door again, and was holding it there. Johnny Bull stood against the wall, leaning, his breast heaving as he panted.

Wharton held up his hand.

"Listen!"

It was the sound again!

Outside in the alleyway, soft and low, came that strange, dragging sound—the sound of the unseen foe as it moved—the foe that the American junior had seen, but which none of the others could even picture to their minds, save as something vague, formless, and terrible.

The sound stopped outside the door. The door creaked slightly, as though from a pressure without, and the juniors' hearts stood still. Then that gliding sound again, and silence.

"What—what can it be?" muttered Bob Cherry, through his chattering teeth. "Fish has seen it! Can't he speak?"

He shook the American junior.

Fish opened his eyes dully and shuddered. His gaze swept wildly round the cabin.

"Save me!" he gasped.

"Fish, old man—"

"Help! Is it there?"

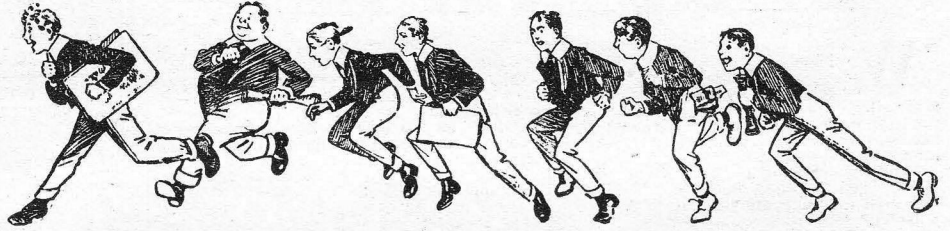
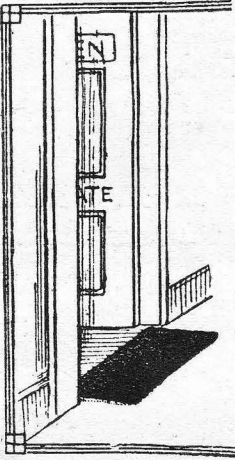
(Continued on page 13.)

**ANSWERS**  
EVERY MONDAY...PRICE 2!

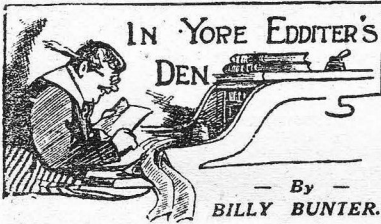


# BILLY BUNTER'S WEEKLY!

Edited by WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER.



**ASSISTED BY FATTY WYNN AND BAGGY TRIMBLE OF ST. JIM'S, SAMMY BUNTER OF GREYFRIARS, AND TUBBY MUFFIN OF ROOKWOOD**



My Dear Readers,—The werst has happened!

After all the nice things I said about them in last week's isscw—after treeting them with every kindness and konsideration—my staff has gone on strike!

I karn't think why they have struck—unless the strike wave has affected there branes. I have been like a bruther to them. I have pade them fat salleries. I have studded there interests in every way. And this is how they treet me in return! A lass, how black is man's ingratty-chewed!

They komplain that they don't get enuff munney. They komplain that I work them too hard. Their is no ground for either of these komplaints. I am sure that no edditer could have treeted his staff so well as I have treeted mine.

My miner Sammy says he is fed-up with skrubbing flores and doing all sorts of menial work. Fatty Wynn deklares he is sick of the very site of "Billy Bunter's Weekly." Baggy Trimble thretten to lornch a paper of his own, and Tubby Muffin says I can go and eat koke. Oh, the trayters! Oh, what tretchery and desect! I have nursed four vipers in my boozum, and they have terned and stung me!

Hear am I, left to carry on the paper by myself. What's going to happen neckst week I don't no.

Of this I am sertain. "Billy Bunter's Weekly" shall not dye! So long as I am on the spott to kontrol its welfare, it shall not perrish! I am not going to allow this strike to rooin the paper. Oh deer, no!

I refewse to yeeld to the demands of my four fat subbs. They have deklared war upon there frend and edditer. Very well, then. It shall be war to the nife!

Meenwile, I trussed my readers will back me up in this time of cry-sis.

I am too fool of emoshun to say more at this junkcher.—Yore hevvy-harted pal,

*Yore Edditer*

## QUEER QUERIES!

By BOB CHERRY.

(Note.—These were intended for the "Greyfriars Herald." I abbstracted them from Bob Cherry's desk in a moment of weekness.—Ed.)

Do you know Bulstrode?  
Eh?  
Bull strode on to the playing pitch!

Do you know Morgan?  
What?  
More gan-der than goose!

Do you know Singh?  
Which?  
Sing these songs of Araby!

Do you know Wun Lung?  
Eh?  
One lung means poor respiration!

Do you know Lascelles?  
Who?  
Lass sells programmes at the pictures!

Do you know Carne?  
No.  
Carne't say I do, either!

Do you know Tozer?  
Which?  
Toes are sometimes tickled!

## THE STAFF ON STRIKE!

By DICK PENFOLD.

The shades of night were swiftly falling  
As through the Greyfriars Close came crawling  
Our porpoise, gripping like a vice  
A banner, with this strange device:

"THE STAFF'S ON STRIKE!"

His brow was sad, he piped his eye,  
And heaved a deep, portentous sigh.  
And as he to the tuckshop rolled  
His feeble voice said: "Boys, behold!"

THE STAFF'S ON STRIKE!"

"I sorter guess and calculate  
I'll fill their places, Bill, first-rate,"  
Quoth F. T. Fish, like one inspired.  
"Lie down!" said Bill. "You make me tired!"

THE STAFF'S ON STRIKE!"

"Me velly muchee like to fillee  
A place upon your paper, Billy."  
"Silence," roared Bill, "you pigtailed rat!"

I'm going off my head—that's flat!

THE STAFF'S ON STRIKE!"

"Try a new staff!" Bob Cherry said.  
"The others are defunct and dead."  
Said Billy Bunter, "Mock me not.  
I'm sure I'm going off my dot!"

THE STAFF'S ON STRIKE!"

There in the twilight cold and grey,  
Our Bill was seen to reel and sway.  
He landed in a huddled heap,  
And from his lips these words did creep:

"THE STAFF'S ON STRIKE!"  
THE POPULAR.—No. 138.

### NOTISS!

**BILLY BUNTER'S WEEKLY  
WILL  
APPEER NECKS FRIDAY  
STRIKE OR NO STRIKE.  
W. G. B.**



By GEORGE FIGGINS.

**W**YNN! You're wanted on the telephone, in the prefects' room." Dick Redfern bobbed his head round the door of the study, and made that announcement.

Fatty Wynn gave a snort. He was just getting into his cricket flannels, in readiness for the House match.

"Who is it ringing me up?" he growled. "No idea," said Redfern. "Monteith answered the call. He told me to come and tell you."

Fatty Wynn adjusted his belt—he took an extra size in belts—and went along to the prefects' room. He picked up the telephone receiver, and growled into the transmitter: "Hallo! Who are you?"

A familiar voice sounded over the wires: "Billy Bunter, of Greyfriars, speaking."

"Well, if you want to speak to me, why can't you ring me up at a respectable time? I'm just going to play in a House match."

"Be careful how you address me!" said Billy Bunter. "I don't take any cheek from my sub-editors!"

"You—you—" "Look here, Wynn, I want you to write a column article for my 'Weekly,' and post it to me to-night."

"Bless your 'Weekly'!" "Will you do this column article? The printers are clamouring for it."

"All right. I'll do it after the match. But, for goodness' sake, ring off now, and don't worry me any more!"

So saying, Fatty Wynn jammed the receiver on to its hooks, and hurried away in the direction of the tuckshop. There was just time for him to have a snack before the match began. Fatty always maintains that he can bowl better after he's sampled half a dozen strawberry ices.

Before he could start on his first ice, however, he heard his name being called in the quadrangle.

"Wynn! Anybody seen Wynn?" "It was Pratt's voice this time."

"Here I am!" growled Fatty, stepping to the door. "Who wants me?"

"Somebody on the telephone, in the prefects' room."

"But I've just answered one call!"

"Well, I suppose this is a fresh one. You'll have to hurry, because you're restricted to two minutes."

Fatty Wynn tore himself away from the tuckshop by a great effort, and paid a further visit to the prefects' room. The telephone-bell was tinkling impatiently.

"Who's that?" demanded Fatty bluntly. "Billy Bunter. Sorry to trouble you again so soon, Wynn—"

"Ass! Fathead! Dolt! Imbecile! I was just going to have a snack at the tuckshop, and now I shan't be able to! The House match is just going to start! Oh, you prize chump!"

"Really, Wynn, you needn't sling those fancy names at me! I want to say something jolly important!"

"Get it off your chest, then!"

"You know that column article?"

"Yes."

"Well, make it two columns, will you?"

Fatty Wynn gave an emphatic snort.

"You mean to say you've dragged me all the way from the tuckshop to the prefects' room just to tell me that?" he exclaimed wrathfully. "Oh, you—you— If you were within punching distance, I'd scalp you!"

"Oh, really, Wynn— You won't forget that two-column article, will you?"

Fatty Wynn did not deign to reply. He replaced the receiver, and, glancing out of the window, saw that the House match had started.

The School House were taking first knock. Tom Merry and Talbot, bats in hand, were coming down the pavilion steps.

The New House fieldsmen stood in a cluster in the middle of the pitch, waiting for Fatty Wynn to arrive.

Fatty hurried on to the field, and his arrival was greeted with ironical cheers. "Hurrah!"

"Our prize porpoise has rolled up at last!" "That champion idiot Bunter delayed me!" explained Fatty. "He's rung me up twice in about five minutes. Wants me to do an article for his 'Weekly.'"

"Give the 'Weekly' a rest, and see what you can do towards skitting these School House beggars out!"

Fatty Wynn went on to bowl from the pavilion end, and he did great execution. Neither Tom Merry nor Talbot was comfortable with his bowling, and both were dismissed before they could get properly going.

Jack Blake and Harry Noble stopped the rot, however, and the School House managed to score 89—quite a respectable total. Fatty Wynn had taken seven wickets for 35 runs.

Having performed this deed of valour, Fatty adjourned to the tuckshop to have the snack which Billy Bunter's telephone-call had balked him of. He was the last man in for the New House, so he would not be wanted for some time.

When it came to Fatty's turn to go in the game was in a most interesting position. The New House score was 71 for nine wickets. They wanted 9 to tie, and 10 to win.

Tom Merry was bowling. His first ball missed the batsman's off-stump by a fraction

of an inch. His second was a full toss to leg, and Fatty Wynn banged it to the boundary for four.

The third ball was a beauty. Fatty Wynn met it with the full face of the bat, and stopped it dead. The fourth ball was too good to hit, also. But the fifth was a half-volley. Fatty opened his shoulders to it, and drove it to the railings.

Another 4—and still louder applause! One more run to tie—2 more runs to win. And one more ball remained of Tom Merry's over.

The School House skipper started his run, and Fatty Wynn crouched in front of the wicket.

It was at this crucial moment that the voice of French of the New House rang out across the pitch:

"Fatty! You're wanted on the 'phone!'"

Wynn turned, and the next moment his middle stump was on the ground.

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It was at this crucial moment that the voice of French of the New House rang out across the pitch:

"Fatty! You're wanted on the 'phone!'"

Wynn turned, and the next instant his middle stump lay flat!

The School House had won by 1 run! Fatty Wynn's feelings, as he came off the pitch, were too deep for words. He made his way to the prefects' room, and found Billy Bunter had rung him up for the third time to ask that the two-column article should be turned into a full-page one.

Fatty Wynn's reply was more emphatic than polite.

"You've lost us the House match," he snarled, "and I'm fed up! I'm going on strike! You won't get an article of any sort from me! I won't write another line for your confounded rag! You can go and eat coke!"

And Fatty Wynn rang off, and stamped savagely out of the prefects' room.

The strike of Billy Bunter's four fat subs had begun!

## Special Strike Notice!

By THE FOUR FAT SUBS.

To WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER, Proprietor, Producer, and Head Cook and Bottle-Washer of "Billy Bunter's Weekly."

TAKE NOTICE that we, the undersigned, having been subjected to numerous insults at your hands, are fed-up with our respective jobs, and are going on strike forthwith and instanter.

From to-day we will do no more work for your potty production, unless you agree to our terms, which are set out hereunder:

1. We demand a substantial increase of salary all round. The wages we have been getting have not been sufficient to keep body and soul together. We demand an increase of at least fifty per cent., to enable us to keep clear of debt, and to have an occasional snack at out respective school tuckshops.
2. We demand that Samuel Tuckless Bunter shall be instantly relieved of all tasks of drudgery, such as scrubbing the floor of the editorial sanctum, polishing the editor's spectacles, washing out inkpots, black-leading the firegrate with whitewash, making a bonfire of rejected manuscripts, and so on and so forth.
3. We demand that David Llewellyn Wynn—commonly called "Fatty"—shall be excused from writing more than one column per week, so that he may have plenty of time for footer practice, as the season will start very shortly.
4. We demand that Bagley Trimble be treated with greater respect and courtesy by the editor—otherwise, he will launch a rival paper on his own, and "Billy Bunter's Weekly" will be hustled out of existence.
5. We demand that Reginald Muffin be appointed sole representative for Rookwood, and that his contributions shall be published as they stand, and not mauled about and ruined by the editor.

Until the above demands are agreed to we shall do no manner of work for "Billy Bunter's Weekly," and shall remain on strike.

Given under our hand and seal this umpteenth day of September, in the Year of Grace One Thousand Nine Hundred and Twenty-One:

DAVID LLEWELLYN WYNN.  
BAGLEY TRIMBLE.  
REGINALD MUFFIN.  
SAMUEL TUCKLESS BUNTER.

### EDDITER'S NOTE!

These demands are set out eggerstly as I received them. I could have cast them into the waist-paper basket, but never shall it be said that I was afraid to let the varst British reading public no the greevances of my four fatheaded subbs.

In reply to the demands of the strikers, I say: "Wate awhile, and cool down. The time will come when sorrow will be your lot! Then will you come to me on yore bended knees, and beg of me to take you back. To you, I shall then say, 'Go and eat coke!' or sumthing like that!"

Readers, under the articles written by the diskontented subbs, I have placed an advertisment. Nuff séd!



**S**UB-EDITOR WANTED, in place of my miner Sammy, who has gone on strike. Apply within."

This announcement, in the familiar handwriting and spelling of Billy Bunter, was pinned outside the door of Study No. 7 in the Remove passage.

Crowds of fellows paused to read the notice, but they didn't exactly fall over each other in their eagerness to respond to it.

A sub-editor's lot is rarely a happy one. And a job on the staff of "Billy Bunter's Weekly" was more strenuous than most. Billy Bunter insisted upon getting every ounce of energy out of his staff, and they were very poorly paid for their services. In fact, if they got an odd tanner now and again they could consider themselves lucky.

Therefore, there was no rush of applicants in response to Billy Bunter's advertisement.

At tea-time the notice was still pinned to the door. Some wag had scrawled underneath it, in blue pencil, the words, "DON'T ALL RUSH!" And the Greyfriars public didn't! The majority of the fellows glanced at the announcement, chuckled, and passed on.

It wasn't until after tea that an applicant turned up.

This was Master Richard Nugent, the babe of the Second.

It was rather surprising that Dicky Nugent should offer to fill the shoes of Sammy Bunter, who was on strike. Dicky was angry with Billy Bunter because the latter had rejected a magnificent school serial of his, entitled, "Why Are All You Chaps Up Against Me?" Dicky had described this serial as "very fetching." Billy Bunter had retorted that it wouldn't fetch a single new reader. He had rammed the manuscript into the grate and made a bonfire of it, and Dicky Nugent had vowed revenge.

This being the case, it was extraordinary that Dicky should offer his services as sub-editor.

"I've seen the notice on the door," said the fag, as he entered Study No. 7, where Billy Bunter was sitting—a human island in a sea of manuscripts.

"Well?"

"I've dropped in to apply for the job."

"Good! It was awfully silly of Sammy to go on strike. He had a jolly good position—good pay and prospects, and all that sort of thing. The whole trouble is, I've been too generous to him, and he's abused it. So have the rest of my subs. They're all on strike."

"How are you going to fill your paper, then?" inquired Dicky Nugent.

"Oh, I shall manage it somehow. Meanwhile, I must have somebody to take Sammy's place."

"I'm your man."

"Well, I'll tell you what your duties will be. You'll write one column per week for my 'Weekly.'"

"That's easy."

"And you'll come in every morning before brekker and dust the office. On Friday mornings you'll scrub it—give it a jolly good clean. It gets in a frightful mess, with so many fellows tramping in with muddy boots. To-morrow's Friday, so I shall expect to find this place as clean as a new pin when I come in after brekker."

Dicky Nugent nodded.

"Leave that to me," he said. "Anything else for me to do?"

"Yes. You're to run all the errands—about a hundred a day—"

"My hat!"

"And you're to help me eject any unwelcome visitors, see?"

"All serene."

"Your salary," said Billy Bunter, "will be

a bob a week. You'll admit that's jolly generous. Strictly speaking, I ought to ask you to pay a premium of five quids before you join the staff of an influential paper like my 'Weekly.' But I'm not a money-grabber. I'm always generous to my subs. You can consider yourself engaged, young Nugent."

"Thanks!" said the fag.

And there was a twinkle in his eye—a merry, mischievous twinkle—which it was as well that Billy Bunter failed to notice.

"Don't forget to scrub the editorial sanctum in the morning," was Billy Bunter's parting remark. "Neglect of duty is a thing that I never overlook."

"When you come into this place after brekker," said Dicky Nugent, "you'll have quite a surprise."

He did not say whether the surprise would be a joyful one, or otherwise!

Chuckling softly to himself, Dicky scampered away to the fags' common-room.

Here he found his two chums, Gatty and Myers, engaged in frying fish, which were impaled on penholders.

There was a desk near by, on which plates were set out, also a cruet which had been borrowed from the dining-hall. This particular desk was quite an institution in the fags' Common-room. It was known as Gatty's Fish and Oyster Bar.

"Blown in for a feed, Dicky?" inquired



Dicky Nugent waded into the study, splashing the water right and left. "More water wanted!" he cried.

Gatty. "I've got some lovely whitebait here. Caught 'em off the jetty at Pegg this afternoon."

"Bless your whitebait!" growled Dicky. "They're so scraggy that by the time you've lopped off their heads and tails and fins there's nothing left of 'em! I didn't come in for a feed. I came to tell you that I've been appointed a sub-editor on the staff of 'Billy Bunter's Weekly.'"

Gatty and Myers stared.

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

Dicky Nugent chuckled.

"Join me first thing in the morning," he said, "and you'll see. I've got to scrub the editorial sanctum, and I shall need some help. The job's going to be done thoroughly—so thoroughly that Billy Bunter will have several sorts of a fit when he sees the result!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gatty and Myers entered into the scheme with zest.

The three fags were up betimes in the morning—long before the rising-bell clanged out its summons.

"Now, we want some long-handled scrubbing-brushes, and enough water to flood a giddy mine!" said Dicky Nugent. "Let's see what we can find."

The three fags went down to the domestic

regions, and procured six pails, which they filled with water at the scullery tap. They carried two pails apiece to Billy Bunter's study, and Dicky Nugent, in addition, carried a scrubbing-brush under his arm.

Gatty kicked open the door of the study, and promptly dashed the contents of his two pails on to the floor.

Myers followed suit, and then Dicky Nugent did likewise.

The result was appalling. It was as if the days of the Flood had returned.

The water penetrated to every corner of the study. It trickled into the fireplace; it swamped the carpet; it caused the waste-paper-basket to bob about like a buoy in mid-ocean.

Dicky Nugent waded into the study, splashing the water right and left with his scrubbing-brush, and swamping the table, the chairs, and even the mantelpiece in his industrious zeal. Whatever happened, his employer could not accuse him of not being thorough.

"Better get some more water, kids," said Dicky.

Gatty and Myers departed, with broad grins and empty buckets. They were back again in a few moments, and four more pails of water were added to the deluge.

"The furniture will start floating in a jiffy!" chuckled Dicky Nugent. "By the way, there are some fire-extinguishers hanging up in the passage. Might as well try our hand at a little fire-drill."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The spirit of mischief was strong upon the trio by this time. They obtained a fire-extinguisher apiece, and fierce jets of liquid were discharged into the study.

Manuscripts, and papers of all sorts, floated in the miniature sea.

Dicky Nugent paused, but not until his extinguisher was empty.

"I think we've cleaned the place out pretty thoroughly now!" he remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"When the editor comes along he'll have to do his work in a rowing-boat!" grinned Gatty.

Even as Gatty spoke the editor did come along. And his eyes nearly bulged out of his head as he surveyed the interior of the study.

The editorial sanctum of "Billy Bunter's Weekly" was more like a swimming-bath than a study.

Billy Bunter turned upon Dicky Nugent in savage fury.

"You—you—" he spluttered. "What do you reckon you're doing?"

"Cleaning out the study, as per your instructions," said Dicky meekly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You mad idiot! It'll take hours and hours to swab all this water out of the place!"

"It'll be jolly good exercise for you," said Myers. "It'll work off some of your superfluous fat!"

"Yes, rather!"

Snorting with rage, Billy Bunter waded into the study, and picked up a cricket-stump which was drifting leisurely towards the bookcase. Then he waded out again, breathing threatenings and slaughter.

On emerging into the passage, however, he found that the three fags, wise in their generation, had fled.

Needless to add, the newly-engaged sub-editor did not return to duty. And Billy Bunter didn't advertise for another. He spent the best part of the day in draining Study No. 7 of water, and he was assisted in his task by Peter and Alonzo Todd and Tom Dutton.

As for Dicky Nugent, that over-industrious youth very discreetly kept his distance!

## WHY I AM ON STRIKE!

By TUBBY MUFFIN.

I don't believe in strikes, as a jeneral rool. But when a fello has a reel grievance, like I have, I konsider he is perfectly justified in chucking in his mitt, as the saying goes.

A fare day's work at a fare day's wage—that's my motto.

A subb-edditer on the staff of "Billy Bunter's Weekly" does a very unfare day's work, and he gets a very unfare wage. Fatty Wynn and Baggy Trimble will tell you the same. So will Sammy Bunter.

Who is responsible for the wonderful suckness of "Billy Bunter's Weekly"? The edditer? No jolly feer! It's the four fat subbs who have maid the paper famus.

Wear wood you be without my artikles each week? In the soop! Wear wood you be without the artikles of the other subbs? In the cart!

What will Billy Bunter do now that we have withdrorn our servisses? He will have to shutt down his paper. He karn't possibly carry on without us.

Now, if Billy Bunter gave me a sallery as fat as himself, and paid me  $\frac{1}{2}$  a krown a word for all my kontributions, I should have nothing to grumel at. But the present sistem of swetted labor is deplorabl.

Day after day, nite after nite, I have eggserisied my branes for Billy Bunter's bennyfit. Ask any of the feloes at Rook-wood, and they will tell you that I have worked my fingers to the boan.

"Oh, it's Tubby this, and it's Tubby that, and it's 'Tubby, write a story!' But it's Billy Bunter—not myself—who's reeping all the glory.

Who's reeping all the glory, boys, who's reeping all the glory!"

Yes, I have toyled untill the perspirashun has stood out in necklaces—I meen beads—on my brow. I have worked and slug—I mean slogged—with mite and mane. Nothing has been too much trouble. I have been willing and industrious right threw the peace!

And now—well, it's the last stor that brakes the cammel's back, and this eternal slavery has given me the hump.

I have maid up my mind to join the jeneral strike, and to lay down my pen—so far as "Billy Bunter's Weekly" is konserned, at any rate.

I mite lornch a paper on my own. My Uncle Splosh has just sent me a printing outfit, which cost one-and-forepense sekond-hand. This will enable me to do all my own printing, and I am sure I shall make an enormous prophet.

Won't Billy Bunter be mad when he heres what I am kontemplating? Won't he be furious, in short?

As I say, I don't believe in strikes as a jeneral rool, but if ever a fello had ample kawse to go on strike, that fello is me! Banded about from piller to post—ordered to write things at a minnit's notiss—insulted on the tellyfone by Billy Bunter—I have had to put up with all this, and more.

And now I'm fed-up, and I'm going on strike.

Wish me luck, deer reeders.

THE POPULAR.—No. 138.

## Off Duty!

By Baggy Trimble.

A krushing kalamity has befallen "Billy Bunter's Weekly."

I, Bagley Trimble, have gone on strike! The world goes on as usual, as if nothing of importans had happened. But the sollum fakt remane that I am on strike. I have severed my connექshun with "Billy Bunter's Weekly."

Of course, the paper is doomed. It karn't possibly eggst without me. I have been the life and sole of it. I have karried it on my sholders.

And now the whole masheenery of the paper has been disorganized.

I, Bagley Trimble, have gone on strike! If you were to peep inside my studdy at St. Jim's you wood find me lazily re-klining on the kouch.

My pen is idle. My brane is no longer bizzzy.

Feloes keep coming to me with kontributions. Arthur Augustus brought me an artikle on "How to Preservere Yore Storr Hatt Untill Neckst Summer." He torks of storr hatts as if they were storberrry jam!

"I say, deah boy," said Gussy, "can you awwange for this artikle to appeah in 'Billy Buntah's Weekly?'"

"I shook my head.  
"It's no use, Gussy," I said. "I, Bagley Trimble, have gone on strike!"

"Bai Jove! Whatever induced you to do such a weekless thing?"

"I have been insulted by Billy Bunter a hundred and forty-four times," I replide.  
"In other words, I have been treeted with 'gross' disrespekt!"

Arthur Augustus stared.  
"You meen to say you're not goin' to write anythin' more for the papah?"

"No."  
"Then the serkulation will go up by leaps and bounds!"

"You—you—" I spluttered.  
But the sarky beest had gone.

Then Skimpole blew in with an artikle on "Determinnism," whatever that may meen.

"I say, Baggy," he said, "I want you to get this published in "Billy Bunter's Weekly."

"The paper you meenshun," I replide, "is dead and defunckt. At least, it jolly soon will be."

"Why?"

"I, Bagley Trimble, have gone on strike!"

"Oh crumms!"  
Other feloes trooped in with artikles and stories and poems, and I told them all the same tail.

I am fed-up with working for Bunter, and I am now going to take a nice long holler-day.

It will be a staggering blow to the nation. I karn't think how all the boys and girls who have been reeding my artikles each week will servive.

Nevertheless, the grim, stern fakt remanes:

"I, Bagley Trimble, have gone on strike!"

## :: THE :: GRATE CRYISIS!

By SAMMY BUNTER.

Deer reeders, the hour has struck.  
And so have I!

I have told my majer to his face that I will work for him no longer. I have come to the end of my tether. I karn't stand such treatment—or sit down under it—a minnit longer.

I have told my majer that I will strike. I don't meen that I'll dot him on the knows—though that wood be easy enuff, goodness nos! I meen that I will stopp work, and join the grate crossade against oppression and petty tirranny.

If Billy likes to releev me of such paneful duties as skrubbing flores, polishing the fire-great, and seterer and seterer, and if he will dubble my sallery, I don't mind reering work. But I refuse to be a beestly errand-boy and a makeshift any longer.

The fiat has gone fourth—or fifth, I forget which—and the whole of the staff of "Billy Bunter's Weekly" is on strike.

It's all Billy's fault. If he had treeted us with kindness, and kurtesy, and konsideration, this kalamity, so krushing in its konsequenses, wood not have happened.

But Billy has not studded us at all, so I don't see why we should studdy him.

Neckst week he will have to get the paper out on his own—and a jolly fine mess he'll make of it.

Just think of it! The four fat subbs on strike! This must surely be oae of the biggest upheevals the world has ever known. The grate coal strike in Grate Brittan was a miner tragedy kompared with this!

If Billy hopes to bring out an issew of the paper neckst week, he'll have to work all day and all nite, and then put in over-time. He sartainly won't get no help from me. He won't get nun from Wynn and Trimble and Muffin, either. We're all standing sholder to sholder for our rites, and if Billy won't agree to our demans—which are kwito reazonable—then his paper will have to shutt up shopp.

Billy has implored me on bended cheeks, and with the teers streaming down his knees, to come back to work; but, bel-Eve me, I am Adam-ant. Wild horses won't induce me to go back untill he yeelds to our demans, which you will find in anuther kolum.

I hope you won't find it in yore harts to blame me, deer reeders, for taking this stepp. But I karn't go on in this unsatisfactory manna. Why, I'd sooner start a weekly paper of my own, with me as edditer-in-cheef, and yung Nugent as offis-boy!

The strike is now in fool swing. Goodness nose how it's all going to end. But Billy will find that we meen bizzness, and that we will not submit to his tirranikkle ways any longer.

If Billy wood play fare with us, we wood play fare with him. But he has been making us slave like niggers for small salleries, and the time is ripe for a jeneral strike, or lock-out, or whatever you like to call it.

Brutherly affeekshun counts for nothing in this act. I've got my own interests to konsider, and I karn't possibly go on working at such a mizzerable pittanse.

As I said before, deer reeders, the hour has struck.

And the staff of "Billy Bunter's Weekly" has dun likewise!

## REEDERS!

FEER NOT THE THRETS KONTAIN-  
ED IN THE ARTIKLES ON THIS  
PAGE. I TREET THEM WITH  
KONTEMPT! MY "WEEKLY" WILL  
APPEER NECKS FRIDAY.—W. G. B.

**A NIGHT OF TERROR!**

(Continued from page 8.)

"What was it?" cried Wharton. Fish groaned. "I—I saw it! There it was, coiled up— Oh, Heaven! And—and its eyes—" He broke off with a scream of fear. "Look! It—it is there!" He pointed to the window, shrieking. The juniors swung round towards the porthole, Wharton realising, with a deadly grip at his heart, that it was open!

**THE FOURTH CHAPTER.**

**The Mysterious Enemy!**

"THE snake!" shrieked the American junior. "There it is!" The snake! But the juniors did not need telling now.

A hideous head was groping outside the porthole, feeling for an entrance, as it had groped and felt the previous night, when in the darkness the imprisoned juniors had been unable to see it.

But they could see it now. With starting eyes they looked at the fearful apparition.

The great reptile was coiled, doubtless, upon the rail above, and its head swept downwards to the porthole outside, as if instinct had warned it where to seek its victims.

The circular glass was slanting open, as Wharton had left it.

The head of the serpent came sliding, gliding in. It squeezed in the narrow aperture, and the sinuous neck behind seemed to crease and crumple with the pressure.

The juniors stood transfixed. They knew what it was. The gigantic size of the reptile told them that. It was a boa-constrictor, and once to be enfolded in its deadly coils was death!

The hidden horror of the derelict was revealed at last!

Fisher T. Fish shrank back into a corner of the cabin, muttering with terror. The other juniors stood dumb.

Harry Wharton was the first to recover. Death was staring him in the face. Instant action was needed, and it was fortunate for the Greyfriars juniors that Wharton recovered his presence of mind in time.

He caught up a cudgel, and leaped towards the porthole, his face white as death.

Bob Cherry gave a shriek. "Harry! Look out!" Wharton did not heed.

It was for life or death now, and life hung upon a chance. Before the snake could get its sinuous neck through the narrow opening it was necessary to act—and even then it might not be repelled.

The cudgel flashed through the air. Crash!

The threatening head was jerked back, but the reptile could not wholly escape the blow. The eyes glittered horribly as the cudgel glanced on the hideous head. There was a horrible, hissing sound, and the head jerked out from the porthole.

It thrashed wildly against the ship without, evidently in pain.

Wharton did not shrink back. He dropped the cudgel, and grasped the porthole glass and closed it, and fastened the catch.

Then he reeled back, almost-fainting. He leaned against the wall, white as death, panting for breath.

"Good heavens!" he muttered inco-

herently. "Good heavens! It's—it's a boa-constrictor! If—if it gets in—"

"Look!" muttered Bob Cherry, with clicking teeth.

Outside the glass a head was groping round, seeking entrance again. The reptile seemed puzzled at finding no admittance where before there had been an opening. The hideous head glided to and fro, flattening over the outside of the glass, pressing and writhing.

The juniors watched it breathlessly. If the glass should break!

Perhaps a heavy blow from the reptile's head might have broken it, but that did not come. The fearful creature was striving to find an entrance. For five minutes—five centuries of horror to the juniors watching within—the hideous head groped over the outside of the glass.

Then it was withdrawn. The glass was clear again, and the juniors, imprisoned in the state-room, almost sobbed in their relief.

"It's gone!" muttered Bob Cherry. "Oh, the—horrible thing! Then—then that's what it was—that was what cleared the ship of the crew!" panted Johnny Bull. "Good heavens!"

"Listen!" They heard the gliding sound in the passage again—the sound they understood now—of the huge reptile writhing along the floor. Again the door creaked under a pressure from without. Then the reptile glided on.

The juniors breathed again. "That's it!" said Wharton, in a low, shaken voice. "That's what Keeley and his gang saw; they must have seen it while they were hammering at the door here last night. No wonder they ran!"

"The rotters!" muttered Bob Cherry. "They might have sent help—"

Harry Wharton nodded. "And that accounts for the face in the negative," he said. "We know now why that man in the photograph was racing past the door here when the camera snapped. That horrible thing was after him."

The juniors shuddered. "But—but how did it get here?" gasped Johnny Bull.

Wharton shook his head. "I dare say this ship has touched at a South American port, and it was taken on board there," he said. "Perhaps bringing it over here for some zoological

collection. And it must have got loose somehow from where it was kept."

"I—I suppose that's it." "It must be so. I don't see how it could get on the ship by accident. They must have been bringing it over, and it escaped from its cage."

The juniors shivered as they thought of that scene—of the fearful reptile loose upon the steamer amid unarmed men.

"What happened, then, we can only guess," said Wharton. "The men may have jumped overboard to escape it; if the ship was in sight of land they may have taken to swimming to get away from the awful thing. Perhaps some of them shut themselves up in the cabins, but they would have to venture out for food, and then—"

"Oh, it's horrible!" "We don't know how long that horrible brute has been roaming about the ship—days, weeks, or months. I believe they lie in a stupefied state without moving for weeks after a meal," said Harry. "That beast is hungry now, though. We don't know whether it's had a meal since it broke loose; if so—"

"Good heavens!" Again they heard the reptile gliding, and listened with beating hearts. Harry Wharton watched anxiously from the porthole. He gave a sudden shout of relief.

"Hurray!" "They're coming?" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Yes, Hurray!"

The juniors crowded round the porthole. Nugent and Tom Brown had reappeared on the big rock, and with them were five or six of the sturdy fishermen of Pegg Bay. The fishermen carried axes, and one of them had a gun under his arm. Wharton opened the window.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" shouted Bob Cherry.

"This way!" "You're all right?" called out Nugent. "Yes; but look out for the snake!"

"Right-ho!" And the rescuers came cautiously close to the side of the grounded derelict.

**THE FIFTH CHAPTER.**

**The Last of the Horror!**

HARRY WHARTON & CO. listened anxiously, with beating hearts.

The rescuers were numerous, and they were armed, but the rescue was fraught with peril.

If any of the fishermen fell within the fearful coils of the boa-constrictor he would not be extricated living.

Where was the reptile? The juniors had not heard it moving for some time. If it had retired to the hold the sound of footsteps would probably bring it forth again.

Wharton heard Nugent's voice on the rock.

"There it is!" There were loud exclamations from the fishermen. Then suddenly a loud report. Bang!

Then came a sound of a terrible struggling on the deck above—the thrashing of a gigantic reptile in agony.

Wharton shuddered. "He's got it!" he muttered.

There was a scraping of footsteps on the rocks. Nugent and Brown and the Pegg fishermen were retreating. Wharton looked anxiously out.

"It's all right!" shouted Nugent. "He's got it in the head!"

"Not killed?" "It's dying!"

Harry Wharton and his comrades waited.

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NEXT FRIDAY! "YOUNG OKER, OF THE SIXTH!" A SPLENDID TALE OF THE JUNIORS OF GREYFRIARS. By FRANK RICHARDS.

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"Look out for the snake!" roared Bob Cherry from the derelict. The rescuers, grasping their axes firmly, moved cautiously towards the ship. (See Chapter 4.)

The sounds of the struggling reptile died away above, as the great coils stretched out in stillness.

But it was a quarter of an hour before the assailants ventured to clamber aboard the derelict, axe in hand, to finish the reptile.

"Come on!" said Harry Wharton. He unfastened the door of the cabin. Fisher T. Fish gave a yell.

"Hold on! Keep that door shut!"

"Rats! We're going to lend a hand!"

"I guess it's not safe. I—"

"Bosh!"

Wharton dragged the door open and rushed out, cudgel in hand. Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull followed him.

There were trampling footsteps and shouts on the deck.

The Removites dashed upon the scene.

There, under the sunlight, in the midst of the crowd of fishermen, lay their terrible foe—the hidden horror of the derelict.

"Dead!" said Bob Cherry, in a low voice. "Thank goodness!"

"Yes, sir," said one of the fishermen. "And 'ave you been on board all night with that awful thing, Master Wharton?"

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Yes," he said. "Thank you for coming to our help. I'll see that you fellows have a good whack in the salvage-money for what you've done."

"Yes, rather!" said Johnny Bull and Bob Cherry together.

"You can come on deck, Fisher!" called out Nugent. "It's dead!"

The Yankee junior came up from below. He was looking very white, and he shuddered at the sight of the fearful creature stretched out in death.

"Sure it's—it's dead?" he stammered.

"Look at it."

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"I guess it was enough to scare a fellow," said Fish. "When I dropped down into the hold it was coiled up there—and—and—groo! I'm glad you've finished it off, I guess. Of course, I wasn't afraid!"

The juniors laughed. They could afford to laugh now."

"I guess—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Here comes all Greyfriars!"

It was not quite all Greyfriars; but a considerable crowd of fellows were coming down to the shore to see the derelict. Coker had doubtless told his story at the school. He had not come back to the shore; but there were twenty fellows, at least, with Wingate of the Sixth at their head. The juniors waved to them.

Wingate was the first aboard. He jumped at the sight of the dead boa-constrictor.

"Great Scott! Was that it—what Coker has told us about?" he exclaimed.

"That's it, Wingate!"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the captain of Greyfriars. "You might have been killed!"

"We came jolly near it," said Harry Wharton. "I wouldn't go through another night like that for a hundred times the salvage of the *Aspasia*!"

"Same here," said Bob Cherry.

"And you were allowed to stay here because there was no danger!" said Wingate grimly. "You young asses! You'd better cut off to Greyfriars at once now. I'm going to arrange for someone to be put in charge of the derelict."

"It will want guarding," said Harry Wharton anxiously. "Keeley and a gang of longshoremen tried to get on board and turn us out last night."

Wingate started.

"My hat! And what did you do?"

"We put up a fight," said Bob Cherry, rubbing the bump on his head. "They had to go—they caught sight of the snake, though we didn't know it at the time. Then we were shut up in the cabin, with that fearful thing crawling about outside. Ugh!"

The Famous Four were glad enough to leave the derelict and return to the school. A crowd of Greyfriars fellows walked back with them, and they had to tell the story of their night's experiences; and when they arrived at Greyfriars they had to tell it over again to the Head. Dr. Locke listened very gravely.

"Heaven be praised that you have escaped safely!" he exclaimed, when they had told him. "Of course, this fearful danger could not have been foreseen. As for Keeley and those ruffians, I shall communicate with the police at once. They will be punished."

And Harry Wharton & Co. went to their breakfast.

The mystery of the derelict was never fully cleared up. That the boa-constrictor was the cause of the disappearance of the crew was certain; but the details of what had happened aboard the ill-fated steamer could never be known. They could be surmised—but that was all. And it was not a subject that Harry Wharton & Co. cared to think about.

It was some time before the effects of that fearful night on board the derelict wore off their minds. The salvage was realised in due course, and the shares that the Greyfriars juniors received compensated them somewhat for their terrible experience on board the derelict with the hidden horror.

THE END.  
(Particulars of next week's story will be found on page 5.)



# STICKING UP FOR GUNNER!

A Grand Story of the Adventures of Jimmy Silver & Co. at Rookwood.

By OWEN CONQUEST

(Author of the famous Rookwood Stories in "The Boys' Friend").

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### Jimmy Silver Makes Inquiries!

"BY gad! Seen this?" Mornington of the Fourth uttered that ejaculation as he stopped before the notice-board in the hall at Rookwood.

A good many of the Classical juniors were gathered about it.

There was a new notice on the board, in the Head's writing, and it ran:

"Until further orders, school bounds are restricted to the school precincts, except by special permission."

It was signed by Dr. Chisholm.

"That's something new," remarked Erroll.

"What the dickens is the whole school gated for?"

"I know!" announced Tubby Muffin triumphantly.

"Well, what do you know, podgy?" snapped Mornington.

"It's on account of that fellow Gunner."

"Who's Gunner?"

"The Head don't want us to see him," grinned Tubby. "He's an old Rookwood chap, you know, and he's gone to the bad, and the peelers are after him—"

"Oh, rats!" said Mornington, and he walked on with Erroll, leaving the fat Classical to find other listeners.

"A regular, desperate criminal, that chap, Gunner," Tubby went on, addressing Conroy and Pons and Van Ryn, the three Colonials. "A fearful character, you know, who was at Rookwood—"

"Bow-wow!" said the Colonial Co. together.

"But it's a fact, you know," said Tubby.

"I heard P.-c. Boggs telling the Head, and the Head said that Gunner was a regular rotter when he was at Rookwood—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling 'at?" demanded Tubby indignantly.

"I can fancy the Head describing anybody as a regular rotter—I don't think," chuckled Van Ryn.

"Well, perhaps he didn't use exactly those words," said Tubby reflectively. "He said his record wasn't good, and—"

"Muffin, you have been listening at my door!" came a sharp, stern voice close behind the fat Classical.

Tubby fairly jumped as he heard the voice of the Head.

He spun round in dismay.

"Oh, no, sir!" he gasped. "Certainly not! A—a fellow told me, sir—in—in confidence, sir—I—my hat! Where's the Head?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tubby Muffin stared round him in astonishment. The Head was not to be seen, and there were only grinning juniors round him. "I—I—Didn't you hear him, you fellows?" gasped Tubby.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Van Ryn.

"Oh, you rotter!" yelled Tubby, remembering that the South African junior was the possessor of the weird gift of ventriloquism. "It was you all the time."

"Lucky for you it was," said Dick Van Ryn, laughing. "The Head wouldn't be

pleased to discover that you'd been listening at his door."

"I—I didn't, really, you know—it was quite by accident, and then that beast Bulkeley came along, and took me by the ear. Bulkeley's a rotten, unfeeling beast, you know—"

"Muffin!" thundered the voice of Bulkeley of the Sixth, behind Tubby.

But Tubby did not spin round in alarm this time. He only bestowed a fat wink upon the Fourth Form ventriloquist.

"You can't take me in a second time, you know," he grinned. "I say Bulkeley's a rotten beast—yaroooooh!"

Tubby broke off with a yell as Bulkeley's finger and thumb gripped his ear. It was Bulkeley, and not the ventriloquist, after all!

"What's that, Muffin?" asked the captain of Rookwood.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tubby in dismay. "Leggo my ear, Bulkeley, old chap! I—I was only saying what a splendid chap you were—"

"What?"

"And—how we all admire you, you know, and—yaroooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bulkeley walked on, leaving Tubby rubbing a crimson ear. The Colonial Co. strolled away, grinning.

"I say, Jimmy Silver—"

The Fistical Four, after looking at the notice on the board, were going out into the quad. Tubby Muffin rolled after them. He was still bent on expatiating on his startling discoveries.

Tubby prided himself on being a fellow who "knew things." It was his boast that precious little went on at Rookwood without his knowing something about it.

Which really was not very surprising, considering Tubby's methods of obtaining information.

"I say, we're all gated, you know, on account of that fellow Gunner," said Tubby, trotting along with the Fistical Four. "It's rather hard-cheese, ain't it. The queer thing is that the Head don't know we know why we're gated. He, he, he! I've found out, you know."

"You want a licking for finding out!" growled Lovell. "What business is it of yours, anyway?"

"Some fellows know what's going on, and some don't," said Tubby complacently. "I'm one that does. I say, it's rather a disgrace to the school, isn't it, for an old Rookwood chap to be an awful criminal! Fancy, his coming hanging round his old school, with the bobbies after him, you know! I say, I heard the Head say—Yoooooop!"

Tubby Muffin did not mean to imply that he had heard the Head utter that remarkable ejaculation. He uttered that on his own as Lovell grasped him and sat him down in the quad.

The Fistical Four left him there; and when Tubby recovered his breath he drifted away to the Modern side to find fresh audiences.

Jimmy Silver was looking thoughtful.

"Tubby's an eavesdropping little beast," he remarked, "and he's got an imagination that

would make his fortune as a war correspondent! But I think he's telling us the facts this time, or as near as the fat Prussian can get to the facts. The school bounds being drawn in shows that there's something up."

"But it's all rot!" said Lovell uneasily. "Rookwood chaps don't become criminals. Tubby's got it wrong, somehow."

"There are black sheep in every flock," said Jimmy Silver. "Must be bad specimens produced even by Rookwood. Look at Lattery of the Fourth, for instance. He might turn out to be a burglar any day. And there's Leggett. He says he's going into the House of Commons when he grows up, and he looks capable of it. Some Rookwooders have gone to the bad, I dare say—precious few, of course, but some."

"Well, I suppose it's possible," Lovell admitted.

"The chap must have been a Modern," remarked Raby.

"No doubt about that," said Newcome. "He was a Modern, right enough, if he was a Rookwood chap at all."

Jimmy Silver reflected.

"Well, there hasn't been a Modern side at Rookwood for such a jolly long time," he remarked. "Gunner may have been here before the Modern side was instituted, when Rookwood was all Classical. But we're jolly well going to find out something about Gunner. There must be some folk about the school who remember him, as well as the Head. We can't—ahem!—very well ask the Head."

"Ha, ha! No."

"Old Mack has been here for centuries, more or less," said Jimmy. "Let's go and jaw old Mack on the subject. He will know."

The old porter of Rookwood was in his lodge, and he looked rather suspiciously at the Fistical Four when they presented themselves. Old Mack had had his rubs with those cheerful young gentlemen.

"Good-afternoon, Mack!" said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "How's the rheumatism?"

"None the better for your asking, Master Silver!" replied old Mack grumpily.

Jimmy coughed.

Apparently Mack was in a grumpy mood, and disinclined to listen to the voice of the charmer.

"You've been here a jolly long time, haven't you, Mack?" Jimmy went on, with polished politeness. "Quite an institution at Rookwood. The school wouldn't be the same without you, Mack."

Grunt!

"Do you remember a chap named Gunner, who was here once?" continued Jimmy, coming to the point.

The old porter looked rather sharply at him.

"Yes, I do!" he said shortly.

"Oh! There was such a chap, then?" exclaimed Newcome.

"Yes, there was."

"What sort of a chap was he, Mack?" asked Raby.

"Very like you young gentlemen," said the

THE POPULAR.—No. 138.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

NEXT FRIDAY: "YOUNG COKER, OF THE SIXTH!"

porter grimly. "Never had no respect for his elders—"

"Oh, Mack!"

"Never had any more manners than a Prooshian 'Un!"

"Oh!"

"And was always cheeky, and poking 'iself in where he wasn't asked!"

"Ahem!"

"And he was like you young gents in other ways, too," continued old Mack, beginning to relish the conversation. "He went to the bad!"

"H'm!"

"Ended up in prison, so I 'eard," said Mack. "Which I 'ope as you young gentlemen won't go and do likewise."

"Look here—"

"But I 'as my doubts," added Mack grimly.

The Fistical Four gave old Mack expressive looks. The crusty old gentleman seemed to be getting the best of that pleasant conversation.

"You grousing old fossil—" began Lovell, apparently thinking that further politeness would be wasted on Mack.

"Shush!" said Jimmy Silver. "Mack, old scout, was this chap Gunner a Classical or a Modern?"

"Which I disremember," said Mack.

"Oh, Mack don't remember anything!" said Raby. "I don't suppose he remembers the reign of George the Third, though he was grown up then!"

"I wasn't!" roared Mack. Mack was a little hazy as to when King George the Third had reigned, but he knew that Raby was attributing to him an age much greater than the sixty years he owned to. "And I remember that feller Gunner well, too. He was on the Modern side, which was soon after it was instituted 'ere, and he became a solicitor arter he left. There ain't nothing wrong with my memory, wotever there may be with the manners of some folks!"

And Mack snorted, and went into his back room. The Fistical Four strolled out of the lodge, satisfied with the information they had gained.

"A Modern, you see!" grinned Lovell. "Of course, he was a Modern, if he turned out a bad lot! I think we may as well mention this to Tommy Dodd."

"Ha, ha! Yes, rather!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. proceeded to look for their old rivals of the Modern side. They felt sure that Tommy Dodd would be interested to learn that Geoffrey Gunner, now a fugitive from justice, had been on the Modern side at Rookwood when he honoured the school with his presence.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

**Tommy Dodd is Equal to the Occasion!**  
"W HITHER bound?" asked Tommy Cook.

The Modern Fourth had just been dismissed by Mr. Manders after the chemistry class, which was known at Rookwood by the less euphonious name of "stinks."

Tommy Dodd was walking his two inseparable comrades across the quad what time the Fistical Four were pursuing their inquiries at the porter's lodge.

"Tuckshop!" said Tommy Dodd. "We're going to see the sergeant."

"Faith, and phwat do we want to see the sergeant for?" exclaimed Doyle, in surprise. "Do you want a yarn about the Boer War?"

"Follow your leader!" said Tommy Dodd autocratically. "Sergeant Kettle's an old chap, Tommy."

"Old as Methuselah, or very nearly!" agreed Doyle. "But—"

"He's been at Rookwood a thousand years or so."

"Twenty, at least," said Cook.

"He joined up again for the South African War, I've heard, and came back again. That was before our time."

"Yes, a trifle!" grinned Tommy Dodd. "Well, we're going to visit the merry old sergeant, on account of his age."

"Are you off your rocker?" demanded Cook.

"Bow-wow!"

Tommy Dodd led his two companions to the school shop, which old Sergeant Kettle kept in the ancient disused clock-tower. The sergeant was there, sitting on a barrel, and THE POPULAR.—No. 133.

smoking the pipe of peace, untroubled by customers at the moment.

"Hallo, sergeant!" said Tommy Dodd genially. "I suppose you remember all the Classical chaps at Rookwood for the last twenty years or so?"

The sergeant grinned.

"Not quite, Master Dodd."

"Do you remember a Classical chap named Gunner?"

Sergeant Kettle reflected, and shook his head.

"It might be anything from fifteen to twenty years ago," urged Tommy Dodd. "I know you were away part of the time in Africa; but surely you heard of the chap, at least. He seems to have gone to the bad after he left Rookwood."

"Perhaps he wasn't a Classical intoirly?" suggested Doyle.

"Fathead!"

"But sure—"

"Of course he was a Classical!" said Tommy Dodd, unconsciously reasoning upon the same lines as the Fistical Four. "He must have been, as he turned out a bad character."

"Oh, I see! Faith, and it's a dead cert, then!" grinned Doyle.

"Classical, right enough!" said Cook. "Don't you remember a Classical chap named Gunner, sergeant?"

Sergeant Kettle shook his head again.

"No, I remember there was a young gent on the Modern side of that name—"

"The Modern side!" exclaimed the three Tommies together.

"Yes, I remember him, arter I came back from the war," said the sergeant. "He was in the Fifth then, and a regular rip! He was always in trouble for smoking or getting out of bounds, and tricks of that kind. Not a nice young gent at all. Geoffrey Gunner was the name."

The three Tommies looked at one another rather queerly. They were getting information about the old Rookwooder, but not precisely the kind they wanted.

"I heard afterwards he was articted to a solicitor, or something of the sort," said the sergeant. "He became a solicitor himself, and after that—"

He paused.

"Go on, sergeant!"

The sergeant hesitated.

"Look here, we've heard something about him," said Tommy Dodd. "We want to know whether it's true. Did he go on the rocks?"

"He was mixed up in a swindle, sir," said the sergeant. "Something about keeping a client's money, and losing it in spec—spec—something—"

"Speculation?"

"Yes, that's it. It was called miss—miss—miss—"

"The old sergeant made an effort to remember. "Miss something—"

"Misappropriation?"

"That's the word—misappropriation of funds, I think."

"Did he get to choky?"

"Yes, Master Dodd."

"My hat! Is he there now?" asked Cook.

"I s'pose he is."

"And you're sure he was a Modern?" asked Tommy Dodd, with a lingering hope that the sergeant might be mistaken on that point.

"Quite sure. I remember him well."

"Oh, rotten!" said Dodd.

The Three Tommies left the tuckshop in a decidedly dissatisfied frame of mind. They had hoped, if not taken it for granted, that Geoffrey Gunner, who had gone to the bad, had been a Classical during his Rookwood career. The discovery that he had been on the Modern side was disconcerting.

But Tommy Dodd's fertile brain was equal to the emergency.

"It's a sad case!" he said at last.

"Rotten!" agreed Doyle and Cook.

"Shocking miscarriage of justice!" continued Tommy Dodd.

"Eh—shocking whatter?"

"Miscarriage of justice!" said Tommy Dodd firmly. "This poor fellow—"

"What poor fellow?" howled Doyle.

"Gunner."

"He isn't a poor fellow—he's a gaol-bird!" said Cook.

"This poor fellow," said Tommy Dodd, undaunted, "is the victim of a miscarriage of justice. These things do happen, you know. There was Convict 88, or 99, or something—chap sent to prison when he was perfectly innocent—"

"Bow-wow!"

"The same thing evidently happened in the case of poor Gunner—"

"Evidently!" murmured Cook.

"Evidently!" repeated Tommy Dodd. "He never misappropriated his clients' money. I feel certain that he was incapable of doing anything of the sort."

"Oh crumbs!"

"He was found guilty on circumstantial evidence—"

"How do you know he was?"

"I feel sure of it."

"Oh!"

"Circumstantial evidence," said Tommy Dodd, nodding his head sagely. "Lots of innocent chaps in novels are sent to choky on circumstantial evidence."

"But Gunner wasn't in a novel."

"Fathead! It happens in real life sometimes. Look what old duffers judges are!" said Tommy Dodd argumentatively. "Why, Classical chaps from Rookwood become judges sometimes! I shouldn't wonder if it was a Classical chap who tried poor old Gunner, and found him guilty on circumstantial evidence!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Or very likely," continued Tommy Dodd, warming up—"very likely it was some Classical sneak who misappropriated the money, and put it on to poor old Gunner!"

"Great pip!"

"How do we know there wasn't an old Rookwooder, a Classical chap, employed in the bank, or the office, or wherever it was?" said Tommy. "In the dead of night—"

"The—the what?" gasped Cook.

"The dead of night. In the dead of night he sneaked into the office, or the bank, as the case may be, and—misappropriated the tin, you know, and left poor old Gunner's hanky there, or his socks, or something, to make the fat-headed police believe that a Modern did it."

"Oh, begorra!" murmured Doyle, quite overcome by Tommy Dodd's remarkable imaginative powers.

"Draw it mild, you know!" gasped Cook.

Tommy Dodd sniffed.

"I believe it's most likely that it happened just like that," he said obstinately. "The circumstantial evidence was against poor old Gunner, and he was sent to choky. I shouldn't be surprised to hear that some Classical sneak was living in clover on the misappropriated money to this day. It would be like him."

"Like who?" howled Cook.

"Him! The Classical rotter I'm speaking about!"

"But how do you know there was a Classical chap mixed up in the bizney at all?" said Cook dazedly.

"Well, I don't know it for certain, of course," admitted Tommy Dodd. "But it looks to me very probable."

"Probable! My hat!"

"Hallo, here are those Classical worms, and they look as if they've found out something!" growled Tommy Dodd, as the Fistical Four, with smiling faces, came sauntering from the direction of the porter's lodge.

"Hallo, dear boys!" said Jimmy Silver sweetly. "We've been hearing about an old chap of your side—"

"A regular Modern specimen!" grinned Lovell.

"Merry merchant named Gunner!" chuckled Raby.

"Mind you don't follow in his footsteps!" roared Newcome. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"You mean poor old Gunner!" said Tommy Dodd sadly.

"Poor old rats!" said Jimmy Silver. "We mean that blessed Modern who went to choky—not the only one who ought to have gone. I'll be bound!"

"You don't know the facts," said Tommy Dodd scornfully. "Wait till the facts come out before you crow! There's reason to believe that the murder—I mean the misappropriation—was committed by a Classical chap—"

"What?" ejaculated the Fistical Four in chorus.

"Who sneaked into the bank—I mean the office—"

"In the dead of night!" chimed in Doyle.

"And bagged the tin," said Tommy Dodd, "and left poor old Gunner's hanky there to throw suspicion on him."

"Gammon!" exclaimed Lovell, taken quite aback.

"And it's just what might have been expected of a Classical, I must say that!"



said Cook, loyally backing up his leader. "Just a Classical trick, and no mistake! Yah!"

And the three Tommies elevated their noses into the air disdainfully, and walked away, leaving Jimmy Silver & Co. staring. The wind had been taken out of the Classical sails!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Van Ryn Takes a Hand!

FOR a day or two the chief topic of conversation among the juniors at Rookwood was that shady character, Geoffroy Gunner, once a Rookwood fellow.

The Rookwooders were keenly interested in him.

They were anxious to get more particulars about him, but details were hard to get.

That he had been a solicitor, that he had misappropriated his clients' cash, and had been sent to choky for doing so was known. It was also evident that he must have escaped from that delightful resort, choky, since he was free and in the neighbourhood of the school.

Why he had come to that neighbourhood was a very interesting mystery. And the question of his guilt or his innocence was keenly debated in the junior studies.

The Classics, to a man, hadn't the slightest doubt on the subject. They maintained that he had turned out just as a Modern chap might be expected to turn out.

As a judge and jury had decided that Gunner was guilty, it might have been supposed that that question was settled.

But for the Modern juniors at Rookwood it wasn't settled at all, not in the least.

Tommy Dodd's remarkable theory that Gunner was a wronged man caught on very much, on the Modern side.

Indeed, the Moderns favoured Tommy's still more startling theory that a Classical chap had, somehow, been at the bottom of the whole business.

Tommy Dodd was eloquent on the subject. He pointed out that innocent men had been sent to prison, and had even been hanged. Such occurrences were, fortunately, rare, but it was no use denying that they had happened.

Judges weren't infallible, and all sorts of duffers served on juries, according to Tommy Dodd.

"Frinstance," said Tommy Dodd, "when those Classical chumps over the way grow up they'll serve on juries, you know. Well, what sort of a verdict would they give? What sort of brains would they bring to the job? Would any chap here take any notice of their giddy verdict?"

To which the Moderns replied unanimously: "No fear!"

"So, you see," said Tommy Dodd, "Gunner was as innocent as a baby. Perhaps the truth will come out some day. And, mark my words, when it does it will come out that the real criminal was a chap who was once a Classical at Rookwood, I feel sure of it."

And the Moderns duly marked his words. The Classics felt more inclined to mark his features.

Anyhow, with that attitude taken up by the Moderns, it was impossible for the Classics to "crow" on the subject. They could not "rub it in" that a Modern's natural destination was "choky," while the Moderns persisted in regarding Gunner as an unhappy victim of a miscarriage of justice.

Indeed, Tommy Dodd went so far as to declare that if Gunner turned up at Rookwood he would ask him into his study to tea as an "Old Boy" whom the Moderns would be delighted to honour.

"Cheeky asses!" growled Lovell, in the end study. Lovell was quite exasperated by the attitude of the Moderns on the subject. "The man's a blessed swindler, you know, and they're making out that he's a sort of romantic victim. I jolly well wish that the bobbies would lay him by the heels. Why, if Tommy Dodd saw him, very likely he'd turn out to be some beetle-browed villain with a face like the Kaiser!"

"Most likely!" agreed Raby.

"I know if I see the beast I'll jolly well hand him over!" said Newcome. "My opinion is that a lot of the other Moderns ought to be handed over with him!"

"Hear, hear!"

"It's jolly queer what he's come hanging about Rookwood for!" remarked Jimmy Silver thoughtfully. "He can't expect to get any

help here. Even the Moderns wouldn't go so far as that."

"And it's queer, too, that the bobbies don't nail him!" said Lovell. "I suppose he's skulking in the woods, but they ought to rout him out."

"Perhaps they have!" suggested Raby. Jimmy shook his head.

"We shall know when he's caught," he replied. "Bounds will be extended again. So long as we're gated we know he's still loose. Looks as if he's a dangerous character, or the Head wouldn't be so jolly careful!"

Lovell grinned.

"The cream of the joke is that the Head doesn't know we know anything about it," he remarked. "I dare say it's the talk of the village, but we're not supposed to go down to Coombe now. Lattrey went down yesterday on the quiet, and he says he heard people talking about it."

"Well, of all the chumps!" exclaimed Lovell. "If it's not on, how can it come off? Do you mean it's on a tree?"

"Ha, ha!" roared the Canadian junior. "It's not that kind of lark, fathead! It's a lark on the Moderns."

"Oh, I see! Wh't sort of a lark?"

"Wait and see!" smiled Conroy.

The juniors walked out into the quadrangle.

They bent their steps in the direction of the new clock-tower on the Modern side. Round the little arched doorway that gave admittance to that edifice a number of juniors were gathered, mostly Moderns.

Tommy Dodd & Co. were there, looking somewhat excited. Tubby Muffin, the plump Classical, was there also, and he was wildly excited.

"I tell you I heard him!" he was saying,



Tommy Dodd & Co. dashed down the staircase. "Where are you, Gunner?" called out Tommy Dodd. In a moment there came a faint reply: "Here!" (See Chapter 5.)

Dick Van Ryn's cheery face looked into the study.

The South African junior was grinning.

"You fellows coming?" he asked.

"Whither?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"To see a lark."

"In a cage?" asked Lovell. "Look here, Dutely, you oughtn't to keep a lark in a cage."

"Ha, ha! No."

"Then how can we see it if it's not in a cage?" demanded Lovell. "Larks don't stand still to be looked over, do they?"

"This one will," grinned Van Ryn. "Come along with your Dutch uncle, and see."

The Fistical Four followed him from the study, Lovell looking mystified, and the other three grinning. They guessed the kind of "lark" Dick Van Ryn alluded to was not of the ornithological variety.

Pons and Conroy joined them in the passage. All three of the Colonial chumps wore smiling looks.

"Well, where's the lark?" asked Lovell.

"It hasn't come off yet," said Pons.

"What is it on?" asked the puzzled Lovell.

"On! It's not on yet," said Pons, equally puzzled.

as Jimmy Silver & Co. came up. "I heard him as plain as anything. Some other fellows did. Van Ryn and Pons must have heard him. They were standing near here."

"Rats!" said Pons.

"Well, I heard him," persisted Tubby Muffin. "I tell you I heard him plain. He was calling out."

"Gammon!" said Tommy Dodd doubtfully. "It's all rot! How could he get into the clock-tower? It's locked."

"May have been hiding in there a long time."

"Oh, piffle!"

"What on earth are you burbling about?" asked Jimmy Silver, in amazement. "Is old Mack shut up in the tower? I remember he got shut in once."

"It's Gunner!" gasped Tubby Muffin.

"Gunner!" yelled Van Ryn.

"Yes."

"Bosh!"

"Piffle!"

"I tell you I heard him!" shouted the fat Classical indignantly. "I was walking past

here with Van Ryn and Pons, and I heard him call out."  
 "Tell us another."  
 "Well, I'm jolly well going to tell Mr. Bootles," said Tubby warmly. "Leggo my shoulder, Dodd. Bootles ought to know, so that he can send for the bobbies."  
 Tommy Dodd knitted his brows.  
 "It's all rot," he said. "But if Gunner happened to be there, he's not going to be given away. He's an innocent man."  
 "Bow-wow!" chorused the Classics.  
 "The victim of circumstantial evidence!" roared Tommy.  
 "Rats!"  
 "And he's not going to be given away," said Tommy Dodd. "I suppose even you Classical rotters don't want to turn informer."  
 "But he can't be there," said Van Ryn. "I certainly never heard him call out."  
 "Neither did I," said Pons.  
 "I did," said Tubby Muffin, "and I'm going to Bootles— Yow-ow!"  
 "Stay where you are!" growled Tommy Dodd.  
 "I say, you know he's a swindler, you know, and a gaolbird— Yow-ow! Leave off pulling my ear, you rotter!" wailed Tubby.  
 "Hark!" exclaimed Tommy Cook suddenly. There was a breathless hush among the juniors as a faint voice proceeded from the oaken door of the clock tower.  
 "Help!"

**THE FOURTH CHAPTER.  
 Tommy Dodd to the Rescue!**

**H**ELP!"  
 It was plain enough. The voice was faint and low, as of a man in the last stages of hunger or exhaustion, but it was audible to every fellow there.  
 The Rookwood juniors looked at one another with startled faces. Tommy Dodd drew a quick, hurried breath, and stepped closer to the little door. He tapped on the thick oak with his knuckles.  
 "Who's that?" he breathed.  
 "Help!"  
 "Who are you?"  
 "My name's Gunner."  
 "Oh!"  
 "I'm starving! I'm willing to give myself up! I can't stand it any longer! For mercy's sake, let me out!"  
 "My hat!" muttered Dodd. "I—I say, keep this dark, you fellows! The poor beast's here! It would be a fearful disgrace to Rookwood for him to be arrested here! We can't give him up. He's an old Rookwood chap."  
 "Only a Modern!"  
 "Rookwood, anyway," said Tommy Dodd, usually amicable. "It's up to us to stand by him."  
 "Oh, draw it mild!" said Lovell.  
 "He's a wronged man—"  
 "Bosh!"  
 "Anyway, he's a poor, starving beast!" pleaded Tommy Dodd. "We can't turn informers; it's not good enough for Rookwood."  
 "We're not going to say anything," said Jimmy Silver.  
 "Look here, I think I ought to go to the Head," said Tubby Muffin, swelling with importance at the idea.  
 "Shut up!" said Conroy.  
 "I tell you—"  
 The Australian junior took Tubby by the collar. It was settled that Tubby Muffin wasn't going to the Head.  
 The juniors gathered closer round the little deep doorway. Tommy Dodd tapped on the oak again.  
 "Gunner!" he called out cautiously.  
 "I'm here!" came the reply in the same faint tones, which went right to Tommy Dodd's tender heart.  
 "Just be patient for a few minutes, and we'll get in somehow, and bring you some grub to start with."  
 "Bless you, my boy!"  
 Tommy Dodd stepped back from the door. The juniors looked at him with very grave faces.  
 "I say, this is jolly serious, Doddy," said Jimmy Silver. "You can't help an escaped convict, you know!"  
 "It's against the law!" said Newcome, with a shake of the head.  
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"Jolly serious!" said Lovell, with the gravity of an owl.  
 Tommy Dodd sniffed.  
 "You fellows needn't have a hand in it if you're afraid!" he said disdainfully. "I'm standing by old Gunner! All I want you to do is to keep your mouths shut about it!"  
 "Well, we can do that!" conceded Jimmy Silver.  
 "That's all I want."  
 Tommy Dodd cut away to the porter's lodge. The juniors waited for his return in a state of considerable excitement. There had been so much discussion of the missing Gunner, that it was highly exciting to find that the hapless fugitive had actually taken refuge within the walls of Rookwood itself.  
 Tommy Dodd came scudding back in a few minutes.  
 "Got it, bedad?" exclaimed Doyle.  
 Tommy drew a key from his pocket, and held it up in triumph.  
 "Here it is! Old Mack keeps it hanging over his mantelpiece, and I cut in and bagged it. He wasn't there, thank goodness! Now it's all serene."  
 Tommy pushed the key into the door, with a grating sound. There was a sudden whimper of terror.  
 "Oh, run down at last! I am lost!"  
 "It's all right, Gunner!" called out Tommy Dodd hastily. "Only me, you know."  
 "Keep off! I will fight for my liberty! I am armed—"  
 "Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Tommy. "I—I say, old chap, it's all serene. I'm a friend, you know. I'm coming to help you. I'm Dodd."  
 "Pursue me if you dare!" came in hoarse tones. "I am armed and desperate!"  
 "Bedad!" murmured Tommy Doyle. "Mind how you open that dure, Tommy—"  
 But Tommy Dodd did not heed. He turned the key in the lock, and threw the oaken door wide open. There was a general scuttling back of the juniors.  
 They expected to see a haggard, desperate convict, probably with a revolver in his hand. But the dusky space was bare, and Tommy Dodd blinked in, without seeing a trace of the hapless refugee.

**THE FIFTH CHAPTER.  
 Missing!**

**G**UNNER!" panted Tommy Dodd.  
 There was no reply.  
 "Poor chap!" said Tommy Dodd. "I dare say he's half off his poor old head with hunger and fright. He's bolted up the stairs."  
 "Lucky the door's not bolted, too!" remarked Lovell, with an attempt at humour.  
 "Oh, don't be funny! I'm going up."  
 "Mind his revolver!" exclaimed Van Ryn, in alarm. "Suppose he takes you for a bobby, and begins shooting?"  
 "Rats! He won't!"  
 "Faith, and he might intirely!" said Tommy Doyle uneasily. "He seems to be half cracked."  
 "Well, I'm going to risk it."  
 "Where's poor old Gunner?"  
 "Bolted up the staircase," said Tommy

Dodd. "He's taken the alarm. I'm going after him. Come on!"  
 The three Tommies entered the tower, two of them, at least, feeling rather uneasy. But Tommy Dodd led the way, as brave as a lion.  
 "Let's go after them," said Dick Van Ryn. "They're not going to face the merry danger alone."  
 "Come on!" said Jimmy Silver.  
 The three Colonials and the Fistical Four rushed in after the Moderns, and mounted the narrow, winding stair behind them.  
 "Get out!" snapped Tommy Dodd, looking back. "You classicals ain't wanted here."  
 "We're sharing the merry risk," said Jimmy Silver. "Can't let you Modern kids run into danger."  
 "There isn't any danger, fathead!"  
 "It may give you an awful shock to see him!" said Pons.  
 "Eh! Why should it?"  
 "Well, he may have a face like most Modern chaps."  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "Shut up!" roared Tommy Dodd ferociously. "This isn't a time for cackling, or a place, either."  
 And Tommy Dodd tramped on wrathfully up the stairs. Cook and Doyle followed him, and after them came the Classics, crowding the stairs.  
 No sign of the convict was seen on the staircase.  
 "The duffer!" muttered Cook. "He's gone out on the platform at the top. He may be seen from the quad."  
 "Hurry up!" said Dodd.  
 A little door at the back of the clock-room gave access to the open platform, surrounded by a parapet. The three Tommies emerged into the open air.  
 From that elevated point they had a splendid view of Rookwood and the surrounding country. But they were not thinking of views. They were thinking of the unhappy fugitive, and, to their amazement, they found that the platform was untenanted.  
 "Howly Moses! Where is he?" ejaculated Doyle.  
 Tommy Doyle looked dazed.  
 "My hat! He—he can't have jumped off, surely!"  
 "Oh, begorra!"  
 With dreadful doubts in their breasts as to what the desperate man might have done, the three Tommies looked over the parapet and scanned the ground below.  
 They saw nothing, however, but a crowd of juniors, looking upward.  
 "Where is he?" Jimmy Silver & Co. came through the little door. "Where is the merry convict?"  
 "He—he's not here!"  
 "Hark!" exclaimed Van Ryn.  
 From below, in the depths of the dusky winding staircase, came a voice.  
 "Help! Master Dodd, where are you?"  
 Tommy Dodd jumped.  
 "Great pip! He's below!"  
 "How could we have passed him?" stammered Doyle.  
 "Must have been hidden somewhere. Come on!"  
 Tommy Dodd & Co. dashed down the staircase again, and the Classics followed them.  
 "Where are you, Gunner?" called out Tommy Dodd, halting on a landing half-way down the staircase.  
 "Here!" came a faint voice.  
 "Where?"  
 "Down below! Come quick! I'm fainting!"  
 "Oh, my hat!"  
 The three Moderns tore down the stairs. They were perplexed, and considerably exasperated with the elusive Mr. Gunner by this time.  
 "Here he is!" exclaimed Cook, as a bulky form loomed up in the open doorway on the ground floor. "Look here, Gunner! My hat! It's Mack!"  
 Mack glared at the Modern juniors.  
 "Which my key has been took!" he roared. "And 'ere it is in the door. Who took that there key, hey? Come out of there, you young vagabonds, or I'll report yer!"  
 "Oh, crumbs! It's all up now!" muttered Tommy Dodd.  
 "Come hout! Which you know well enough that you ain't allowed in there, you and your monkey tricks!" snorted old Mack.  
 The Moderns crowded out, in dismay.  
 (Continued on page 20.)

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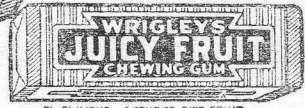
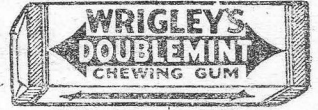
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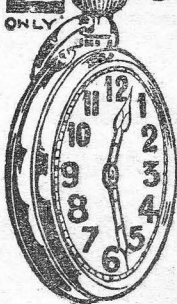
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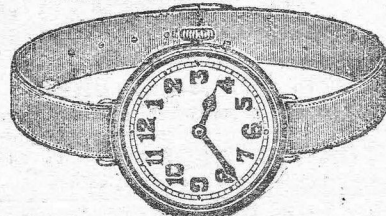
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**STICKING UP FOR GUNNER!**

(Continued from page 18.)

followed by Jimmy Silver & Co. Tommy Dodd only hoped that Mack would not detect the presence of the hidden convict. But as the old porter was dragging the door shut, the faint voice was heard again. "Mack! Mack! Aren't you going to help me?" "Oh, the ass, he's given himself away!" muttered Tommy Dodd. "As if old Mack will help him! Oh, the duffer!" Mack gave a jump. "Who's that?" he ejaculated. "I'm your old pal, Gunner!" "Gunner!" yelled Mack. "Yes, old fellow; the man who worked beside you in the stone-breaking gang at Dartmoor. You're going to help an old pal, Mack?" "Hallo! We're learning something about Mack!" exclaimed Cook. Mack was purple. "Which it's a lie!" he roared. "I never was at Dartmoor, and if you're Gunner, you're going to be 'anded over, you rascal! I'll 'ave you out of that in a jiffy, you see! Coming 'ere to 'ide from the peelers, wot? I'll show you!" Mack rushed into the tower. "All up now!" said Van Ryn, touching Tommy Dodd on the elbow. "You've done your best, Tommy." "Poor old Gunner!" said Tommy. "Still, I don't think Mack will find him,"

added the South African junior thoughtfully. "He's bound to, you ass!" Dick Van Ryn shook his head. "Mack will be jolly clever if he does!" he remarked. "You see, there's nobody there!" "What!" "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jimmy Silver & Co. The "lark" had been a success, from the point of view of the Classics. "Thanks awfully for the pleasant conversation we've had, Tommy!" said Van Ryn affably. "Ha, ha, ha!" Tommy Dodd stared at the South African. "Are you off your rocker, you Dutch duffer?" he exclaimed. "We haven't had any conversation!" "Yes, we have, dear boy," grinned Van Ryn, "and it's been awfully entertaining! And next time you have a talk with a convict hidden behind a door, make sure that the merry convict isn't a ventriloquist standing beside you all the time!" "Wha-a-at!" "Oh, begorra!" "You spooring rotter!" yelled Cook. "Ha, ha, ha!" Van Ryn and his comrades walked away, chuckling. The entertainment was over—for all excepting old Mack, who, in great perplexity, was still searching the interior of the clock tower. Tommy Dodd & Co. gazed after the Rookwood ventriloquist with really extraordinary expressions on their faces. "My—my hat!" stuttered Tommy Dodd at last. "Spoofoed—spoofoed all the time by that Classical beast!" Old Mack came out of the tower with a very puzzled expression on his face. He had

found nobody there. Shaking his head very gravely, old Mack locked the door and carried away the key. "Spoofoed!" mumbled Tommy Dodd. "Oh crumbs! I—I never thought—" "Oh, bedad! After him!" gasped Tommy Doyle. "Squash him! Jump on him! Scalp him!" The feelings of the three Tommies were really too deep for words. It was time for action—drastic action. They charged after the grinning Classics, and hurled themselves upon Dick Van Ryn. "Now, you funny idiot!" "Now, you jinking duffer!" "Scalp him!" But Classical hands were laid on the three Tommies on all sides, and they were dragged off the ventriloquist and bumped on the ground. Jimmy Silver & Co. sauntered away, chortling, leaving them there. Tommy Dodd sat up. "Oh crumbs!" "Faith, it's a howling ass ye are, Tommy!" gasped Doyle. "The Classics will be laughing us to death over this!" "Look here—" "Of all the silly asses, you're the silly-assiest!" snorted Tommy Cook. "Why, I—I—" "Yah!" And with that expressive remark, Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle marched off, leaving Tommy Dodd speechless. And for a long time afterwards it was only necessary to whisper the name "Gunner" in Tommy Dodd's ear, in order to arouse him to a pitch of Hunnish fury. THE END. (Another splendid Rookwood story next Friday. Order your copy of the POPULAR now.)

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