

SCHOOL, WILD WEST, MYSTERY & ADVENTURE TALES INSIDE!

Week Ending
June 23rd,
1923.

New
Series.

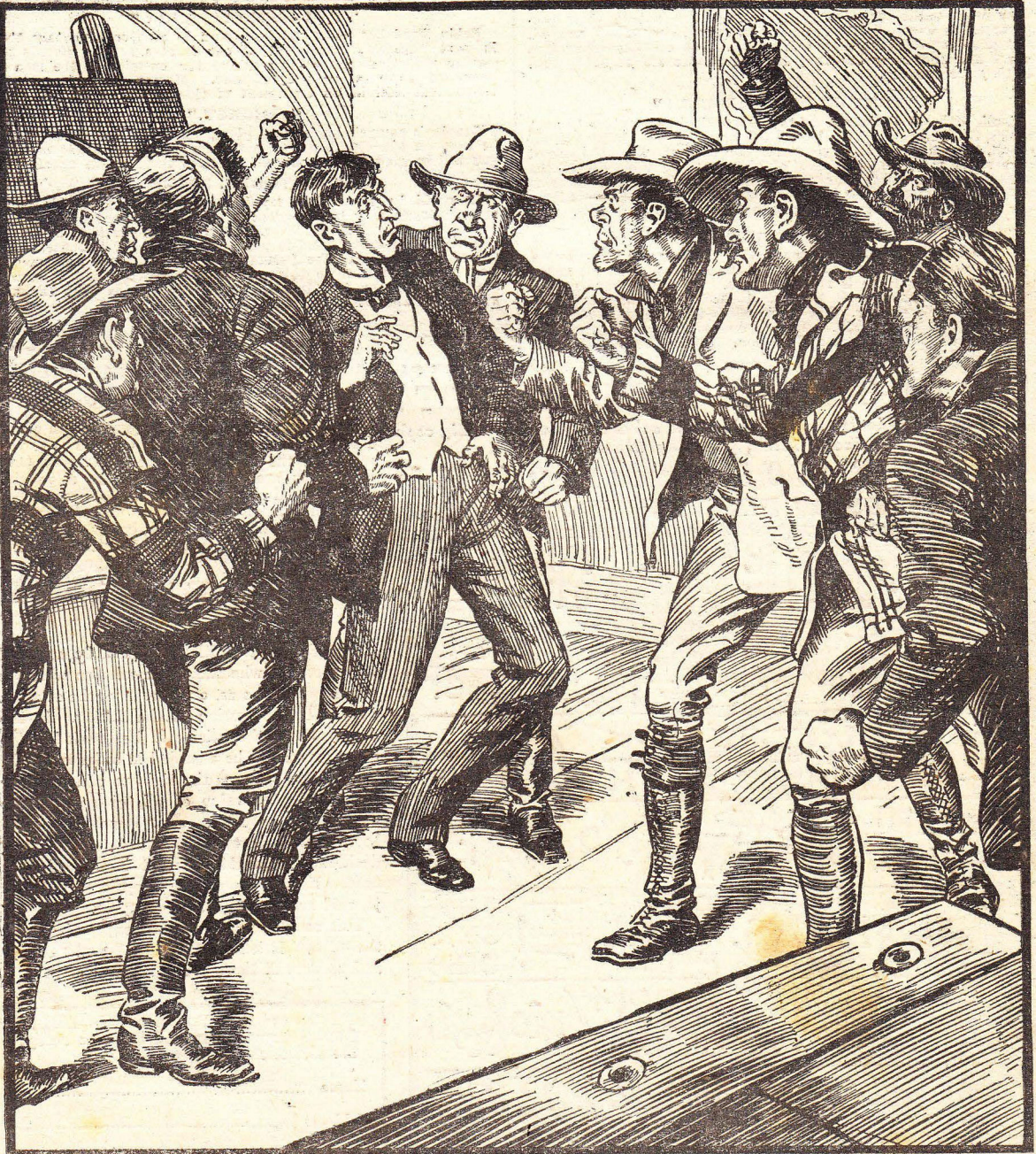
No.
231.

Twenty-eight
Pages.

The POPULAR 2^D

The Story Book for Boys.

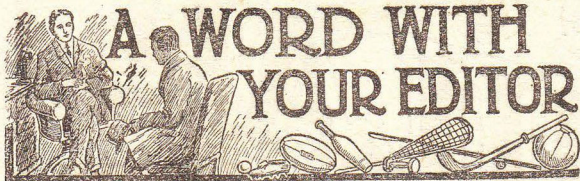
Money Prizes
Every
Week.



MR. PECKOVER'S UNINVITED GUESTS TURN NASTY!

(An Amazing Scene from the Thrilling Backwoods Tale in this issue.)

Here's a Great Number of Numbers for you fellows—
next week!



"THE KIDNAPPERS' MISTAKE!"

Surprises are fresh and invigorating things, especially when you get them by the packet. They do good—that is, sometimes, not always. In next week's lively yarn of Greyfriars, Gerald Loder finds a surprise waiting for him, and he does not like it. Loder has an unenviable reputation at the school. One of his biographers has set down the burly senior, who is nearly eighteen, as a rotter and a bitter taskmaster to all fags. Putting all that on one side, it is sure as eggs are eggs that any sympathy felt for the massive Loder, because of what happens to him next Tuesday, will be largely mitigated by the remembrance of the numerous shabby tricks he has played. The kidnapping party are, however, in error. They were out after other game; Loder was not in their programme. It was just like the bully to turn up when not wanted, and put everything at sixes and sevens. The ensuing shindy is a smart and enlivening business, and the results are as unexpected as they are exciting.

"TRICKED ON THE TRAIL!"

Frank Richards & Co. are up to their necks in adventure in next week's Cedar Creek story. Things are humming at the backwoods school. The band of loyal comrades who have stuck by the school have never yet found any lack of excitement in their life in the wilds. In the new story events occur so suddenly that there is no time for casting shadows. It will please you to note how admirably the old favourites face the sudden rush of danger.

"TIT FOR TAT!"

Look out for a noteworthy contribution to the great fag question in next week's Rookwood yarn. We have heard a good bit about the hansom cab; there is more to come. What you have got to look out for next week is the lay of the land as regards Mornington, the new skipper. The noble Fifth is at loggerheads with the Tritons of the Fourth. Jimmy Silver's views on fagging are too well known to need recapitulation. It is Mornington's turn

to play. All eyes on Mornington! Is he going to be a mean trimmer? Will he stand by his side? These are questions which you will find thrashed out in the new story of a mighty struggle. Britons are no slaves—never have been! Fourth-Formers are Britons. You will like this tale, so be on the qui vive for a startling upshot.

"TEN POUNDS REWARD!"

It sounds a bit of all right. An even tenner means a lot of things. It can be split up into neat one-pound sections, and each section can offer a lot of pleasure. The job on these occasions is to catch the hare—otherwise, the recompense. Baggy Trimble is convinced he can discover the hiding-place of the blue Persian cat. The owner of this missing feline quadruped is prepared to part with the sum mentioned if the animal is restored to its sorrowing home. But the mystery does not stop short at the Persian purrer, and Baggy lands himself in an Al difficulty. That is the worst of Baggy; he goes too far—as you may say, seeing it is a cat. I can recommend this sparkling yarn about the embarrassments of Baggy. He who asks for trouble is never disappointed.

"BUNTER'S WEEKLY."

A most engaging issue of the famous supplement will be found airing itself in the POPULAR next week. The subjects dealt with are many and exciting, and all POPULAR readers from China to Peru, and from Penzance to John o' Groats, will feel like giants refreshed after a perusal of Bunter's latest magnum opus.

"THE OUTLAW KING!"

Robin Hood has never yet been seen to greater advantage than in next Tuesday's instalment of our famous serial. Events are moving with dramatic swiftness, and the enemies of the men of Sherwood have a rude awakening. Morton Pike has shown tremendous skill in his treatment of this appealing theme.

"CRICKET."

Tuesday's competition is right plump on the wicket, and you will be keen on the elucidation of a topping problem. What is more, you will be glad to see good old Notts to the fore—as usual.

AN EDITORIAL SECRET.

It would be more than my life is worth to give this secret away. Baggy may be an adept at letting cats out of bags—not so a common or garden Editor. He is a mere speck of obscurity. But there is a secret, and it will interest you, for it concerns the future programme of the POPULAR in a very intimate and unusual way. I shall return to this matter very shortly, and I know I shall have all my friends with me in the opinion that the new attraction, which is on its way, tops the bill.

Your Editor.

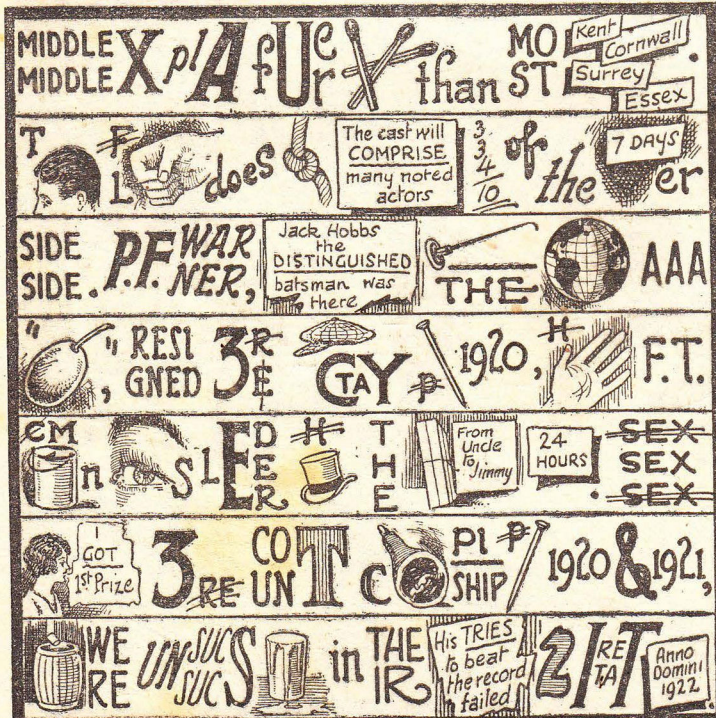
What You Have To Do.

Here is a splendid Cricket competition which I am sure will interest you. On this page you will find the history of the Middlesex C.C. What you are invited to do is to solve this picture, and when you have done so, write your solution on a sheet of paper. Then sign the coupon which appears below, pin it to your solution, and post it to "Middlesex" Competition, POPULAR Office, Gough House, Gough Square, E.C.4, so as to reach that address not later than THURSDAY, June 28th, 1923.

The FIRST PRIZE of £5 will be awarded to the reader who submits a solution which is exactly the same as, or nearest to, the solution now in the possession of the Editor. In the event of ties the prize will be divided. The other prizes will be awarded in order of merit. The Editor reserves the right to add together and divide the value of all, or any, of the prizes, but the full amount will be awarded. It is a distinct condition of entry that the decision of the Editor must be regarded as final. Employees of the proprietors of this journal are not eligible to compete.

This competition is run in conjunction with the "Boys' Friend," "Magnet," and "Gem," and readers of those journals may compete.

IT'S SO SIMPLE—HAVE A SHOT!
Glance over the picture-puzzle below and solve the solution. Big cash prizes offered, you may win one.
FIRST PRIZE £5 0 0: Second Prize £2 10 0:
TEN PRIZES OF FIVE SHILLINGS EACH!



I enter the POPULAR "MIDDLESEX" Competition and agree to accept the Editor's decision as final.

Name

Address

P.

THE LAND OF ADVENTURE!

A tale of the Roaring Far West of Canada, the land of adventure, dealing with the little lumber school amidst the mighty forests of the North, and the snow-capped peaks of the Rockies, where the world-famous author, Frank Richards, spent his schooldays with his "rough-neck," cheery comrades of Cedar Creek.

FRANK RICHARDS' SCHOOL DAYS.



The Amazing Adventures of
Frank Richards & Co., of Cedar
Creek School.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Hard Luck.

"O H!"
"Ow!"
"Oh dear!"
"I guess somebody's hurt!"
grinned Chunky Todgers.

It certainly sounded like it. A group of Cedar Creek fellows were waiting in the trail in the thickening winter gloom.

From the darkness along the trail, which led to Cedar Creek from Hillcrest School, came those sounds of woe.

"Hyer they are!" chuckled Eben Hacke, as three figures came in sight in the dusk. "They've been lookin' for trouble, and, by thunder, I reckon they've found it—some!"

"Just a few!" chortled Todgers. The three were Frank Richards, Bob Lawless, and Vere Beauclerc.

They were on their snowshoes, but were going slowly over the frozen snow of the trail.

They did not look happy. But their pained ejaculations suddenly ceased as they spotted the Cedar Creek crowd waiting for them.

"Hallo!" said Bob Lawless gruffly. "What are you galoots hanging around for?"

"For you!" said Tom Lawrence, laughing. "We knew you'd gone over to Hillcrest School—"

"To rag Mr. Peckover!" chuckled Chunky Todgers. "We waited to see what luck you'd have."

"And now we know! Ha, ha!"
"Nothing to cackle at!" said Frank Richards. "We've had rather bad luck. We were fairly caught—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Eben Hacke. "I guess I could have told you that! You'd better let Peckover alone!"

"We won't let him alone," said Beauclerc. "We've had bad luck this time."

"You look it! Did he lambaste you?"
"Ye-es."
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Jolly funny, isn't it?" growled Frank Richards.

"I guess so. Ha, ha!"
"But what happened, Frank?" asked Molly Lawrence, in her sweet, soft voice, which had a soothing effect.

"Well, it was hard luck, Molly," said Frank. "You know Mr. Peckover came over from Hillcrest to complain to Miss Meadows about us, and actually told her what wasn't true. So we went over to—"

"To get a cow-hiding!" suggested Chunky Todgers.

"To make him sit up somehow," said Frank, unheeding the humorous Chunky. "We snowballed him in his own room, and cleared off; and then, by sheer ill-luck, we ran into Dicky Bird and Fisher and some others of that lot, and they collared us."

"You didn't expect to see them!" said Chunky.

"We thought they'd gone home, of course."

"They didn't think you had."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"The silly asses collared us, and then Peckover came on the lot of us!" said Frank ruefully. "Dicky Bird and the rest cleared off; but we were down in the snow, and before we could get away—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Oh, cut the cackle!" said Bob Lawless gruffly. "I don't see why you galoots haven't gone home. Nothing to wait for that I can see."

"We wanted to know how you'd got on at Hillcrest," said Molly, restraining her smiles. "It was very reckless to go there and snowball a headmaster. He might come complaining to Miss Meadows again."

"He didn't know us in the dark, luckily," said Beauclerc. "Still, it was a silly duffer's idea, yours, Bob!"

"Br-r-r-r!" growled Bob. "We'll make Peckover sit up, somehow, all the same," said Frank Richards.

"Tell us when you mosey over to Hillcrest to do it!" implored Chunky Todgers. "We want to be on the scene next time; it will be worth seeing!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Oh, rats!"
Frank Richards & Co. slid on their way, and the Cedar Creek fellows took their homeward route, still laughing.

The unfortunate ending of the expedition to Hillcrest seemed to strike them as comic. It did not seem very comic to the three fellows who had taken part in it; they were still aching from the lashes of Mr. Peckover's big stick.

In fact, the expedition, which had been reckless enough, had turned out a hopeless failure; and the chums of Cedar Creek School were sore both in mind and body.

"Ow!" mumbled Bob Lawless, as they slid on over the snow. "I say, I've got a lot of bumps and things! That old galoot seemed to think that he was beating carpets when we were hanging on the fence!"

"Oh dear! I'm aching all over!"
"But we're not done with him yet," said Bob.

"Fathead!"
"I say, Franky—"

"Don't say anything!" groaned Frank Richards. "I feel as if I'd been put through a quartz crusher! You're an ass, Bob! If you propose going over to Hillcrest again I'll biff you!"

"Well, perhaps it was a bit reckless," admitted Bob. "But it would have gone all right if we hadn't fallen in with Dicky Bird."

"But we did!" grunted Frank.

"There's other ways," said Bob Lawless. "I tell you Peckover's got to pay the piper, and I'm going to think—"

"You can't think, old chap!" said Frank. "Don't try!"

Tempers were a little sore in the Co., as well as backs.

They slid on in silence for some time, till they reached the fork in the trail.

"Good-night!" called out Beauclerc, as he took his turning.

"Good-night, Cherub!"

Vere Beauclerc disappeared along the dark trail that led to the shack by the creek, and Frank and Bob kept on by the main trail for the Lawless Ranch.

They were tired when they arrived home, and late for supper; and when they sat down to supper they betrayed an incessant desire to shift in their seats.

Mr. Peckover had laid on his big stick not wisely, but too well; and it was likely to be some days before the chums recovered from the infliction.

They were still feeling sore and sorry when they went up to the room they shared in the ranch-house.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Doubting Thomases!

FRANK RICHARDS & CO. were greeted with smiles by their schoolfellows at Cedar Creek next morning.

All Cedar Creek was "up against" Mr. Peckover, the exceedingly unpleasant master of Hillcrest School, and they quite approved of punishing him, if possible.

But Bob Lawless' reckless expedition only appealed to their sense of humour.

It was in vain that Bob explained that the expedition had really been a success, and Mr. Peckover had been snowballed in his own sitting-room.

The fact remained that the raiders had been caught on the fence in escaping, and soundly "lambasted" by the schoolmaster's stick, and that incident made the Cedar Creek fellows roar.

The chums were rather uneasy as they entered the school-room and saw Miss Meadows.

But the Canadian schoolmistress did not take any special note of them, and they were relieved.

It was apparent that Mr. Peckover had not recognised the raiders in the dark, and so there was no complaint to come to the schoolmistress of Cedar Creek.

Perhaps, too, Mr. Peckover considered that the raiders had been sufficiently punished.

Certainly he had laid it on well with his big stick, and they were likely to ache for some days to come.

Bob Lawless glanced at his chums several times during morning lessons.

He was in possession of a great idea for "downing" the obnoxious Peckover—or, at least, he believed he was.

But it was not surprising that his chums, for the present, were tired of Bob Lawless' "stunts."

When school was dismissed at twelve, Bob approached the subject, but Frank and Vere Beauclerc waved him off.

"Cheese it!" said Frank.

"Give us a rest, old chap," urged Beauclerc. "We haven't got over your last ripping wheeze yet, you know."

"Look here—"

"Wait till we recover."

"But I guess—"

"Anybody coming on the ice?" called out Frank.

The creek was frozen over that morning, and most of the Cedar Creek boys and girls were going down to the ice.

Frank and Beauclerc joined them, and Bob was left to waste his eloquence on the desert air.

He grunted, and took his skates after them, and there was no further opportunity for talk before dinner.

But after dinner Bob Lawless gripped his two chums by the arms as they came out into the playground.

He did not mean to let them escape him again.

"Now I'm going to talk to you," he said.

"Mercy!"

"Help!"

"Don't be such all-fired jays!" exclaimed Bob. "I tell you it's a stunt that puts the lid right on. I tell you it's a stunt that will make Peckover sit up and weep."

"More likely to make us sit up and howl, if it's anything like the last," said Frank Richards.

"Look here!" roared Bob Lawless. "If you don't want to hear my stunt, Franky—"

"My dear chap, I want you to go and find the deepest, darkest corner in the pine woods, and bury it—deep!" answered Frank.

"And don't mark its grave!" said Beauclerc, with a chuckle.

Bob Lawless surveyed his chums with a grim brow.

He was evidently ruffled.

"You're a pair of silly jays!" he said.

"Hear, hear! Now are we going on the ice?"

"You can go to Jericho, for all I care!" retorted Bob gruffly, and he strode away.

"Hold on, Bob—"

But the rancher's son did not turn his head.

He took his snowshoes, and started out on the trail, plainly in a huff.

"Poor old Bob!" said Frank. "He's got his back up, but he really can't expect us to enthuse over his new stunt while we're still sore from the last one. He will come round by lesson-time. Let's get on the creek."

And the two schoolboys joined the merry crowd on the ice.

Meanwhile, Bob Lawless was covering the trail towards Thompson Town over the snow in great style.

Where he was gone, and what was his object, his chums did not know; but they looked for him when the bell rang for afternoon classes.

Bob Lawless did not appear, however.

The rest of Cedar Creek went in without him, but as they were settling down at their desks, Bob Lawless came in, ruddy and breathless.

He dropped into his seat beside Frank, who greeted him with a smile.

Bob nodded amiably in response.

His "huff" was over, and his good temper had quite returned. Bob could be very wrathful sometimes, but his wrath never lasted long.

He found an opportunity of whispering to Frank during lessons.

"It's all O.K."

"What is?"

"The stunt."

"Oh, my hat!"

That was all that could be said until after lessons.

But when Cedar Creek was dismissed, Frank and Beauclerc joined him in the playground, rather curious to hear where he had been, and what he had done.

But they found Bob uncommunicative.

"I'm going home through Thompson," he said, as he fastened on his snowshoes.

"You fellows coming?"

"Of course we're coming, if you're going that way," said Beauclerc. "But what have you been up to?"

"I've got a call to make," was Bob's reply; and that was all he would say.

The three schoolboys slid off on the trail to Thompson, and Bob declined to speak a word all the way; it was his turn now.

However, his chums were quite patient. In point of fact, they did not think much of the stunt, whatever it was.

To their surprise, Bob Lawless halted at the door of the local newspaper office and printer's in Thompson.

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There a packet was handed to him at the door.

He slipped it into his pocket, and came back to his chums in the road.

"What have you got there?" asked Frank.

"Some stuff I've had printed," answered Bob.

"I gave the order to-day, and it was promised for this evening."

"What on earth is it?"

"Invitation cards."

"My only hat! Are you giving a party?"

"No; Mr. Peckover is."

"Peckover!" exclaimed Frank and Beauclerc together.

"Yep!"

"And you've got the cards printed for him."

"Correct."

"Blessed if I expected to find you fagging for Peckover," said Frank Richards, very much puzzled.

"Whatting?" asked Bob, with a stare.

Frank laughed.

He had learned a good many new expressions since he had been in Canada, but he sometimes used expressions himself that were new to his Canadian cousin.

"Fagging," he said. "It's a word we used at my old school in England. What you call 'doing the chores.'"

"Oh, I see! Well, why shouldn't I do the chores for Peckover?" said Bob. "He's a nice man, isn't he? And it's up to us to oblige a nice man like Peckover. He exerted himself a lot with that stick of his, and now I'm exerting myself for his sake."

"If you're not wandering in your mind, old chap, suppose you explain what you're at," suggested the Cherub.

"Oh, you want to hear the stunt now?" asked Bob sarcastically.

"Go ahead!" said Frank.

"Hallo, there's Four Kings!" remarked Bob, as a burly, rough-looking man passed them in the street with a scowling face.

"And Euchre Dick! Pretty pair they are, aren't they?"

"Never mind them now. What the dickens—"

"I can't yell it out here for everybody to hear, fadhead! Let's get along to the old wing-dam, and I'll tell you."

"Oh, all right!"

The three chums left Main Street, and went towards the river, carrying their snowshoes.

They seated themselves in a row on the old wing-dam, which was quite deserted now that the winter dusk had fallen.

And then Bob Lawless opened his little packet, watched with very curious eyes by his comrades. They were interested at last.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Something Like a Stunt!

"MY hat!"

"What the dickens—"

Frank and Beauclerc stared at the contents of the packet were turned out.

There were a dozen nice-looking little cards, with gilt-bevelled edges, printed very tastefully.

Each of the little gilt-edged cards bore an inscription in delicate print, with blanks left for names to be filled in, as follows:

"Mr. has the pleasure of requesting the company of on Thursday afternoon, the 21st inst., on the occasion of his birthday.

"Music, dancing, refreshments."

"And they're for Peckover?" asked Frank in wonder.

"Sure!"

"He asked you—"

"Nope."

"You've got those cards printed for Peckover without his asking you?" exclaimed Frank.

"Yep."

"But what the dickens—"

"You see," said Bob calmly, "Peckover doesn't know that it's his birthday to-morrow."

"He—he doesn't know?"

"Not at all. He doesn't know he's giving a party."

"Wha-a-at?"

"I guess I'm arranging the whole thing for him," said Bob, grinning at his chums' amazed faces. "You see, if it was Peckover's birthday, and he was giving a party,

I don't suppose he'd invite the chaps who are going to get these cards."

"But—but—"

"You see, I'm going to fill them in with names, and send them to a set of the toughest characters in Thompson," said Bob coolly. "Four Kings, and Euchre Dick, Dave Dunn, and Frisco Bill, and some more of that sort."

"My hat!"

"They'll accept the invitation, of course."

"The—the invitation? Oh dear!"

"They're bound to. Nobody ever refuses an invitation to a party in this section, where there ain't many parties given. Besides, the word 'refreshments' would bring them a hundred miles!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Music and dancing, too," said Bob. "You don't get much music and dancing in the Thompson Valley. They'll jump at the chance!"

"I—I suppose so. But—"

"You see, I had to get cards printed for this stunt, so as to use the third person. I couldn't write an invitation in Peckover's name. Can't use a man's name like that. But I can send along an invitation-card, stating that Peckover would be glad of someone's company on the occasion of his birthday. I dare say he would be—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Peckover won't know, of course. These cards will be delivered to-night. I'll get Injun Dick to take them round—he carries half the messages in Thompson, and it will look natural enough—and as Thursday's to-morrow there won't be time for the guests to reply, even if they thought of doing it. They'll simply turn up at Hillcrest for the party."

"Great Scott! But there won't be any party!"

Bob shrugged his shoulders.

"Peckover can settle that with his guests!" he answered.

"Oh!"

"And when a rough crowd turns up there, expecting a great time and free drinks, and gets nothing but slanging from old Peckover, I've a suspicion that there will be trouble. I shouldn't be surprised if they wreck the place."

"Oh!"

"It will be quite amusing for Peckover—as amusing as laying into fellows with a big stick!" chuckled Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now to get these cards filled in," said Bob, jumping up. "We can get pen and ink at a store in the town. Come on!"

Bob's chums followed him in almost a dazed state of mind.

The "stunt" almost took their breath away.

What would happen at Hillcrest on the morning, when a rough crowd arrived there for the party, and were disappointed, they could hardly imagine.

But it was certain to be something very exciting.

The schoolboys entered a store, and Frank and Beauclerc made a few small purchases, while Bob Lawless asked for pen and ink, and sat down at a table in a corner.

There he filled up the cards, taking care to use a round-hand, quite unlike his ordinary "fst."

Frank glanced over his shoulder as he completed the first card.

It ran now:

"Mr. Peckover has the pleasure of requesting the company of Euchre Dick on Thursday afternoon, the 21st inst., on the occasion of his birthday.

"Music, dancing, refreshments."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Frank.

It did not take Bob long to work through the cards.

They were filled in with the names of Euchre Dick, Four Kings, Dave Dunn, Frisco Bill, Billy Bowers, Ikey Scooter, and several others of the roughest characters who made the town of Thompson their abiding-place.

"Got the envelopes, Franky?"

"Here you are."

Frank had purchased a dozen envelopes in the store for the purpose.

Bob enclosed the cards in them, and inscribed the names on the outside.

"Wait for me here," he said.

He left the store and walked along the

Main Street into the naphtha-glare from the Red Dog Saloon.

Leaning against a post outside the Red Dog was Injun Dick, the red man who had once been a great chief, and was now a fetcher and carrier of messages, and a terrific consumer of the potent fire-water.

Injun Dick returned Bob's greeting with a stately inclination of the head.

"Injun thirsty!" he remarked.

"You'd like a dollar, old sport?" asked Bob.

"You bet!" said the red man tersely.

"I want you to deliver these letters. You know where to find the galoots," said Bob in a low voice.

"They're all to be delivered this evening. And you don't let on who gave them to you to deliver, Dick. Savvy?"

"Injun savvy."

"And there's your dollar," said Bob.

"The Little White Chief is a bully boy with a glass eye," said the red man solemnly.

And he started on his errand at once.

Bob Lawless rejoined his chums at the store.

"All O.K.," he said. "I guess it's time we lit out for home. Get on your snowshoes."

And the chums scudded on cheerily.

Their only regret was that they would not be at Hillcrest on the following afternoon to see what happened.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Guests at Hillcrest!

THE old sport's ratty this afternoon!

"Mind your eye!" whispered Fisher.

There was a hush in the school-room at Hillcrest.

Mr. Ephraim Peckover, the headmaster—and only master—of Hillcrest School, had just entered.

He did not look amiable.

Mr. Peckover had a very sharp and unpleasant temper—as the Cedar Creek fellows had discovered—and as the Hillcrest boys had learned to their cost.

The only fellow at Hillcrest who was in Mr. Peckover's good books was Kern Gunten, the son of the richest storekeeper in Thompson, who had a financial interest in the new school.

So far, the new school was not a numerous one, the fees being rather too high for the average citizen of the Thompson Valley; more especially as most of the people of the section sent their boys and girls to Cedar Creek.

Mr. Peckover's curriculum was more imposing than that of the "National" school, but French and Latin did not "cut much ice" with the citizens of Thompson.

Indeed, it was not at all certain that the venture would be a financial success, and that, perhaps, sharpened Mr. Peckover's naturally sharp temper.

Certainly he did not seem to think it was necessary to make himself liked by his pupils.

One of his favourite methods of instruction was rapping knuckles with a pointer, a method that could not be expected to recommend itself to the owners of the knuckles.

Mr. Peckover's look showed that his never amiable temper was a little worse than usual that afternoon.

He was still feeling the annoyance of his late experience, when he had been snow-balled through the window of his sitting-room.

He had taken condign vengeance on the culprits, but he did not know who they were, and he suspected that some of his own boys were mixed up in the affair.

His eye singled out Dicky Bird, as he came before the class, and the unfortunate Dicky wished that he had not addressed that murmured remark to Fisher.

"Bird!" rapped out Mr. Peckover.

"Yes, sir," said Dicky meekly.

"I think I have spoken to you before about chattering in class."

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"What did you say to Fisher?"

"Only—only a remark, sir," stammered Dicky Bird.

He was not likely to repeat that remark to Mr. Peckover.

"I have told you not to chatter in class, Bird."

Rap!
"Yaroooh!" roared Dicky Bird.
"Silence!"

The unfortunate Dicky sucked his knuckles, and gasped.

The class were very circumspect when the lessons began. Nobody wanted to catch Mr. Peckover's dyspeptic eye.

But several fellows caught it, all the same, and the pointer rapped several times.

By the time an hour had elapsed, Mr. Peckover had made the tempers in class as bad as his own, and there were black and sulky looks on all sides.

Fortunately for the class, there came an interruption then.

A heavy tread sounded in the porch of the schoolhouse, and a deep, powerful voice bawled:

"Anybody to home?"

Mr. Peckover jumped.

He knew the voice; it was that of Four Kings, the leader of the "Red Dog crowd" in Thompson.

"Hyer I am!" went on the powerful voice. "I've come! Isn't there anybody to home, to speak to a galoot?"

"Dear me!" murmured Mr. Peckover, while the Hillcrest fellows stared at one another in astonishment. "What can the man want?"

Apparently Four Kings was annoyed at finding no one to receive him.

The man and wife who served Mr. Peckover in his house were occupied elsewhere.

Visitors were not expected during lessons, and the man was cutting logs in the timber, and his wife was gone marketing in Thompson.

Mr. Peckover was there to deal with his visitor himself, but he did not like interviewing such a visitor.

"Bird," he snapped, "go out and ask the man what he wants!"

"Yes, sir."

Dicky Bird left the school-room.

He came back in a minute or so with an expression of astonishment on his cheery face.

"Well?" snapped Mr. Peckover.

"He says he's come to the party, sir," said Dicky.

"The—what?"

"The birthday party, sir."

"What do you mean, boy? Whose birthday party?"

"Yours, sir."

"Is this impertinence, Bird?" thundered Mr. Peckover.

"That's what he said, sir."

"Nonsense! Hold out your hand!"

"But, sir, he said—"

"How dare you tell me such ridiculous falsehoods, Bird? Hold out your hand at once!"

"Swish!"

"Ow! Oh! Ah!"

"Go to your place, Bird, and be silent!"

Dicky Bird went to his place with glittering eyes.

He had told Mr. Peckover the exact facts, but perhaps it was not surprising that the Hillcrest master suspected him of an attempt to "pull his leg," when he received that astonishing message.

But the message was quickly confirmed.

Dicky Bird had hardly sat down at his desk when the school-room door was thrown open, and a burly ruffian in leathern trousers, big boots, red shirt, and woollen jacket, and Stetson hat, looked in.

He gave the startled schoolmaster a grin and a nod.

"Oh, hyer you are!" he exclaimed.

"I—I am certainly here," stammered Mr. Peckover.

"I—I do not understand what—"

"Put it there!" said Four Kings, holding out a huge, hairy hand.

Mr. Peckover shook hands with him mechanically.

He certainly did not want to shake hands with the ruffian, especially as Four Kings' hands showed that he had a rooted objection to the use of soap and water; but refusal was impossible.

"Glad to see ye, Peckover!" went on Four Kings amiably.

"Many happy returns of the day to you!"

"Wha-a-at?"



THE FIRST GUEST! The school-room door opened, and a burly ruffian looked in. He gave the startled schoolmaster a nod and a grin. "Oh, hyer you are!" he said. "Many happy returns of the day. Am I the first?" (See Chapter 4.)

"I'm the first, am I?" said Four Kings, looking round. "Never mind—the boys will be along in a brace of shakes!"

"The—the boys!"

"I s'pose the dancing will be hyer," said Four Kings. "Are the kids staying for the party, Peckover?"

"The—the party?"

"And if the refreshments are handy, Peckover, I guess I don't object to a long drink, arter my walk up the hill."

"I—I—I—" stuttered Mr. Peckover helplessly.

"Oh, here they come!" exclaimed Four Kings, as Euchre Dick and Billy Bowers appeared together in the doorway. "Mosey right in, boys!"

"Hyer we are!" announced Billy Bowers. "Top of the afternoon to you, Mr. Peckover! You're a gentleman, sir!"

"Bless my soul!" murmured Mr. Peckover, wondering whether he was dreaming. "The gentleman was jest speaking of a long drink," remarked Four Kings.

"Mr. Peckover, you're a white man!" exclaimed dry Billy Bowers. "A long drink, sir—that hits me jest where I live! You're the real goods, sir!"

"But—but—" said Mr. Peckover dazedly. "P'raps we've come rather early for the party?" suggested Euchre Dick. "You said Thursday afternoon."

"I—I said what?"

"Bless your 'art, if we're early, what matters?" said Four Kings heartily. "Give us a quiet corner and something to drink, and we'll wait as long as you like."

"Correct!" said Mr. Bowers.

"But—but—" shrieked Mr. Peckover.

"This—this is some mistake—" "What?"

"There is no party here—" "Hay?"

"It is not my birthday—" "Eh?"

"I—I did not—I never dreamed— I certainly—"

"Look here!" The amiable look had quite departed from the rough and stubby countenance of Four Kings. "What sort of game do you call this hyer? You asked us hyer—"

"I did not!"

"You hear him, pards? What sort of a trick is this?"

"On the occasion of his birthday!" said Mr. Bowers solemnly. "Them was the werry words."

"Music, dancing, refreshments," said Euchre Dick.

"There was a fresh tramp of feet in the porch.

More of the guests were arriving. Dave Dunn and Ikey Scooter looked into the school-room.

Three or four more rough-looking customers could be seen beyond them.

Mr. Peckover gazed at them dazedly. This party of the roughest characters in Thompson had arrived for his birthday-party, apparently, and it was no wonder that it seemed like a specially severe nightmare to the unhappy headmaster of Hillcrest.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Nice for Mr. Peckover.

DICKY BIRD and his companions looked on in silence and amazement. They could not understand the strange affair any more than Mr. Peckover could.

The schoolmaster stood rooted to the floor, breathing hard.

Four Kings & Co. were indignant.

They had tramped a good distance, mostly uphill, to accept the invitation to Mr. Peckover's birthday-party, and instead of the hearty welcome they had expected, they met—this!

No birthday, no party, and, above all, no drinks!

Unless the man was mad, the Red Dog gentlemen could not imagine why he should play such a trick on them.

But, undoubtedly, they were not the kind of men to take such trickery patiently.

Four Kings' rough face was already assuming the expression of an infuriated bulldog.

"Hyer we are!" came the voice of Ikey Scooter, from the doorway. "Good-afternoon to you, Peckover, old sport!"

THE POPULAR.—No. 251.

"Dear me! I—I—I—" moaned Mr. Peckover.

"Boys!" roared Four Kings. "He says as how it's a trick on us, and there ain't no party!"

"Wot!"

"No, no!" panted Mr. Peckover. "Not at all! I—I said it was a mistake! You are under a—a—a misapprehension."

"You invited us hyer for your birthday, didn't you?" demanded Dave Dunn angrily.

"No, certainly not!"

"Why, I've got the card hyer, you lying old skinkint!" shouted Dunn. "Do you mean to say there ain't a party at all?"

"No! No, certainly not! I—"

"No music and dancin'?" howled Euchre Dick.

"No. I—"

"No refreshments?" wailed Mr. Bowers.

"Oh dear! No. I—I—"

"Then we've been gulled!" roared Four Kings furiously. "Boys, that there old hunk has brought us up the hill for nothing—jest a stunt on us!"

"Lynch him!" yelled Dry Billy.

"Peckover, you coyote—"

"You skinny rascal—"

The guests surrounded their unhappy host, whose knees were knocking together.

Four Kings flourished a huge fist under his nose, and Mr. Peckover jumped back.

"You've fooled us—hay?" roared Four Kings. "Give us a tramp up the hill for a joke on us—hay? I'll joke you, a guess!

There ain't going to be no party, ain't there? There ain't going to be no drinks? By gum, if you don't trot out them drinks in short order, we'll lynch you over your own doorway!"

"Oh! Ow! Help!"

"Trot out them drinks!" exclaimed Mr. Bowers indignantly. "I'm s'prised at you, Peckover! Can't you ask a genelman if he's got a mouth on him?"

"Rope him!" exclaimed Euchre Dick.

"Give him a larruping!"

"That's the music! Rope him!"

Mr. Peckover, with a gasp of terror, made a wild rush for the door.

He was grasped instantly by two or three of his unruly guests and dragged back.

"No, you don't!" said Four Kings grimly.

"Yaroooh! Help!"

"Shet up!" Four Kings shook the unhappy schoolmaster till his teeth rattled in his head. "Now, Peckover, I'll go easy with you! You've fooled us! You're a silly old coyote, and you oughter be lynched! But you trot out them drinks, long and strong, and we'll let you off with a cow-hiding. I can't say fairer than that!"

"Ow, ow, ow!"

In Four Kings' muscular grip, Mr. Peckover was marched out of the school-room, surrounded by his terrible guests.

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Dicky Bird.

The class sat and listened, dumbfounded.

Dicky Bird ventured to the door, and watched the proceedings.

The unhappy Mr. Peckover, trembling for his skin, was serving his awful guests with all he could lay his hands on; the dining-room was filled with the thick smoke of pipes and cigars, the fumes of spirits, and the clatter of glasses and bottles.

It was fortunate for Mr. Peckover that he had a supply of firewater on the premises.

It was a party, after all—of sorts.

But the guests wasted no politeness on Mr. Peckover.

They shouted at him, cursed him freely, and even threw glasses at him when he did not move quickly enough to please them.

And the unhappy master laboured untiringly in their service, lest worse should befall him.

He was still waiting on the guests when the hour of dismissal came round, but he had forgotten his pupils.

They dismissed themselves, and left the schoolhouse, with a roaring chorus following them.

Four Kings & Co. seemed to be enjoying themselves, after all.

Well, my hat!" said Dicky Bird, as he came down the trail from the school. "My word! Poor old Peckover! It serves him right, but—"

"Hallo, here's the Cedar Creek galoots!" said Blumpy, as they turned into the Thompson trail.

Frank Richards & Co. were waiting at the fork of the trail.

They had sped there on their snowshoes immediately after lessons.

"Hallo! Anything happened at Hillcrest this afternoon, Dicky?" called out Bob Lawless.

"Yes, rather!" gasped Dicky. "A crowd of awful bulldozers came along—" "Ha, ha!"

"They seem to think Peckover had asked them to a birthday-party, and he hadn't—" "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Frank Richards & Co.

"They cut up rusty," said Fisher. "They're making Peckover wait on them, and drinking all his tanglefoot. I only hope they won't lynch him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do you fellows know anything about it?" asked Dicky Bird, with sudden suspicion.

"Do we?" grinned Bob Lawless. "Ha, ha! Hallo, there's Peckover!"

On the snowy trail, towards Hillcrest, a fleeing figure came in sight.

Mr. Peckover, hatless, was fleeing for his skin, and dodged into the timber, and vanished from sight.

Four Kings came staggering out of the gates after him, a coiled trail-rope in his hand.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Lawless, and the Hillcrest fellows echoed the shout of merriment.

Frank Richards & Co. slid away chortling.

The unhappy Mr. Peckover remained concealed in the timber till his terrible guests were gone, and then he crept back to Hillcrest.

And the next day there were roars of laughter at Cedar Creek, when Bob Lawless and his chums told the story of Mr. Peckover's guests!

THE END.

There will be another Topping Tale of the Backwood Chums, entitled:

"TRICKED ON THE TRAIL"

NEXT WEEK.

RESULT OF LEICESTER CITY PICTURE-PUZZLE COMPETITION!

In this competition one competitor sent in a correct solution of the picture. The First Prize of £5 has therefore been awarded to:

W. SIDWELL,
15, Broadmead Road,
Folkestone.

So many competitors qualified for the third grade of prizes that division among them of the prizes offered was impracticable. The Second Prize of £2 10s. and the ten prizes of 5s. each have therefore been added together and divided among the following twenty competitors, whose solutions contained one error each:

John Hogben, 35, Bournemouth Road, Folkestone; William Gilbert, 16, Sandhurst Gardens, Belfast; William Scott, 424, Parliamentary Road, Glasgow; S. J. Evans, 44, Regent Street, Gloucester; Mrs. E. Arnold, 27, Delorme Street, Fulham, S.W. 6; W. Boyd Barrie, 19, Barrie Terrace, Ardrossan; Charles H. Morton, 7, Eyre Street, Pallion, Sunderland; Nora Wyles, 51, Marmion Road, Southsea, Hants; Geo. Chambers, 172, Dover Road, Folkestone; Miss W. Wrigglesworth, 13, Church Street, Kidderminster; Archie Fullarton, 1, Adam Street, Gourock, Scotland; Miss M. Gunn, 15, Waverley Park, Edinburgh; R. W. Stratton, 63, High Street, Whiteley, Cambs; Ernest B. Simpson, 16, East View, Deepdale, Preston, Lancs; Thomas Howarth, 1, Pomfret Street, Acerrington Road, Burnley; Fred Taylor, 53, Flaxby Road, Darnall, Sheffield; Miss A. Brewster, Polam Hall, Darlington; Oswald Williams, 71, Melrose Avenue, Mitcham, Surrey; F. Tarbotton, 37, Lyndhurst Street, Leeds Road, Bradford; V. Linater, 101, Maperton Road, Bradford, Yorks.

SOLUTION.

Leicester City club had a great fight to establish itself, owing to the enormous drawing power Rugby has in that district. But it has courageously kept the flag flying. There have been several splendid sides, but never a really first-class one.

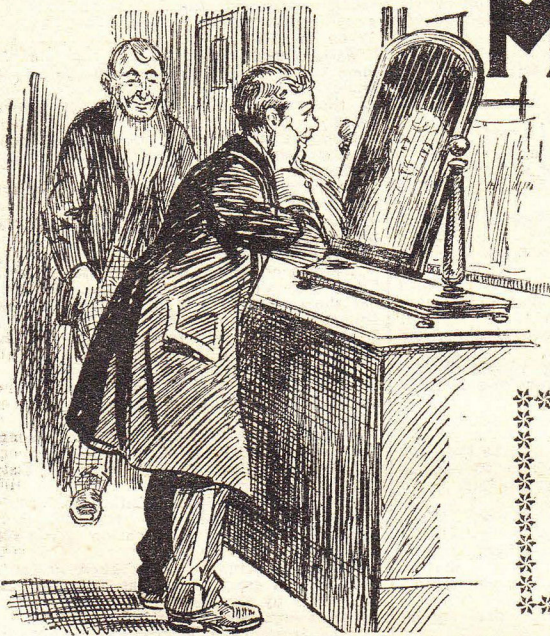
Don't Miss "Tricked on the Trail!" in Next Week's Bumper Number!

THE JAPE OF THE SEASON!

Have you ever heard of Gordon Gay, the schoolboy impersonator? Gay is a member of the famous Grammarian Co., and is ever on the look out for a chance of "dishing" his old rivals Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's.

GORDON GAY'S DARING!

MAKING THINGS LIVELY!



A splendid long complete story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.
By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**

(Author of the famous St. Jim's stories in "The Gem" Library.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
Nothing if not Daring.

"WHAT do you think, you fellows?" Baggy Trimble of the Fourth spoke excitedly. His ample form filled the doorway of Study No. 10 in the Shell passage, where the Terrible Three were at tea. Monty Lowther looked up from his poached egg.

"What do we think?" he asked. "Why, we think you're a fat, sponging toad, Trimble. And we also think you'd better travel!"

"Sharp!" growled Manners.

Three separate and distinct glares were bestowed upon Baggy Trimble. The Terrible Three thought he had come to cadge for grub. And they could be excused for thinking so. Trimble could scent a feed a mile off, and he was always on the prowl, seeking what he might devour.

"All right, you beasts," growled the fat junior. "If you don't want to hear about poor old Taggles I'll buzz off!"

"Eh? What's up with Taggles?" said Tom Merry quickly.

"He's awfully queer. Collapsed in the quad this morning. Went down wallop, so the Head says."

"I can imagine the Head saying that!" said Monty Lowther, with a chuckle.

"Well, he didn't put it in those words. But I heard him telling Railton that Taggles was carrying a ladder across the quad, and he sort of spun round and fell all off a heap."

The Terrible Three looked concerned. They rather liked Taggles, the porter, in spite of his crusty ways, and his pernicious habit of reporting them when they came in after locking-up time.

"What was the matter with Taggles?" asked Tom Merry.

"He just had a queer turn, that's all," said Baggy Trimble. "Dash it all, when a man's about ninety years old—a vegetarian, as they call it—"

"Nonogenerian, you mean!" said Lowther.

"Same thing! Well, when a man gets to that age, he can't frisk about like a two-year-old. Taggy has been overdoing it, and the Head's ordered him away for a few days' rest."

"What about Mrs. Taggles?" asked Manners.

"She's gone, too. One of her kitchen staff is going to take charge of the tuck-shop in her absence."

"And who's going to take Taggles' place?" asked Tom Merry.

"An old man named Huggins, from the

village. He's arrived already, I believe. I say, you fellows, don't you think all this information is worth a slice of your plum-cake?"

Tom Merry cut a slice of the cake in question, and handed it to Trimble.

"It's hardly right to encourage eavesdroppers," said Tom. "Still, you've told us some jolly interesting news. Now you can skedaddle."

Trimble "skedaddled" cheerfully enough, nibbling the cake as he rolled away.

The Terrible Three exchanged smiling glances.

"We ought to be able to pull the leg of the worthy Huggins," said Monty Lowther.

"Yes, rather!"

"We'll give the old buffer a lively time," said Tom Merry. "We'll look him up after tea, and see what sort of a merchant he is. Gouty old jossler, I expect."

The juniors went on with their tea, blissfully unconscious of a little drama which was being enacted in the gate-porter's lodge.

Mr. Huggins had already arrived, as Trimble had said, to take up his temporary duties. He was a crotchety old man, short and stumpy, with a rather long beard. That beard had been a great nuisance to Mr. Huggins, for it had evoked cries of "Beaver!" from the impertinent youths of Rylcombe. But nothing would induce Mr. Huggins to shave, for he was very proud of his flowing adornment.

The temporary porter had taken possession of Taggles' lodge, and he had just made himself comfortable in the armchair in the parlour, when there was a tap on the front door.

Mr. Huggins rose to his feet, and hobbled to the door and opened it. He was greeted by a smiling youth who sported the cap and badge of Rylcombe Grammar School.

"Master Gay!" he ejaculated.

Gordon Gay, the leader of the Grammarians, nodded.

"Let me come in, Huggins," he said quickly. "I want to have a jaw with you."

Mr. Huggins, who had once been employed as a manservant at the Grammar School, knew Gordon Gay very well. He shuffled back into the parlour, and the junior followed, carrying a small handbag.

"I thort you was on your 'ollerdays, Master Gay," said Huggins. "You breaks up at the Grammar School rather early, I believe?"

Gordon Gay nodded.

"We broke up 40-day," he said. "But I'm not going away just yet. I've got a little jape to play first—up against the St. Jim's fellows, you know. I happened to

meet Taggles and his wife on the road, and Taggles tells me that you're taking his place for two days."

"That's so, Master Gay."

"Well, Huggins, you won't be wanted here," said the Grammarian coolly. "You can toddle off home again, to the bosom of your family. But before you go I'll borrow your uniform."

Huggins stared at the speaker in blank amazement, as well he might.

"You're torkin' nonsense, Master Gay!" he gasped, as soon as he could find words.

"On the other hand," said Gordon Gay, "I'm in sober earnest. You've brought your civilian clothes along, I take it?"

"Yes, but—"

"Well, tumble into them, and let me have your uniform. It looks as if it will fit me perfectly."

It seemed to the bewildered Mr. Huggins that Gordon Gay was out of his senses.

"Wot madness is this, Master Gay?" he broke out.

"It's a jape," said the Grammarian, with a grin. "Did anybody see you arrive, Huggins?"

"Some of the young gents saw me from a distance."

"But not near enough to take stock of you?"

"No, Master Gay."

"That's good! Buck up and change your clothes, and let me have that uniform. Then you can buzz off. I'm going to take your place here, and give the St. Jim's bouders a lively time of it. I've got my plans cut and dried, and nothing's going to stand in my way."

For sheer audacity, Gordon Gay's latest "wheeze" took some beating. He intended to impersonate the temporary porter—to remain at St. Jim's during the next two days, and lead Tom Merry & Co. a rare dance. But first of all he must get Huggins out of the way. And Huggins, being a thoroughly sober and steady-going old man, took a lot of persuading.

"Look here, Huggins," said Gordon Gay, "I'll see that you're not a penny out of pocket over this business. What arrangements has the Head made about salary?"

"Which he was goin' to give me five bob a day—"

"Very well! I'll give you ten bob a day if you'll do as I ask, and clear off."

"That's wot I calls bribery an' corruption," said Mr. Huggins.

"Take it or leave it," Gordon said.

Mr. Huggins hesitated. He was a poor man, and the prospect of getting ten

"Ten Pounds Reward!"—Thrilling Tale of St. Jim's Next Week!

shillings a day for two days for doing nothing was not to be sneezed at. The more Mr. Huggins pondered over it, the more tempting it appeared.

Gordon Gay saw that his companion was wavering, and he pressed home his advantage.

"You can have the money in advance," he said, laying a pound-note on the table. Mr. Huggins drew a deep breath.

"I—'d like to oblige you, Master Gay," he muttered. "But supposin' the 'ead-master gets to know about it?"

"I'm going to keep out of the Head's way," said Gordon Gay. "Don't you worry about that, Huggins. He won't know that we've swapped places."

Gradually, Mr. Huggins was won over. It was the first time in his long life that he had been a party to a jape of this description. But it seemed quite a harmless jape. For two days Gordon Gay would play the part of the St. Jim's porter; and then Taggles would be back again.

Mr. Huggins started to exchange his uniform for the suit of ordinary clothes which he had brought with him. And Gordon Gay proceeded to don the uniform, which was very similar to that of a cinema-attendant.

Having put on the uniform, and the heavy hobnailed boots, the Grammarian opened his handbag, and produced therefrom a long beard and a wig. These he affixed to his chin and head respectively, chuckling gleefully as he did so.

Gordon Gay was a past master in the art of making up. In his time he had played many parts. And the part of an ancient porter presented few difficulties.

Standing before the mirror in the little parlour, Gordon Gay proceeded to "doctor" his face. By the time he had finished, it was to all appearances the lined and wrinkled face of an old man.

A soiled and battered article of headgear—it would have been sheer flattery to call it a hat—completed the junior's disguise.

Mr. Huggins gazed at his companion with admiration.

"You're a marvel, Master Gay!" he ejaculated. "Why, you'd be took for my twin brother!"

"It's a perfectly simple disguise," said Gordon Gay. "All I've got to do now is to cultivate a gruff voice and a rheumatically shuffle. I think I can manage that all right. Are you ready to quit, Huggins?"

The old man nodded.

"I'll just peep out and see if the coast is clear," said Gordon Gay, crossing to the window. "Yes, it's all serene. Off you go—and mind you keep as munn as a mouse about this, for your own sake, as well as mine."

"Which I won't breathe so much as a whisper, Master Gay." Good-bye—an' I wish you the best o' luck!"

Mr. Huggins passed out of the little parlour. His footsteps crunched upon the gravel outside, and finally died away down the road.

Gordon Gay was left in sole possession of the porter's lodge. And Tom Merry & Co., his old rivals, were at his mercy!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Tale of a Trunk.

"LET'S heard the old josser in his lair!"

Thus Monty Lowther.

Quite a crowd of School House juniors trooped down to the porter's lodge. The Terrible Three led the procession, followed by Tabbot and Noble, and Glyn and Dane. Jack Blake & Co., the heroes of the Fourth, brought up the rear.

The juniors were grinning—a sure sign that the imp of mischief was abroad. They were intent upon playing a little jape on the aged and venerable Huggins.

Tom Merry tapped on the door of the little lodge. But there was no response.

"Huggins is deaf, most likely," said Manners. "Put your boot to the door, Tommy!"

Tom Merry did so, with such force that he nearly stove the door in.

"That'll fetch him!" chuckled Lowther. It did. There was a shuffling of footsteps within, and an ancient "Beaver," complete with flowing beard, presented himself in the doorway.

THE POPULAR—No. 231.

"Good-afternoon, Huggins!" said Tom Merry politely.

And the rest of the juniors chimed in, in a shrill chorus:

"Good-afternoon, Huggins!"

The porter, standing well back in the shadow of the doorway, peered and blinked at the juniors.

"'Arternoon, young gents!" he said, in a croaking voice. "Wot might you be wantin'?"

"There's a little job we want done, Huggins," said Tom Merry.

The porter put his hand to his ear and cocked his head on one side.

"Axin' your pardon," he said, "but I'm a trifle 'ard of 'earing. Would you mind speakin' up?"

Tom Merry began to bellow his instructions.

"We want you to fetch a trunk from the station—"

"Dissipation?" said the porter. "No, I don't go in for the likes o' that. I'm a pussyfoot, that's wot I am!"

There was a titter from the juniors, and Tom Merry flushed crimson.

"I didn't say anything about dissipation!" he hooted. "We want you to fetch a trunk—"

"Cert'nly not!"

"Eh?"

"I be threescore year of age, as the crow flies, but I never allows nobody to call me a funk!" said the porter aggressively.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, help!" gasped Tom Merry. "The old buffer's as deaf as a doornail! I didn't say 'funk,' Huggins—I said 'trunk.' We want you to go down to the station and bring up a trunk that's addressed to Master D'Arcy."

"Would you mind sayin' that again, young sir?"

Tom Merry repeated his instructions, in a voice which would have awakened the celebrated Seven Sleepers.

"Now do you cotton on?" he concluded breathlessly.

The porter nodded.

"Oh ah!" he said.

"You'll fetch that trunk from the station at once?"

"As soon as I've 'ad a bite of summat to eat," was the reply. And the porter shuffled back into his lodge.

The juniors withdrew, chuckling gaily. The trunk at the station was quite an imaginary one. They had been pulling the leg of the worthy Huggins, and were sending him on a fool's errand.

The porter might possibly have been deaf, but his eyesight was remarkably keen. He had seen the juniors exchange winks outside the lodge, and he knew that a jape was afoot. And when it came to a jape, the bogus Huggins could more than hold his own.

After tea, when the juniors had settled down to their prep, the porter fetched a trolley, and made his way to the box-room. Here he discovered a large trunk—the property of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The trunk was corded, and it bore the label of a well-known firm of London tailors, Messrs. Tryon & Fitt.

With remarkable agility for such an old man, the porter heaved the trunk on to the trolley, which he proceeded to trundle out of the building and down to the school gates.

Trolley and trunk and porter disappeared through the gateway, in the direction of the station.

An interval of half an hour elapsed before the porter returned. He was gasping and grunting, and bent almost double, as he pushed the now empty trolley into the St. Jim's quadrangle.

A crowd of juniors came forward to meet him. They were grinning broadly. On seeing the empty trolley, they concluded that Huggins had been to the station to fetch D'Arcy's trunk, only to find there was no trunk there.

The porter paused, mopping his brow.

"Which I've took the trunk to the station, young gents!" he announced.

"What!"

The grins vanished from the juniors' faces. They glared at the porter.

"You've—you've what?" gasped Tom Merry.

"Took the trunk to the station, in accordance with destructions received, an' arranged for it to be put on the next train," was the calm reply.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dashed forward, in a state of great excitement, and clutched the porter by the arm.

"My twunk, you villain!" he cried.

"The trunk belongin' to Master D'Arcy, of course. I found it in the box-room—"

The swell of St. Jim's gave a shriek.

"Oh, you fwabjous duffah! You've been an' made off with my powerty, bai Jove! I had three new suits in that twunk!"

"Huggins, you born idiot!" chimed in Tom Merry. "You were asked to fetch a trunk from the station, not to take one there!"

The porter looked very apologetic.

"Which I'm werry sorry, young sir, but I quite thought as 'ow you told me to take Master D'Arcy's trunk to the station. This 'ere deafness of mine be a sore affliction—"

"Not only to yourself, but to everybody else!" growled Jack Blake. "Fancy making off with Gussy's belongings! And you say you've arranged for the trunk to be put on the next train?"

"Ay, ay!"

"Where to?" howled Arthur Augustus, giving the porter a violent shake.

"I can't tell 'ee, sir. I simply said to the porter, 'Put this 'ere trunk on the next train, 'Arry. An' 'e said, 'Right-ho, matey! Whether he'll put it on a hup train, or a down train, or a goods train, or a cattle train, is more than I can tell 'ee!"

"You—you ewass ass!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "My suits are probably lost an' gone for evah!"

"I don't think it's quite so bad as that, Gussy," said Tom Merry. "Was there any address on the trunk—a label, or anything of that sort?"

"Yaas. It had the address of my tailahs—Messrs. Twyon & Fitt."

"Then the trunk will have gone to London—if the railway-porter had any horse-sense," said Manners. "Your tailors will send it back to you, Gussy."

"If they don't," said Arthur Augustus fiercely, "I twemble to think what will happen to you, Huggins!"

"Lemme go!" gasped the porter. "I only done my dooty. Wot I says is this 'ere—I've 'ad to trudge all the way down to the station, an' I reckon I deserves a good, fat tip, as ever was!"

The porter was an optimist. Arthur Augustus, generous fellow though he was, did not feel in the mood for giving a tip at that moment—unless it was a tip into the school fountain. He unhanded the porter, who shuffled off towards his lodge.

The juniors exchanged gloomy glances.

"The jape that didn't come off!" said Monty Lowther. "What a sell! Instead of our having the laugh of old Huggins, he's got the laugh of us!"

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"The fellah's an absolute imbecile!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I can't undahstand the Head engagin' him, deah boys. If my trunk doesn't come back, I shall feel like committin' assault an' battewon on him, in spite of his age!"

Gussy got his trunk back all right. He received a telegram from Messrs. Tryon & Fitte as follows:

"Trunk returned to us. Cannot understand. Awaiting your instructions."

Arthur Augustus wired for the trunk to be sent back to St. Jim's, and after some delay it came, with the three suits intact. But the temporary porter wouldn't have remained intact had that trunk gone astray!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
Bowled Out!

CLANG, CLANG, CLANG!
The harsh notes of the rising-bell rang out on the morning air.

Tom Merry sat up in bed and frowned. The other occupants of the Shell dormitory did likewise.

"What on earth's the matter with old Huggins?" growled Manners. "Like his blessed cheek, sounding the rising-bell in the middle of the night!"

"What do you make the time, Tommy?" asked Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry glanced at his wrist-watch. "Five o'clock," he said.

"That's what I make it. Rising-bell's going a couple of hours too soon!"

The juniors were very much annoyed. So were the seniors and fags, for that matter.

Rising-bell went quite early enough, in the ordinary way. But to ring it two hours before the scheduled time was the height of impudence. Taggles would not have dared to do such a thing. But Huggins, the temporary porter, did many things which Taggles would not have dared to do.

"Are we going to turn out, or stay where we are?" asked Harry Noble drowsily.

"Better turn out," said Tom Merry. "It may be a fire-alarm, you know."

"My hat!"

"Or perhaps the Head's getting us up a couple of hours earlier than usual, for some special reason. Anyway, we'd better tumble out."

The Shell fellows rose and dressed, with much grumbling and grouching. And the rest of the school followed suit.

Tom Merry & Co. went straight to the porter's lodge, to ask Huggins what he meant by it.

The school porter was sweeping away an accumulation of leaves from the doorstep of his lodge.

"Huggins, you madman," roared Tom Merry, "what do you mean by ringing the rising-bell so early?"

Huggins leaned heavily on his broom, and scowled at the juniors.

"It's seven o'clock, ain't it?" he demanded.

"No, you chopheaded chump, it's only five!" hooted Manners.

"Sakes alive! Then the clock in my parlour must be a couple of hours fast! Which I'm awfully sorry, young gents—"

"Bless your sorrow!" growled Tom Merry. "You've dragged us out a couple of hours too soon. And we don't feel like going back to bed again now. If it wasn't for your age, Huggins, we'd bump the breath out of your body!"

"Yes, rather!"

"There will be the dickens of a row about this," said Monty Lowther. "You'll have the Head on your track, Huggins, as sure as fate!"

"Oh crumbs!"

The porter seemed quite dismayed at the prospect of a summons to the Head's study.

The summons came right enough, just before breakfast. Toby, the page, trotted down to the school gates.

"Which the Head wants to see you, Mr. Uggins," said Toby. "E wants to know why you rung the risin'-bell two hours early."

"Tell 'im I can't come along jest now," said the porter. "I'm busy. 'Aif a jiffy! I'll get you to take a note to 'im."

So saying, he shuffled into his lodge, returning in a moment with the following note for Toby to take to the Head:



ON THE TRACK OF THE JAPER! Tom Merry & Co. clambered through the small window of the porter's lodge. "We shall catch him on the hop!" whispered Monty Lowther. Tom Merry nodded and led the way up the creaking stairs. (See Chapter 3.)

"Dear Sir,—asking your Pardon, but I can't get away from my Dooties. Which I regrets having rung the Bell too early this Morning, but the Clock in my parlour was two hours Fast. Hoping you will Understand and not Go for me, Sir.

"Yours trooly,
"J. HUGGINS."

The Head was evidently quite satisfied with this explanation, for he did not repeat his summons for Huggins to attend upon him in his study.

The juniors were drowsy and inattentive during morning lessons, which was hardly surprising, for their sleep had been curtailed by two hours.

"Confound that fellow Huggins!" growled Manners, when lessons were at last over for the day. "I've been yawning ever since I got up."

"Same here," said Tom Merry. "It's a rummy thing to say, but I rather think old Huggins played that trick on us deliberately."

"What!"

"Draw it mild, Tommy!"

"I'm quite willing to believe that Huggins' clock was two hours fast," Tom Merry went on. "But I'm certain he put it on overnight. A decent clock never gains as much as two hours in a day. And Taggles never used to have any trouble with it."

"But Huggins is too old and sober to play japes of that description," said Talbot.

Tom Merry, however, was convinced that the temporary porter had japed the school. He fancied he had seen a twinkle in Huggins' eye, whilst talking to him that morning.

"I believe you're right, Tommy," said Monty Lowther. "Old Huggins has been pulling our lower limbs, so to speak. And it's up to us to pay him back in his own coin."

"We've tried one jape on him," said Tom Merry, "and it was a ghastly failure."

"All the more reason why we should try another," said Lowther.

"What do you suggest?"

"After a few moments' reflection, Monty Lowther outlined his plan.

"Supposing we pay old Huggins a midnight visit, and paint his beard blue with water-colours?"

"And then christen him 'Bluebeard!'"

chuckled Manners. "That's quite a brainy wheeze of yours, Monty!"

"All wheezes are brainy that emanate from my noble napper," said Lowther modestly. "I was going to suggest dyeing the old chap's beard at first. But that would be a bit too thick. It would take him ages to get it back to its normal colour. But if we paint it blue it'll last for a day or so, and it will be great fun!"

"Yes, rather!"

"How are we going to get into the lodge?" asked Tom Merry. "Huggins locks and bolts the door, you bet!"

"There's a window at the back which, I believe, he leaves unfastened," said Lowther. "Anyway, we'll get in somehow."

The proposed jape was confided to Jack Blake & Co., who voted it a first-rate idea. And they offered to accompany Tom Merry & Co. to the porter's lodge at midnight.

The juniors were tired when they went to bed, and they went straight to sleep. But Tom Merry had timed himself to wake at midnight, and he did so. He sat up in bed as the midnight chimes rang out on the night air.

The task of rousing the others was soon accomplished.

Blake, D'Arcy, Herries and Digby, of the Fourth, and the Terrible Three of the Shell, made their way under cover of darkness to the porter's lodge. Monty Lowther carried a tin of water-colours, and he chuckled as he wended his way with the others across the dark quadrangle. The picture of Huggins, the porter, with a blue beard tickled Monty's fancy.

The juniors were in luck.

Although the front door of the porter's lodge was locked and bolted, there was a window left unfastened at the back. And through this window the juniors clambered one by one.

Tom Merry went first, leading the way up the stairs. They were rather rickety stairs, and they creaked a little, but not sufficiently to disturb the slumbers of the porter.

Cautiously, the captain of the Shell opened the door of the room in which the porter slept. There was a sound of deep breathing within.

"He's fast asleep," whispered Tom, over

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UP AGAINST THE FIFTH!

When the Fifth started juggling the Fourth everyone predicted stormy times to come, and they turn out to be true prophets. The Fourth naturally resent the attitude of Hansom & Co., and the result is open war!

A TOPPING TALE OF ROOKWOOD

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BY

OWEN CONQUEST

(Author of the stories of Jimmy Silver & Co., appearing in the "Boys' Friend.")

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Trying it On.

"FAG!"

It was Hansom, of the Fifth Form at Rookwood, who called.

And—amazing as it was—Hansom of the Fifth was evidently addressing Jimmy Silver & Co.

Jimmy Silver looked at him. Arthur Edward Lovell gave a loud snort, a good deal like an angry war-horse. Raby sniffed, and Newcome grinned. But Hansom of the Fifth, undeterred by those signs of contempt and resentment, raised his hand and beckoned to the Fistical Four, and repeated: "Fag!"

"Are you talking to us, Hansom?" demanded Jimmy Silver, more in surprise than in wrath.

"Yes; I want a fag." "You want a fag," repeated Jimmy Silver, as if scarcely able to believe his ears. "You want a fag."

"Yes, and sharp!"

"Well, my hat!"

"I don't care which one of you it is," said Hansom. "Any one of you will do. You'll do, Silver. Cut down to the tuckshop—"

"You cheeky ass!" roared Arthur Edward Lovell, in sulphurous wrath. "Do you think the Fourth fag for the Fifth?"

"You burbling jabberwock!" said Raby. "Why, we don't even fag for the Sixth unless we choose!"

Hansom made a lofty gesture.

"I don't want any cheek! I want a fag!" he said. "Now, Silver—"

"Go to sleep and dream again!" suggested Jimmy Silver.

"Look here—"

"Bow-wow!"

"I tell you—" roared the captain of the Fifth.

"Rats!"

Then there was a pause.

The Fistical Four stood their ground. There were three other Fifth-Formers with Hansom—Lumsden, Talboys, and Brown major. If it came to a "scrap," four juniors hadn't much chance against four seniors. But Jimmy Silver & Co. didn't even think of that. Wild horses would not have dragged them into the humiliation of fagging for the Fifth.

Jimmy had a shrewd suspicion, too, that Hansom did not specially want a fag. What he wanted was to establish fagging rights. There had often been trouble between the two Forms, Hansom & Co. looking on the Fourth as cheeky fags, and the Fourth looking on Hansom & Co. as swanking duffers, who strove to imitate, at a distance, the manners and customs of the mighty Sixth.

While Jimmy Silver was captain of the Fourth, that rather unruly Form had certainly kept its end up. But Mornington was junior captain now, and Jimmy Silver only a "common or garden" junior, so to speak. Perhaps Hansom thought it a favourable

THE POPULAR.—No. 231.

opportunity for asserting his long-disputed and resisted claim.

Hansom had a walking-cane under his arm. He had cornered the Fistical Four near the archway which led from Little-Quad into Big Quad—a rather deserted spot. He let the cane slide down into his hand as he came nearer to the quartette.

"Now, I don't want any nonsense!" said the Fifth-Former. "I've had enough chin-wag from you, Silver!"

"I've had more than enough from you, old bear," answered Jimmy Silver. "Give your chin a rest. It can do with it."

"Are you going to the tuckshop for me?"

"No fear!"

"I shall be sorry to lick you."

"You will if you begin," assented Jimmy.

"You kids in the Fourth think a lot too much of yourselves, don't you know," remarked Talboys. "You're only dashed fags, you know!"

"Merely that, and nothing more!" grinned Lumsden.

Hansom shook his cane at Jimmy Silver.

"I give you a last chance," he said magnanimously. "I don't want to be hard on you. Cut off to the tuckshop or—"

"Bow-wow!"

"Get the things on this list, and take them to my study—"

"Think again!"

"And you shall have one jam-tart for yourself," said Hansom generously.

Jimmy's eyes gleamed.

"You silly ass—" he began.

"I've arranged with Sergeant Kettle about paying," went on Hansom. "You've simply got to present the list, and take the goods. See?"

"Fathead!"

"And if you don't, I'll jolly well wallop you!" roared Hansom.

Jimmy Silver's lips opened for a defiant retort.

But he checked himself suddenly, and a glimmer came into his eyes.

"You'll wallop me if I don't?" he asked.

"Yes, and jolly hard!"

"Then I'd better obey orders?"

"You had—rather!"

"Give me the list, Hansom."

Jimmy Silver held out his hand meekly.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome simply blinked at him.

That Jimmy Silver would consent to fag, at the order of the Fifth-Formers, was a thing far beyond their imaginations.

Hansom himself was surprised.

This was really what the juniors would have called a "try-on" on the part of the Fifth-Formers, and they had not been at all certain of success.

And here was success, easy and simple.

Hansom smiled with satisfaction as he handed the list to Jimmy Silver. The latter read it over.

"One currant-cake, pot of jam, pot of marmalade, pound of biscuits, tin of bloater-paste, tin of pineapple, half-pound of chocolates, half-dozen new-laid eggs." Is that the lot, Hansom?"

"That's the lot!" said Hansom, with a triumphant glance at his companions. "Get a move on!"

"Right-ho!"

"Take the stuff to my study," continued the Fifth-Former. "Get tea ready there. Mind you don't boil the eggs hard, or you'll catch it! If it's not all ready in a quarter of an hour, I'm sorry for you, that's all!"

"I'll have tea ready in a quarter of an hour, Hansom."

"You'd better! Cut off!"

Hansom waved his hand loftily, dismissing the fags.

"Come on, you fellows!" said Jimmy Silver, starting through the arch, with the paper in his hand.

"You—you—you howling idiot!" gasped Lovell. "You're not going to fag for the Fifth! You're not—"

"Dry up, old chap, and come on!"

"But I tell you—" shrieked Lovell.

"Do come on, or Hansom will be annoyed!" murmured Jimmy.

"What the merry thump do I care if Hansom is annoyed?" bellowed Lovell. "Are you off your silly rocker?"

"Come on, I tell you!"

Jimmy fairly dragged his incensed chum away. Raby and Newcome followed, amazed and angry.

"Well, by gad!" murmured Talboys, as the four juniors disappeared into Big Quad. Hansom smiled.

"It only needs a firm hand," he explained, as he strolled on with his chums. "That's all—a firm hand! Bless your little hearts, I know how to manage fags! Leave it to me! A firm hand—that's all it wants!"

And Hansom's chums had to agree that he did know how to manage fags. It looked like it, at all events. And Hansom swanked even more than usual as he sauntered round Little Quad with his friends, quite elated with his success.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Spread in the End Study!

"JIMMY, you ass—"

"Jimmy, you chump—"

Lovell and Raby and Newcome were all speaking together as the

Fistical Four crossed the quad towards Sergeant Kettle's little shop behind the beeches.

Jimmy Silver was smiling, but his chums were quite wild with wrath.

They had been prepared for a scrap with the Fifth-Formers, and even for a "walloping," but for this abject surrender on the part of their leader they had not been prepared—far from it.

"You—you—you idiot!" gasped Lovell.

"Can't you see it's a put-up job? Hansom's fixed this up just to show off that he can fag the Fourth."

"I know—I know," assented Jimmy.

"He's paid for the stuff at the tuckshop, and could have taken it in himself quite

The Great Question of the Moment—Who Will Win—the Fifth or the Fourth?

easily; but he's not done that, so as to fag somebody in the Fourth."

"I know."
"And you've let him do it!" shrieked Lovell.

"Why not?"
"Why not? Why, you—you silly ass—you—you—"

"Easy does it," urged Jimmy Silver.
"Nothing to rag about."

"You—you—," stuttered Lovell.
"Hallo, what's the row?" asked a cheery voice.

Mornington and Erroll, coming away from Little Side, met the Fistical Four in the quad.

"Not rowing, surely, you chaps?" asked Erroll, with a smile.

"Not at all," answered Jimmy. "Lovell seems excited about something, that's all."

"I put it to you, Morny, as junior skipper," shouted Lovell, "do we fag for the Fifth?"

Mornington frowned.
"No jolly fear!" he answered emphatically.

"That's what Jimmy's doing."
"Rot!"

"He is, I tell you!" shrieked Arthur Edward. "Hansom's given him a list of stuff to get at the tuckshop, and he's going to get tea in Hansom's study in a quarter of an hour. What do you think of that?"

"Bosh!" answered Morny. "I suppose Lovell's offside, as usual, isn't he, Jimmy?"

"Naturally."
"I tell you—"

"I'll explain how the matter stands, if you like," said Jimmy Silver, with a yawn.

"Hansom is standing us a tea in the end study."

"Wha-a-at?" stammered Lovell.

"He's given me an order on the sergeant for the stuff. Now, we're not on the best of terms with the Fifth; but if Hansom chooses to stand us a tea, why refuse?"

Lovell blinked.

"He told you to take the stuff to his study!" he howled.

"I believe he did," assented Jimmy.
"But I'm going to take it to my study, old top."

"You—you said you'd get tea in a quarter of an hour."
"So I shall—in our study."
"Oh!"

"Understand at last?" asked Jimmy cheerfully. "I think this will be rather a valuable lesson to Hansom about fagging the Fourth. And we're stony, and this feed will come like corn in Egypt in one of the lean years. Come on!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Raby and Newcome.

Lovell grinned.

He understood at last.

"Good man!" chuckled Mornington, and Erroll laughed. "You're full of good ideas, Jimmy! Go it!"

"You two fellows come to tea with us," said Jimmy Silver. "There's lots for a whole family. And I think we may have a visit from the Fifth before tea is over. You never know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll come," said Mornington. "I'll bring a cricket-stump with me, in case it's wanted."

"Come on, you chaps," said Jimmy.

And the Fistical Four headed for the tuckshop again, in quite a cheery and contented mood now.

Four faces were smiling brightly as Jimmy presented Hansom's list to Mr. Kettle.

The old sergeant had the goods ready. It was evidently, as Lovell had said, a "put-up" job on the part of Edward Hansom.

He was going to establish the right of fagging the Fourth, and he was beginning with Jimmy Silver.

Jimmy Silver & Co. left the school shop laden with Hansom's parcels.

In the distance, Hansom and his friends, sauntering through the arch from Little Quad, caught sight of them and smiled.

"There they go!" murmured Brown major. "Faggin' for us, begad!" said Talboys.

Hansom smiled superior.

"I think I told you so," he remarked.
"You did, old chap!" said his chums admiringly. "You did!"

And Edward Hansom's nose was an inch higher as he strolled on.

Doubtless the Fifth-Formers would not have felt so satisfied if they had known the real destination of the good things.

The Fistical Four did not head for the Fifth Form quarter in the School House—

far from it. They headed for the end study in the Fourth Form passage. Tubby Muffin joined them as they progressed along that passage with their parcels.

"Feed on?" asked Tubby, with keen interest.

"Yes. Like to come?" grinned Jimmy Silver.

"My dear old chap, I'm your man!" said Reginald Muffin affectionately.

And he came.

Teddy Grace was met farther along the passage, and he also was invited, and accepted. "Putty of the Fourth" was a good man in a scrap, and Jimmy thought it probable that there would be scrapping later on.

There was soon quite a festive scene in the end study.

The Fistical Four, Morny and Erroll, Tubby Muffin and Putty, made quite a numerous party.

But there was enough for all. Hansom's goods were quite enough to go round, and the Fourth-Formers piled in with a will.

The good things vanished fast under the attacks of eight hungry juniors.

Tea in the end study was rapid, and it was nearing its end when Conroy, the Australian, looked in.

"You kids been asking the Fifth for trouble?" he inquired.

"They've been asking us," said Jimmy Silver. "And the answer was in the affirmative, as the political chinwaggers say in the House of Chinwag."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, they're coming," said Conroy.

"Let 'em all come! Try these biscuits, Conroy, they're good. Hansom paid a good price for these biscuits."

"Hansom did?" ejaculated Conroy.

"Exactly."
"Oh, so that's why—"

Jimmy Silver explained, and the Australian junior roared. He called in his chums, Pons and Van Ryn, to help him try the biscuits.

They were also on the scene, ready for the expected arrival of the Fifth. If Hansom & Co. came to the end study they were likely to wake up a very serious hornets'-nest there.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Not According to Programme!

"READY?" asked Edward Hansom. He glanced into his study in the Fifth Form passage.

Hansom had allowed a good quarter of an hour to elapse. He wanted to give his fags time to get tea nicely for him.

Hansom was judicious in this. Later on he could hurry up his fags, and cuff them for delay, and so forth, like the great men of the Sixth. But this was an experiment, at present; and he was anxious to break the ice successfully, as it were. So he gave Jimmy Silver plenty of time to get tea.

And his tone was quite cheery and polite as he looked into his study and asked if it was ready.

His expression changed the next moment, however.

Study No. 1 in the Fifth was empty.

There was no sign of tea, and there was no sign of fags. The grate was cold and empty. There was no fire—no pile of warm toast. There was no set table—in fact, there was nothing that hadn't been there when Hansom had left his study.

"By gad!" ejaculated the Fifth-Former. He stared into the study blankly.

The captain of the Fifth could not quite make it out. He had ordered Jimmy Silver to get his tea ready in a quarter of an hour, and he had allowed him twenty minutes in which to do it. And there was no tea, and there was no Jimmy Silver.

It was quite perplexing.

"All serene?" asked Cecil Talboys, from the passage.

"Nunno!"

"Isn't tea ready?" inquired Lumsden.

"N-no!"

"My word! Give those fags a jolly good hiding, then!" exclaimed Brown major wrathfully. "They've had plenty of time."

"They—they're not here."
"Eh?"

Lumsden and Talboys and Brown major looked past Hansom into the study. They were surprised, like their leader, to find it empty.

"Jolly queer!" said Lumsden. "Where are they?"

Hansom knitted his brows.

He had "swanked" over his success in fagging the Fourth; but secretly he had been very much surprised at his easy success. It was now dawning upon him that he had not been so successful as he had believed.

"I—I—I think—" he began haltingly.

"Well, they're not here!" said Talboys.

"Where are they, Hansom?"

"And where's tea? I'm hungry."

"I—I—I think perhaps they— It's jolly odd," said Hansom, colouring. "I—I—I suppose that young cad Silver wouldn't have the nerve to disobey my orders—my direct orders, you know—"

"Hum!"

"Hum!"

Hansom's followers thought it very probable, as a matter of fact, that Silver would have the nerve.

"I—I—I say, what's become of the grub, though?" exclaimed Brown major in dismay. "They had that right enough; we saw them carrying it away from the shop."

"They—they've got that!" stammered Hansom. "They—they wouldn't have the cheek to—to—to—"

He stopped.

The Fifth-Formers looked at one another. The dreadful truth occurred to all of them at once. They understood rather too late the real reason of Jimmy Silver's meek submission. He was not fagging for the Fifth, after all. He was bagging the Fifth Form spread, which was quite a different matter, and not at all gratifying to the hungry heroes of the Fifth.

"Let's go and look for the young sweeps!" said Lumsden abruptly.

Hansom nodded, and the four seniors hurried off towards the Fourth Form quarters. They met Rawson on the staircase, and inquired if he had seen Jimmy Silver. It was then that Conroy spotted them, and took the news to the end study.

"Seen Jimmy Silver?" asked Rawson reflectively. "Oh, yes!"

"Well, where did you see him?"

"In the Form-room."

"Come on, you chaps!" said Hansom hurriedly. "They're feeding on our stuff in the Form-room! Out of the way there, you know! We—we—we'll jolly well slaughter them!"

The Fifth-Formers rushed downstairs to the Fourth Form-room, deserted at that hour. Rawson grinned and went into his study. His statement had been well founded; he had seen Jimmy Silver in the Form-room. He only omitted to mention that he had seen him there during lessons a couple of hours earlier.

But his meaning dawned on Hansom & Co. when they rushed into the Form-room with warlike looks, and found it empty.

"They—they're not here, begad!" ejaculated Talboys.

Hansom gave a snort of fury.

"That cheeky young rascal was pulling our leg!" he howled. "Come on! We shall find them in Silver's study, I expect."

"Oh, gad!"

In a frame of mind by this time that was almost Hunchish, Hansom & Co. rushed upstairs again.

This time they did not inquire after Jimmy Silver; they rushed along to the end study to see for themselves.

The door was shut. It opened with a crash as Hansom drove his boot against it.

The four seniors rushed in.

"Here they are!" gasped Hansom.

The rush of the Fifth had to stop. The study was crowded. There were eleven juniors in the room; and junior studies were not planned for parties of eleven. There was not much room for the seniors. And there were loud and wrathful exclamations as they collided with the Colonial Co., who were nearest the door.

"Hallo, you fellows! Want anything?" asked Silver.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where's my tuck?" yelled Hansom furiously. He had forgotten for a moment his claims to fagging service, in his anxiety for the spread.

Jimmy Silver jumped up.

"Only one egg left, old bean."

"What?"

"But you can have that!" added Jimmy Silver kindly.

Whiz! Crack!—Smash!
Hansom received the egg—on his nose!
"Grooooch!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
Hansom made a wild jump at Jimmy Silver. The egg was streaming down his face, and the Classical juniors were roaring with laughter. The Fifth-Former drove his way through the juniors and reached Jimmy Silver.
"Back up!" roared Jimmy.
"What-ho!"
"Collar 'em!"
"Kick 'em out!"
"Hurrah!"
And the scene that followed was worthy of the pen of a Homer, or, at least, the typewriter of a Kipling.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
Vas Vicis!

BACK up!"
"Give 'em socks!"
"Yaroooh!"
"Down with the Fifth!"
"Hurrah!"
"Oh! Ow! Yow! Yoop!"
Against the Fistical Four alone the four seniors would no doubt have proved themselves victors. But eleven juniors were rather too much for them. Even Tubby Muffin was not a warrior; but he was equal to sitting on anybody who was down, and he sat on Hansom when that warlike youth was floored.
And when Tubby Muffin sat on a person, that person was hors de combat. There was no arguing with Tubby's avoidupois.
Hansom crumpled up as Tubby sat on him.
Lumsden and Talboys and Brown major were still putting up a losing fight. Apparently they had expected to walk over a gang of fags with ease. What happened was quite the reverse. The gang of fags walked over them.
Lumsden went down with his head in the ashes, and three or four juniors pinned him there, and Putty playfully sprinkled ashes over his upturned, furious face. Brown major rolled under the table, with juniors pommelling him on all sides. Cecil Talboys struggled with Morny and Conroy and Van Ryn, but he struggled in vain. The dandy of the Fifth was chiefly concerned about his clothes, on which the juniors showed no mercy whatever.
"Mind my collar!" wailed Talboys in tones of anguish. "Mind my necktie! Oh, gad!"
His collar came off in Van Ryn's grasp; what time Conroy jerked out his necktie. And three or four grasping hands rent his elegant jacket up the back.
"Oh, you awful rotters! Yow-ow! I give in!" gasped Talboys. "I give in! Stoppit! Yaroooh!"
"Kick him out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I say, I'm goin', you know— Yoooop!"
Talboys went. Three or four boots behind him helped him to go; and he left the end study almost whizzing.
Fourth-Formers were hurrying along the passage now to the scene of the uproar. The alarm had gone forth that the Fifth had invaded the sacred quarters of the Fourth; and there was not a man in the Fourth Form who was not prepared to do battle with the invaders. Even Peele and Gower and Lattrey, even Towny and Toppy, rushed up with the rest. And Talboys, as he fled, had to run the gauntlet of the new arrivals.
"Kick him out!" yelled Jimmy Silver from the doorway of the end study.
And his direction was obeyed.
Every foot in the passage seemed anxious to get a kick at Cecil Talboys as he fled; and there seemed to be innumerable feet. The hapless Talboys felt like a football by the time he reached the stairs, and bounded down them three at a time.
"Any more there?" roared Higgs from the passage.
"Three more!"
"Chuck 'em out, and we'll give 'em beans!"
"What-ho!"
Jimmy Silver turned back into the study. The end study had rather a wrecked appearance, but it did not look so wretched as Hansom and Lumsden and Brown major. Those three unhappy youths were wriggling painfully under the weight of the juniors who pinned them to the floor.
"Brown next!" said Jimmy Silver.
"Leggo!" roared Brown major. "I—I'll go, if you like—"
"You will, old top!"
"On your neck!" grinned Lovell.
Brown major was hauled to the door and hurled forth.
He landed on his hands and knees in the midst of the excited crowd of juniors outside.
A dozen feet found him as he dropped on the floor.
"Oh, my hat! You young villains! Help! Yaroooh!"
"Punish him!" roared Higgs. "Kick him out! Gerrout of the way, Peele! I've only kicked him once!"
Brown major picked himself up and fled. A hurricane of kicks accompanied him along the passage, till he scrambled down the stairs and escaped.
Lumsden was the next.
He was tossed out of the end study like a sack of coke, and kicked along to the stairs, amid yells of laughter.
Edward Hansom was left till the last. The captain of the Fifth looked very apprehensive as he was yanked to his feet.
"Your turn now!" grinned Jimmy Silver.
"Chuck him out!"

Hansom gasped. Tubby Muffin's weight had told on him. He was in a breathless state as he was hustled to the door.
"You—you young sweeps! Leggo! Oh crumbs! Oh crickey! Yaroooh!"
"Do you want us to fag for you any more, Hansom?"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Yaroooh!"
Hansom went out headlong. He fell into the crowd outside; and Jimmy Silver & Co. followed him up. His comrades had fared roughly; but their experience was a joke to Hansom's. By the time the captain of the Fifth reached the stairs, he felt as if he had been through an earthquake and a cyclone and an air-raid rolled into one. And even then he was not done with. The exuberant juniors rolled him down the first flight of stairs, bumping him on each stair. He was allowed to roll down the next flight by himself; and he lay on the next landing in a dazed state.
The unfortunate fagger of the Fourth was just able to crawl away.
He was followed by yells of derision from above, and loud invitations to come back and fag the Fourth again; but the hapless Hansom was not thinking just then of fagging the Fourth.
He picked himself up and limped off to his study, where he sank into his armchair, and for the next quarter of an hour was chiefly occupied in gasping and groaning.
The Fourth-Formers cheered loudly as they went back to their studies, victorious.
Jimmy Silver and his chums came back into the end study, chuckling. The study was in a deplorable state; but they set to work very cheerfully putting it to rights.
"I rather think that Hansom will be tired of fagging this study, after this!" Raby remarked.
"I shouldn't be surprised!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "I don't think the Fifth got much change out of us this time. Anyhow, they're pretty certain not to send us for tuck again."
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"But where did Morny come in?" grinned Lovell.
"Morny?"
"Well, Morny's junior captain now, and it was up to Morny to deal with the Fifth. But it's left to this study to take Hansom down a peg." Arthur Edward Lovell chortled. "Morny was in a back seat all the time—it was Jimmy Silver first, second, and all the time."
Jimmy Silver looked rather serious.
"I don't want to be taking the lead now Morny's captain," he said. "A fellow must play the game. But—"
"But it can't be helped, old top. You're a bit of an ass, in your way, Jimmy, but you ought to be skipper, and you know it. Morny isn't really big enough for the job."
"Oh, rot!" said Jimmy unasily.
But other fellows in the Fourth took Arthur Edward Lovell's view. There had been a tussle with the rival Form, and the Fifth had been beaten; and it was Jimmy Silver who had been the leader. And from Morny's very thoughtful look, when Jimmy saw him again, Jimmy could guess that the same thought had occurred to him.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.
A Fag at Last!

IT'S the principle of the thing!"
Edward Hansom of the Fifth made that remark a couple of days later in his study.
His audience consisted of 'his study-mates, Lumsden and Talboys.
Both of them were looking dubious.
"The principle of the thing!" repeated Hansom. "That's what we've got to think about!"
"The fact is, old chap," said Lumsden, with a cough, "it looks to me to be more trouble than it's worth. The unruly little beasts—"
"Unruly little beasts require ruling with a firm hand."
"Well, after all, we ain't prefects, and the Fourth don't matter a tuppenny button to us."
"I'm fed up with the scrubby little scoundrels," said Talboys. "I know they simply ruined my clobber the other day!"
"Both your clobber!" said Hansom irritably.

(Continued on page 16.)

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MYSTERY	OUT ON FRIDAY!		ADVENTURE



Assisted by Sammy Bunter of Greyfriars, Baggy Trimble and Fatty Wynn of St. Jim's, and Tubby Muffin of Rookwood.

Supplement No. 129.

Week Ending June 23rd, 1923.

IN YOUR EDITOR'S DEN!

By Billy Bunter.

My Dear Readers,
Ambition is what Cardinal Wolsey told Cromwell to fling away. Why he told him to do that I don't know, bekwase honest ambition is one of the finest things out.

We all want to make a suxcess of our lives, don't we? We don't want to stick in the same old rut year after year. Ambition acts as a spur to our endeavers. The desire to beat the other fellow, and to finnish first in the race is a perfectly natcherel one. It isn't often that I preach a sermon, but my advice is, don't fling away ambition; embrace it!

Without ambition, I should not have become the editor of this flurrishing jernal. Without ambition, I should not have become the finest skoller and athlete in the Greyfriars Remove. Without ambition, where should I be? And where should we all be? Ekko answers "Nowhere!"

One of the most frekwent queschuns ever asked is, "What are you going to be when you grow up?" The fellow without ambition replies, "Nothing." The ambitious fellow replies, "A soljer," or "A sailer," or "The Chanseller of the Exchecker," as the case may be.

My readers will be very interested to know the ambitions of the Greyfriars fellows. That is why I am publishing this Special Ambition Number. It may not be such a commical number as usual, but it will screw your interest up to concert-pitch, and rivet your attention from start to finnish. I will now leave you to digest it, as the cook said when she put a plum-pooding on the table.

By the way, I am simply bersting with brane-waves, and there are lots more Special Numbers to come. In fact, I am so full of bright ideas that the services of my four fat subbs are not really rekwired. I ought really to sack them and put them on the dole. But I will keep them on, out of kindness of hart.

Yours sincerely,
YOUR EDITOR.

MY AMBITION!

By The Editor.

"What are you going to be, my boy?"

What are you going to be?
My titled uncle, Earl de Broke,
Has put this point to me.

"Sailor, soldier, tailor, tinker,
Poet, orator, or thinker,
Chef, or cook, or coffee-drinker—
What are you going to be?"

"What profession will you choose

When you've thought it over?
Will you be a pirate bold,
Or a reckless rover?

Will you be a high-class baker,
Butcher, barber, or boot-maker,
Or a cheerful undertaker,
When you've thought it over?"

"Will you wield a pen, my William,

Or a blacksmith's hammer
Will you be a wise professor,
Skilled in maths, and grammar?
Will you be a famous writer?
Will you boast a crown and mitre?
Will you be a hefty smiter,
Or a studious 'crammer'?"

What am I going to be, my boys?

What am I going to be?
I'll have to wait and see, my boys,
What fate's in store for me.
A waiter in some grand hotel,
That's the job that would suit me

well;
But just at present I cannot tell
What I am going to be!

AMBITION AMONG THE FAGS!

By Sammy Bunter.

Every member of the fag tribe nurses an ambition in his brest. My own ambition is to grow fatter and fatter, and then tour the musick-halls as the fattest boy the world has ever seen. I should charge a hundred ginnies a night for eggsposing myself to the publick, and I should make such a mint of munney that I shouldn't know what to do with it.

Young Tubb's ambition is to become Admiral of the Fleet. I don't know if he means the Pegg fishing fleet. That's about the only fleet he's ever likely to become admiral of. Tubb thinks himself a jolly good sailer, but the fact is he can't take a punt on the River Sark without being violently seasick. He suffers from what the French call mail-demur, so a fat lot of use he would be as an admiral!

Bolsover miner wants to become the boxing champion of the world. He's got a long way to go! His mussels are no stronger than the ankles of a sparrow, and as for licking anybody—why, it's as much as the fellow can do to lick a postage-stamp! I fear Bolsover miner will never realize his grate ambition.

Dicky Nugent is fired with the ambition to become a grate novelist. Just bekwase my majer prints a story of his now and again, Dicky's got swelled head. He'll never make a novelist. Why, he hasn't mastered the ruddyments of grammer and speling! His speling is a perfectt disgrace. Personally, I should never dream of putting pen to paper unless I could spell correctly!

Young Gatty wants to become a perfesional footballer, if ever you heard of such an aberserdyty! Imagine a little rat like Gatty playing for Tottenham Hotspur, or kicking goles for Chelsea! Why, the specked-taters would go into shrieks of merriment if Gatty blew on to the ground! He can't play footer for toffy, and the sooner he berries his ambition, the better!

Myers says he's going to become Poet Lorryat. Ho, ho, ho! 'Scuse me larfin! I've seen some of Myers' poetry, and it's enuff to make a cat go into histerricks. My majer would never dream of publishing any of Myers' effusions in his "Weekly," and I don't blame him!

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ANOTHER LAUGHTER-MAKING

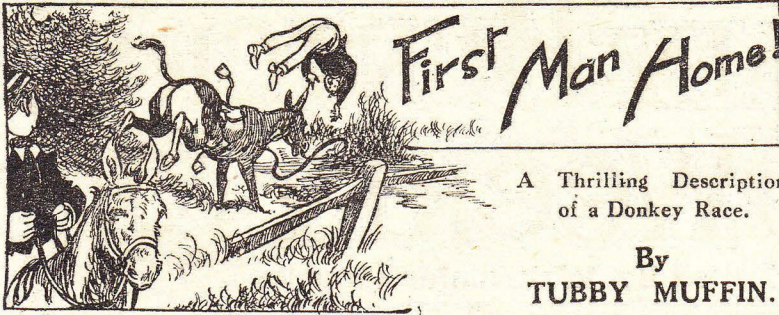
ISSUE OF OUR **HUMOROUS**

SUPPLEMENT NEXT WEEK!

DO NOT MISS IT!

Supplement 1.]

When You Want a Long Laugh, Read the Mirth-Making "Weekly"!



A Thrilling Description
of a Donkey Race.

By
TUBBY MUFFIN.

IT has always been one of my pet ambitions to win a Donkey Race. I don't know why my ambition should take this peculiar form, but it did.

Other fellows have other ambitions. Jimmy Silver's ambition is to score a dubble sentury at cricket. Silver minor's ambition is to become a deep sea diver, and I often see him practising in the school fountain. Kit Erroll's ambition is to invent an aeroplane that will fly to Mars. But my own pet ambition has always been the same—to win a Donkey Race.

My ambition has been achieved at last! In future, I shall be known as the champion donkey—I mean, the donkey champion—of Rookwood.

A party of five of us—Silver, Lovell, Newcome, Raby, and my plump and honourable self—came across some donkeys on Coombe Common, when we were out for a stroll the other day.

"What about a donkey race to Rookwood?" suggested Jimmy Silver. "It will be grate sport. Are you game, Tubby?"

"Yes," I replied. "But I shall want at least a quarter of a mile start!"

"Why?"

"Bekawse my donkey will have more weight to carry than the others. I turn the scale at fourteen stoan, don't forget."

"That's your funeral!" growled Lovell. "You shouldn't eat so much plum-pooding; then you wouldn't be such a grate bladder of lard!"

"Let's choose our donkeys," said Newcome.

I selected the fattest animal of the lot. It would need a very substantial donkey to carry me to Rookwood. A skraggy, undersized animal would have kollapsed completely.

"Come along, Neddy!" I said, as I scrambled on to the beast's back. "If you're the first to arrive at the school gates, I'll buy you a pound of carrots!"

"Hee-haw!" said Neddy, as if he had understood every word I said.

A minnit later, we had all mounted the donkeys, and were ready for the grate race to start.

Jimmy Silver wrapped out a sharp command, and away we went.

I couldn't help larfing when I saw Raby's donkey weel round, and gallop away in the wrong direckshun. Raby

yelled to it that it was going the wrong way, but it took no notiss.

That left only four of us in the race, and I had high hopes of winning, for my plump Neddy was going along at a merry canter. I threw my arms round his neck, and hung on like grim death.

We were half-way to Rookwood, when Jimmy Silver's donkey became a bit skittish. It started prancing on its hind legs, and Jimmy couldn't control it. Prezzantly it tost him clean into the ditch, where he floundered in a foot of muddy water.

"Ha, ha, ha!" I roared. "Poor old Silver's out of the running. Don't you go starting any anticks of that sort, Neddy!"

But my donkey was as good as gold. He seemed to think he was a candidate for the Derby, for he tore along that road like a streak of lightning.

Lovell and Newcome were plodding along in the rear, but I could see that they hadn't an earthly chance of winning. Lovell's steed was a regular Tishy of a donkey, for it kept crossing its front legs. And Newcome's animal was dead-beat, and was coming along at a snail's pace.

"Go it, Neddy!" I chortled gleefully. "It's our race!"

And so it was. We finished the course in fine style, and Mack, the porter, nearly had a fit when Neddy came galloping up to his lodge.

"I say, Mack!" I shouted. "Can you sell me a pound of carrots?"

"Sertainty, Master Muffin," he replied. "There are some tip-top, eighteen-carat carrots in the Head's garden; He told me I could help meself whenever I wanted some."

So Mack brought the carrots, and my Neddy had the feed of his life. He deserved it, too, for he had helped me to win my greatest ambition!



My Great Ambition!

Specially Contributed by a
number of St. Jim's
celebrities.

TOM MERRY:

My greatest ambition is to become a major-general, after joining the army as a humble private. Monty Lowther tells me I shall be an old jossler with a flowing beard before I achieve this ambition. He says that promotion is slow in peace-time. "You'll be a private at eighteen, Tommy," he says, "and you'll advance one step up the ladder every ten years. At twenty-eight, you'll be a lance-corporal; at thirty-eight, a full-blown corporal; at forty-eight, a sergeant; at fifty-eight, a sergeant-major. You'll rise to commissioned rank at the age of sixty-eight, and by the time you've gone through the various stages—second-lieutenant, lieutenant, captain, major, lieutenant-colonel, colonel, brigadier-general, etc.—you'll be 133 years old when your ambition is realised." This doesn't

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sound very promising; but then, Monty Lowther is either a fiddle-faced pessimist or a leg-puller!

MONTY LOWTHER:

My pet ambition—dare I confess it?—is to become a county cricketer. I should dearly love to wield the willow for my county—Hampshire. But I've a long, long way to go before I can hope to become a Philip Mead or a George Brown. However, I shall try all I know to improve my cricket. I shall keep pegging away, and even if my ambition is never realised, I shall at least have the satisfaction of having made a good fight of it.

AUBREY RACKE:

It is my ambition to become a multi-millionaire—the wealthiest man in the world. My pater made pots of money by profiteering, and I see no

reason why I shouldn't follow in his footsteps. I shall employ a staff of a hundred servants, and have twenty high-speed cars at my disposal. And I shall put Croesus and Rothschild completely in the shade! In spite of what they say about the love of money being the root of all evil, I'm fearfully keen on piling up the shekels! Perhaps I shall be able to buy myself a title, and become the Duke of Wayland—who knows?

BAGGY TRIMBLE:

My greatest ambition is to become head cook and bottle-washer at some high-class hotel. I rather fancy myself in the role of hotel proprietor. I should have a special dining-room to myself, where I could sit and stuff to my hart's contempt. Of course, any hotel that I was in charge of would yield a big turnover (I don't mean an apple turnover) and I should claim the lion's share of the prophets. But, alas! I don't suppose this fond ambition will ever be realised. That rotter Lowther says I shall finish up carrying sand-ridge-boards down the Strand!

FATTY WYNN:

The great ambition of my life is to keep goal for Wales in international matches. But fancy talking about footer at this time of the year, when the thermometer's eighty in the shade.

[Supplement II.]

Something to Tell All Your Pals About—"Billy Bunter's Weekly!"



Archie the Ambitious!

A Powerful, Pungent, Poignant Story of School Life, from the Leaky Fountain Pen of DICKY NUGENT.

"I'll do it, pater! I'll fight my way to the top wrung of the ladder! None shall stand in my path!"

It was Archie Hussler who spoke. Archie was a shock-headed youth of fourteen summers, one autumn, and a Christmas. His pater had just put him on the trane, and he was bound for St. Bill's.

"I'm proud to here you talk like that, Archie," said Mr. Hussler. "I'm sure you will be a credit to the famby. The Husslers have always been husslers—right from the word go! We never mark time. We never stagnate. We never Rusty Kate. We make our mark in the world. I am sure you will win heaps of fame and glory at St. Bill's."

"Trussed me, pater!" said Archie, as he leaned out of the karridge window and rung his father warmly by the hand. "Before I have been at St. Bill's twenty-four hours I shall be kaptin of my Form, kaptin of kricket, kaptin of marbels—in fact, kaptin of everything that's going. Good-bye, pater!"

The guard turned the crank-handle, and the trane bounded forward, and purred its way out of the station.

Archie sat in his corner seat and dreamed rosy dreams of the future. He was simply bursting with ambition—with a desire to go fourth and prosper. Nothing but the first place would satisfy him; that thought flashed through his mind in a second as he sat in the third-class karridge. Yes! He would go fourth and prosper. If he failed, he would be a guy, sootable for burning on the Fifth.

"First in this, first in that, and first in everything—that's what I'm going to be!" he muttered through his clenched hands. And he set his lips so firmly that the nuckles stood out sharp and white.

It was five o'clock in the afternoon when our hero arrived at St. Bill's. He gazed upon the stately bilding with admiration, not unmingled with oar.

A crowd of Fourth-Formers were playing norts and crosses on the flagstones of the quad when Archie turned up. The new boy walked boldly up to them.

"Who is the champion fiting-man of the Form?" he demanded.

A grate, hulking lout, with a bullet head, a scarred face, and a twisted nose stepped forward.

"I am," he said. "My name is Percy Pugg, and with one playful tap of my clenched fist I could knock you into the middle of next week."

Archie Hussler peeled off his coat.

"Go ahead!" he said cheerfully.

The rest of the fellows formed up in a square circular triangle as the bully and the new boy faced each other.

"Go it, Puggy!" they yelled. "Wipe up the quad with the cheeky brat!"

With a deffening roar, like that of an angry sheep, Percy Pugg hurled himself upon the new boy. He struck several

savvidge blows, and if any one of them had got home our hero would have been bed-ridden for the rest of his summers, autums and Chrissmasses.

But Archie Hussler dodged this way and that way, and the blows sailed harmlessly by.

"Why, the kid's like a blessed eel, riggling all over the place!" growled Pugg. "I can't get to grips with him. Hellup! What's happening?"

For Archie suddenly dashed in and proceeded to pepper the bully with blows.

"He's as keen as mustard!" said somebody.

"Yes, the kid's worth his salt!" agreed another.

"Pugg looks as sour as vinnegar!" said a third.

"The new kid's got plenty of sauce!" chimed in a fourth.

Biff! Thud! Bang! Plonk!

A navverlanche of blows reigned upon the unhappy Pugg. Big and berly though he was, he could not withstand that terrific bombardment. With a horse cry of pane, the bully toppled



With a horse cry of pane, the bully toppled backwards! Archie had won the fite!

backwards, and fell with a sickening thud on the flagstones.

Archie Hussler calmly donned his coat.

"He's unconshus," he said coolly. "But he'll come round in a few days. Don't bother about him. Now, who is kaptin of the Form?"

"I am," said a tall, hansom-looking youth. "My name's Barton."

"Well, you saw what I did to Pugg?"

"Yes."

"Would you like a dose of the same meddisin?"

"Dunno!"

"Then you can hand over the kaptiny to me at once!"

Barton hezzitated. Then he looked at the huddled, senseless form of Percy Pugg, and he wisely decided not to risk a simmler fate.

"All serene," he said reluctantly. "You can have the kaptiny of the Fourth."

Archie Hussler grinned.

"There are one or two more

ambitions I want to reelize," he said. "Who is the kaptin of kricket?"

"I am," said a tall youth in flannels. "My name's Dick Driver."

"Well, look here, Driver. Will you hand over your job to me quietly, or must I take it by force?"

Driver glanced at the still-unconshus form of Percy Pugg and shuddered.

"You're quite welcome to my job," he said promptly.

"Thanks!" said Archie. "Now, is it agreed on all sides that I'm kaptin of the Form, kaptin of kricket, and the finest fiting-man in the Fourth?"

Three sturdy juniors began to protest. So Archie peeled off his coat once more, and waded into them. He scattered them left and right with powerful blows, and their screams of angwish rang through the quad.

Archie pranced over the prostrate boddies of his victims.

"Get up and have some more!" he hist feercely.

"Nunno!" gasped the unhappy trio in corus. "We're quite willing to axcept you as kaptin of the Form, kaptin of kricket, and champion fiting-man!"

"Good!" said Archie. And he put on his coat and stalked proudly away, monark of all he surveyed.

Archie wrote home that evening, telling his father of his triumphs. Mr. Hussler was, natcherally, very pleased, and he showed his plezzure by sending Archie stamps to the value of three-pence-halfpenny.

Now that we have seen our hero acheive his ambitions, we will bid him a fond farewell, and leave him, like Alee of old, looking around for fresh worlds to konker.



OUR ADVERTISEMENT COLUMN!

LOST.—A healthy appetite! Anyone returning same to Monty Lowther, Study No. 10, will be rewarded with a bag of bullseyes.

WANTED.—A cure for that distressing complaint, India-gestion. Have tried pepsin, bismuth, roorbab, soda, and other so-called remedies, but without rezult. Eating is disliked and loathed. Violent panes follow every feed. Black specks float before the eyes. Will pay twopence for a complete cure.—BAGGY TRIMBLE, School House.

THE finest feast under the Sun is "BILLY BUNTER'S WEEKLY." You need never Moon about if you read my wonderful paper. Any fellow who disparages it will be made to see Stars! Sample copy sent on application to W. G. BUNTER, Editor-in-Cheef.

IF you want to see a sausage roll, or an apple turn over, or a cake walk, pay a visit to FATTY WYNN. He will be pleased to show you how it is done. And if you visit the Head's garden you will see a chicken run!

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Supplement III.]

A Punch and a Laugh in Every Line of Our Famous Humorous Supplement!



"Hansom's Mistake!"

(Continued from page 12)



"The tailor man is chargin' me a guinea for repairs. Perhaps you'd like to stand the guinea, Hansom?" suggested Talboys, rather sarcastically.

"If you can't talk sense, Cyril, old man, you'd better give your chin a rest!" said the exasperated Hansom. "Now, as I was saying, it's the principle of the thing. We're seniors, and therefore we have a natural right to fag the juniors. The Sixth do. Carthew of the Sixth was sniggering at me this morning over our affair the other day in the fag quarters. Carthew thinks he can manage fags."

"Carthew's a bully!"

"Well, a certain amount of bullying isn't bad for kids, you know, when they don't know their place. But I'm not thinking of ragging the Fourth. The fact is, I was rather hasty the other day."

"You were!" agreed Lumsden.

"I started with Silver—a thoroughly obstinate little beast, if ever there was one. I would have been wiser to begin with a less obstinate young scoundrel—like Muffin, for instance."

Lumsden grinned.

"Muffin would fag for any blessed chap at Rookwood if he was offered a jam-tart!" he said.

"We can't bribe the fags!" said Hansom loftily. "We've got to remember that we're seniors; and there's the dignity of the Fifth Form to consider. But a thick ear would do it. Offer him a thick ear for refusing, and a fat little funk like Muffin would come to heel fast enough. It's making a beginning and breaking the ice. I ought really to have started with Muffin instead of Silver; I can see that now. What I want is to get the principle of the thing recognised."

"Well, go ahead!" said Lumsden. "We'll back you up, of course; the young rascals ought to fag for us!"

"They ought, for certain!" assented Talboys. "A fag would be no end useful to me; brushin' clothes, and all that. But—"

"I've told Muffin to come to this study," said Hansom casually.

Lumsden indulged in a wink at the ceiling.

"Will he come?" he asked.

"I've given him orders to come."

"Hem!"

Tap!

Hansom gave his study-mates a triumphant glance as a tap came at the study door.

The door opened, and the fat face of Reginald Muffin, of the Classical Fourth, looked in, with a beaming, fat smile on it.

"Oh!" ejaculated Lumsden, taken aback.

Tubby Muffin had evidently obeyed orders.

"Come in, Muffin!" rapped out the captain of the Fifth.

"Yes, Hansom!"

The fat Classical rolled in.

"Shut the door!"

Tubby closed the door obediently.

Lumsden and Talboys looked on in surprise. Here was a member of the Fourth Form obeying Hansom's orders, at all events. True, Tubby Muffin was likely to obey anybody's orders rather than take a licking. But he hadn't been licked yet, at all events. Yet his only object in life at the present moment seemed to be to make himself agreeable to Hansom.

Hansom was growing loftier than ever in look. He had rather a weakness for "showing off" before his friends.

"Muffin!" he rapped out.

"Yes, Hansom?"

"Put some more sticks in the fire, and shove the kettle on!"

"Certainly, Hansom!"

Tubby Muffin carried out those directions with cheerful alacrity. It really looked as if Hansom had found an obedient fag at last.

But when the kettle was disposed of the blazing sticks, Tubby Muffin turned towards the captain of the Fifth with an inquiring look.

"Where are they?" he asked.

Hansom coughed.

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"Oh, I said you could have some tarts, didn't I?" he remarked carelessly. "There they are—in the bag."

"Oh!" murmured Lumsden.

The tarts were in the bag; but the cat was out of the bag now. The magic power that had turned the fat Classical into an obedient fag for the Fifth was not Hansom's eye of command or the terror of his glance. It was the promise of jam-tarts.

Hansom avoided meeting his chums' eyes as Tubby Muffin travelled through a couple of jam-tarts. They did not take him long. Two jam-tarts were much to Tubby Muffin. Two dozen would probably have left him inquiring for more.

"Is that all, Hansom?" he asked.

"Yes," grunted the Fifth-Former. "Do you think I keep a tuckshop here for fat fags?"

"Well, you said tarts!" answered Reginald Muffin, in rather an aggrieved tone. "Of course, two tarts are tarts. But I thought—"

"You needn't trouble to think!" snapped Hansom. "You're not wanted to think, Muffin! You're wanted to do as you're told!"

"Oh, am I?" said Tubby warmly.

"Yes. And don't argue!"

"I'll argue if I like!" retorted Reginald Muffin independently.

"You'll get a licking if you do!"

Evidently the fagging was beginning in earnest. The fly had walked into the spider's parlour—attracted by jam-tarts. It was not going to be so easy to walk out again.

That consideration seemed to dawn upon fat Muffin's brain, for he began to back towards the door.

Hansom raised his hand.

"Stop!" he commanded.

Edward Hansom was firmly under the impression that, like the lamented parent of the Prince of Denmark, he had "an eye like Mars, to threaten and command." He was exercising it now.

So far, however, from being awed by Hansom's eye like Mars, Tubby Muffin made a jump for the door. He scented danger.

Hansom jumped up.

His commanding eye was evidently useless in this case. But a commanding hand dropped on Tubby's fat shoulder before he could get the door open and swung him back. Hansom had a heavy hand, and it was much more efficacious than his eye.

"Now, then, you cheeky young rascal—"

"Yaroooh!"

"Shurrup!"

"Help!"

"You silly young ass!" roared the exasperated Hansom. "Stop making that row! I haven't touched you!"

"Leggo!"

"Now, Muffin—"

"Rescue!"

"Give me that cane, Lummy!"

"Here you are," said Lumsden, grinning.

"Hold out your hand, Muffin!" said Hansom, just as if he was a prefect of the Sixth Form.

Muffin blinked at him.

"Mum-mum-my hand!" he stuttered.

"Yes; sharp!"

"Wha-a-at for?"

"I'm going to cane you!"

"Kik-kik-cane me!" howled Tubby Muffin indignantly. "Yah! Do you think you're a prefect, you silly clown? Yah!"

Lumsden and Talboys grinned; they couldn't help it. Hansom flushed with wrath.

"Hold out your hand!" he thundered.

"Yah!" retorted Tubby Muffin.

"Then you'll get it harder!"

Whack, whack, whack!

The hapless Tubby did get it—across his fat shoulders. Hansom laid it on with great energy. He felt that he was upholding the dignity of the Fifth, as well as establishing the important rule that the Fourth fagged for the Fifth. Tubby Muffin squirmed and howled.

But there was no help at hand for poor Tubby. He was in the spider's parlour, far from help.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yoop! Stop! I say, Hansom, old chap—Yaroooh! You beast! Chuck it! I say, old fellow, leggo! Yaroooh!"

"There!" said Hansom severely. "I think that ought to be a lesson to you, Muffin!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Do you want any more?"

"No!" howled Tubby.

"Then set to work, fagging!" commanded Hansom. "Clear the tea-table, tidy up the grate, and put the kettle away, and—and dust the room! I'll watch you do it!"

"I'm not going to fag for the Fifth!" roared Tubby.

Whack!

"Yaroooh!"

"What did you say, Muffin?"

"I—I said—I mean, I'll fag for you with pleasure, old fellow!" gasped the unhappy Tubby.

"Don't call me old fellow! I don't like it from fags!"

"All right, old fellow—I mean, you beast—I meaner say, yes, Hansom! All right!"

"File in!" commanded Hansom.

Tubby Muffin cast a longing glance at the door. The fat Classical was paying dearly for two jam-tarts. With a furious face he set to work fagging, under the commanding eye of Hansom of the Fifth.

Hansom had bagged a fag at last!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. The High Hand!

"JIMMY!"

"Hallo, porker!"

Jimmy Silver was on his way to the cricket-ground, when Tubby stopped him, red and wrathful and pantive at the same time. Jimmy paused good-naturedly.

"Been in the wars?" he asked.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Well, what's the trouble? Lovell's yelling to me!" said Jimmy Silver.

"I've been fagging for the Fifth!" gasped Tubby.

"What?"

"They got me into Hansom's study," groaned Tubby dolorously, "and then the beast licked me till I fagged for him, Jimmy!"

Jimmy Silver frowned.

"You oughtn't to have done it," he said.

"What could I do?" demanded Muffin warmly. "Think I could fight three of the Fifth? Three of the Fourth would be as much as I could tackle."

"And a little over, I think," said Jimmy, laughing.

"Well, ain't you going to take it up?" exclaimed Tubby. "Are those Fifth Form cads going to fag the Fourth, and wallop 'em?"

"No fear! But—but—" Jimmy hesitated. "Morny's junior captain now, Tubby; it's Morny's bizney to take it up for the Form. You'd better go to Mornington."

Tubby Muffin gave a snort.

"Morny's no good!" he answered.

"Go to Morny!" answered Jimmy Silver. "Why, you young sweep, you voted for him at the election—"

"Well, he stood me a feed, you see—"

"Well, Morny's your man!" grunted Jimmy, and he detached Tubby's fat hand from his sleeve and joined his chums, who were waiting for him impatiently.

Tubby Muffin blinked after him, and then rolled away to Valentine Mornington's study. Tubby was simply athirst for vengeance for his manifold wrongs, and although he had voted for Mornington at the junior captain's election, his faith was stronger in Jimmy Silver. But there was no choice for him now, and he rolled away to pitch his tale of woe to the new skipper.

Morny was alone in Study No. 4; Erroll was on the cricket-ground. The new junior captain was wrestling with French conjunctions, a task set him by Monsieur Monceau, when Tubby rolled in. He pitched impatiently to the door.

"Travel!" he snapped. "I'm busy!"

"Look here, Morny—"

"Shut the door after you!"

"Do you call yourself junior captain?"

roared Tubby Muffin, in a white heat of indignation. "Am I going to be fagged by the Fifth, and nothing said about it? Jimmy Silver would have made the rotters sit up for it, when he was captain, I can tell you!"

"Oh! Is that it?" Mornington laid down his pen and rose to his feet. "The Fifth have been fagging you, have they?"

"Yes; Hansom and Lumsden and Talboys, in their study!"

"And you fagged?"

"I had to. Hansom whacked me till I did. I—I fought hard!" said Tubby Muffin.

"I—I knocked him flying once—fairly spinning. But there were three of them—"

"Didn't you knock them all spinnin'?" asked Mornington sarcastically.

"Why didn't you take all three, and bash their heads together?"

"Well, I would have, only—only after I'd knocked Hansom down the others, you know—"

"You should have knocked them down, too!" grinned Mornington.

"Well, I did, you know," said Tubby.

"I fought like a—a lion. But altogether they were too much for me. See? And—and I've been thrashed, and made to fag, and it's your bizney to take it up as junior captain, Morny, you know it is!"

Mornington frowned.

"You're such a thumpin' fat little liar!" he said. "I don't know how much there is in your yarn. But I'll go and see Hansom about it."

"Fat lot of good that will be!" grunted Tubby Muffin discontentedly. "Jimmy Silver would have—"

"Never mind Jimmy Silver now—I'm skipper. Shut up, and leave it to me!" snapped Mornington.

The junior captain left his study and made his way to the Fifth Form quarters. That was rather a reckless proceeding on his part in the circumstances, but Morny did not stop to think about that; he was reckless by nature, and it did not occur to him to be prudent.

There was a sound of laughter in Hansom's study as Morny reached the door. He threw it open.

Hansom & Co. seemed in a merry mood. The principle of the thing, as Hansom termed it, had been established—the ice had been broken. The Fourth had started fagging for the Fifth. True, only Tubby Muffin had started; but it was a beginning.

Edward Hansom confidently predicted that Muffin's example would be followed, especially if a few more thrashings were handed out. And Hansom was prepared to hand them out as fast as required.

The three Fifth-Formers stared at Mornington, still smiling.

"Hallo! Did you tell this fag to come here, Hansom?" yawned Talboys.

Hansom shook his head.

"No; I'm not wanting a fag at present," he said. "You can cut, Mornington. I'll call you when required!"

"You silly chump!" was Morny's reply.

"Cut off at once!"

"I want to know whether you've been fagging Tubby Muffin, of my Form?" said Mornington.

Hansom nodded genially.

"Yes; I believe it was Muffin who fagged here," he assented. "One of your scrubby gang, anyhow. I think it was Muffin."

"I think you're already aware that the Fourth don't fag for the Fifth!" said Mornington.

"We're going to knock all that nonsense out of you, my boy," assured Hansom. "I shall probably want you to-morrow. Be ready."

"You picked Muffin, I suppose, because he's a funky ass, to begin with?" said Mornington disdainfully.

Hansom glanced round.

"Where's that cane?" he asked.

"Here you are, old top!" said Talboys.

"Now, Mornington," said Hansom, taking the cane, "you've been cheeky. Cheek to the Fifth isn't allowed. I'm sorry for you, but I've decided to put down this unruliness among the fags with a firm hand!"

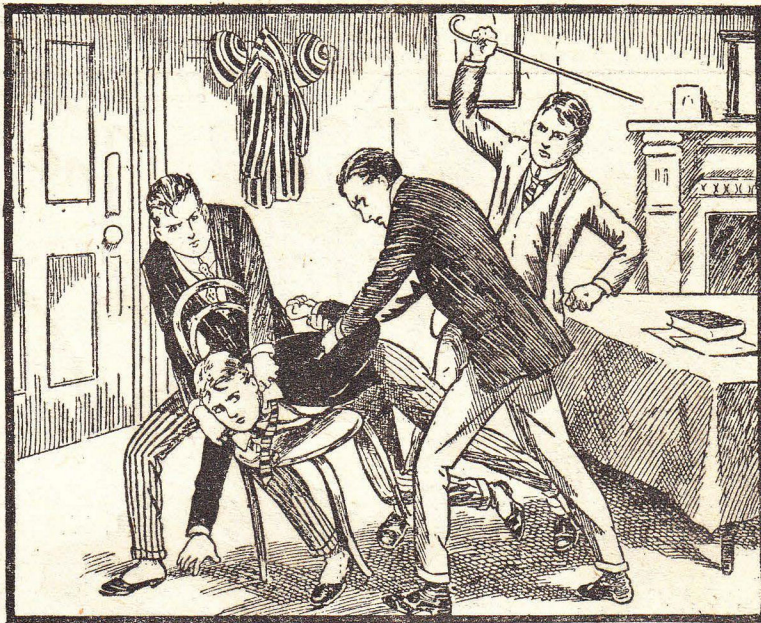
"You silly ass!"

"Hold out your hand, Mornington!"

Valentine Mornington laughed. He was not likely to hold out his hand at the Fifth-Formers' bidding.

"You hear me, Mornington?" said Hansom darkly.

"Oh, don't talk out of your neck!" said



MORNY GETS IT HOT! "Lay him across the chair!" commanded Hansom. Mornington was fighting like a tiger, but the seniors got him down at last. Then Hansom started in with the cane. Whack! Whack! Whack! "Now are you going to hold out your hand when you're told?" asked the senior. (See Chapter 6.)

Morny contemptuously. "Do you think I'm another Tubby Muffin, you swanking duffer? I've got this to tell you, Hansom—Tubby Muffin personally don't matter two pins; but you won't be allowed to fag the Fourth, not even Muffin. I'm goin' to make you sit up for it. That's all."

And Mornington swung round on his heel to walk away.

The next moment Hansom's hand was on his collar, and he was swung back. Without a word, Mornington hit out, and Hansom staggered back.

"Ow!" he gasped.

Mornington darted into the passage again, and almost into the arms of Brown major, who was coming to the study. Brown major grasped him at once.

Mornington struggled fiercely. But the big Fifth-Former held him securely enough, and bundled him back into the study.

Hansom closed the door and put his back to it.

"Now I think you'll sing a different tune, my pippin!" he said savagely. "Hold out your hand, Mornington!"

"Rats!"

"Will you obey orders?"

"Oh, don't be a goat!"

"Lay him across a chair!" commanded Hansom.

Lumsden and Talboys laid Morny across a chair. It required both of them to do it, for Morny was fighting like a tiger. There were signs of damage about the two seniors, and they were panting when they had Morny safely down at last.

Then Hansom started in with the cane. Whack, whack, whack!

Mornington still struggled furiously, but in vain. The grasp on him was too strong.

"Now, are you going to hold out your hand when you're told?" chuckled Hansom.

"No, you rotter!"

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

Not a cry left Morny's lips; but he still struggled savagely. Hansom laid on the cane with great vim. It was a chance that might not occur again, and he was making the most of it.

"I say, that'll do!" said Lumsden at last.

"He's had enough!"

"Well, perhaps that'll do," assented Hansom. "I don't want to be hard, even on a cheeky fag. Chuck him out now he's licked! I dare say he'll do as he's told to-morrow!"

Brown major opened the door, and Mornington was dropped into the passage. The door closed again, and the hapless Morny

heard loud laughter from within as he staggered to his feet. Hansom & Co. were enjoying their triumph.

Valentine Mornington limped away.

Tubby Muffin met him on the staircase. The fat Classical blinked inquiringly at him, and then grinned. It did not need much perspicacity to discern what had happened.

"He, he, he! Call yourself junior captain?" hooted Tubby. "Do you think Jimmy Silver would have—Yaroooooh!"

Mornington smote, and the fat Classical sat on the stairs with a yell. Then Morny strode on to his study, leaving Tubby Muffin yelling.

There was excitement in the Fourth Form at Rookwood when Reginald Muffin spread the news—which he very quickly did.

The Fifth Form had started fagging the Fourth successfully! And they had licked the junior captain for objecting! The Rookwood Fourth was quite wild with wrath, and on all sides the question was loudly asked—what was Morny going to do about it? And upon the answer to that question Morny's leadership of the Lower School at Rookwood depended.

THE END.

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THE FIRST CHAPTER.
The Dark Horse!

IT was all very mysterious. It simply wasn't like Billy Bunter, the fat porpoise whom all the Remove thought they knew so well. Bunter had gallantly saved Marjorie Hazeldene, sister of the junior of that name in the Remove, from a very nasty accident when the horse in her trap ran away. Bunter had not asked anybody to cash a postal order for at least twenty-four hours, and Bunter had proved to Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Upper Fourth that he could play cricket.

The Remove thought Billy had altered. The fact was that Billy hadn't altered at all. The great William George was disporting himself at that time at Margate, whilst his athletic cousin, Wally, was taking his place at Greyfriars.

But the Remove were not to know that. They simply stared and marvelled at the change in their Owl. Only Sammy, otherwise Bunter minor of the Third, had found out the impersonation—and was profiting by it by extorting bobs from Wally Bunter under threats of disclosure.

The Remove simply would not have Billy Bunter, as they thought the fat junior to be, in their eleven when they were matched against Temple's team from the Upper Fourth. Bunter, however, proved to Temple that he could play—and play well—and Temple blandly asked Wharton if he had any objection to Bunter playing for him.

Wharton said "No!" very emphatically, and asked if Temple had gone off his dot. Thus, much to the amusement of the Remove, Billy Bunter's name was included in Temple's list.

Temple, Dabney & Co. were keeping their secret.

That is to say, they were keeping it from the Remove, and from Greyfriars generally. But to the Fourth Form fellows Cecil Temple had to explain.

The news that he was playing Bunter in the Fourth Form team caused a general howl of indignation to rise from the Fourth. There were plenty of fellows in the Form who were quite willing to play in the team, and who considered their claims were uncontestable. And one of the team had to be dropped, of course, to make room for Bunter. When the news became known to the Fourth, Temple was in danger of being mobbed. Only Fry and Dabney

understood, and backed up their leader. The rest were almost ready to lynch Temple.

Under a strict promise of secrecy from the Fourth-Formers, therefore, Temple explained to them, calling a meeting for the purpose in the Form-room, with closed doors.

But his explanation was greeted with a howl of derision.

"Bunter's a wonderful player—both at batting and bowling," Temple asserted. "He's been keeping it dark for some reason. Why, I don't know. But he's a marvel!"

"Rats!"
"Bosh!"
"Rubbish!"
"Piffle!"

"Well, will you believe it if you see it?" demanded the captain of the Fourth.

Wilkinson sniffed contemptuously.

"Yes. And if that fat ass can play cricket I'll ask him myself to take my place in the team!" he said.

"Done!" said Temple instantly.

"But it's all rot!" said Wilkinson. "And you know it!"

"All of you come out—not in a crowd, but in twos and threes," said Temple. "Gather on the common—where those Courtfield chaps play cricket, you know. I'll bring Bunter along. Dab can take the stumps, and Scott can take a bat along, and I'll bring a ball. But mind you don't whisper a word where the Remove kids can hear you. I tell you this is the biggest thing we've ever sprung on them, and if you give it away I'll—I'll—"

"Well, back up your words," said Wilkinson. "If you don't prove that Bunter is a ripping cricketer you'll resign and let some chap with more sense captain the team."

"Agreed!" said Temple.

Temple's prompt acceptance staggered the Fourth a little. After all, they knew that Temple knew something about cricket; and the day before he would have laughed as loudly as anybody at the idea of playing Bunter. The juniors could not help being impressed. But that Bunter could play cricket, that his form was anything like what Temple declared—that was too thick. They simply couldn't believe it.

"Well, we'll give you a chance," said Wilkinson, "and we'll keep you to your word, mind."

"I'll keep my word," said Temple. "But mind you don't let it out. That's the important thing. We're going to surprise the Remove on Saturday."

"Yes, it will surprise them if Bunter plays a good game," snorted Jones. "It will surprise me, too. I think I should faint."

But the Fourth-Formers agreed that nothing should be said outside the Form until it was seen what Bunter could do. The Fourth-Formers left the school in twos and threes to gather on the common, where the public pitch was used by the fellows of Courtfield County School for their matches. Temple, Dabney and Fry sought for Bunter, and found him in the school shop. He was eating tarts, and, much to the surprise of Mrs. Mimble, paying for them. Mrs. Mimble had hinted to the fat junior that as he was in funds he might as well settle in full time the little bill for which Mr. Quelch had stopped his pocket-money. But Bunter did not see the point at all.

"Hallo, Bunty!" said Temple cordially. "I want you to come for a little stroll."

"Feed?" asked Bunter.

"Ahem! No. Only a walk. We'll have some ginger-pop when we come back."

"All serene!"

Bunter rolled down off the high stool, and left the tuck-shop with Temple & Co. Harry Wharton and his chums spotted them as they strolled towards the gates, and grinned.

"Taking your dark horse out for exercise, Temple?" Bob Cherry inquired.

Temple nodded carelessly.

"Yes, just a walk to keep in form," he said.

"You're really playing him against us on Saturday?" asked Harry Wharton, laughing. "Yes—really!"

"But what's the little game?" demanded the Famous Five with one voice.

"You'll see—on Saturday."

And the Fourth-Formers walked off with Bunter. The chums of the Remove were laughing, but they could not help feeling puzzled.

"Blessed if I catch on," said Nugent. "I should think Temple's team would scalp him for putting that duffer in. What can he be doing it for?"

"It's a giddy mystery."

"Bunter has changed a lot in the last day or two; but he can't have learned to play a good game of cricket in the time," said Bob Cherry.

"Impossible, of course!"

"Then what the deuce is Temple's little game?"

"Give it up!" said Harry Wharton; and

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the Co. had to give it up, too. It was simply an impenetrable mystery. But that Bunter would take either a run or a wicket on Saturday was not to be believed for a moment. That was absurd.

Bunter and the Fourth-Former strolled down the road towards Courfield. Temple explained as they went what was wanted. Bunter grinned.

"All serene!" he said. "Stand your fellows up one after another, and I'll bowl out the whole gang like a set of skittles. I can bowl better than any junior bowling I've seen here, so far."

"You saw the Remove chaps at practice to-day?" said Temple eagerly. "You think you could take Wharton's wicket—eh?"

"Pretty certain," said Bunter. "Oh, good! If you can take his wicket, you can take the others. He's the best in the bunch. Here we are!" said Temple.

Most of the Fourth were on the common now, and the others were coming up. They glared at Bunter far from amiably. They wanted a great deal of convincing that he was a suitable person to play in their team.

"Here's the silly idiot!" said Smith major. "Now let's see what he can do!"

"Stick up the stumps!" said Temple. The pitch had been used that afternoon, but there was no one about at the present moment. The stumps were jammed into the ground, and the ball tossed to Bunter. "You take the bat, Wilkinson," grinned Temple.

Wilkinson snorted, and took the bat. "I'll jolly well show you whether that fat idiot can take my wicket!" he growled. "Play!"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Wilkinson a moment later, as his wicket was spread-eagled. "How on earth did that happen?"

"Great Scott!" "Rotten fluke!" said Jones secundus. "Try it again!" howled Wilkinson.

"Give him another, Bunter." "As many as you like," grinned Bunter. And apparently without an effort he knocked Wilkinson's wicket over again, in spite of Wilkinson's great care the second time.

"Well, I'm blowed!" said Wilkinson, in utter astonishment.

"Some of you others try," yawned Bunter. The Fourth-Formers tried in turn. All of them were anxious to sample the wonderful new powers which had been so unexpectedly developed by the Owl of the Remove.

The fat bowler simply made hay of the wickets. Sometimes a batsman would stop a ball or two, but the luckiest of them did not live through an over.

The Fourth Form simply gasped. It was miraculous. Hurree Janset Ram Singh of the Remove was a splendid bowler, but he was nothing to this. Bunter simply took the cake.

"Well, I'm blessed!" said Smith major. "I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen it. Blessed if I can quite believe it now I have seen it."

"He's a giddy, dark horse, and no mistake," said Scott.

"But what has he been keeping his form dark for all this time?" demanded Wilkinson. "Why didn't you ever let on that you could do this, Bunter?"

"Time we got back and sampled that ginger-beer, Temple," yawned Bunter. "I'm thirsty."

"Look here, you fat ass, why didn't you ever let us know—"

"Oh, don't ask questions!" said Bunter. "Let's get back. It'll be locking-up soon, and I'm thirsty after bowling to you duffers."

"Well, what price playing Bunter on the Remove?" demanded Temple triumphantly. "Won't he give 'em an electric shock—what?"

"What-ho!" "It will be a giddy walk-over, and no mistake. Why, he could bowl the First Eleven bats, I verily believe," said Scott.

"Bet you I could!" said Bunter. "Do let's get back and have that ginger-beer. Don't I keep on telling you I'm thirsty?"

And the Fourth-Formers returned to Greyfriars in great spirits, and Bunter was duly regaled with ginger-beer. Temple would have stood him almost anything just then in the exuberance of his spirits. And the Fourth Form now were only too keen to keep the great secret until Saturday. Then it would be sprung upon the unsuspecting

Remove. And the Fourth-Formers chuckled joyfully at the prospect.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Little Surprise for Coker!

THE first person Bunter met when he came down on the following morning was Sammy Bunter. Several other Remove fellows came down with Bunter, and they were surprised to see Sammy extend a fat paw towards his major without a word of explanation. They were still more surprised to see Bunter drop a shilling into it.

"Thanks!" grinned Sammy. And he scudded off.

"This is getting too thick!" Bob Cherry murmured. "Have you taken to supplying your minor with pocket-money now, Bunter?"

"Well, a chap ought to look after his minor, you know," said Bunter negligently. "Yes, he ought," agreed Bob. "I don't know about handing him out cash, though. But you—you—oh, it beats me! I give it up!"

Bunter grinned, and rolled away. The chums of the Remove watched him doing his early morning trot round the Close.

"What can it mean?" said Frank Nugent. "He gets a good pace on him, too," remarked Harry Wharton, watching Bunter with a critical eye. "I never knew Billy could run like that. His action's good, too. The fat bounder doesn't seem half so flabby as he was."

"Just as fat, but not so flabby," agreed Bob. "I wonder what's come over him. And what's come over Temple, too. They're quite serious about playing him in their team to-morrow. I thought the Fourth would scalp Temple about it; but they've taken it like lambs. They seem to be perfectly satisfied."

"After what Bunter's done, blessed if I should be surprised to see him play a good game of cricket, too!" said Peter Todd. "He gave his cake to his minor yesterday! What do you think of that?"

Harry Wharton shook his head. "I've given up thinking of it," he said. "It beats me."

"It will be a sight for Marjorie, anyway—Bunter playing cricket," said Hazeldene. "I'm going over to fetch them to see the match. They seem to think a lot of Bunter now; and they never could stand him."

"Well, no wonder, after he's saved their lives," said Bob. "But what made Bunter do it, that's the giddy mystery. It beats me hollow."

Bunter's unaccustomed exercise in the Close drew the attention of others, as well as his Form-fellows. Coker of the Fifth came out of the School House, and as soon as he caught sight of the sprinting junior he stopped and stared.

"Hallo! Bunter taking exercise!" he exclaimed. "That's something new. I'll give him exercise!"

And Coker, who was given to being humorous in a rather rough-and-ready way with fags, started sprinting after Bunter, and as he drew close to him, let out his foot, helping him on as if he intended to dribble the fat junior round the Close like a football.

Bunter gave a yelp, and stopped, and swung round, and Coker almost ran into him.

"You silly owl!" roared Bunter. "What are you up to?"

Coker chuckled. "Only helping you on," he explained. "You want a bit of assistance to carry all that fat. Get on. I'm going to take you right round the Close."

"You're jolly well not!" growled Bunter. "And if you touch me with your hoof again I'll go for you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Coker, greatly tickled at the idea of the Owl of the Remove going for him. "Ha, ha, ha! Start, you ass! I'm waiting."

Bunter started, and Coker of the Fifth started after him, lunging out with his boot. The fat junior suddenly halted, catching quickly behind him with his hand. His grasp closed on Coker's ankle, and held it like a vice. Coker was taken utterly by surprise, and he came down on his back with a mighty bump.

"Ooooooh!" he gasped. "Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Removites, who

were watching from the doorway of the School House. "Well caught, Bunter! Down and out!"

Bunter turned round and blinked at the sprawling Fifth-Former. All the breath had been knocked out of Horace Coker by the shock, and he lay gasping, and staring blankly at the fat Removite.

"Cut off, you ass, before he gets up!" called out Tom Brown.

But Bunter did not cut off. Apparently he was not afraid of what the burly Fifth-Former would do when he got up. Coker struggled slowly and painfully to his feet. Coker's sense of humour failed him when the laugh was turned against himself—as is the case with many humorists—and he was furious now. He made a rush at Bunter, and grasped him in his powerful arms.

"You fat bounder! I'll squash you!" he panted.

How it was done, the juniors could not see, but suddenly Coker's grasp on the fat Removite was torn asunder, and the great Horace went flying. He alighted on his back again with a loud grunt.

"Jiu-jitsu!" howled Bob Cherry. "Where did Bunter pick that up? What else has he been keeping dark, the fat spoofer?"

"It—it must have been an accident," stammered Peter Todd. "Bunter couldn't give Coker a fall. Here, come on; let's chip in before Coker slaughters him!"

But chipping in was not needed. Coker of the Fifth had leaped up again, and was charging at the fat junior like a mad bull. Bunter closed with him, and in a moment more Coker was on his back again. This time he stayed there, bumped quite out of breath.

"How—how—how did you do that, Bunter?" gasped Bob Cherry.

Bunter grinned serenely, and set his spectacles straight.

"Jiu-jitsu," he said. "I often practise it in the evening."

"What!" ejaculated Peter Todd. "You're jolly well never practised it in the study—and you never go into the gym."

"I—I—I mean I—I've practised it, you know," stammered Bunter. "Coker doesn't know anything about it, and I could handle him like a baby. Have some more, Coker?"

Coker had crawled up very painfully, gasping for breath. He had a considerable number of bruises scattered over his burly person, and he felt jarred from head to foot. He shook his head.

"No, you fat rotter! I didn't know you were a wrestler. I've a jolly good mind to lick you!"

"I'll wrestle you any time, but I'm not fighting you," grinned Bunter. "You're rather too big for me."

"Hands off, Coker!" chorused the juniors. And Coker, after glaring at the Famous Five, gave up the idea of bestowing a thick ear upon Bunter. He walked away rather painfully. The chuckles of the Removites followed him.

"But what do you mean by it, Bunter?" Peter Todd demanded indignantly. "Only last week I harruped you with a cricket-stump for letting Tubb of the Third lick you. And now you handled Coker, who's too big for any of us. What do you mean by it?"

"Think it out," said Bunter cheerfully. "Look here, I'm jolly well going to know what this means!" said Peter Todd, exasperated. "You've been spoofing us all along the line, and you're going to explain why you've done it. I'm head of the study, and I'm going to know what it means!"

"Head of your grandmother!" said Bunter calmly. "Nobody's head of my study."

"What!" yelled Peter, astounded by that cool defiance from the member of Study No. 7, who had always been the tamest under his rod of iron. "Do you want me to lick you?"

"Rats!" "Wha-a-a-at!"

"You couldn't do it," said Bunter cheerfully. "Now, don't get excited; I don't want to hurt you—"

"Hurt me!" said Peter dazedly. "You hurt me! Why, you—you fat earth-worm, you couldn't hurt my little toe! You—you—"

Words failed Peter. He felt that it was a time for action, too. His position as undisputed head of Study No. 7 was in danger.

and Peter believed in the old maxim of resisting the beginnings. Rebellion had to be nipped in the bud. He made a run at Bunter, and seized him.

"Now, you fat rotter, if you don't want me to bump you hard— Yarooooh!"

It was Peter who bumped. He descended upon the ground in a sitting position, with a bump that knocked out all his wind. He gasped wildly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—I—" stuttered Peter. "I suppose I'm dreaming. Yes, I must be dreaming! Pinch me, somebody, and see if I'm awake!"

"Pleased!" said Bob Cherry.

"Yow-ow-ow! Leggo, you thundering idiot! Gerrooh! Don't take a lump out of me!" shrieked Peter Todd.

"Well, you asked me—"

Peter Todd staggered to his feet.

"I don't like licking you, Bunter, as you've been so amazingly decent the last day or two," he said, "but this has got to be stopped. You'll be fancying yourself head of the study next if I don't nip it in the bud."

"Well, so I am, if you come to that," said Bunter.

"That settles it!" said Peter grimly. "Come into the gym. There's time for a few rounds with the gloves on before the bell goes. Come on!"

"Any old thing to please!" said Bunter resignedly.

The juniors followed them into the gym with alacrity. They were curious to see the two members of Study No. 7 with the gloves on. That the fat junior could stand up for a single round against so celebrated a fighting man as Peter Todd seemed wildly impossible. But after the way he had floored Coker, nothing would have surprised them.

The news that Bunter and Peter Todd were going to have the gloves on spread like wildfire, and a crowd of fellows swarmed into the gym to see the fun. That Bunter would be knocked into the middle of next week, or the whole length of the calendar, seemed a foregone conclusion. But as the fat junior donned the gloves and stood up to Peter Todd, Lord Mauleverer, who was a great judge of boxing form, chirruped:

"Begad! He knows something! Begad!"

And certainly Bunter looked very scientific. Peter Todd put on the gloves with a grim look, and advanced upon Bunter. He meant to finish in a single round. He did not want to hurt the fat junior, but it was strictly necessary to show Bunter who was the chief of Study No. 7. Peter Todd came on with a rush, and the ring of juniors looked to see Bunter swept off his feet; but he wasn't. He had still one more surprise in store for his Form-fellows. Peter Todd's rush was stopped by a pair of fat fists, and Peter's blows were knocked up, and Peter's chin came with a crash against a hard glove, and Peter went down with a "wallop" that almost shook the floor of the gym.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Bowled—Bunter!

BUNTER stood quite calmly, blinking down at the fallen chief of Study No. 7 over his spectacles. He had not even taken the trouble to remove his glasses.

Peter Todd lay on his back, gasping. It had been a tremendous drive, and the impetus of Todd's rush had added to its force. It would have knocked out a good many fellows. Peter Todd was not knocked out yet, but he was very groggy.

"My only hat!" exclaimed Wharton. "Where did the young rotter learn to hit like that?"

"My dear Bunter," exclaimed Alonzo Todd, pushing forward with a distressful look, "pray do not fight with Peter! This is most distressing. Uncle Benjamin would be shocked—nay, disgusted! My dear Peter—"

"Oh, shut up, Lonz!" said dear Peter.

"Yes, cheese it, and clear off!" said Bunter. "I'm going to be head of the study while I'm at Griefrayers."

"My dear Bunter—" entreated Alonzo. But the juniors dragged the gentle Alonzo back. They were keen to see the finish of that astounding fight. The odds were on

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Bunter now. Skinner was heard offering ten to one in tanners on Bunter, and he found no takers. Tom Dutton helped Peter to his feet. The chief of No. 7 was looking dazed.

"Want some more?" asked Bunter, with a grin.

"More!" gasped Peter. "Why, I'll smash you! Take off those goggles! I mean business this time!"

"I'll hold the specs, Bunt, begad!" chuckled Lord Mauleverer. "This is as good as Larry Lynx and the Limehouse Chicken, begad!"

"Go it, Bunter!"

"Go it, Peter!" said Tom Dutton, faithful to his leader.

Peter "went it." He made a slogging attack that even Bolsover major would have found it difficult to stand up to; but it had no effect on Bunter. His guard was perfect and impenetrable. And every now and then he let out his left or right in a quick counter and tapped Peter on the nose, or the chin, or in the eye. But for the gloves, Peter would soon have been looking a wreck. As it was, his face assumed a queer kind of mottled appearance, and he was growing groggier and groggier at every tap.

The excitement was almost feverish now. The crowd in the gym increased in numbers, and every fellow who came in stared in astonishment at the sight of Bunter standing up to Peter Todd, and getting the best of it. A terrific right-hander caught Peter on the chin at last, and he went down like a log. When he was helped to his feet, he peeled off the gloves.

"Had enough?" shrieked Skinner.

"Yes, I've had enough," said Peter soberly. "I don't understand it, but I've had enough. That young rotter is as fat as an ox, but he's as strong as a bull. I don't know why he's been taking us all in like this, but he's too good for me."

"Faith, and it bates Banagher intoirely," said Micky Desmond; "and sure Bunter is head o' the study now!"

Peter Todd made a grimace.

"I'll own up," he said. "Bunter's head of the study."

"Bravo, Bunter!"

"No, I ain't!" said Bunter unexpectedly. "I was only joking about that. You're head of the study, old man. This was only a friendly spar. It's all right."

"Wha-a-a-at!"

If Peter had been astonished by his licking at the hands of the fat junior, he was simply dumbfounded at this generosity in the hour of victory. That Bunter would be anything but cocky and aggressive after his success had never entered Peter's head. Already he had realised what a decidedly rotten time he would have in Study No. 7, considering the way he had hitherto kept Bunter in order. Bunter peeled off the gloves and jammed his spectacles on his fat nose, and held out his fat hand to Peter Todd.

"Give us your fist," he said. "It's all right!"

Peter Todd shook hands with him mechanically.

"I know I'm dreaming!" he murmured. "My dear, dear Bunter," said Alonzo, "this noble conduct—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Bunter.

And he walked out of the gym with Peter Todd. The fellows were left staring blankly at one another. It was too much for them.

"It's a miracle!" said Bob Cherry, with conviction. "Some silly ass said the age of miracles was past! It ain't—not by long chalks!"

"Peter used to say that he'd make a man of Bunter," grinned Wharton. "He seems to have done it—with a vengeance. Poor old Peter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Peter Todd and Bunter were on excellent terms that day. Peter Todd could take a licking as well as give one, and Bunter's generous conduct after the victory could not fail to touch him. Peter had always felt a sense of duty towards his fat study-mate, and had licked him times out of number for his own good, in the most conscientious way; but now, for the first time, he felt really friendly towards him.

A chap who could lick him like that was worthy of respect, and a chap who could be so decent about it was good enough to

be anybody's pal. That was how Peter Todd looked at it, and that day he was chummy with Bunter, and was heard to address him as "old fellow," instead of "silly ass" or "fat duffer"—which was a decided change.

"After this," said Bob Cherry solemnly, "I shouldn't be surprised to see Bunter play cricket to-morrow like W. G. Grace at his best!"

But the Removites grinned at that suggestion. Bunter had surprised them in many ways, but that was a little too much.

That day Bunter was treated by his Form-fellows in a very different manner from the Bunter of old. But he took it very quietly; and the juniors, who were accustomed to see William George "swank" on the slightest provocation, marvelled more and more. But they had given up trying to understand it.

The next morning Bunter took his sprint round the Close as usual, but Coker of the Fifth did not offer him any assistance. Horace Coker had wisely decided to leave the surprising fat junior severely alone.

In the Form-room that morning, when Bunter construed a difficult passage in Virgil without a fault, Mr. Quelch opened his eyes, and gave him words of commendation; but the Removites were past being surprised by anything that Bunter did now.

Morning lessons over, all thoughts turned to the cricket match of the afternoon. Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Fourth were in great spirits. Immediately after dinner they "bagged" Bunter.

Billy Bunter had no great reputation for keeping his word, and up to the last moment Temple was not quite sure of him. But Bunter meant business. He came down to the cricket-ground in flannels with Temple, Dabney & Co., and a general grin greeted his appearance there. Bunter had developed unexpected powers in many directions, but that he could play cricket was too incredible.

Harry Wharton & Co. arrived on Little Side in cheerful anticipation of victory. Hazel had gone over to Cliff House, and he returned as the two captains were tossing the coin, with Marjorie and Miss Clara. The two girls were very curious to see Bunter playing in a Form match.

Bob Cherry arranged seats for them outside the pavilion, and Bunter raised his cricket-cap politely. But he did not roll up and seek to monopolise the Cliff House girls, as of old. It was not till Marjorie beckoned to him that he approached.

"You are playing to-day?" Marjorie asked.

"Yes," said Bunter cheerfully; "against the Remove, I'm sorry to say. Wharton couldn't find room for me in his team—"

"You want a lot of room, you know," murmured Bob Cherry.

"So Temple's taken me on," said Bunter. "It's all the same to me, so long as I get a game. I'm rather keen on cricket."

"Oh!" said Marjorie.

"Man in!" said Harry Wharton, who had won the toss. "You're starting with me, Bob."

"Right-ho!"

Temple led his merry men into the field. He tossed the ball to Bunter.

"First over against Wharton!" he said. "Give him socks!"

"You bet!"

Wharton grinned as he took up his position, and Bunter went on to bowl. Against a bowler like Bunter he did not think much care was necessary. He soon discovered his mistake.

Whiz! Swish!

Harry Wharton swiped at the ball—where he was certain it was—but it wasn't there! He soon knew where it was, however. Clack!

"How's that?" roared the Fourth Form, with one voice.

"My hat!"

"Out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Harry Wharton looked dazed, carried out his bat—clean bowled first ball by Bunter!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. The Climax!

BUNTER!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well bowled, Bunter!"

"What price ducks' eggs?"

Marjorie looked inquiringly at Harry as

he joined the Cliff House girls, a somewhat disconsolate expression on his handsome face. It was a new experience to the captain of the Remove to be bowled first ball of the first over, and that Bunter should have sent down the ball seemed like insult added to injury.

"How ever did Bunter do that?" asked Marjorie.

"A giddy fluke?" suggested Miss Clara.

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"No," he said honestly, "it was no fluke—it was jolly good bowling. I never knew Bunter could bowl. I never knew he could do a lot of things he's been doing lately. He can bowl—no mistake about that!"

"He's been astonishing the natives lately," grinned Vernon-Smith. "He's beaten Peter Todd with the gloves on, knocked out Coker of the Fifth at jiu-jitsu, does regular exercise in the morning, tells the truth—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But this is the climax! My only summer hat!" yelled the Bounder. "There goes Nugent!"

Frank Nugent had followed Wharton. He stayed for one ball, which spread-eagled his wicket. Frank came out, looking dazed. "I'm dreaming," he said to Hurree Singh, the next man in, "dreaming fearful dreams! Look out for that fat villain, or you'll get the same!"

"The look-outfulness will be terrific, my esteemed chum!"

And the Nabob of Bhanipur looked out, with all his eyes, as he stood up to the fat bowler. But the "terrific look-outfulness," as Inky described it in his weird English, did not serve him. His leg stump was whipped right out of the ground, and the dusky junior gave it a dolorous look, and returned to the pavilion amid a wild roar.

"Well bowled, Bunter!"

"The hat-trick, by gum!"

"Hooray!" shrieked Temple of the Fourth.

"What price ducks' eggs? Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fourth-Formers were in ecstasies. They were beating the Remove at last. Three wickets down for nil in the first over! It was an experience that had never fallen to the lot of Harry Wharton's team before. They rubbed their eyes.

It was true—the deadly truth—three down for nil! There was but one consolation. That deadly bowler was, after all, a fellow in their own Form—a Removeite. But he was playing for the Fourth, and at this rate the Fourth were going to win the match hands down.

"For goodness' sake stop him, Smithy!" said Harry Wharton imploringly, as the Bounder buttoned his gloves, to follow Inky in.

"I'll try," said Vernon-Smith soberly. "But I don't know. That chap's delivery is the finest I've ever seen. I can't believe it's Bunter. It must be his ghost—or else he's hypnotised, or mad, or squiffy! Bunter never could bowl!"

"He's bowling now," said Wharton ruefully. "Who'd have thought it?"

Vernon-Smith went to the wickets. He did not try his usual policy of hitting out for runs. He was only too glad to be able to stop the bowling. And the Remove fellows gave the Bounder a cheer when he stopped three balls in succession, though no runs came.

It was not like Smithy's usual performance with the willow; but under the circumstances, it was very creditable.

Temple thumped Bunter on his fat shoulders and the field crossed over.

"Good—good—good!" he ejaculated. "This beats everything, Bunter! By Jove, I wish you were in the Fourth! Look here, you've got to make an effort to get your remove, and get into the Fourth! We want you!"

Bunter grinned. He had only one day more at Greyfriars to do it in, but he did not tell Cecil Temple that.

Fry bowled the second over against Bob Cherry. Now the Remove were gratified with some hitting. Bob Cherry could deal with Fry's bowling, and he knocked it all over the field, and twelve runs rewarded him.

Harry Wharton drew a breath of relief. The Remove had broken their duck, at all events. But now Bunter went on again at the other end to bowl to the Bounder. All eyes were upon Vernon-Smith. His powers as a bat were well-known; and all

were eager to see how he would deal with Bunter in this miraculous state. The news of that extraordinary display by Bunter had spread, and fellows were coming from far and near to see the match, and to look on and marvel.

The only fellow among the buzzing crowd who did not marvel was a fat fag of the Second Form—Bunter minor. He grinned. Sammy Bunter had kept his own counsel; the third shilling reposed in his pocket, the price of his silence, and he was willing to keep it dark for a whole term, if necessary, at that price. But he grinned and chuckled as he heard the fellows discussing Bunter's marvellous form. Sammy had always known that his cousin Wally was a first-class cricketer, so it was no surprise to him. But the rest of the crowd were overwhelmed with wonder.

The Bounder stopped ball after ball with sedulous care, but, as he afterwards confessed, every one of them was a "twister," and gave him all he could do to stop it. It was at the last ball of the over that Vernon-Smith ventured to hit out, and he repented it. For the fat bowler was seen to give a jump and a run and a jump again, a fat hand swept in the air—smack!—and there was a yell.

"Well caught!"

"Caught and bowled, Bunter! Hurrah!"

"Oh, my only hat!" gasped Vernon-Smith, and he walked off, frowning. Four down for 12, and all that dozen taken by Bob Cherry off Fry's bowling. Fry bowled again to Bob now, with a similar result. Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull scored 14 between them in that over, so the Remove score jumped to 26. Then Bunter was put on to bowl again. Temple did not spare him. Bunter was to bowl as many overs as the laws of the game allowed. Just then Temple would have been quite willing to remodel the laws of cricket, and let Bunter bowl from start to finish.

Johnny Bull was the first to take a run from Bunter's bowling. It was only a single, but the Remove fellows cheered him heartily. Harry Wharton clapped his hands.

Then a lucky catch by Temple deprived Bob Cherry of his wicket—five down for 27. Bulstrode went in to partner Johnny Bull.

Bulstrode stopped Bunter's bowling for the rest of the over. Dabney bowled to Johnny Bull, and the score jumped to 36. The last was a single, so Johnny had the bowling again when Bunter went on. Bunter looked as fresh as a daisy. His exertions had not told on him in the least, so far, and the juniors marvelled as they saw it. Johnny Bull was famous as a stone-waller, and he stone-walled to Bunter; but at the last ball of the over, the fat bowler found a crevice in the stone wall, so to speak. Johnny Bull's bails went down, and the Fourth yelled "How's that?" in huge delight. Six down! Scarcely half an hour had passed, and the Remove had lost six wickets for 36 runs. It was, as Temple had gleefully foretold, an eye-opener for them.

Bulstrode and Mark Linley made the running now; but Bunter was at point, and his eyes were gleaming over his glasses. Bulstrode had taken two from Fry's bowling, and when he hit out again the batsmen started running; but there was a yell at point, as the fat fieldsman held up the ball.

"How's that?"

"Well caught!"

"My only hat!" gasped Harry Wharton. "It—it—it's like a giddy nightmare! That was as good a catch as I've ever seen. Seven down for 38. Man in, Pen!"

Penfold went in to join Linley. He added six to the score. Then the fat bowler was at work again, and Mark Linley was on his guard. There were ringing cheers when the Lancashire lad scored a four from Bunter, and followed it up with a three. That brought Penfold to the batting end, and the next ball clean-bowled him. Eight down for 45. Peter Todd came in, and added two, and then another two; but the last ball of the over scattered his bails, and the Remove were nine down for 49.

"Last man in!"

Tom Brown, the New Zealander, joined



BOWLED BUNTER! Harry Wharton grinned as he took up his position, and Bunter went to bowl. Whiz! Swish! Wharton swiped at the ball—where he was, certain it was—but it wasn't there! Crash! He had been clean bowled first ball. "How's that?" "Out!" (See Chapter 3.)

Mark Linley. It was the last struggle of the Remove, and Linley and Tom Brown did their best. The score jumped to 56, and then—

"Well caught, Bunter!"

Mark Linley was out. The innings was over, Tom Brown being not out; total 56. The Fourth-Formers almost hugged Bunter. He had more than fulfilled their wildest hopes.

As the field came off, Bunter was surrounded by indignant Removites. "You fat boulder, why didn't you tell us you could play?"

Bunter grinned.

"But I did tell you. I told you lots of times. I asked you to play me, Wharton. Don't you remember?"

"Well, ye-e-es; but you've always been such a howling duffer at cricket," stammered Harry. "But you'll jolly well play for us in our next match—I know that!" And Bunter grinned more broadly at the thought of the surprise that would befall the Removites when the genuine Billy played for them in their next match.

The Fourth-Formers were eager to begin their innings. Temple opened with himself and Dabney. If possible, he intended to win the match with Fourth Form batting. Bunter had kept down the Remove score, and so had given Temple a chance. The captain of the Fourth wanted to beat the Remove on his own, if he could, so far as the batting was concerned.

"Hallo, ain't I batting?" Bunter demanded.

"Later, my son, later!" said Temple loftily. "We don't really need you at the wickets, and this is a Fourth Form match, anyway."

Bunter blinked at him indignantly.

"My hat! Look here, I want to bat!"

"Later, later—perhaps!" said Temple, with a wave of the hand.

The fat junior snorted.

"No 'perhaps' about it, the way you bat!" he growled.

Bunter was right. Whether Bunter's batting powers equalled his wonderful powers as a bowler, the Removites could not guess; but they feared so. And so they were glad enough to see that he did not go to the wickets. With the Fourth Form batting they knew how to deal. Hurree Janset Ram Singh took the first over, and the lordly Temple was down for two, and came off looking very crestfallen.

"Won't want me to bat—what?" chuckled Bunter.

"Oh, rats!" said Temple crossly. "Man in, Dab!"

Dabney went in, and came out with two to his credit. Fry followed him in, and was clean-bowled first ball. The Remove were beginning well. Harry Wharton smiled at the looks of the Fourth Form batsmen.

Three wickets down for 4 runs did not look as if they would beat the Remove score, moderate as it was.

"Want me to bat?" chuckled Bunter.

Temple pretended not to hear. He sent Smith major in next. Smith major survived for a couple of overs, and was then caught out by Harry Wharton. The Remove players were bucking up, and doing their very best, and their very best was very good. Temple realised that he had only one chance—playing Bunter! And he beckoned to the fat junior.

"You're next, Bunter!"

"Jolly good mind to stay out till last now!" grunted Bunter.

"Oh, play up, old chap!"

"All right! Gimme my bat!"

And Bunter went on. Another Fourth Form wicket fell. Five down for 4 runs. It was, as Inky remarked, "terrific." But now the bowling was coming to Bunter, and all eyes were upon him to see how he shaped at the wicket. Inky's bowling was first-class. But Bunter dealt with it quite easily. The Removites started leather-hunting in that over for the first time. It finished with 15 runs to Bunter's credit. His pace between the wickets was marvellous. The crowd simply gasped as they looked on. How he could carry his weight at that pace was a marvel. And as they remembered the slow and lumbering motions of the Bunter of old, the fellows asked one another if they were dreaming.

Bunter was at the batting end again now, and Tom Brown tried him with every kind of ball. The New Zealand junior was

a splendid bowler, and his bowling was fast, and generally dangerous. But Bunter did not find any danger. He took 11 runs from Tom Brown, and so was still batting when Inky bowled again. The Fourth Form score stood at 30 already, most of them due to Temple's wonderful recruit.

"Sure, it bates Banagher!" said Micky Desmond. "He bats as well as he bowls; and, faith, he never could do either before!"

Six for the next over; and then Jones secundus was getting the bowling. He did not get much of it, as Tom Brown caught him out at the second ball. Six down for 36. Then Scott ran a single, and brought Bunter to the batting end. The amount of running he had done did not seem to have tired the fat junior. Perspiration was streaming down his fat face; but, otherwise, he seemed quite fresh. And he made hay of the bowling for the rest of the over. The score stood at 46. Scott was clean-bowled, and Turner came in. Harry Wharton caught him out. Llewellyn of the Fourth was next man in, and he succeeded in adding four, making the total 50, and then he fell.

"Nine down for 50," chuckled Bob Cherry. "We'll do it yet. They want seven to win, and it's last man in!"

"Only Bunter's got the bowling!" grunted Wharton.

Temple was looking on very anxiously now. It was pretty certain that Bunter would not lose his wicket. He seemed invulnerable. But the Fourth-Former at the other end was not much use against the Remove bowling. If Bunter ran a single, the game was up. Temple repented very sincerely at that moment that he had not put Bunter on to open the innings.

And he feared, too, that Bunter might get even with him by deliberately taking a single, and leaving the batting to his Fourth Form partner. He watched very anxiously. Bunter was getting the bowling from Inky, and he was hitting out. Four—crossing the pitch like lightning—and the ball came in a second too late. Then two, and there was a roar from the Fourth. They had tied! And Bunter had the batting still. He was loyal to the last. Inky sent down the ball without much hope, and Bunter snicked it away through the slip, and ran the one that was wanted.

Then he came off with his bat tucked under his fat arm, grinning. There was a roar of cheering. The first time there had been a cheer for Bunter on the Greyfriars' cricket-ground was that afternoon, but now there was no grudging it.

"Bravo, Bunter! Bravo!"

"You fat boulder, you're in the Remove team after this!" said Harry Wharton.

"Well, I told you we'd beat you, Wharton," said Temple airily.

"Oh, rather!" chuckled Dabney.

And the Fourth Form cricketers walked off, very well satisfied. It was Bunter who had won the match, as a matter of fact; but it counted as a win for the Fourth, of course, and that was what Temple, Dabney & Co. wanted. And so they rejoiced. Marjorie and Clara congratulated Bunter on his wonderful performance, and, to their surprise, found him quite modest and unassuming about it. But Harry Wharton & Co. were not surprised. They had given up being surprised by anything that Bunter might do now.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Same Old Bunter!

THE next day Bunter walked out of the gates of Greyfriars by himself in the morning. The fat junior was, by this time, so popular in his Form that he could have had a "Sunday walk" with anybody he chose. But he preferred his own company on this especial morning. If the Remove fellows could have seen him when he arrived at Courtfield Station, they might have guessed the reason. For the fat junior waited on the platform for a train in, and when it stopped, he greeted another fat fellow exactly like himself, but dressed in grey, with a straw hat and a cane, and a flower in his coat.

"Here we are again, Billy!"

Billy Bunter blinked at Wally Bunter.

"Gone all right?" he asked.

"Topping!"

"Had a good time?"

Wally Bunter sighed.

"Oh, ripping! The time of my life,"

he said. "Blessed if I don't feel inclined to pitch you under the train, Billy, and keep it up for good!"

Billy Bunter chuckled.

"Well, I'm blessed if I know how you found it a good time, but I suppose it's a matter of taste," he said. "I've enjoyed myself first-rate. I'd have been jolly glad to stay at Margate, and leave you here for the rest of the term. If it could be fixed—"

Wally shook his head.

"Got to get back to old Hookit's office," he said. "Besides, the money wouldn't run to it, unless you could pay your own expenses at Margate."

"Ahem! Quite stony! In fact, I've run up rather a little bill at your lodgings. Of course, you don't mind, considering that you've had a topping time here—"

"All the same if I did, I expect," growled Wally. "Well, let's get changed: My train goes in a quarter of an hour."

They hurried out of the station, and changed clothes in the old barn off the Courtfield Road. Wally Bunter, in his own person again, took the train for Margate; and Billy Bunter rolled away towards Greyfriars.

Harry Wharton & Co. spotted him as he came in. They came up to him with surprised looks.

"What have you been doing to your face?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"M-m-my face!"

"Yes; it's sunburnt all over."

"Ahem! Is it? The—the sun's very hot this morning," stammered Bunter.

But the juniors stared at him blankly. However hot the sun was, it was certainly extraordinary that Bunter should have become sunburnt to that extent in a couple of hours. However, there it was, extraordinary or not.

Sammy Bunter met his major as he rolled towards the School House. Sammy held out a fat paw as usual, and Bunter blinked at it through his big spectacles.

"What's that for?" he demanded.

"My bob!" said Sammy.

"Your bob! You silly young ass, you'll get a thick ear if you ask me for a bob!" growled the Owl of the Remove.

Sammy jumped and stared at him.

"Oh!" he said. "It's you!"

"Of course it's me, you fat idiot," said Billy Bunter.

"Oh, I know all about it!" chuckled Sammy; and he walked away—minus his usual shilling. He was not likely to be able to extract any shillings from the genuine William George.

Billy Bunter was amazed by the respect and friendliness he received from the Removites that afternoon. He could not understand it at first. But references to the late happenings enlightened him, and he realised that his Cousin Wally had considerably improved his reputation for him during his absence. And, finding himself a person of some consequence now, Billy Bunter naturally assumed cocky airs.

"I knew it wouldn't last," said Bob Cherry, with a sad shake of the head. "The change was too sudden! Bunter's the same old Bunter again now."

He was! The next day, after morning lessons, he scanned the letter-rack, and announced that he had been expecting a postal-order, and borrowed ten shillings from Lord Mauleverer on the strength of it. Evidently he was the same old Bunter. Having heard of the heroic rescue, and Miss Penelope Primrose's gratitude and admiration for the same, he borrowed Wharton's bicycle without leave, and pedalled over to Cliff House on Tuesday, and came back with a huge cake. And this time his minor did not get a "whack," by any means; neither did he share it with Study No. 7.

The change, evidently, was not lasting. But even if the Owl of the Remove was developing once more his old traits, still, it was not to be supposed that he had lost his skill as a cricketer; and on Wednesday afternoon Wharton asked him to play in a match with the Shell. Bunter consented willingly. He had always believed himself a good cricketer.

But his performances at that match made the Remove fellows almost weep.

He was bowled first ball at the wicket; and when he was put on to bowl against the Shell, he nearly brained mid-on with the first ball, and point with the second.

(Continued on page 26.)

THE CHASE AFTER THE LITTER!

Many obstacles and perils are strewn before the path of the two daring foresters, Guy and Allan-a-Dale, but undaunted they follow on the track of the litter with the blue curtains in which lie the captives of the usurper Prince John.

TWO CHUMS' DARING!



Introduction.

GUY FITZHUGH, a young ward of King Richard Cœur de Lion, unable to tolerate the tyranny of Sir Humphrey de Brionne any longer, has made his escape from the castle of his rascally guardian, fled into the forest of Sherwood, and joined the great band of outlaws under the leadership of ROBIN HOOD. Here he meets many friends—Allan-a-Dale, Friar Tuck, Will Scarlet, and two wandering minstrels, Sweeney, the harper, and Isobel.

About this time King Richard had been imprisoned in Normandy when returning from a crusade into the Holy Land, and Prince John had become master of Merry England by underhand means. John is hated by many, but none like him less than ROBIN HOOD THE OUTLAW.

Many times the prince's men-at-arms have come into conflict with the merry men of Sherwood, and many times they have been defeated. But a day comes when John's great following turn the tables on the outlaws, and the foresters are driven into the woods, to seek shelter in their secret hiding-places. But John is not satisfied with this; he kidnaps MAID MARIAN and ISOBEL, the minstrel, and takes them to KENILWORTH with him, where he is to hold a tournament, and where he hopes to trap Robin Hood.

When Robin hears the news he sets forth, masquerading under the title of Sir Nameless of Cumberland, with Guy Fitzhugh and one or two other trusty men, and follows the prince to Kenilworth. But Earl John discovers the real identity of the nameless knight and his band after the latter has distinguished himself at the tournament, and sends an army of men-at-arms to round them up. But the outlaws escape, save Friar Tuck, who is captured and brought before John at a banquet.

The friar is requested to give some samples of his powers with the quarterstaff during the feasting, and he does so.

As the hour grows late the revellers fall asleep round the tables, leaving only Sir Geoffrey de Rushbrook and Tuck awake. Sir Geoffrey is a friend of the outlaws. He steals over to the friar and whispers: "Now is your chance to escape from the castle."

Now Read On.

How Friar Tuck was Summoned to a Sick-bed, and Used His Wits to Some Purpose.

FRIAR TUCK pressed his hands to his temples, which throbbed violently; but before he could reply, from a door in the wall there glided a bearded figure with a conical head-dress and a flowing robe.

His hands were clasped, and there was anxiety—nay, even terror—on his face which deepened as he saw the condition of the revellers.

He was the leech who had been in attendance upon Sir Humphrey de Brionne ever since they had borne him from the lists, and he had come to tell them that Sir Humphrey was dying, and had asked for a priest.

Sir Geoffrey de Rushbrook pressed Friar Tuck's foot beneath the table, and the friar rose.

"His well for his soul that I am here!" said the friar, his face lengthening. "Lead me to him!"

And following the agitated doctor, he was soon in the bare, comfortless, cold room on

the floor above, where, on a rude bed, he found the injured man sitting bolt upright, to his great astonishment.

"I shall cheat you yet!" said the baron in a husky voice. "I thought a moment ago I had run my last course, but some strength has come back to me. Give me a draught of wine. You have half poisoned me with your physic, Master Leech!"

The Norman baron could not have been a very good patient at the best of times, but in addition to his wounds he had learned the secret of his opponent's identity, and his mighty rage at being overthrown by the outlaw had thrown him into a high fever.

Friar Tuck withdrew to one of the narrow, unglazed windows set in an angle, so that no arrow could penetrate the room fired from the outside, and as the cool night air played upon his brow, he put his face to the slit, and drank it in in greedy mouthfuls.

Then from out of the night came the far-off note of a bugle horn.

Friar Tuck heard a horn blow in the distance, and he knew it was a signal to the band to gather together, and a feeling of joy took possession of him. Although the horn was far away—more than a mile off, he judged it—he knew that he was not deserted.

He peered round the corner of the embrasure, and looked at the rude wooden bed on which the baron turned and tossed, and saw him seize the cup from the leech's hand and drain its contents with the thirst of a fevered man.

"Now, you dog of a leech," growled the baron, "I think I can sleep. Where is that parchment roll that I bade you place beneath my pillow?"

"It is here, my lord," said the old man, drawing it forth and placing it in Sir Humphrey's hands.

"Good!" said the baron. "Now put it under the pillow once more, and get out of my sight until I summon you!"

A candle burned by the bedside, and, turning over with his face to the wall, the baron settled himself to sleep, and, almost before the leech had stolen to the embrasure on tiptoe, Sir Humphrey de Brionne was snoring a deep bass note.

Powerful man as Friar Tuck was, when the leech came to him he was all of a tremble from head to foot, for a sudden idea had seized him, and, drawing the leech into the opening, he put his lips to his ear.

"Thanks to your skill, there is no need for my presence here," he whispered. "But I have at my lodging in the town a balm of miraculous cure for all wounds. It is a profound secret, known only to the brethren of my order. I will hence and get me a bottle of it, and return anon before my lord awakes."

The leech clasped his thin hands in ecstasy.

"By the beard of Æsculapius, if you will do this, you will make me your debtor for life, for never did I minister to so violent a man as this same Sir Humphrey. Three times has he taken me by the throat and well-nigh choked me. Oh, haste—haste, I pray thee, for possibly when he wakes will be a good time to apply the remedy!"

"It is best of all," said Friar Tuck, nodding his head with great apparent gravity. "But thou hadst best see me to the gate, for I came in early, and if they have

changed the guard, peradventure they will not let me pass."

"Let us hasten, then, for if I am not here to obey Sir Humphrey's call, methinks you will have to apply your balm to my poor carcase."

"Get thee to the door," said Friar Tuck, "while I listen to his breathing, for of a truth I also have some knowledge of the healing art."

The leech did as he was bid, and Friar Tuck, approaching the edge of the pallet cautiously, bent over, taking care to keep his huge bulk between the bed and the impatient leech.

Bending over the sleeping man, Friar Tuck softly drew the roll of parchment from its hiding-place under the pillow, placed it unseen in the bosom of his gown, and joined his companion at the top of the stone stairs, drawing his cowl well over his face as he did so.

Groping their way down they came into the banqueting-hall, where of all that company Sir Geoffrey de Rushbrook alone sat upright in his chair. Even his head was bent forward as if in sleep, but for all that his keen eyes followed the passage of the two figures across the end of the hall, and he heaved a sigh of relief as he saw them disappear through the door that led down to the ground floor. He listened, but there was no sound, and presently the leech returned, looked at the table askance, and ascended to his patient's room, his steps echoing faintly amid the stony silence of the place.

The guard had grumbled at being roused from their slumbers; but, seeing nothing amiss with the brown-frocked friar—who, moreover, was accompanied by the earl's leech—they let him out at the gateway; and the brown figure passed away into the night!

DISCOVERED!



Guy and Allan-a-Dale sat down at a small table with their faces turned towards the windows of the inn. Suddenly a curtain was pulled aside and Isobel looked out and waved to the trackers. Guy leant forward eagerly. "She has seen us at last," he said. (See page 25.)

Riding at foot pace, the two horsemen approached the outskirts of the town, where two rows of booths and pavilions were now sunk in slumber.

"Softly, Guy," said Allan-a-Dale, in a low voice. "I don't doubt much that we have come upon a fool's errand. 'Tis bad enough that we have seen nothing of the band, and know not whether Robin himself escaped. Remember, if we raise an alarm, there is nothing for it but to ride like the wind."

"No matter," returned Guy. "We know now that the litter rests within the walls of Banbury Castle to-night, from whence it will be easy to take up the clue, and I am very loth to leave Kenilworth without some news of Friar Tuck."

And he shook his fist at the square keep that loomed blackly up on the hill against the sky.

"Hist! Someone moves among the tents yonder," said Allan-a-Dale. "Remember we are two lads of Sir Geoffrey de Rushbrook's company riding back to the town after a little night adventure of our own. That tale will suffice enough."

They rode on side by side and presently saw a figure slink behind one of the pavilions at their approach.

"Good-night, friend!" said Guy, in a cheery voice. "Didst think we would harm thee?"

The man uttered something in a surly tone, and came towards them.

"Ye be out late o' nights, young sirs," he said.

"Not so loud, man! You have been young yourself once. But tell us, what news? Have they taken the outlaw? When we rode away to Coventry to-day, they were just carrying the rogue Friar Tuck to the castle. Is he yet hanged?"

"Marry, come up!" said the man, drawing closer. "You seem over eager for news of the ruffian. And by what road have ye come from Coventry? The town lies not in that direction. And yet one other question. How know ye 'twas Friar Tuck they took to-day, unless ye be also of the outlaw's band? Ho, there! The watch—the watch!"

And the man raised his voice to its highest pitch, at the same time seizing the bridle of Guy's horse.

The lads' hands flew to their sword-hilts; but ere they could draw them a peculiar whistle came from the darkness, and a huge figure that had been stealing silently in the wake of the watchman—for such he proved to be—suddenly let out with the full force of his brawny arm, caught the man a blow under the ear that hurled him senseless through the walls of the nearest tent, and as they heard answering shouts and running footsteps in the distance, Friar Tuck delivered himself of a low chuckle.

"Not a word," he said, "until we are in safety. Give you each of me a stirrup-leather, and now away! I warrant we will soon outstrip those clumsy fools, and gain the woods before a horse can be saddled."

How the Foresters Overtook the Litter, and Formed a Bold Scheme.

THE soft turf deadened the thud of the horses' hoofs, and when the occupants of the nearest booths hummed like a hive of bees about the bruised and shaking watchman, they could listen to his tale with wonder, for the bold outlaws had vanished from their sight.

"I told you so," laughed Friar Tuck, as they splashed through a winding stream and mounted a grassy slope that brought them to a fringe of woodland. "Pause a moment, good lads, for I must e'en take my breath. Listen! The wind brings no sound of pursuit, nor will it, until they have carried the news to Earl John, and then, mark you, horsemen will ride forth in every direction; so forward again. I have a most confounded stitch in my side, but I doubt not that will wear off. Now, tell me all you know of Robin and the band."

As they continued their way the boys told him how Robin had ridden off, and how the rest of the outlaws had so mysteriously disappeared, and how, after searching in vain for any trace of them, the boys had followed the litter, and learned that it would stop the night at the Castle of Banbury, in Oxfordshire.

"Well, as for our leader," said the friar, when he had heard their news, "'tis like

looking for a needle in a bottle of hay to search for Robin at any time, as his enemies well know. Let us make the best of our way after the litter, and, since you are mounted and I am not, when we have covered ten miles of the road we will part company. I will undertake to light upon our master, and he will not be far behind you. Your work is to keep the litter in sight and trust me; you will hear from us between this and London Town."

Accordingly, when they had left Warwick far behind, and were in the neighbourhood of Bishop's Itchington, the friar, who had kept up bravely with them all the time, called a halt.

"Yonder is a village," he said, his voice husky with exhaustion. "There will I go and rest me awhile; while you push on upon your quest. Remember that all depends on you, for if the ladies are once within the walls of the Tower, not all the Robin Hoods in the world can get them out again."

When the litter with the blue curtains rode into the castle yard at Banbury, the seneschal was hard put to it to find quarters for the hundred men-at-arms who escorted it. Full forty of them had to be billeted in the little town, where they sat up half the night, revelling, to the terror of the peaceable inhabitants.

Tongues will wag when the wine flows freely, and consequently, when, an hour after, the litter and its escort had set out again upon their way, and a serving-man, in brown, dismounted at the principal hostelry and called for a bottle of ale, it

THROUGH THE SECRET TRAP-DOOR!



Dame Winifred stooped down and beckoned to the two foresters through the trap-door. "They are ready to see you now," she whispered. Guy went up first, and Allan followed, after casting a quick glance round.

was not long before the said serving-man had discovered whether the litter was bound, and, paying for his draught, he rode away, singing a song, and joined a young gentleman clad in purple, who was toying with a hawk perched upon his wrist.

"Now, friend Guy," said Allan-a-Dale, his face radiant with exultation, "'tis ho! for Leighton Buzzard, whither the rogues have gone; and by great good-fortune, my Aunt Winifred and her husband keep the largest inn in that town, which ought to favour us."

And so it came about that Sir Roger Fitz-Peter and worthy Robert of Rouen, coming forth from their quarters after they had seen their charge safely bestowed for the night, returned the courteous greetings of a young country gentleman, who, with his servant, were dismounting at the inn door.

Sir Roger Fitz-Peter paused, and eyed the young men from under his beetling brows.

"I am in two minds, Robert of Rouen," he said, "whether we should allow strange guests at the inn, or whether we should not claim it in the earl's name. We know not who these fellows be."

"Tut, man!" said the grised soldier. "When you've borne harness as long as I have, you'll not let the sight of a simple lad, and his servitor excite thee; and the inn is as full of our own people as a spider's web of flies!"

The honest old soldier would have been so easy in his mind could he have peeped into the kitchen of the inn and watched the movements of the two newcomers.

A tall, comely woman turned round at the sound of their footsteps, and well-nigh let fall the spit she held in her hand at sight of Allan-a-Dale.

"Gramercy!" she cried, her face wreathing itself with a bright smile of welcome. But Allan-a-Dale raised his hand in warning, and, striding across the kitchen, whispered quickly:

"Hold, Aunt Winifred! Think not but that I am glad to see my mother's sister as thou art to see thy sister's son; but I am here on a strange errand, and must have instant speech with thee in private."

Dame Winifred raised her black eyebrows, and made a despairing motion with her hands.

"What mean you, lad? I am pestered out of my life already, what with the place full of soldiers, and two poor ladies upstairs whom these men have brought hither. There is not a corner in the inn where so much as a mouse could whisper to his mate unseen; but hold, nephew, for here is a pretty gentleman awaiting to be served." And she curtsied to Guy, who had remained in the doorway, looking on.

"Trouble yourself not about him," said Allan-a-Dale, with a smile; "that is my master, or, rather, my very good friend. We are here disguised, aunt, and on account of those same poor ladies you speak of. Was there ever a woman that did not love a tale of scandal? And, by the mass, we have that for your private ear!"

"Out upon it!" said the good dame. "Then you must come with me to your uncle's chamber." And, opening a little door near the fireplace, she pointed to the room beyond, into which Allan and Guy passed quickly, Dame Winifred following, and closing the door behind her.

On a pallet, under the window looking on to a garden, lay a gaunt man under a snowy coverlet. A wan smile lit up his features, and he held out a thin, transparent hand to Allan-a-Dale. The good man of the inn had been crippled by a runaway horse more than two years before, and now lay a helpless log, scarcely able to raise himself upon his elbows, and compelled to leave the management of the hostelry to his active wife.

In a few words the foresters told the good dame everything.

"Help you, forsooth!" cried Dame Winifred. "Marry, that I will! But for the love of our blessed Lady, do not bring trouble upon this house, where, indeed, there is trouble enough already!"

"Never fear, good aunt," said Allan-a-Dale, kissing her heartily on both cheeks. "I knew we should find a friend in you, and what we do will not be done here at all; only, between now and cock-crow you must gain us access to the captives, and you must have two gowns that will fit them passably well. Marry, you, friend Guy, and

I are much of a build with these fair ladies! Once we can change dresses with them, and draw their wimples over our heads, I'll wager my soul that we shall take their places in the litter to-morrow without their guard being a penny the wiser. Nay, even though Sir Roger FitzPeter did hand us to our seats himself!"

Guy's face reflected the astonishment that showed itself on Dame Winifred's, for this was the first time he had heard of the idea.

"Gramercy!" cried the landlady. "My poor head swims with the thought of it! As for access to the ladies, 'tis simple enough, for they are bestowed in the garden-room, which hath a little secret door leading into the fireplace that these rascally men-at-arms know nothing of. For the gowns and the rest, I must have time to obtain them. Now you shall break your fast, and in an hour's time I will tell you what I have devised."

A clamour in the kitchen sent Dame Winifred bustling out to supply the demands of the thirsty soldiers, and, obeying the whisper which she bestowed upon them as she left the room, Guy and his companions drew aside the window-curtain, and, climbing out, sauntered across the garden, and sat down in a bower, overgrown with trailing creepers.

They had not been there many minutes, when a serving-wench brought them a wine-

began to glow redly from the hostelry. Sir Roger FitzPeter, who was very much on the alert, came himself to visit the sentinels, whom he had posted round the village, and, rising to their feet, the two lads sauntered carelessly into the inn kitchen, where they were met by Dame Winifred, who made a sign to them to follow her.

The hostelry was well provided with secret doors and little stairways concealed in the thickness of the wall, and up one of these she led them, until they reached a little, low-pitched room, with an unglazed window, looking on to the village street.

"I must not be away a moment, lest my absence be remarked," said the landlady, in a flutter of excitement.

And, pressing her hand on what appeared to be a partition of solid woodwork, one of the panels opened, and they saw the well-known green kirtle and scarlet whimple of Isobel, the minstrel girl.

"Now, mark you," said Dame Winifred, "only one of you must enter at a time, and the other keep watch here. Should there come a step upon the landing without, close the panel with all haste. That black-browed knight who seems to command the party has his eyes and ears on everything."

Then she went out, closing the door behind her; and, holding a finger to his lips

"Ah, lady," said Guy, his eyes sparkling, "that is like old Robert of Rouen, for nobler heart never beat beneath a mailcoat than his."

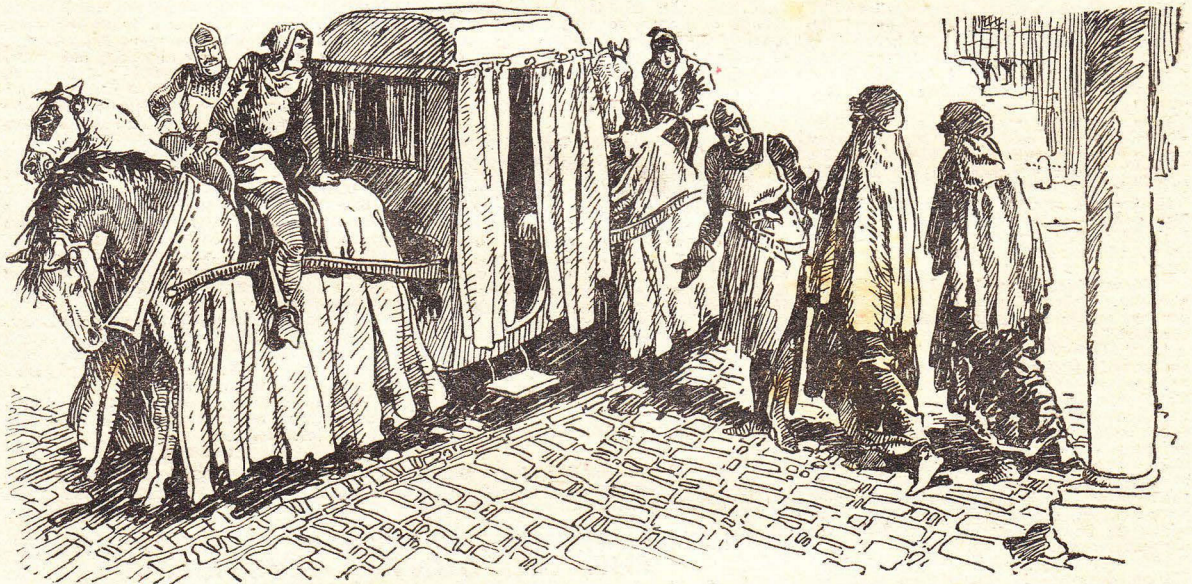
Then they plied him with questions about the tourney and Robin Hood, to all of which Guy replied as well as he was able; and then, at a warning cough from Allan-a-Dale, he slipped back through the panel, which he closed, and the first part of their adventure was successfully accomplished. The captives were warned, they themselves knew what lay before them, and all else depended on their entering the horse-litter without their captors discovering the deception that was being practised upon them.

As for the future, neither Guy nor his companion troubled themselves much about that. They knew that Robin and the band would not be far away, and if they did not find some means of escape before the gates of London came in sight, they must hold themselves clumsy fools and no true foresters.

Of What Befell the Party

NIGHT had fallen. The lights of the little town of Leighton Buzzard had gone out one by one, and Robert of Rouen had laid himself down upon his bed with his drawn sword beside him, when Dame Winifred came into the

THE PRISONERS OF THE LITTER WITH THE BLUE CURTAINS!



There was a clash of armour in the street, the door of the inn opened, and Sir Roger FitzPeter entered. He bade the two "ladies" follow him. Drawing their long robes about them they did so in silence, fearing at every second that their disguise would be seen through. In the courtyard the litter waited for them. (See page 26.)

jar, and returned in all haste to the company of the men-at-arms.

"By the rood," whispered Allan-a-Dale, as he raised the drinking-horn to his lips, "yon is the window of the garden-room straight before us, and there is pretty Isobel, gazing down in our direction!"

"And, by Heaven, she sees us, too! Look how she signs with her hand, and has called Maid Marian to the window!"

There was no doubt about it. Isobel had not only seen, but had recognised Guy under his disguise.

Guy's heart beat wildly, and it was with an effort that he restrained himself from rushing and speaking up to them, for the window itself was not more than ten feet from the ground; but at that moment one of the men-at-arms, who had forsaken his post to join his comrades in a mighty flagon of nut-brown ale, returned, wiping his mouth on the back of his hand, and taking up his position immediately beneath the casement, scowled at the outlaws, who forthwith busied themselves with their winecup, and looked no more at the window.

It was getting dusk now, and the lights

to enjoin silence, Guy FitzHugh slipped into the adjoining room. He was rather staggered when Maid Marian threw her plump arms round his neck and kissed him soundly; but Isobel's greeting was more demure.

"Oh, brave Master FitzHugh," she said, holding out her shapely hand. "Dame Winifred has told us all, and in the clothes-press yonder are two gowns which, as soon as night has fallen we are to put on. For myself I would rather die than you should run so great a risk for me; but I suppose that all my poor appeal will not turn you from your purpose."

"Wild horses cannot do that, Mistress Isobel!" said Guy, in a whisper. "But tell us how we must demean ourselves before these ruffians."

"As for that, 'tis easy," said Maid Marian, "for we have held ourselves laughably aloof, and have exchanged no word, either with the rogue FitzPeter nor with that blunt, honest soldier who accompanies him, and who, to say truth, seems more than half-ashamed of the part he has to play."

bed-chamber of her invalid husband on tip-toe.

"Alack," she whispered, "they have posted three men in the passage outside the ladies' door, to say nothing of a dozen more who keep careful watch all round the house. I must e'en get you up by another way, and thank goodness, there it is!"

She pointed to the low ceiling, and, looking upward, Guy and Allan saw a square trap-door set in its centre. The shutters of the room were closed, and the curtains drawn tightly across them, and Allan, finding a ladder in one corner, placed it immediately under the trap.

"Now hold it securely," said the landlady, "for I must mount me and prepare them for your coming."

Allan held the ladder securely in position while Dame Winifred ascended, and she had not been gone many minutes when, by the low glimmer of firelight on the hearth, they saw her stooping down and beckoning to them through this square hole.

Guy went up first, and Allan followed on his heels, and there they found the ladies

had undergone a complete transformation, being now habited in garments which Dame Winifred had secured while their own lay upon the floor.

The moment Maid Marian and Isobel had disappeared down the ladder, Guy lowered the trapdoor, and, casting off his purple tunic, proceeded to array himself in Isobel's green robe. Allan-a-Dale adjusted the red whimple about his head and shoulders, and, in spite of the danger they were about to run, the forester could not resist a merry smile playing about his handsome face; for when Guy was so habited he looked like a very pretty girl, his black dyed hair completing his resemblance to Isobel.

With nimble fingers Allan-a-Dale then dressed himself, pulling Maid Marian's capuchin well about his face, and, after a very minute examination of each other to see that there was nothing awry or likely to betray them, they sat down on the edge of the bed to await developments.

Guy had sunk back into a heavy slumber, when he felt Allan pluck him sharply by the sleeve.

"The cocks are crowing," he whispered; "and already they saddle their horses. In a few minutes they will come for us—may, there is even now someone knocking upon the door. Remember, I am all outraged dignity and contemptuous silence, while you must be demure and shy, and hang down your head."

The door opened, and Dame Winifred appeared, bearing food and wine, which she placed in the window-seat.

"I have kept a watch for you all night," she whispered to Allan, "and everything goes well. 'Twill be barely light before they start, which is all in your favour. The moment you are gone I will despatch Dame Fitzooth and her companion to a safe place."

Then, bestowing a silent kiss upon Allan-a-Dale, and a low curtsy to Guy, the worthy woman went out again, as the voice of Sir Roger FitzPeter was heard as he ascended the staircase.

He knocked on the door with the hilt of his sword, and Allan-a-Dale, mimicking Maid Marian's voice very cleverly, bade him enter, which he did in a half-shamefaced way.

"Ah, you break your fast, I see!" he said abruptly. "'Tis well, for the litter is now horsing, and in five minutes we must be on our way."

Allan-a-Dale turned his back upon him, and tossed his head with a gesture of indignant contempt; and, greatly relieved to find his charges still in safe keeping, FitzPeter withdrew. Then the two boys ate and drank quickly, not knowing when they would get another meal, until presently, when the clash of armour in the street below betokened the men-at-arms had climbed into their saddles, Sir Roger FitzPeter once more presented himself at the chamber door, which he flung wide open, and bade the occupants come forth.

They did so in silence, the mock Maid Marian drawing her skirts aside as if his very touch would mean contamination, and, stalking to the door, closely followed by Guy, who found his green robe very much in the way, the two "ladies" reached the porch of the hostelry, where they found the litter awaiting them.

It was a square palanquin of wood, draped on either side by those well-known blue curtains, and having a pair of shafts at each end, which was secured to the saddles of two horses. It was a clumsy mode of conveyance; but ladies of that time were in the habit of making long journeys in just such litters, for the wheeled carriages of that day were very rude contrivances indeed.

Robert of Rouen sat grimly on his horse beside the litter. His face was stern, and betrayed his dislike for the duty on which he found himself; and, disdainful of the proffered assistance of Sir Roger FitzPeter, who had begun to be somewhat captivated with Isobel's beauty, the two prisoners entered the vehicle, and closed the curtains behind them.

They caught a swift glimpse of Dame Winifred in the doorway. And then the litter began to sway from side to side, like a ship in a heavy sea, and the cavalcade started, and went clattering down the main street of Leighton Buzzard.

"So far, so good," whispered Allan. "Everything goes well!"

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"I was fearful," said Guy, in the same voice, "that my sword would betray me when I stepped in."

"Marry! Now is the time to draw them from under our skirts, and place them ready to hand among the cushions!"

The horses were trotting now, and the air rang with the clatter of steel from the armour-clad knights and the strong escort, as they made their way over the uneven road.

There was not much sympathy between Sir Roger FitzPeter and Robert of Rouen. The one was a dissolute, unprincipled swash-buckler, ready to sell his sword to the highest bidder, in spite of the knightly rank he held; the other, a simple-hearted, bluff soldier, who had grown grey in the Service, had only entered the household of Sir Humphrey de Brionne when he came back penniless from the wars, and impatiently did he look forward to the day when his contract with the baron would expire, and he would be a free man again, for he had found Sir Humphrey very little to his liking.

Sir Roger FitzPeter had marshalled his forces in safe manner. Thirty men rode ahead, keeping some quarter of a mile in advance; thirty more followed as a rear-guard; and between the two was the litter, with forty stout men-at-arms to guard it. With the centre party rode Sir Roger and Robert of Rouen, and by these means FitzPeter hoped to convey his prisoners safely to the Tower of London.

But for all that he was not easy in his mind. Whether it was the surly silence of Robert of Rouen, or whether his own bad heart misgave him, FitzPeter was conscious of a foreboding anxiety, and when they had gone some five miles upon the road he signed to one of his men, and, drawing a little aside from Robert of Rouen, said some low words to him.

"Hark ye, Simeon of Worcester, all has gone well so far, but I have my doubts that we shall reach London town without some attempt at rescue by the outlaw, Fitzooth. 'Tis not like that man to see his wife carried off without a struggle, and the commands I now give you must be obeyed at peril of your own skin. If we are attacked upon the road, and by any mischance the dogs should prove too many for us, you are to instantly draw aside the curtain of the litter, and kill the outlaw's wife. I have Earl John's express order for this!"

Simeon of Worcester looked at his master with the lowering of his right eyelid.

"And the girl?" he said.

"Harm her not," replied FitzPeter quickly.

And Simeon of Worcester smiled and nodded.

(There will be another long thrilling instalment of our powerful serial in next week's bumper issue.)

THE BIG BUNTER MYSTERY!

(Continued from page 22.)

And then Harry Wharton dragged him off the bowling-green by main force.

"B-b-but I say—"

"Get off!" roared Wharton, lifting his boot.

And Bunter rolled off, grumbling, and the Shell won that match quite easily. Bunter's wonderful form as a cricketer had vanished; and his popularity, by this time, had vanished, too. The same afternoon Peter Todd found him gathering information in his old way, with his fat ear to a keyhole, and kicked him along the Remove passage. And Bunter fled, yelling. Evidently he was no longer a boxer.

The Remove had been astounded by the change in Bunter in the first place. But this change back to his old self was more astounding still. There was some mystery about it, and they puzzled over it. But Bunter did not choose to enlighten them. He preferred to bask in the reflected glory of his cousin. Indeed, but for Sammy Bunter, the Remove would probably never have discovered the truth. But Sammy, after several ineffectual attempts to extract the price of silence from his major, gave the whole story away. And then the Remove understood.

They were amazed by the explanation of the little imposture. But it was not, as

MAKING THINGS LIVELY!

(Continued from page 9.)

his shoulder. "Follow quietly, you fellows!"

Into the room stepped the Terrible Three, with the Fourth-Formers at their heels.

Tom Merry switched on his electric-torch—a necessary proceeding—and then he staggered back a pace, unable to repress a cry of astonishment.

"Gordon Gay!"

It was, indeed, the leader of the Gram-marians who reposed in the porter's bed.

Gordon Gay had removed his disguise before retiring. The beard, the wig, and the false eyebrows were on top of the chest of drawers. And the clean-shaven face and curly hair of Gordon Gay greeted the gaze of the St. Jim's juniors!

To say that Tom Merry & Co. were amazed was to put it mildly. They stood and blinked at the sleeper in the rays of the electric torch, and they wondered if they were dreaming.

But it was no dream. It was Gordon Gay who lay there, smiling in his sleep.

"Spooed!"

Jack Blake fairly shouted the word. And his shout aroused the impostor, who opened his eyes and sat up in bed, greatly alarmed.

"What the thump—" he began.

"Gay, you spooing bounder!" roared Tom Merry. "So it was you all the time? Well, this fairly beats the band, takes the cake, and prances off with the whole giddy biscuit factory! You're fairly bowled out now. The game's up. Tell us how you managed to wangle it."

Gordon Gay grinned rather ruefully—he had not expected to be bowled out so soon—and explained.

"Let's give the bounder the bumping of his life, and then chuck him out!" said Manners.

But Tom Merry would not consent to this course. He felt very foolish at having been taken in; but he could not help admiring the clever way in which Gordon Gay had played his part. If only for his amazing daring and audacity, the fellow deserved to go scot-free.

And scot-free he went, the very next day, without the headmaster of St. Jim's being any the wiser as to his identity. Only seven fellows knew, and the seven kept their knowledge to themselves.

Within an hour of Gordon Gay's departure, Taggles returned, rested and refreshed by his brief holiday.

THE END.

(Next week's special long complete story of the St. Jim's chums is entitled: "Ten Pounds Reward!")

THE BIG BUNTER MYSTERY!

(Continued from page 22.)

Bob Cherry remarked, so amazing as a change in Bunter for the better. If Bunter had really turned out a decent chap, that would have been the climax.

After Sammy's revelation, Billy Bunter was solemnly seized, and bumped in the Common-room; not so much for having taken the Remove in, but for having allowed himself to be played in a Form match by mistake.

"You fat rotter!" said Wharton witheringly. "If you'd owned up in time, we might have saved that match; I mean, we should have saved it! Bump him!"

And Bunter was bumped hard.

As he crawled away afterwards, Alonzo Todd gave him some really good advice.

"My dear Bunter, why not try to turn over a new leaf, and grow like your very estimable cousin, and then—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" snapped Bunter.

Turning over a new leaf, and growing like his estimable cousin, was not in Billy Bunter's line. Never again was Greyfriars likely to ring to the shout of "Bravo, Bunter!"

THE END.

(Next week's long complete tale of Greyfriars is really ripping. Look out for "The Kidnappers' Mistake!")

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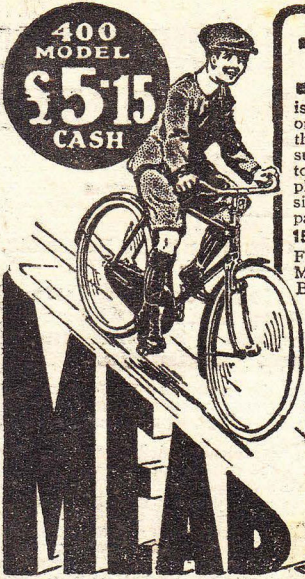
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