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THE OPENING CHAPTERS.



Being the Amazing and Thrilling Adventures of the Famous Buccaneer, CAPTAIN HENRY MORGAN, and the jolly lads of the "VENTURE!"

*"The heaving deck, the rolling sea,
A ship well found, and sailing free.
A captain who is the yellow dogs' bane,
Morgan, the Cock o' the Spanish Main!"*

CAPTAIN HENRY MORGAN sang softly as he leaned against the rail of his brig the Venture, now on a cruise in the Carib Sea in search of adventure. Turning to one at his side, he said:

"The doggerel hath a rare swing to it, eh, Barney, mine?"

Barney, a red-haired Irishman looked at his master through half-closed eyes.

"I warrant ye the Dons ha' no liking for it, cap'n!" he chuckled. "And as for me, I'd sooner fight Jack Spaniard than raise my voice in unmelodious howlings."

Morgan surveyed the tall, gaunt figure of his mate with quiet amusement.

"I faith, I believe you, my old war-dog!" quoth he. "Those long ears of thine incline not to gentle music."

Then, taking out a snuff-box that had once belonged to the Grand Monarch himself, he proffered it to the other.

"You've heard," said Morgan, as he daintily took a pinch, "that his Most Christian Majesty of Spain is aware of our doings in these seas?"

Barney gave a hoarse chuckle of amusement.

"An' well he might, be, cap'n," he grinned, "for we ha' harried the Dons till the very name o' Morgan o' the Main sets them shivering with terror."

With a snap Captain Morgan closed the lid of his snuff-box, then drawing a cambric kerchief from his frilled sleeve he flicked the dust from the lapels of his coat. When this was done to his satisfaction, he took a small mirror from his pocket and held it before him. Taking off his laced hat he once more applied himself to the mirror. At length, satisfied with his scrutiny, he replaced both hat and mirror and turned anew to his mate.

"Barney," he said, with an air of conviction. "Methinks this new periwig becomes me vastly, for 'tis said to be the latest fashion in London Town."

The other, who had been watching Morgan with an air of amused tolerance, scratched his head as if in perplexity. "Sink me, cap'n!" he answered slowly. "If I ha' not sailed the seas wi' ye for many a year, I would take ye for nought but a gilded popinjay. What wi' your satin breeches, your silver-buckled shoes, each wi' a diamond to its fastening, your blue surcoat, and"—here the old rascal bowed almost to the deck in mock abasement—"your most noble periwig, why, ye be just a fop from the Court!"

"And in no wise," quoth the other lazily. "Morgan the Cock o' the Spanish Main!" And then he went on: "So, Barney, mine, the Spanish king hath sent one of his most illustrious admirals to lay Morgan by the heels. This Don, one José de Firando, hath left Europe for these seas with no less than seven sail, as well as his flagship, a great carrack known as the Santa Maria."

Barney's face lit up as he heard.

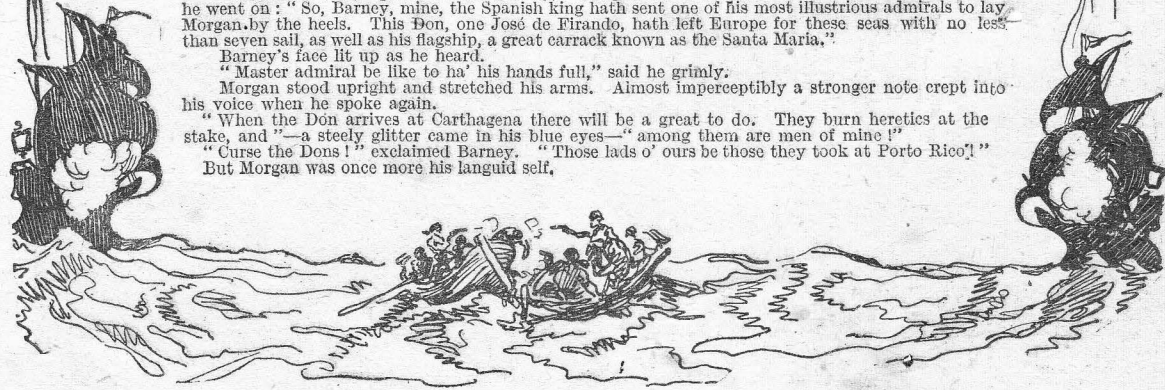
"Master admiral be like to ha' his hands full," said he grimly.

Morgan stood upright and stretched his arms. Almost imperceptibly a stronger note crept into his voice when he spoke again.

"When the Don arrives at Carthage there will be a great to do. They burn heretics at the stake, and"—a steely glitter came in his blue eyes—"among them are men of mine!"

"Curse the Dons!" exclaimed Barney. "Those lads o' ours be those they took at Porto Rico!"

But Morgan was once more his languid self.



"So you see," said he, "that we are like to be busy these next few days with keeping a weather-eye open for the admiral and rescuing my bullies from the stake!"

Barney's eyes opened wide in amazement. "Rot me, cap'n!" he cried. "But how do ye mean to rescue the lads? If ye go to Carthagea 'twill be to thrust your head in the lion's jaws."

Morgan wagged a reproving finger at his mate.

"Surely ye know by now," he said gently, "that I leave not my lads to die, if by any power of mine I can save them."

But ere Barney could reply there came a hail from the masthead of the Venture:

"Sail on the weather-bow!" Morgan snatched up a spyglass and gazed out to sea; a moment later he handed it to his mate.

"There be two of them," he said, "and, by the looks of her, one is a Don!"

"Sink me, but you're right," cried Barney, as he looked in turn. "An' they are coming up fast!"

Then from over the waste of waters the faint sound of cannon came to their ears.

Without another glance Morgan seized his speaking-trumpet, and gave a loud shout. As if by magic men tumbled up from below, and clambered aloft to the swaying yards. In a moment white sails-bellied to the freshening breeze:

And the Venture moved forward over the seas.

Louder and louder grew the noise of the guns, and as Morgan stood by the helmsman conning his ship, Barney, who had once more betaken himself to the spyglass, gave a great shout:

"It is the Hawk in combat wi' a Spaniard!"

"So ho!" murmured Morgan softly. "And her captain will be that half-bred Frenchie, Ollon, who has but new come to these parts."

"'Tis he—a murderous dog!" growled the mate as he sat down the spyglass. "I knew one that sailed wi' he, and he tells that 'tis a custom o' Ollon's to do away wi' all his captives—man, woman, or child—so that none be left alive to speak against him. And 'tis whispered, cap'n," went on Barney, "that Ollon ha' taken English ships as well."

"A dirty rascal, in truth!" commented the buccaneer. "We'll see what mounseer be up to!"

Favoured by the breeze, the gallant Venture bore down upon the combatants, the waves dancing merrily round her fore-foot as she cut through the seas. Guns were cast loose, gunners saw to their primings, men rushed hither and hither getting shot and powder from the hold, whilst others stood on the bulwarks, pointing with grimy hands to where, far across the heaving billows, the two ships lay hidden in the smoke from their guns.

Then, when they were but a mile away, those on the Venture saw the foremast of the Spaniard come down with a crash, and, with a quick manoeuvre, the Hawk ran alongside its now helpless opponent. Grappling-irons were flung out, and a striking figure in red shirt and cap led the boarders. "That will be Ollon," quoth Barney, pointing to the red-shirted leader, "and the Frenchie will not thank us to interfere."

But Morgan seized his mate's shoulder in a grip that made him wince.

"See you not, Barney," he cried, "that on the poop of the Don there are children? And he pointed as he spoke to two small figures huddled against the bulwarks of the Spanish ship.

"Ode rot me," exclaimed the mate, "so there be! And the dirty Frenchie will show them no mercy."

He was interrupted by a sudden shout from the crew gathered on the lower decks: "The Don's struck!"

Sure enough, the golden flag of Spain slowly fluttered from the forepeak. As the Venture drew nearer, Morgan saw the wounded Dons being tumbled into the sea, their captors all the while jeering at their cries for mercy. And then the survivors were driven aboard the Hawk. In a moment a broad plank was thrust out from the side of the ship. The red-shirted Ollon stood watching with an evil smile. Then when all was done to his satisfaction he turned to his trembling captives.

"Senors," he said mockingly, as he pointed to the open sea, "pray take a walk!"

And on the instant a shrieking Spaniard was forced on to the plank, and, though the poor wretch fought and struggled like a

madman, cruel pikes urged him along. Foot by foot he crept towards the centre of the board, then suddenly it tipped up, and, with a shriek that made the blood curdle in the veins, the Spaniard fell headlong into the sea.

One by one the Spaniards were thrust to the depths below, and, to add to the horror of it all, those denizens of the Carib Sea—the sharks—seized them as they fell.

As the last of the Dons went to his death, Morgan, handling the Venture daintily, hove her to a cable's length from Ollon and his prize.

It was at that moment Ollon seized one of the terrified children.

"Now for Jack Spaniards' brats!" he cried, as he hoisted the child in his arms to throw him over. But an interruption came from the newcomer.

A hail floated across the sea: "Good-day to you, Captain Ollon!"

Ollon dropped the shrieking youngster in amazement as he heard it. He had been so busy sacking his prize and dealing with the Dons that he had not seen the approach of Morgan.



A VICTIM OF THE PIRATES. As the Venture drew nearer, Morgan saw the wounded Dons being tumbled into the sea by their merciless captors, whilst the red-shirted Ollon stood watching nearby, with a sneer upon his evil-looking face. (See this page.)

Snatching up a trumpet, he sprang to the ratlines.

"Who be ye?" he roared. "And what want ye a spying here?"

Morgan took off his laced hat, and made a sweeping bow.

"Morgan, they call me, sweet sir," answered he politely, "and I wish a word with you concerning the children yonder."

Ollon's savage face lit up as he heard. "So you're Morgan—he who calls himself the Cock o' the Main, are you? Come aboard; I've been anxious to meet ye, Morgan. I ha' a mind to cut that cock's comb for ye!"

As he spoke he burst into a roar of raucous laughter at the witticism.

But Morgan bade them lower a boat, and, despite Barney's attempt to dissuade him, he dropped into it, and rowed to the other vessel.

Hardly had the boat left the side of the Venture when Barney gave a sharp order: "Send Jo and Jupe to me!"

The two seamen came at a run, each with a musketoon in his hand. Two more akin had never been seen, for one was the image of the other. The only difference between

them was that Jo had a grey hair or so behind his left ear. Short, sturdy lads were they, with massive arms and great chests, and Morgan, who had freed them from a Spanish prison, dubbed one Jove and the other Jupiter. And as Jo and Jupe they were known to the crew.

Barney pointed to the Hawk.

"If but one raise a hand against Cap'n Morgan, put a bullet through the head o' the villain!"

The twain nodded their understanding.

Bidding his men remain in the boat, Morgan ran up the rope ladder of the Hawk, and, dropping to the deck, found himself ringed in by a crowd of hostile faces.

Ollon stood on the high poop, waiting for Morgan to come, and as his motley crew of blackamoors, dagoes, sallow-faced Portuguese, with here and there an Englishman or so, closed round the buccaneer, he looked on with a sardonic smile.

So this effeminate ninny was Morgan, the Cock o' the Main! The half-breed's lip curled contemptuously. It should be his business to put this coxcomb in his place.

Morgan looked at the ring of evil faces surrounding him, then he took his cambric kerchief from his sleeve.

"Give me room, good, sirs, I pray ye!" he drawled. "Though perchance ye know it not, the very smell o' ye contaminates the air."

And with that he held the kerchief to his nose.

For a moment they were too taken aback to move; then, snarling, they closed around him. But in a flash Morgan had a pistol to the head of the foremost—a brawny Italian.

"Back, ye sweepings o' the seas!" he snapped, and as they hesitated he reached the gangway that led to the poop above. In another second he was standing beside Ollon on the poop.

On the deck the crew of pirates crouched like a pack of wolves.

Morgan shook a reproving head at Ollon.

"You over-feed your dogs!" he chided. "They be too fond o' quarrelling."

Ollon scowled.

"Enough o' this!" he growled. "What want ye o' me?"

Morgan helped himself to snuff, then proffered the box to the other.

"I want those youngers," said he, pointing to the terrified children.

With a curse Ollon thrust his arm aside, and as he did so the pirate crew, thinking their captain was about to strike Morgan down, swarmed up the ladder to Ollon's aid. But as the foremost reached the top a shot rang out from the Venture, and the man went down with a bullet in his shoulder.

Captain Morgan took a pinch of snuff.

"That should be Jo," said he comely.

For a moment the rush was stayed; then, as they stood in doubt, their captain all the while gazing at Morgan in amazement, there came another shot hard on the heels of the first. A man sank to the deck nursing a shattered arm.

Captain Morgan snapped the lid. "And that Jupe," quoth he.

Then, raising his arm, Morgan pointed to the Venture, with her gunners standing to their cannon.

"To your kennel," cried he, "else my ship blow ye out of the water!"

They looked to sea with blanched faces, then, turning tail, ran helter-skelter down the gangway. Morgan turned briskly to Ollon, all trace of languor gone.

"I give ye two minutes, Ollon," he said sharply. "Have the youngers to the boat, else we lay ye aboard!"

The half-breed bit his nails with rage. Morgan had him as in a cleft stick, for even had he wished, the Hawk could not make a fight of it, for she had been sadly damaged in her conflict with the Spaniard. Then, as he looked at Morgan with hatred in his eyes, there came a sudden idea to him.

"By the custom o' the main, Cap'n Morgan," cried he, "I challenge ye to fight me, man to man. Then, should ye best me the brats be yours."

And as he spoke a look of triumph spread over his face, for Ollon had as yet never met his match with the sword.

In a moment the buccaneer had hailed the waiting boat, and bade a man come aboard to second him. Ollon roared for his quartermaster—one Fat George—to do the like for



A DUEL TO DEATH. The two buccaneers fought on silently, with the French crew looking on in amazement. Morgan had scarcely turned a hair, whilst Ollon was desperate—fighting a losing battle. Hardly had he parried one thrust when another threatened him, and the rapier, a dazzle of flame, leapt around his body. (See this page.)

him. Casting off his blue surcoat, and rolling up his spotless sleeves—for he was ever dainty in his linen—Morgan, rapier in hand, awaited his opponent.

The huge Ollon towered above his slight, almost youthful adversary. The half-breed was well over six feet in height, and big withal. The bunched-up muscles of his massive arms gave evidence of great strength, and with his savage face, and his one ear missing, he looked truly one to be feared. Ollon's red shirt and cap but added to the ferocity of his appearance.

But, for all Morgan's slowness, his supple body was all whipcord and energy. Those fine wrists of his were as steel, the broad sweep of his jaw showed determination, and the lazy, blue eyes could flash fire when they chose. No! Ollon, for all his seeming advantages, had no easy task before him.

As the half-breed chose a weapon from those they brought him, Morgan touched him on the shoulder.

"I pray you haste," he drawled, "for it wants but a few moments to when I dine."

The big man flushed angrily at Morgan's tone.

"So ye'd crow, my cock!" he roared, as he snatched up a cutlass. "Rot me, but the next meal ye'll have shall be wi' Old Nick himself!" And, hurling himself into the fray, Ollon hacked savagely at Morgan's head, and strove by main force to beat down his guard. But, with that tantalising smile on his face, Morgan almost carelessly parried the furious blows. Then, taking his weapon in both hands, Ollon made a sweeping stroke at Morgan's knees; but though his rapier seemed but insignificant beside the heavy cutlass, Morgan deftly swept the foul blow aside.

And as they fought, the Frenchie's crew came up the gangway to watch, and though they glared vengeance at Morgan o' the Main, not a man of them dare raise a hand. They had now learned to fear the gentle-speaking buccaneer, and there, barely a cable's length away, the gunners of the Venture stood to their cannon.

Panting for breath, Ollon fought desperately to cut the other down, but Morgan himself had scarcely turned a hair.

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"You are too gross! A little blood letting should be of benefit," said Morgan smilingly; and as he spoke a red stain appeared on the Frenchie's shoulder.

Hardly had Ollon parried one thrust when another threatened him, and the rapier, a dazzle of flame, leapt and quivered around his body. His contemptuous smile had gone, and a look of terror took its place. The half-breed now realised that he had met his master, and that Morgan could finish him when he wished. He saw Morgan as through a haze, and dully the other's taunting words came to his ears.

"You are but a brute, Ollon!" said that mocking voice, "and to teach you to behave I'll set my mark on you!" And, with that, Morgan thrust him through the flesh part of the cheek.

Fat George, who had been watching Morgan in open admiration, burst into a hoarse laugh.

"That be a shrewd blow, Cap'n Ollon, and like to loosen the few teeth ye have."

Ollon glared savagely at his man; then, in a last despairing effort, he rushed at Morgan. With a quick turn of the wrist Morgan sent his cutlass flying to the deck, and as Ollon stared stupidly at the weapon Morgan had his rapier to his throat.

"Have the children in the boat," said he curtly.

For a moment it seemed that the half-breed would refuse, then, meeting the steely glitter in Morgan's eyes, he roughly bade his men see to it.

Sheathing his sword, Morgan carefully donned his clothes and prepared to follow.

"Good-day to you, sweet Ollon!" he said, as a ladder was flung over the poop for him to descend.

Ollon, a hand clasped to the hurt in his cheek, glared at Morgan with the fury of a thousand devils in his eyes.

"Tis your turn now, Morgan!" he foamed. "But if I ha' to wait a thousand years I'll make ye suffer for it!"

A leg over the side of the vessel, Morgan paused and held up a reproving hand.

"Softly, Captain Ollon—softly!" he admonished. "You must not say such things before the children."

And with that he descended to the waiting boat.

The Landing of Don Jose at Carthage—The Treachery of Ollon—A Bargain.

CARTHAGENA was en fête, and flags and bunting hung from all the shops and houses, for was not the arrival of Don Jose de Firando hourly expected? And Don Jose was the Admiral of His Most Catholic Majesty of Spain, sent expressly from Europe for the purpose of putting an end to the activities of the buccaneers and pirates of the Indies, and more expressly to capture Captain Henry Morgan, the most daring of them all.

Don Diego de Colombo, Governor of Carthage, was seated with his officers in the council chamber at the castle. In person the Governor was short and stout, with a fat, flabby face and little piggy eyes—in appearance the very opposite of the Spanish aristocrat he claimed to be.

"Senors," he announced, "his Excellency the Admiral should arrive by the evening's tide, and to-morrow we will hold an Auto da Fe, when Mother Church will purge the souls of the English heretics by the flame. How many of the dogs have you, father?" he asked of a cowed figure at his side.

The monk rose to his feet. "Two score, your Excellency," he replied in a voice that was little more than a whisper. "And we burn their bodies so that their souls find Paradise."

"And so satisfy the law," broke in Don Miguel the commandant—a bluff, hearty, individual, who had no love for the Governor, for he knew Don Diego to be a coward. "For we know the prisoners to be pirates each one of them, and by burning they but escape the hangman."

There was a sudden roar of guns as Don Miguel finished speaking, then an answering roar from the fort. The whole council jumped to their feet in startled surprise. For a moment no one spoke, then the commandant found his tongue.

"Madre de Dios!" he exclaimed excitedly. "Tis the Admiral!"

In a moment the chamber was empty, and helter-skelter they rushed to the harbour. There, coming round the bluff, was a stately ship flying the flag of Spain, with the smoke eddying from the mouths of the cannon which she had fired in salute. The whole population thronged to the waterside to welcome their deliverer, for this must be the long-expected admiral at last. Yet where were the other ships of the fleet—for Don Jose had set out from Europe with seven sail under his command?

On and on came the mighty vessel, and as she drew closer and yet closer all eyes were on the figure on the poop. The setting sun shining on his burnished armour made him look a figure of gold, and the smoke from the cannon melting into thin air revealed the rows of portholes, each with its gun, that lay in long tiers beneath where he stood.

The Governor's beady eyes glistened as he watched the noble ship, and well they might, for the Santa Maria was the largest of his Majesty's fleet, being of full two thousand tons burthen. Woe betide the pirate ship that fell into her clutches!

Hoarse commands rang out from the warship, sails were furled, and with a rattling of chains through the hawse-holes the anchor was let go. And the Santa Maria lay at anchor, perhaps a quarter of a mile from the water front. In a few minutes a boat was lowered and Don Jose de Firando came down the gangway.

The admiral was of the middle height, pale and courteous, he was the typical Spaniard. As he landed the Governor made haste to welcome him.

"Greetings, Senor Admiral," said he with a bow. "Carthage welcomes her deliverer. But where are the rest of your fleet?"

Don Jose raised his eyebrows a trifle.

"I thank you for your welcome, senor," he replied in cultured tones. "But surely as you are Governor of this town, so am I Admiral of the Fleet. Look to your business, senor, and I'll see to mine."

Don Diego hastened to apologise. "I mean no offence, senor," he said, almost humbly. "But we are in mortal dread of the pirate Morgan and his ships."

A pale smile lit up the admiral's face as he answered:

"Morgan shall be my care, Senor Governor.

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And, if it ease you, my ships separated from me in a great storm some days since, and should be here anon."

With an exclamation of relief Don Diego led the way to the castle, where a sumptuous banquet was prepared in honour of the admiral. Don Jose entertained the company with many a jest and anecdote, and the Governor, now that he had come, seemed to be relieved of all care. Glass in hand he jumped to his feet.

"A toast, senor! Here's to your speedy meeting with that evil pirate, Morgan o' the Main!"

Don Jose bowed his head gravely. "Tell me, senor, what manner of man is this Morgan?"

The little Governor seemed to expand. "Morgan," he began, "is a most villainous rascal, and 'tis said that he hath dealings with the Evil One himself."

"Perchance you yourself have encountered the man?" inquired the other.

"I once held the villain in the hollow of my hand," answered the Governor, throwing out his chest.

There was a broad smile on the faces of his hearers, for well they know what a boaster their Governor was, and even Don Jose's eyes twinkled with sly amusement, for Colombo looked little the fire-eater he professed to be.

"Tell us the story, senor," he said suavely. "I was on a galleon that the ruffian attacked. They vastly outnumbered us, and though we made a brave defence we were driven back. As the last of us were borne down I ran to fire the magazine, for I determined that they should die with me. But the door was held against my efforts. With all my force I tried to pull it open, and at last I made the other loose his hold. I sprang inside and bore him to the ground, and though the man fought like a devil I was fighting for the honour of Spain, senors, and I mastered him. And then I saw that it was the arch-fiend Morgan himself."

There was a smothered laugh from the commandant, and Don Diego glared suspiciously at him, but Don Jose placed a hand on his shoulder.

"And what then, Senor Governor?" he asked.

"Unfortunately, while I struggled with their captain, the pirates found their way to the magazine and pounced upon me ere I could fire the powder. At night I escaped, for Morgan had sworn to hang me at dawn. The commandant could contain himself no longer.

"Your Excellency," he spluttered, as he jumped to his feet, "our Governor is a very marvel. To find the pirate Morgan in the magazine of the galleon would be as strange as to find him in Carthage. Surely such gallant conduct on the Senor Governor's part should be brought to the notice of his Majesty of Spain, and then his Majesty perchance would decorate the noble Don Diego with the Most Noble Order of the Golden Fleece—and so bring much honour to Carthage."

The Governor listened with eyes ablaze to this trade, and when his tormentor had finished he half-drew his sword, but the mocking smile on the commandant's lips made him pause. With a click he thrust it back and contented himself with glaring venomously at the soldier, and if looks could kill Don Miguel would have been a dead man. But the admiral was courteous itself.

"Tell me, senor, what appearance hath this Morgan, for I would know, as it is my duty to capture the rogue?"

"Ugly as a toad!" was the reply. "His arms are like the ape in that they reach below his knees. He hath but one eye that gloweth in the dark, and so hideous is he that his crew cannot look him in the face. And"—the Governor's voice dropped to a whisper—"tis said that he liveth on the flesh of young babes."

Don Jose rose. "I thank you, senor," he said gravely. "I shall know this monster when I see him."

Hardly had he spoken when the door was thrown open, and a white-faced servant came hurriedly into the room. Don Diego looked up angrily as the man approached, but ere he could speak the man blurted out his news.

"Your excellencies," he gasped. "There is an English ship come into the bay, and her captain is here with a flag of truce to have speech with you."

The Governor turned pale. "Don Jose," he said anxiously, "what if this should be the devil Morgan himself?" "Morgan is not likely to trust himself in Carthage, senor, even under a flag of truce," answered the admiral, with a shrug. The Governor's face cleared. "By the saints, you're right, senor! Would that the rogue did come, now that you are here to deal with him!"



THE LANDING OF DON JOSE. As the boat bumped against the quay the admiral stepped out on to the stone steps. The Governor made haste to welcome him. "Greeting, Senor Admiral," he said. "Carthage welcomes you, her deliverer." (See page 4.)

Then turning to the servant he bade him admit the messenger. And Ollon, an evil grin on his face, stalked into the room. A dozen hands flew to their swordhilts, Don Diego half-drew a pistol, but Ollon took no notice. Hurling his velvet hat among the glasses on the table he threw himself into a chair.

"Give ye good even, senors," quoth he, displaying a row of uneven fangs as he spoke. "Odd rot me! But ye like not my appearance, eh?"

The Governor opened his mouth to shout, but, with a gesture, Don Jose stayed him.

"Perchance the captain hath a message for you?"

Don Diego looked puzzled, then, turning to the smiling Ollon:

"How now, captain!" he said, in tones he meant to be menacing. "We suspect you for a dastardly pirate! Why should not I send you to the gallows?"

Ollon slowly got to his feet, and approached his questioner, when a foot from the Don he paused.

"That for ye!" he cried, snapping his fingers under the Governor's very nose. "I came under a flag o' truce, my cock, an' if ye respect not that, my guns are trained both on yon warship and the town!"

Don Jose, who had gone to a window, turned.

"I like not your conversation, captain!" he said harshly. "Have a care how you beard the majesty of Spain!"

Ollon threw back his head, and laughed aloud, then as suddenly stopped.

"Enough of this bickering!" he said shortly. "I ha' come to deliver the pirate Morgan into your hands!"

If he had dropped a bomb into the room he could not have caused a greater sensation. In a moment he was the centre of an excited crowd. Don Diego clutched his sleeve.

"What mean you, captain?" he stuttered. "Play us no pranks, or thy head will pay forfeit!"

Ollon shook him off.

"Am I like to thrust my head into a hornets' nest?" he asked scornfully. "Ten thousand pieces of eight, and Morgan's yours!"

The governor began to expostulate, but the admiral cut him short.

"Give him what he wants! Morgan is more to us than gold!"

The half-breed's eyes glistened as he heard. Morgan should bitterly rue the day he had bearded him! Ollon licked his lips at the thought that he would have both revenge and the Spaniards' gold.

"Senors," he cried excitedly, "it be known to me that Morgan ha' sworn to free your English captives, for there be some o' his men among them. His ship, the Venture, will be here by to-morrow eve. When I passed her two days since she bore scars of battle, which her crew were busily repairing."

"And a warm welcome will he find!" broke in the admiral. "Now list to me, Senor Governor"—he turned to Don Diego—"if the prisoners are to be burned at the stake, let it be to-morrow morn, then, when that be done, Morgan will have none to rescue when he come. And the Santa Maria will blow the pirate out of the sea!"

"An' if ye need help, Master Spaniard," cried Ollon excitedly, "the Hawk will give it ye!"

Don Jose looked the rogue up and down. "So ho, captain, you would see the end of this Morgan?" he said softly. "Are not you Brethren of the Coast, as you call yourselves, sworn to stand one by the other?"

Ollon's face grew red with anger. "Rot me, Senor Don," he said viciously, "but I would that these hands could tear the life out of the rogue!"

And then his gaze lit on a flask of wine that stood on the board. Swooping down upon it he struck off the neck, and finished the bottle with one gulp.

"That's a rare wine, camarado!" cried he, slapping the Governor familiarly on the back. "I would that I had some o' it!"

"'Tis but new come from Spain; the admiral hath brought it," answered the Don as he backed away.

Ollon turned sharply to the stately admiral.

"An' I come aboard yon Santa Maria in the morn, Master Spaniard, will ye spare a flask or so?"

The admiral curtly nodded assent, and a fleeting smile of satisfaction showed itself on the pirate's evil face, but as quickly it was gone.

(Continued on page 24.)

HORACE COKER'S NEW ROLE.

Horace Coker, commonly known as the duffer of the Fifth, has taken on a new role this week. He has been, in the past, many things—poet, swot, actor, master; but his latest post of authority will take your breath away. He is amazing and amusing, and you will agree, out-Cokers Coker, as it were. Get on with the story.

ROLICKING TALE OF THE GREYFRIARS CHUMS.

Coker The Prefect!

Another Topping, Long, Complete Story dealing with the adventures of Harry Wharton & Co., and the great Horace of the Fifth at Greyfriars.

By

Frank Richards.

(Author of the famous tales of Greyfriars in the "MAGNET.")

THE FIRST CHAPTER. I Coker's Latest.

HORACE COKER, of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars, stood at his study window, looking out into the Close. His hands were driven deep into his trousers pockets, and his brow was corrugated with deep lines of thought. Coker was thinking!

That in itself was a sufficiently remarkable circumstance, as either Potter or Greene would have testified at once. Potter and Greene were Coker's study-mates, and while Coker stood with frowning brow at the window, thinking and watching the Close, Potter and Greene stood in the study and watched Coker, and also did some thinking. They were thinking that it was tea-time, and also that it was up to Coker to stand the tea. They had ventured to hint to Coker gently that it was tea-time. Coker had not even turned his head. He was immersed in deep reflection.

What might be the subject of Coker's deep meditations, Potter and Greene didn't know; neither did they care. What they knew was that it was rather hard upon them to have to wait for their tea while Horace Coker did these unaccustomed mental exercises.

"I say, Coker—"
"Coker, old man—"
"Ready for tea, Coker?"
"Turned six, Coker!"

Coker of the Fifth might have been as deaf as a post for all the notice he took of those remarks. He did not even look round. "What the dickens is going on out there, Coker?" demanded Potter impatiently. "What are you looking at?"

Potter joined Coker at the window. He could see nothing in the Close to account for Coker's absorption. North and Walker of the Sixth were walking down to the gates with bags in their hands. Harry Wharton & Co. of the Remove were apparently seeing the two prefects off. Several Sixth-Formers had come round to say good-bye to them.

But Potter of the Fifth wasn't interested in the fact that a couple of prefects of the Sixth were going on a holiday. He didn't see why Coker should be interested, either—especially at tea-time.

"Look here, Coker—" began Potter.

"Why not?" said Coker suddenly, breaking his long silence at last.

Potter stared. That was really an extraordinary remark to be made in reply to his

own. But Coker was not replying to him. He was speaking in answer to his own thoughts, whatever they were.

"Why not what?" demanded Potter. "Eh?" Coker seemed to become aware of his study-mate's existence at last. "Eh—what? Did you speak to me, Potter?" "Did I speak to you?" said Potter, with crushing sarcasm. "Yes, about a dozen times!"

"I've been thinking—"
"Yes, I thought there was something wrong. If you've finished, we might have tea," said Potter tartly. "I'm hungry!"

"Same here!" said Greene.
"Tea!" said Coker absently. "Oh, tea! Never mind tea!"

"Never mind tea!" said Greene, almost dazedly. Coker was generally quite keen on his meals; he was a tremendous trencherman. For Coker to "never mind tea" was as surprising as for Coker to stand buried in thought. Potter and Greene began to entertain doubts of his sanity.

"I've been thinking, you chaps," said Coker briskly, "and it's stunning—simply stunning! You see that?" He nodded towards the Close.

"I don't see anything excepting North and Walker going off on their holiday!" growled Potter. "Nothing surprising in that, is there? And the Remove kids seeing North off. What the deuce does it matter to us? It's tea-time."

"Blow tea-time!"
"And there's nothing in the study," said Greene plaintively. "As you've had a remittance from your Aunt Judy to-day, Coker, I naturally thought—"
"It's a ripping idea!" said Coker.

"What—to have an extra-special feed now you've got your remittance?"

"No, ass! I was thinking. North and Walker are going away for a week."

"Blow North and Walker!"
"They're both prefects."

"Blow the prefects!"
"Don't speak disrespectfully of prefects," said Coker reprovingly. "A prefect is a person to be respected. Ain't they appointed by the Head to keep order among the kids? You treat prefects with proper respect, Greene."

Greene nearly gasped.

It was quite true that prefects were appointed by the Head, and that they were awfully important persons. But Coker of the Fifth had never recognised the fact

before. Coker, in fact, had always made it a point to treat prefects in an exceedingly off-hand manner. Coker was the biggest fellow in the Fifth, and a tremendous fighting-man. There were few fellows even in the Sixth who cared to stand up to Coker, and there wasn't one of them whom Coker wouldn't have tackled at a moment's notice. Coker had actually upon one occasion "whopped" Loder of the Sixth, who was a prefect. To hear Coker sermonising on the duty of respect to prefects was, therefore, astonishing. Apparently it was the outcome of the deep thinking he had been indulging in.

"I—I say, you ain't gone barny suddenly, have you, Coker?" murmured Greene.

"I've been thinking," said Coker. "Two of the prefects are going to be away for a week. Now's the time!"

"The time for what—tea?"

"No, not tea!" roared Coker. "Blow tea, I say! Look here, it's a great idea, and I've thought of it! It came into my head. Up till now the Head has always appointed prefects from the Sixth Form."

"They always do," said Potter.
"It's the rule," said Greene.

"I know it's the rule; and a jolly bad rule!" said Coker, with a sniff. "They ought really to pick out the most suitable fellows, whether they're in the Sixth or not—if they're in a senior Form, of course. Look at me!"

Potter and Greene were already looking at him. They were looking at him, as a matter of fact, as if they thought that he was wandering in his mind.

"What they want for a prefect," said Coker argumentatively, "is a fellow who's universally respected—a fellow who's big enough to keep order among the fags—a chap who can whop anybody who kicks over the traces—a fellow who's good at games, too—in fact, they want a fellow like me."

"Like you!" gasped Potter.

"Yes."
"Oh, my hat!"

"What I want to know is, why shouldn't prefects be appointed from the Fifth Form, as well as the Sixth?" said Coker. "Of course, all the Fifth ain't suitable. Frinstance, you two chaps wouldn't be any good."

"Oh!"

"Blundell wouldn't be any good. He makes a passable Form captain, but he wouldn't be any good as a prefect. What they ought to pick out, really, is one of those fellows who are born to command—a chap

Horace Coker Makes the Fur Fly Next Week at Greyfriars!

Remove looked in, chuckling. The chums glared at him. An attempted hoax was all very well, but there was such a thing as having too much of it, and Harry Wharton & Co. were getting fed up. Bob Cherry rose to his feet and picked up a fat jam-tart.

"Well, what's the news?" he asked.
"Haven't you heard?" gurgled Skinner.
"Coker—"

"Oh, I knew it was Coker! What's he done?"
"He's asked Prouty to ask the Head to make him—oooooooo!" shrieked Skinner, as the fat jam-tart squashed on his face.
"Groooch! You thumping ass! What the thunder-yaroooh!"

Skinner bolted out of the study as two or three more jam-tarts plastered upon him. He slammed the door, and fled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I fancy that will put an end to their japing!" said Bob Cherry, sitting down again. "Can have too much of a good thing. Nuff's as good as a feast!"

"The 'nuff-fulness is terrific!" agreed Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "They cannot rofffully hoax this esteemed study."

But a few minutes later Micky Desmond of the Remove looked into the study. Micky's face was irradiated with mirth. The juniors knew what was coming, and they hadn't the least doubt that Micky's mirth was assumed—that it was part of the "rotting" process, apparently aimed at No. 1 Study. Desmond almost staggered into the study.

"Faith, and have ye heard?" he gasped.
"Sure, and it's too rich for anything, intirely. Coker—ha, ha, ha—Here—phwat—hands off! Sure, and I'll—I say—groooch!"

Hands were laid upon the Irish junior on all sides, and he descended upon the study carpet with such impact that a cloud of dust rose therefrom. His laughter changed to a yell of anguished wrath. Bump, bump, bump!

"Ow! Tare an' ouns! Howly mother av Moses! Phwat—phwat—ye spalpeens—"

"There!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Now you can go back and tell the others that this study can't be hoaxed!" See?"

"Shure, and I—ow—ow!"
Vernon-Smith and Tom Brown looked in from the passage.

"Hallo, what's the row?" asked Smithy.
"I say, have you heard the news? Coker of the Fifth has asked—"

"Cheese it!" roared Bob Cherry, stopping his ears. "I'm fed up. Go and tell your fairy tales to somebody else!"

"But it's true!" shouted Tom Brown. "I couldn't believe it at first, but it's true!"

"Rats! Bosh! Gammon!"
"I say, you chaps," shouted Peter Todd, dashing into the study, in great excitement, "have you heard the news—"

"Oh, my hat!"
"Coker of the Fifth—ha, ha, ha!—he's asked—ha, ha, ha—"

"Thou too, Brutus?" gasped Bob Cherry.
"Honest Injun!" yelled Tom Brown. "It's a fact—ha, ha, ha—honour bright!"
"Honour bright?" asked Wharton, in amazement.

"Yes, ha, ha, ha!"
"Well, my—my only hat!"
Micky Desmond scrambled to his feet, red with wrath.

"Ye spalpeens! Ye howlin' omadhans—"
"Sorry!" gasped Bob Cherry. "We thought it was a rag. Sorry! But—but it can't be true! Even Coker couldn't—"

"He is—he has—he are!" chortled Peter Todd. "He wants to be a prefect! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Co.
No. 1 Study rang with merriment.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

To Be or Not to Be!

THE astounding news was true! There was no further doubt about it.

Harry Wharton & Co., leaving their tea unfinished—what did tea matter at such a time?—hurried downstairs with the other Remove fellows, and they found the juniors in a buzz with the news.

The tea did not, as a matter of fact, remain unfinished. Billy Bunter slipped into the study after its occupants were gone, and finished the tea. He was more interested in that than in Coker's new idea of becoming a prefect.

But the news spread like wildfire among the juniors, and there were roars of laughter

on all hands. The startling intelligence was imparted far and wide, under the title of "Coker's latest."

Coker was known to be a funny man—unconsciously, certainly, but none the less funny for that; rather more so. Coker's belief that he could play football was regarded as a standing joke. Coker's sense of the great importance of Horace Coker was considered as being quite as good as anything in "Chuckles." But that Coker should think of becoming a prefect—that, as Bob Cherry declared, pranced off with the whole biscuit-factory! That scoffed the entire cake! The bare idea of Coker as a prefect, armed with an ashplant and exercising authority, made the juniors shriek.

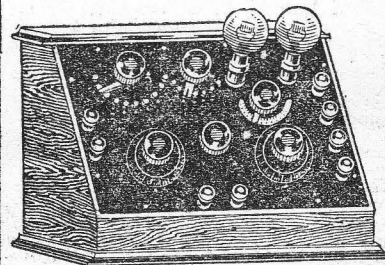
But it was true. Hobson of the Shell had seen him enter Mr. Prout's study, and the door being left open, Hobson had heard him asserverated that Mr. Prout hadn't pitched asserverated that Mr. Prout hadn't pitched him out—hadn't laughed—hadn't had a fit, as might have been expected. He had told Coker he would mention it to the Head.
"What will the Head say?" grinned Temple of the Fourth.

And there was a fresh yell of laughter at the idea of what the Head would say.
"The silly ass!" said Vernon-Smith. "Why, everybody knows that prefects always belong to the Sixth Form!"

"If he were Blundell of the Fifth, or Fitzgerald, it wouldn't be so funny," said Bolsover major. "But Coker—ha, ha, ha!"

"We must put this in the 'Herald,'" chuckled Bob Cherry. "It will be the funniest thing we've ever had in the magazine!"

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"I guess Coker don't know how funny it is," remarked Fisher T. Fish. "If they make Coker a prefect, I calculate I'll ask the Head to make me a prefect."

The awful nerve of Coker was the topic on every tongue. Even the Fifth-Formers were seen chuckling over it. Potter and Greene retailed the story, amid bursts of laughter. But Squiff remarked that Coker had chosen a good time for making his extraordinary request. He was high in the favour of his Form master just then. Coker was not a brilliant scholar; and in the Form-room he sometimes exercised Mr. Prout's patience right up to the limit. But only a couple of days before Mr. Prout had been troubled by a burly tramp, who met him on a lonely footpath, and he would certainly have been relieved of his watch and spare cash if Coker hadn't come along. Coker piled in and polished off the tramp like a shot. And Mr. Prout had been very gracious to Coker since then. Probably, for that reason, the Fifth Form master had not scouted Coker's proposition on the spot. He had tactfully left it to the Head to decline Coker's proffered services as a prefect.

That Coker's proffer was declined was a "dead cert," as Vernon-Smith put it. The Head wasn't likely to depart from the rule of choosing prefects from the top Form. And, if he had done so, and had made a Fifth-Former prefect, he certainly wouldn't choose Coker. Certainly, the Head didn't know Coker so well as the fellows knew him. But he must, know that Coker was a thumping ass, Bob Cherry averred—it was only necessary to look at Coker to know that!

Snoop brought the news that Coker was in his study, waiting for a summons from the Head. That news brought a crowd of juniors trooping along the Fifth Form passage to look at Coker. Coker was the most interesting person at Greyfriars at the present juncture, and when Bob Cherry threw open the study door and disclosed Coker sitting in his armchair with a meditative look upon his face, there was a howl of laughter. The mere sight of Coker was enough to make the juniors howl with laughter, under the circumstances.

Coker looked round haughtily—quite a new hauteur in his manner. Coker was not a prefect yet, but the sense of the possible dignity was strong upon him. He seemed, already, to look upon the juniors from a new and lofty sphere.

"Hallo, what do you fags want?" said Coker. "Clear off, and don't make a noise! I don't allow you fags to be noisy!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker rose from the armchair and picked up a stick from the corner of the study. It was a stout ashplant, such as the prefects carried as a symbol of authority, and also as a means of enforcing their authority. Coker was evidently reckoning on that prefectship as a certainty, and he had provided the ashplant in advance.

The sight of the ash-plant made the juniors shriek again. Trotter, the page, came along the passage.

"Lemme pass, please, young gentlemen," said Trotter. He put his head into the study.
"Please, Master Coker, you're wanted in the 'Ead's study."

"Thank you!" said Coker loftily.

He deposited the ashplant in the corner again, unused, and left the study, the juniors making room for him to pass.

Coker stalked away in the direction of the Head's study, and the grinning juniors followed him, forming up in a grinning file, and imitating the lofty stride of the Fifth-Former.

Coker turned round, with an exasperated look.

"Clear off, you young rascals!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"By Jove, I'll keep you in order when I'm a prefect!" exclaimed Coker.

"When!" chortled Bob Cherry.

"The whunfulness is terrific, my esteemed Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker frowned darkly, and strode on. He tapped at the door of the Head's study, entered, and the door closed behind him. Then the grinning escort took their departure, in great mirth.

"Now he's going to get the chopper!" Nugent remarked. "Poor old Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

At the end of the passage the juniors waited in an eager crowd to see Coker come forth crestfallen. After the Head had refused him, and his air-castles had tumbled down, he would come slinking out—and the juniors were prepared to give him a greeting. But apparently the Head was taking his time about it—the minutes passed on, and Coker did not emerge from the study. What was the Head finding to talk about all that time?

"It wouldn't take him long to say 'No,' I should think," remarked Squiff. "Perhaps he's putting it to him gently."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he comes!"

The study door opened. Coker came forth. But he was not slinking. He did not look crestfallen. He came down the passage as if he were walking on air. There was a smile of satisfaction on his face; he strutted a little. The juniors stared at him, and then at one another, almost in stupefaction. What did it mean? Coker wouldn't look like that if the Head had treated him as he deserved. But surely it wasn't possible—

"Here, you fags clear off!" said Coker, looking down on the juniors as though from an immense height. "Order, there! Can't have fags hanging about the passages!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Cherry, what did you say?"

"I told you to go and eat coke," said Bob,

"and I meant go and eat coke!"

"Take fifty lines!"

"Eh?"

"And bring them to my study before bed-time."

"What!"

"What's the little game!" roared Johnny Bull. "Who are you to give chaps lines, Coker? Go and chop chips!"

There is a Grand New Long Complete Story of Greyfriars in This Week's "Magnet"!

"Take fifty lines, Bull!"
 "Why, you—you—"
 "I'll keep order among you fags, or I'll know the reason why!" said Coker, with a frown. "Now, cut off! You'll find things a bit different now I'm a prefect!"
 Coker stalked on. The juniors gazed after him, stupefied.
 Coker—a prefect!
 It was too astounding. The juniors could only gasp!

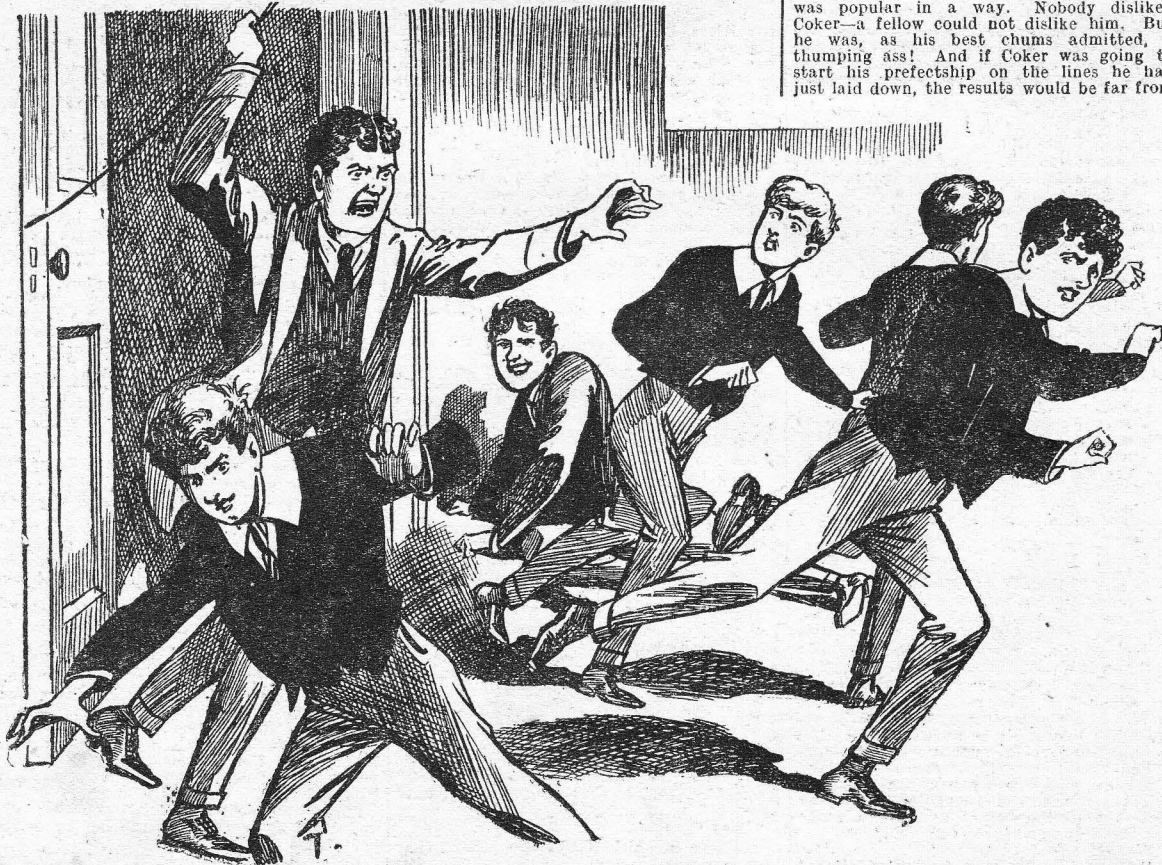
THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
The New Prefect!

HORACE COKER walked into his study. Potter and Greene were there, and they looked at him with smiles. They did not ask him the result of his visit to the Head's study. They thought they knew that in advance.
 "What about tea?" said Coker. His great ambition gratified, Coker remembered that he was hungry.
 "Had tea!" growled Potter. "Fitz stood us tea. You were too jolly busy making a thumping ass of yourself!"
 "What!"
 "Getting deaf?" asked Potter sarcastically. Coker looked at him sternly.
 "No, I'm not getting deaf, George Potter. But I'll thank you to speak more respectfully to a prefect!"
 "What?" gasped Potter.
 "Which?" gasped Greene.
 "As I'm a prefect now, I expect to be treated with proper respect. Otherwise, there will be trouble for somebody!" said Coker loftily.
 Potter and Greene sat upright, and stared at Coker. They were not smiling now. They seemed to find some difficulty in breathing.
 "You—a prefect!" stuttered Potter. "Is that the latest? Send it to 'Chuckles' or 'Punch.' Don't try it on us!"
 "I'm not going to argue with you," said Coker. "It's beneath a prefect's dignity to argue. But I tell you I'm a prefect now, by

appointment, and there's going to be a notice put up in the hall to that effect. And if I have any cheek from anybody there will be trouble."
 "But—but—it ain't possible!" gurgled Greene. "The Head can't be such an ass as—"
 "Don't speak disrespectfully of the Head in the presence of a prefect, Greene. I shall have to report you. I'll pass it over this time, but don't do it again!"
 "Oh, my hat!" said Greene feebly.
 "There's such a thing as discipline," said Coker. "Things are too slack in this school. The juniors simply run wild. Slackness everywhere. Now I'm a prefect, I'm going to see that things are bucked up a little. I shall make that point."
 Potter and Greene gazed at him dazedly. Coker a prefect! They had howled with laughter at the thought. And now the Head had "been and gone and done it." Was it a dream? It really seemed so to the two Fifth Form fellows! Coker, the duffer—Coker, the ass—Coker, the dummy—Coker, a prefect! It was too much!
 "You—you don't really mean to say that the Head has made you a prefect!" stuttered Potter at last.
 "Haven't I said so?" demanded Coker. "What is there so jolly surprising about it? Because I'm in the Fifth? Rot! If it had been you or Greene, of course, that would have been surprising enough. But the Head knows a thing or two—he knows a good man for a job when he sees one! Mr. Prout recommended me to him."
 "For—a prefect?"
 "Certainly! Prout was very decent about it," said Coker. "I put it to him—the Fifth Form have a right to be considered. I can whop any fellow in the Sixth, excepting Wingate. I pointed that out to him. Likewise, now there are two prefects away, a new one is needed. Prout hummed and hawed. But I put it to him straight, and he said he'd put it to the Head."

"And the Head—"
 "Talked to me like a Dutch uncle," said Coker, with satisfaction. "Said I was certainly old enough and big enough, and he'd take Mr. Prout's word for it that I was otherwise suitable. Fifth Form prefects hadn't been appointed before, but he would not refuse to give one of Mr. Prout's boys a trial, especially after the way I had stood up for Prout the other day—with that tramp, you know. Anyway, I could have the job on trial for a week, while the other prefects are away. If all goes well, I keep it."
 "If—if all goes well—"
 "All will go well," said Coker positively. "I shall exert my authority at once. I shall run things on a superior plan. I'll see that those cheeky juniors are kept in order. I shall wake things up generally. By the time I've been a prefect a week, you'll hardly know this school!"
 "Is—is that how you're going to begin?"
 "Certainly. Anybody who objects to my methods will be whopped. I can't say fairer than that!"
 "Oh, my hat!"
 Potter and Greene stared helplessly at their study leader. They gasped. It dawned upon them how Coker had obtained his prefectship.
 Mr. Prout, grateful for the service rendered him, had kindly taken his part—and the Head had not cared to refuse the Fifth Form master—considering, moreover, that as Coker was old enough, and big enough to be in the Sixth, there was really no great reason why he shouldn't join the ranks of the prefects—on trial, at all events. And an extra prefect would be wanted for duty while North and Walker were away.
 And Wingate, the captain of the School, who was head-prefect, would be in authority over Coker, anyway. Potter and Greene understood; but they knew that the Head did not know Coker.

Coker was a good-natured fellow, and he was popular in a way. Nobody disliked Coker—a fellow could not dislike him. But he was, as his best chums admitted, a thumping ass! And if Coker was going to start his prefectship on the lines he had just laid down, the results would be far from



HORACE ON THE WARPATH!—Horace Coker came striding down the passage. He did not enquire the reason of the ragging of Reggie, but walked into the juniors, hitting out right and left with his ashplant. (See Chapter 5.)

Horace is Anxious to Make a Sensation! He Does—Next Week!

what the Head or Mr. Prout could possibly anticipate.

Coker picked up his brand-new ashplant, and whirled it in the air with a great flourish. That outward and visible sign of his authority as a prefect was very dear to Coker. In his exuberance he had a narrow escape of smashing the gas-globe and the clock.

"I—I say, don't break up the happy home!" gurgled Greene. "So you're a prefect! Well, this beats the giddy band!"

"You'll want a larger size in hats," murmured Potter.

Coker grunted.

"My dear chap, not much chance of a fellow like me getting swelled-head! I've got too much mental balance! You see, I'm only occupying the position I'm naturally fitted for. Some fellows are born to command. That's how it is."

Potter and Greene exchanged glances.

"Well, I—I'm jolly glad you're a prefect!" said Potter, with outward heartiness. "I think we ought to celebrate this. Don't have a prefect belonging to the study every day—ahem! This really ought to be celebrated. We had rather a skinny tea with Fitz, and we can do with a whacking supper!"

"Hear, hear!" said Greene cordially. "Let's celebrate it! We feel rather proud of the occasion. We'll have Fritz and Blundell and Bland in—"

"Certainly!" said Potter, getting enthusiastic. "After all, it's a ripping good idea! Old Coker will make a splendid prefect!"

"Glad you think so," said Coker. "I'm going to do my best! If the juniors aren't kept in order, it won't be for want of coming down on them jolly heavy, I can tell you. I think I'll drop into the tuck-shop and take a snack. No time for feeding. I've got my new duties to attend to!"

"Ahem! I was suggesting—"

"This really ought to be celebrated, Coker," urged Greene. "It's a great occasion. I think that a really stunning supper is the proper caper."

Coker snorted.

"Prefects don't have spreads like fags!" he said scornfully. "You won't catch me doing anything of the sort. I've got my dignity to consider."

"Oh, we won't catch you doing anything of the sort, won't we?" grunted Potter.

"No, you won't! Now I'm a prefect—"

"Bow-wow!" said Potter disrespectfully. "My hat! This will be a standing joke for ever and ever! You a prefect! Br-r-r-r!"

Coker's announcement that there would be no celebration in the form of a feed seemed to have changed Potter's opinion of Coker's qualifications as a prefect. Horace Coker glared at him wrathfully.

"What will the Sixth say?" chortled Greene. "The real prefects won't stand it!"

"Real prefects!" roared Coker. "Ain't I a real prefect?"

"Bow-wow! You're a spurious imitation—a blessed prefect made in Germany!" said Potter scoffingly. "And if you begin as you've said, you'll be a scalped prefect before very long. They won't stand you!"

"Why, you—you—" Coker stammered with wrath. "Look here, I'm willing to keep on friendly terms with you chaps, though I'm a prefect—so long as you keep your proper place, and understand that a prefect isn't a fit subject for jokes, or any of your beastly familiarity! But if I have any cheek—"

"Rats!"

"Scat!"

The airs of the new prefect had not pleased Potter and Greene at all; and as there was to be no celebration, there was no reason why they should conceal their real opinion on the matter. So their genuine opinion came out with painful frankness.

Coker seemed about to choke. No man, it was said of old, is regarded as a true prophet in his own country. But to be received like this in his own study was a little bit more than Coker's patience could stand.

"You cheeky asses!" he roared at last. "I'll show you whether you can cheek a prefect! On second thoughts, it's rather below a prefect's dignity to share a study with Fifth Form chaps! Get out!"

"What!" yelled Potter.

"Get out of our own study?" stammered Greene.

"My study!" said Coker. "When you can behave yourselves I may let you come back."

THE POPULAR.—No. 248.

You can go along the passage and dig with Fitzgerald. Out you go!"

"But—b-b-but—"

Coker whirled the ashplant round again. Potter jumped up with a yell and dodged round the table.

"Mind what you're doing with that club!" he roared.

"Yaroo!" roared Greene, as he caught the ashplant with his head. "Oh, my hat! You dangerous ass! Yaroo!"

"Outside!"

"I'll see you blowed first! Keep off! Ow, ow! My word! Oh crumbs!"

Potter and Greene retired precipitately from the study. Coker and the ashplant were not to be argued with. They retired before superior forces, as a military man would say. But it could hardly be called a "masterly retreat." It was more like a rout.

They almost rolled over one another in their hurry. Coker slammed the door after them.

In the passage Potter and Greene looked at one another, almost speechless.

"Well, my word!" spluttered Greene at last. "This takes the cake! This fairly beats it!"

"Ow! The silly ass! Yow! The thundering idiot! Grooh!" said Potter.

"I'm not going to stand it, for one!"

"Nor I, for another!"

"No fear!"

"Not much!"

But they did not enter the study again.

Coker and the ashplant were a little too much for them.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Not Popular!

"ROTTER!"

"Bosh!"

"Rats!"

The crowd of indignant juniors gathered before the notice-board in the hall were not at all moderate in their expressions of opinion. It was seldom, or never, that a notice signed by Dr. Locke, the Head of Greyfriars, caused such comments; but the juniors made them freely now. They could hardly believe their eyes! But there it was, in black and white, in the well-known handwriting of Dr. Locke, and there was no gain-saying it.

Coker of the Fifth was a prefect! Coker of the Fifth had been appointed to the rank of prefect by order of the Head!

There it was. Certainly Bob Cherry declared that it must be a dream, and they would wake up presently. He even asked Squiff to pinch him to ascertain whether he was awake or not.

The Australian junior complied—with what Bob regarded as unnecessary vigour.

"Coker a prefect!" said Harry Wharton, with a warlike air. "Let him try prefecting us! We'll give him prefect!"

"That ass! That duffer! What's the Head thinking of?"

"Nothing at all," said Vernon-Smith. "He must have done this without thinking."

"I should jolly well say so!" exclaimed Tom Brown. "Coker will be more—more Coker than ever now! Of course, nobody will stand it!"

Wingate of the Sixth came along and looked at the notice. The juniors looked at Wingate curiously, to see what effect it would have upon him. As Wingate was head prefect, of course, the matter concerned him. The juniors could guess with what feelings he would greet Coker of the Fifth as a colleague.

Wingate read the notice through carefully, and then scanned it, evidently to make sure that it really was in Dr. Locke's handwriting, and was not a "rag." Then he whistled.

"What do you think of it, Wingate?" demanded Bolsover major.

Whatever Wingate thought of it he evidently did not intend to confide his thoughts to the Lower Fourth. He hid them deep in his own breast.

"It seems that Coker is appointed prefect," he said. "Well, in that case, you will have to obey him, of course!"

"Obey Coker!"

The tone in which the juniors uttered that exclamation was one promising for any obedience to Coker.

"Certainly!" said Wingate. "You must respect and obey a prefect! If there is any nonsense you'll have me down on you!"

Wingate walked away, and left the juniors gasping. They had vaguely expected that old Wingate would get his back up; that he would refuse to recognise Coker as a prefect at all; that he would concur in their opinion on the subject. That hope had been dashed to the ground.

The captain of Greyfriars had swallowed it whole, so to speak.

"Well, I did expect better than that of Wingate!" said Bob Cherry, in a tone of deep disgust. "Looks as if he's going to take Coker to his bosom like a long-lost brother. I never thought the Sixth would stand it!"

"Well, they have to," said Wharton thoughtfully. "Prefects have to back up the Head, whatever he does. It's a giddy responsible position! Luckily, fags don't have to do anything of the sort! The Sixth Form is the giddy palladium of the school, but the Remove isn't. And we can say what we think!"

"Hear, hear!"

"And what we think is that it's all rot, and if Coker comes the prefect over us, he'll get it where the chicken got the chopper, and that's in the neck!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes Coker minor!"

"Room for the prefect minor!" howled Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors made room for Coker minor with exaggerated respect. Coker minor came up to read the notice a little timidly.

Coker minor, though much younger than his brother Horace, was in the Sixth Form. He was a tremendously clever youth, and what he didn't know on all sorts of subjects really wasn't worth knowing. But Coker minor was not big like Horace, and he wasn't an athlete, and he wasn't a fighting-man.

But for the fact that he had a big brother in the Fifth, Reggie Coker's position in the Sixth would have been far from comfortable. Horace fought all his battles for him—generally with pronounced success—and Reggie looked up to his major with affectionate awe.

Horace Coker admitted that his minor had the brains of the family. But muscular force was needed, as well as brains, for a "kid" who had climbed as high as the Sixth Form over the heads of a crowd of older and bigger fellows. That was where Horace came in.

Reggie Coker read the notice on the board with evident delight. He was greatly pleased at that promotion of brother Horace.

"Good news, ain't it?" hooted Bolsover major.

"Yes, indeed!" said Reggie innocently. "I'm so pleased! Horace will make such a splendid prefect! How very wise of the Head!"

"That was too much for the juniors. 'Oh, bump him!' howled Bolsover major. 'Frog's-march him to his major's study!'"

"Oh dear!" gasped Reggie Coker, as the excited Removites and Fourth-Formers closed round him with clapping hands. "My dear young fellows—oh dear—please, don't! Oh! Yah!"

"March!" yelled Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo! Here's Coker!"

It was the new prefect. Horace Coker had heard the distressed voice of Reggie. He came striding on the scene with his famous ashplant in his hand.

Coker did not stop for words. It was miles beneath the dignity of a prefect to argue with juniors. He brought the ashplant into play. Whack, whack, whack, whack! Thwack!

The big stick, wielded by Coker's powerful hand, did great execution. The juniors yelled and scattered. To put it in the Shakespearean language, they stood not upon the order of their going, but went at once.

Horace Coker picked up his gasping minor. "All serene, Reggie!" he said breathlessly. "I'll keep 'em in order! That's all right! There won't be much nonsense knocking around now I'm a prefect, I can promise you!" And Coker, having thus successfully kept order, walked off in triumph.

Coker had blossomed forth as a prefect, and his first encounter with the Removites ended in a victory.

But Coker would discover that being a prefect isn't all roses.

THE END.

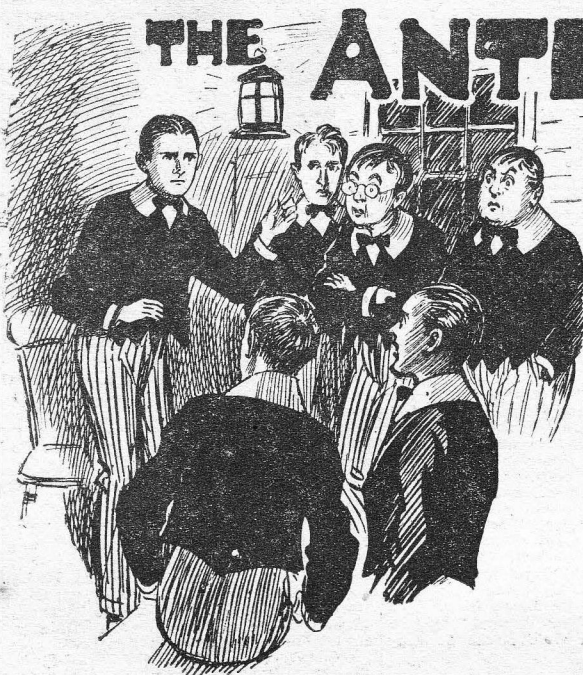
(Don't miss next week's topping story of the Chums of Greyfriars.)

The Limelight and Horace of the Fifth Are Very Closely Connected Next Tuesday!

AN AMAZING FOOTBALL AND SCHOOL TALE.

The Anti-Football League takes St. Jim's by storm. The fat goes forth and the conspirators declare war. What will happen? Will the great army of schoolboy footballers take it lying down, this revolt against them? Many things happen—which will amaze you.

MARTIN CLIFFORD'S LATEST SENSATION.



THE ANTI-FOOTBALL LEAGUE !

A Fine, New, Story of Tom Merry & Co., the Chums of St. Jim's, by one of your popular authors,

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

(Author of the Stories of Tom Merry & Co., now appearing in the "Gem.")

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Conscientious Objectors.

LOOK sharp!"

"Oh, really, Kildare—"

"If you're not in your footertogs and down on the ground in ten minutes, there will be trouble!"

Baggy Trimble, the Falstaff of the Fourth, rose reluctantly from the armchair in his study.

Kildare, captain of St. Jim's and captain of games, stood in the doorway with a frown on his handsome face.

It was Wednesday afternoon, and there was a keen nip in the autumn air, which made the conditions ideal for football. But there were slackers in the School House—fellows who either could not or would not play football—and Kildare had decided to make a tour of the junior studies, and send the slackers out into the fresh air.

Baggy Trimble was the first victim. And Baggy was very reluctant to go and get into footer garb.

"I say, Kildare—" he began.

"Travel!" growled the tall senior.

"But—but I've sprained both my ankles!" said Baggy pitifully. And he limped a pace or two, and then clutched at the table for support.

"You can't get along?" said Kildare grimly.

"Nunno."

"Then p'raps this will help you!"

The well-soled football boot of the captain of St. Jim's clumped behind Baggy's fat person. The fat junior shot through the doorway with the velocity of a stone from a catapult.

"Xarooooo!"

Kildare poised his foot for a fresh kick. But it was not necessary. Despite his alleged sprained ankles, Baggy Trimble fled along the passage like a champion of the cinder-path. His footertogs were in his locker in the Fourth Form dormitory, and Baggy made his way thither. Kildare continued his tour of investigation.

It was a disastrous afternoon for the slackers and non-footballers.

Racke, Crooke, and Mellish were the next to come under Kildare's notice. He ran them to earth in Racke's study, where they were perusing a pink paper, which was strictly taboo at St. Jim's.

Kildare confiscated the paper, and screwed it up into a ball, and tossed it on the

fire. Then he ordered the trio of slackers to proceed to the football-ground.

They all had excuses. Racke said that footer wasn't compulsory, Crooke complained of a splitting headache, and Mellish said he was expecting a visit from one of his uncles.

To all these excuses Kildare turned a deaf ear. And Racke & Co. were compelled to follow in the wake of Trimble.

There was quite a crowd on the junior ground. Tom Merry & Co. had been there since dinner, indulging in shots at goal.

"Hallo, here come the merry slackers!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "Looks as if Kildare's been on the warpath."

Tom Merry nodded.

"We've enough fellows here to pick four sides, and have two matches going at once," he said.

"What about School House first eleven against New House first eleven, and School House reserves against New House reserves?" suggested Manners.

"That's a good wheeze," said Tom Merry.

"The first eleven game will be a sort of full-dress rehearsal of the House match on Saturday. We shall be able to see how the New House fellows shape."

The sides were picked accordingly. There was more than one playing-pitch, and the two games would be able to proceed at the same time.

Aubrey Racke was scowling fiercely as he lined up with the School House reserves.

Racke hated football, as he hated all manly sports. He considered it a wanton waste of time and energy. It would have suited Racke far better to have spent the afternoon in his study, poring over the pink paper.

The School House reserves were being skippered by Bernard Glyn. He strode across to Racke.

"You'll keep goal!" he ordered.

"Can't you find me a softer job than that?" grumbled Racke.

Glyn walked off without arguing the point. And Aubrey Racke took up his position between the posts. He knew that the New House forwards would keep him busily occupied; and he roundly abused Glyn and Kildare and the game of football, in turn.

The two games started simultaneously.

Tom Merry & Co. and Figgins & Co. were "going it" hammer-and-tongs. Their teams were evenly matched. The School House had the pull in attack, for their forwards were fast and clever. But the New House

defence, consisting of Fatty Wynn, Figgins, and Kerr, was well-nigh impregnable.

The other game, between the reserve teams, was woefully one-sided. The New House had matters all their own way.

With such arrant duffers as Trimble and Skimpole playing for the School House, and with such a bungler as Racke in goal, it was not surprising that the New House overran their opponents.

Bernard Glyn played up pluckily, and so did Clifton Dane and Reilly and Kerruish; but they got no support from the slackers. Baggy Trimble kept getting in their way, and he made a speciality of charging his own men off the ball.

Skimpole wandered aimlessly on the touch-line, and ran away from the ball every time it came in his direction. Crooke and Mellish were worse than useless; and Racke made no real effort to save the shots that rained in upon him.

As a result, the New House put on four goals in the first half, without reply.

During the interval, Bernard Glyn spoke sharply to Racke.

"You're not playing up, you cad! You could have prevented at least two of those goals, if you'd tried!"

"I dare say," assented Aubrey, with a shrug of the shoulders. "But I don't choose to try—see?"

"What about the honour of the House? You don't want to see us licked by about twelve to nil, I suppose?"

"The New House can bag twenty goals in the second half, for all I care!" said Racke defiantly. "I'm not goin' to try to stop any of the shots!"

"Oh, you cad!"

"Footer's a rotten game!" said Racke. "The chap who invented it ought to have been put in the pillory. Where's the sense in chasin' a muddy ball, about, an' bowlin' people over?"

"Look here," said Bernard Glyn grimly, "if you don't play up in the second half, I'll give you the licking of your life after the match!"

In spite of that fearful threat Racke was resolved to make no effort when the game was resumed.

Unfortunately for Aubrey, Kildare happened to stroll on to the ground at that juncture. He stood behind the goal-net, and kept his eye on Racke. When the latter muffed a soft shot Kildare cautioned him.

"Play the game, there!" he said sharply.

THE POPULAR.—No. 248.

"The School Without Football!"—Next Week's St. Jim's Tale!

"You're there to guard the goal, not to loll up against the post and take a holiday. I'll keep my eye on you, Racke, and if I see you slacking again, I'll deal with you after the match in a way you won't like!"

After that, Racke had no alternative but to play up. He was on the go the whole time, and the New House forwards gave him no peace. They rained shots upon him from all angles, and Racke had to work harder than he had ever worked in his life. With Kildare's eye upon him, he dared not take things easy.

The New House put on three more goals, but Racke could not be blamed for them. They were shots which would have beaten much cleverer custodians than Aubrey.

When the final whistle rang out, Racke fairly staggered off the ground. The unusual exertion had told upon him, and he was "whacked." He was scowling more darkly than ever as he limped away towards the School House.

"I hate footer!" he muttered vehemently. "An' I'm goin' to set my wits to work an' find some way of squashin' the game."

It was a tall order.—Aubrey Racke was not the first person who had made a "dead set" at football, and tried to get the game abolished. Certain killjoys had tried it. They had contended that there was too much corruption in professional football, and that amateur football wasn't worth watching. But the killjoys, although they had been allowed to have their own way in many matters, had not been able to touch football. The great game had grown in popularity. Not only at St. Jim's, but throughout the country, the football fever was at its height.

Aubrey Racke had made up his mind to storm the stronghold of the great winter game, with a view to getting it suppressed—at St. Jim's, at any rate.

It didn't seem possible that Racke would succeed, or even partly succeed. But the cad of the Shell possessed determination and cunning; and he would stop at nothing in order to achieve his ends.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Anti-Footballers!

TOM MERRY & Co. came off the field looking flushed, and fairly pleased with themselves.

They had not beaten the New House first eleven. The match had ended in a draw of one goal each. But the play had ruled strongly in favour of the School House, and it was only Fatty Wynn's brilliant goalkeeping that had saved his side from defeat.

"I reckon we shall swamp the New House on Saturday," said Tom Merry. "We ought to win, at all events."

"Yes, rather!"

"That was a great goal of yours, Tommy," said Monty Lowther. "Fatty Wynn was beaten all ends up!"

The School House footballers trooped into the building in the gathering dusk. They first of all visited the bath-rooms to remove all traces of the muddy conflict.

Having tubbed and changed their clothes, the Terrible Three set out for the tuckshop, in order to lay in supplies for tea.

As they passed through the hall, they saw signs of excitement.

A crowd of fellows had assembled round the notice-board, like flies round a honey-pot.

"Hallo! What's going on, I wonder?" murmured Tom Merry.

"Heave me on to your shoulders, you two," said Monty Lowther, "and I'll tell you the news."

From his point of vantage, Monty had a clear view of the two announcements which appeared cheek by jowl on the notice-board. They had no bearing on each other, but both were interesting.

"Trot out the merry tidings!" said Manners.

Monty Lowther declaimed the first announcement.

"NOTICE!

"The headmaster announces that he will be absent from the school for a fortnight from to-day. In his absence, the school will be under the control of the senior House-master, Mr. Ratcliff."

THE POPULAR.—No. 248.

A chorus of groans greeted this announcement.

The Head, though a very stern and dignified personage, was also very popular. Mr. Ratcliff was not. Everybody liked the Head; everybody loathed Mr. Ratcliff. And it wasn't very pleasant to think of the school being in Mr. Ratcliff's charge for a fortnight.

"Why couldn't old Railton have been left in charge?" growled Manners.

"He's junior to Ratty," said Tom Merry. "But he's the better man."

"Granted. But the Head couldn't very well stick Railton above Ratty. What's the other notice about, Monty?"

Lowther recited the second announcement.

"NOTICE!

"There will be a Special Meeting in the woodshed this evening, at eight o'clock, for the purpose of forming an Anti-Football League at St. Jim's. Aubrey Racke will take the chair. All who dislike footer, and want to see it abolished, are requested to roll up and join the league."

"Well, of all the nerve!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Does Racke imagine for one moment that he'll be able to stop footer?"

"Oh, he's potty!" snorted Manners. "Might as well try to stop the world going round as to try to stop footer!"

"What are you going to do about this, Merry?" asked Harry Noble.

"Do!" said Tom. "Nothing, of course!"

"Aren't you going to smash up the giddy meeting?"

"Not worth while," was the reply. "If Racke likes to spout a lot of hot air to a set of slackers like himself, let him go ahead. He can't do any harm to the game. This is the result of his being forced to play this afternoon. He hates footer like poison; but I'm thinking it would take a more powerful person than Racke to suppress it."

"Yes, rather!"

Very few fellows took Aubrey Racke's announcement seriously. Racke could form as many anti-football leagues as he liked, but he would not be able to do any damage to the game. That was the general opinion.

Of course, Racke was cunning, and not without brains. But how on earth could he stop football being played? He had set himself a task which was far beyond his powers. An Anti-gambling League might have met with success; but an Anti-Football League was doomed at the outset. That was the universal view, anyway.

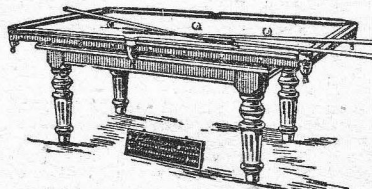
The Terrible Three went on their way to the tuckshop, and dismissed the matter from their minds. They had no intention of putting a spoke in Racke's wheel. Let him do his worst. He would never be able to suppress football.

At eight o'clock the anti-footballers rolled up to the meeting.

There was a mere handful of them. Racke was the first to arrive. He lighted a couple of lanterns in the woodshed, and he placed a number of rickety chairs in position, for the use of the public. But the greater portion of the public preferred to stay away.

Baggy Trimble turned up shortly afterwards. Baggy disliked football, and he was quite willing to join forces with Racke. He also hoped that there might be light refreshments at the meeting. He blinked around the woodshed, and gave a grunt of disappointment on seeing that there were no jam-tarts or bottles of ginger-pop.

WIN ONE OF THESE!



Turn to page 14 for full particulars.

Success for the Anti-Football League Next Week!

Crooke and Mellish arrived, followed closely by Skimpole. Then Clampe and Scrope put in an appearance.

Racke waited a little while, in the hope that others would turn up. But he was disappointed.

"I don't seem to be gettin' much support," he remarked. "Never mind! A handful of red-hot enthusiasts is better than a whole crowd of lukewarm supporters. With your permission, gentlemen, I'll get to business!"

"Fire away!" said Crooke.

"We are here this evening," said Racke, "for the purpose of formin' an Anti-Football League. I take it you fellows are all willin' to join?"

"Yes, rather!"

"But I don't quite see how we're to put the kybosh on footer," said Scrope.

"That's what we're here to discuss—ways an' means," said Racke. "Has anybody got any suggestions? I'll take 'em one at a time."

Gerald Crooke rose to his feet. "We've set ourselves a tall order," he said. "It's the hardest thing in the world to squash a popular game like football. There's only one way of doin' it, that I can see. It's no use goin' up to a fellow and forbidin' him to play footer. He'd simply laugh at you. The only way to do it is to provide a counter-attraction—a new game that will catch on like wildfire, and make football a back number."

"Sounds all right," said Racke. "But do you know a new game?"

Crooke shpok his head.

"Neither do I. In fact, there isn't a game of any sort, old or new, that would seriously challenge football. Soccer an' Rugby are so firmly established that no other game will shift their popularity. Hockey, lacrosse, skatin', tobogganin'—they're simply side-shows. I'm afraid your suggestion is a wash-out, Crooke."

Crooke sat down. The Anti-Football League seemed unable to make any headway.

Then Skimpole made a speech. As a rule, the words of wisdom that fell from Skimpy's lips were wasted on the desert air. But on this occasion the genius of the Shell was listened to with rapt attention. "The best way to stop football, my dear fellows, is not to substitute another game, as Crooke suggests, but to convince the school authorities that football is a rough, brutal, and extremely dangerous pastime. Once you get that idea into their heads, they will, in the language of the vernacular, sit up and take notice. If they could be convinced that football was nothing but horseplay and hooliganism, they would forbid the game being played."

"Bravo, Skimpy!" said Racke. "You've hit the right nail on the head, old top! That's how we must attack football—through the masters."

"But you'll never convince a beak that footer's too dangerous," said Crooke.

"Oh, yes, we shall! I've thought of a wheeze already!" said Racke excitedly.

"You know young Gibson of the Third? He's simply potty on footer. He can tell you who's won the English Cup for the last twenty years, and he can tell you the name of practically every player in each of the big Leagues. Gibson simply revels in footer; it's meat an' drink to him. He keeps a big scrap-book, an' it's chock-full of newspaper cuttings dealin' with footer. Whenever he comes across a paragraph connected with the game, he cuts it out an' pastes it into his scrap-book. I'm goin' to borrow that book."

"But why?" asked Mellish. "Dashed if I can see what you're driving at!"

Racke gave a chuckle.

"Lend me your ears!" he said. "In young Gibson's scrap-book we shall find heaps of paragraphs dealin' with dangerous accidents which have happened on the football-field. Some players have been killed; others maimed for life."

"But you get that sort of thing in nearly every game," protested Crooke. "People have been killed by cricket-balls, and lamed by hockey-sticks. The percentage of bad accidents on the footer-field must be very small."

"True," said Racke. "But we're goin' to make it appear that the percentage is very large. I'll tell you what I'm goin' to do. I shall collect all the paragraphs dealin'

with accidents, fatal an' otherwise, an' send them anonymously to old Ratty."

"My hat!"

"Ratty hates footer already!" Racke went on. "He'll hate it still more when he reads of all the terrible calamities that have happened on the field of play. I'm willin' to wager that he'll be so impressed by readin' all those paragraphs that he'll stop footer at St. Jim's."

"But he can't!" said Scrope breathlessly.

"Eh? Of course he can! He's deputisin' for the Head, an' he's in charge of the school. I tell you, this is a great stunt! I'll go an' borrow young Gibson's book right away. You fellows are to keep strictly mum about this, mind!"

"We'll be as mum as mice!" said Mellish.

The meeting was at an end; and the anti-footballers dispersed in a state of great excitement.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
The Fiat Goes Forth!

M R. HORACE RATCLIFF, Master of Arts, was seated in the Head's study.

Mr. Ratcliff rather fancied himself in the role of deputy headmaster. He was now free to rule the school as he chose, and he would rule it with a rod of iron.

The sour, ill-tempered Housemaster was an unbearable person, at the best of times. Now that he was dressed in a little brief authority, so to speak, he would be more unbearable than ever.

A pile of correspondence lay on the desk in front of him. Mr. Ratcliff was steadily going through it.

Presently he came upon a rather fat envelope, addressed to himself in printed capitals. He slit it open with the paper-knife, and a number of newspaper cuttings tumbled out on to the blotting-pad.

Mr. Ratcliff frowned.

"I wonder who has sent me these?" he murmured. "They appear to relate to football—a game I heartily detest!"

The Housemaster picked up the paragraphs and perused them. Some were long; others were short. But they all dealt with the same subject—serious accidents on the football-field. The following was a typical sample:

"FOOTBALL PLAYER SERIOUSLY INJURED.

"Playing for Wessex Rovers against Sturminster on Saturday, Peter Brown, the Rovers' goalkeeper, was involved in a scrimmage in the goalmouth, and was carried unconscious from the field. His injuries were found to be so serious that he will be unable to take any further part in Football."

Mr. Ratcliff read this paragraph, and many others of a similar nature, and he frowned.

"I have always maintained that football is a rough, brutal, and ungentlemanly game, and these newspaper cuttings amply confirm my opinion. The number of accidents that occur must be appalling. It is in my power to forbid the game being played at this school; and, in view of the terrible calamities of which I have just read, I feel that I ought to do so. But I will not act at once. I will wait until I get some actual evidence of football hooliganism at this school."

Aubrey Racke would have been delighted could he have seen the impression that the newspaper cuttings had made on Mr. Ratcliff. The Housemaster had a growing conviction that football ought to be stopped. He began to feel quite worried on the subject. Any afternoon he expected to see a St. Jim's fellow brought in on a stretcher, as the result of injuries sustained in a football match.

To do Mr. Ratcliff justice, he was quite sincere in his views about football. He honestly believed it to be a highly dangerous game. He had always believed so, and the newspaper cuttings had given strength to his convictions.

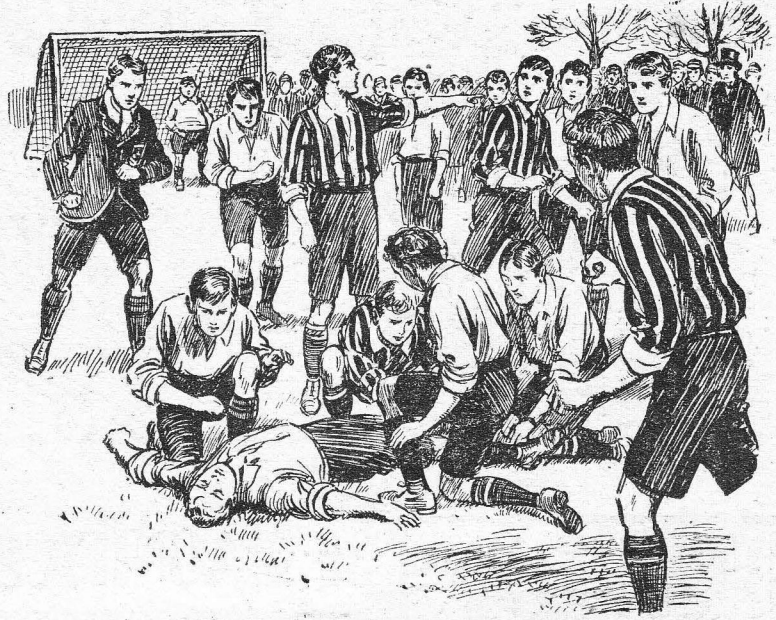
When Saturday afternoon came, Mr. Ratcliff walked down to the football-ground to see the House match.

The juniors were surprised to see him there. As a rule, Mr. Ratcliff never condescended to put in an appearance at a junior match.

"Has Ratty come to cheer us on, I wonder?" said Figgins, with a grin.

"No jolly fear!" growled Fatty Wynn.

"Ratty's a killjoy and a spoilsport."



AN UNFORTUNATE ACCIDENT! There was a sharp tussle in midfield, and several fellows were bowled over. One of them did not rise again. Thompson lay white and still, and the game was immediately suspended. His leg had been badly broken in the fall. (See Chapter 3.)

"Then why has he turned up?"

"To find some fault with the game, I suppose. Ratty doesn't know the difference between a fair shoulder-charge and a bit of hooliganism. He's here to make mischief."

"Oh, blow Ratty!" said Kerr. "We're here to lick the School House, not to worry about what Ratty thinks!"

Tom Merry tossed with Figgins for choice of ends.

School House won the toss, and set their opponents to face a stiff breeze.

Darrel of the Sixth blew his whistle, and the ball was kicked off from the centre of the field.

"Go it, ye cripples!"

"School House for ever!"

"Rats! Play up, New House!"

Play was very fast and very sturdy. The New House backs did not stand on ceremony. They hustled Tom Merry & Co. off the ball whenever the School House threatened danger.

Mr. Ratcliff frowned as he watched the heavy shoulder-charging of Figgins and Kerr. Though heavy, however, it was perfectly fair.

The first hour was a desperate duel between the School House attack and the New House defence. The latter held out gallantly until five minutes from the interval, when Talbot put the ball in for the School House.

"Goal!"

"Hurrah!"

The School House deserved to be on top, for they had pressed continuously. Indeed, but for the brilliant "keeping" of Fatty Wynn, they would have had several goals to their credit.

In the second half the play was faster and keener than ever.

Dick Redfern opened up the game for the New House, and he sent Lawrence away with a well-placed pass.

Lawrence outwitted a couple of opponents, and then transferred the ball to Owen, who cut in towards goal, and fired in a terrific shot which left Harry Hammond helpless.

"Goal!"

"Level, by Jove!"

Now came a dour struggle for the lead. Each side went "all out." Players and on-lookers were equally excited.

When the excitement was at its height a tragedy happened. Exactly how it happened nobody knew. Certainly there was not the slightest suspicion of foul play. It was just sheer ill-luck.

There was a tussle in midfield, where the New House halves were endeavouring to hold up the School House forwards, and prevent them from breaking through.

Several fellows were bowled over, and one of them did not rise again.

Thompson of the Shell lay white and still. His left leg seemed to have crumpled under him in falling, and on examination it was found to be broken.

The referee suspended the game at once. A couple of fellows were despatched for a stretcher, and the unfortunate Thompson was carried away to the sanny. Talbot dashed off to telephone for the doctor.

The affair had shed a gloom over the proceedings.

"Poor old Thompson!" muttered Tom Merry. "We can't possibly play on, after this."

"What frightful bad luck, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Fancy a fellow bweakin' his leg in a House match! I don't think it's evah happened befoah."

"And I hope it never happens again," said Jack Blake, with a shiver. "The look on poor old Thompson's face quite upset me. He was in awful pain."

The match was abandoned by common consent. Had the injury to Thompson been a minor one, the fellows would have played on. But a broken leg was a serious business, and nobody felt like resuming the game.

Mr. Ratcliff had witnessed the calamity, of course. After Thompson had been carried off, the Housemaster walked back towards the building, looking very grim.

That evening a bombshell descended upon St. Jim's.

An announcement appeared on the notice-board to the effect that football was to cease.

Seldom in the school's history had such a startling order been published.

The mighty men of the Sixth were dismayed and furious. They considered it an extremely high-handed procedure on Mr. Ratcliff's part to forbid football just because a junior had had the misfortune to break his leg.

Football was forbidden at St. Jim's! It was a bitter pill—a pill that took a deal of swallowing.

Aubrey Racke, the president of the Anti-Football League, had scored a great triumph, and Racke and his followers rejoiced with a great rejoicing.

What was to happen next? Would the great army of schoolboy footballers take it lying down, or would they rise in revolt against Mr. Ratcliff's decree?

THE END.

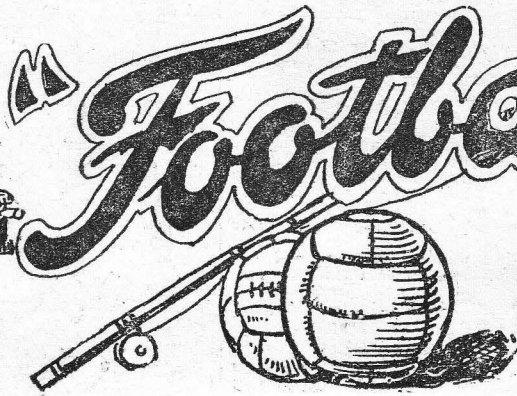
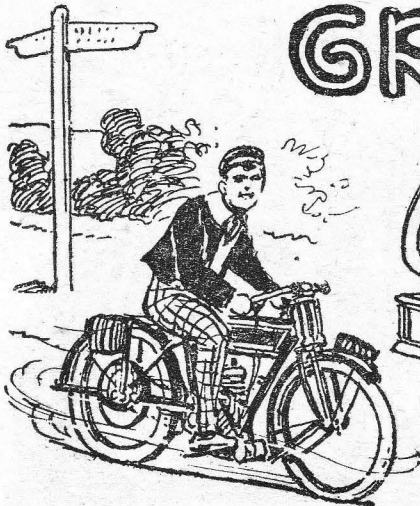
(There will be another tip-top tale of St. Jim's next week.)

THE POPULAR.—No. 248.

THESE WONDERFUL PRIZES MUST BE

GRAND NEW

Football



Bank of England £100

**First Prize,
£100**

**30 MAGNIFICENT "JAMES"
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20 GRAMOPHONES. 40 FOOTBALL OUTFITS (Boots, Stockings, Shorts, and Shirt). 50 Pairs of BOXING GLOVES. 100 Pairs of ROLLER SKATES.

250 BOOK Consola

RULES AND CONDITIONS

which must be strictly adhered to.

1.—The First Prize of £100 in cash will be awarded to the competitor who sends in the correct, or nearest correct, solution of all eight sets of the pictures according to the Editor's official solution.

2.—The Second Prize of £50, and the others in the splendid variety of prizes will be awarded in order of merit.

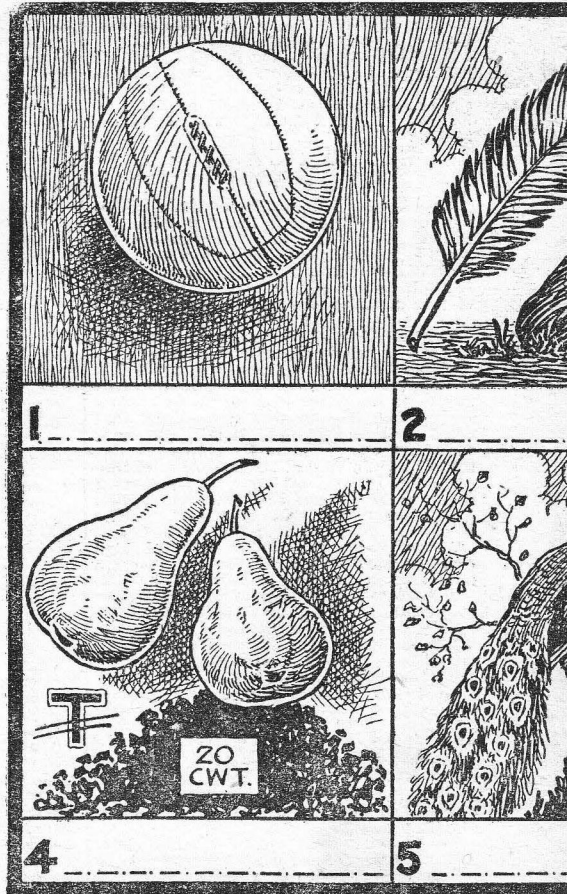
3.—All the prizes will be awarded. If two or more competitors tie, however, the prize or prizes, or their value, will be divided, and the Editor reserves full rights in this respect.

4.—No solution may be sent in until all the sets of the pictures and the necessary coupon have been published. Full directions will then be given.

5.—The names under the pictures must be written IN INK.

6.—Employees of the proprietors of this journal are not eligible to compete.

7.—Entry to this competition is on the full understanding that the Editor's decision is final and legally binding throughout.



All these Magnificent Prizes are Open to You a

WON! NOTHING DIFFICULT HERE, BOYS!

COMPETITION!



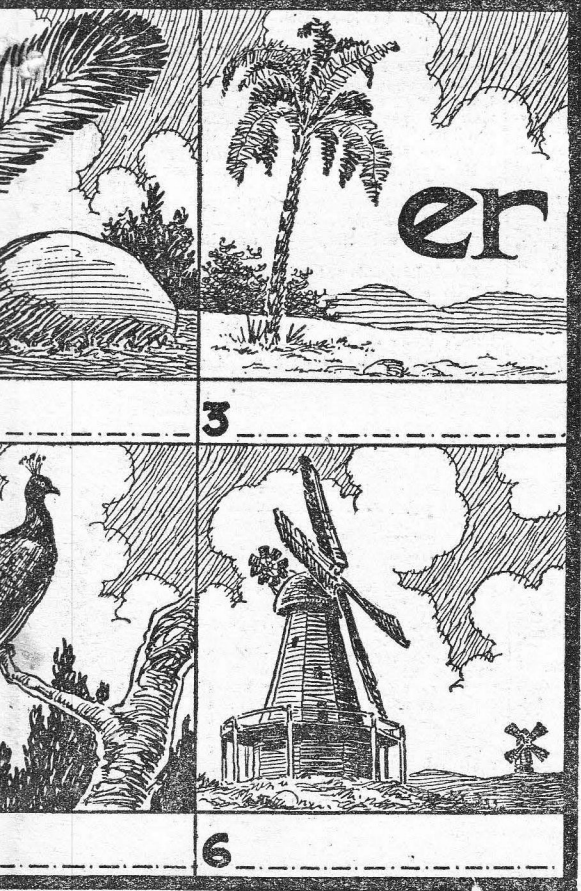
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Second Prize, £50

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6 "RILEY" BILLIARDS TABLES. 100 FISHING RODS. 100 MATCH FOOTBALLS. 20 MODEL STEAM LOCOMOTIVES (With Rails).



ALL YOU HAVE TO DO

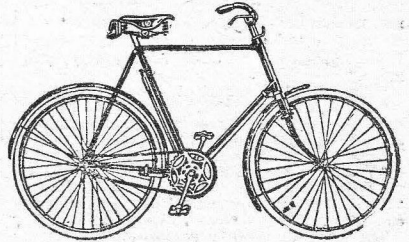
is to write IN INK in the allotted space under each of the puzzle-pictures the name of the Footballer which you think the picture represents. Thus with No. 1, here the picture clearly means BALL. In the same way you have to discover the names indicated by the other five pictures.

In all there will be EIGHT SETS OF PICTURES, so keep your solutions until the other sets appear. Look out for the second set of pictures next week!

DO NOT SEND YOUR ENTRIES YET.

To help you still further there is a list containing the names of prominent footballers to choose from on page 24, columns 1 and 2. This list contains the actual names represented by the puzzle-pictures, so that all you have to do is to fit the correct name to each picture.

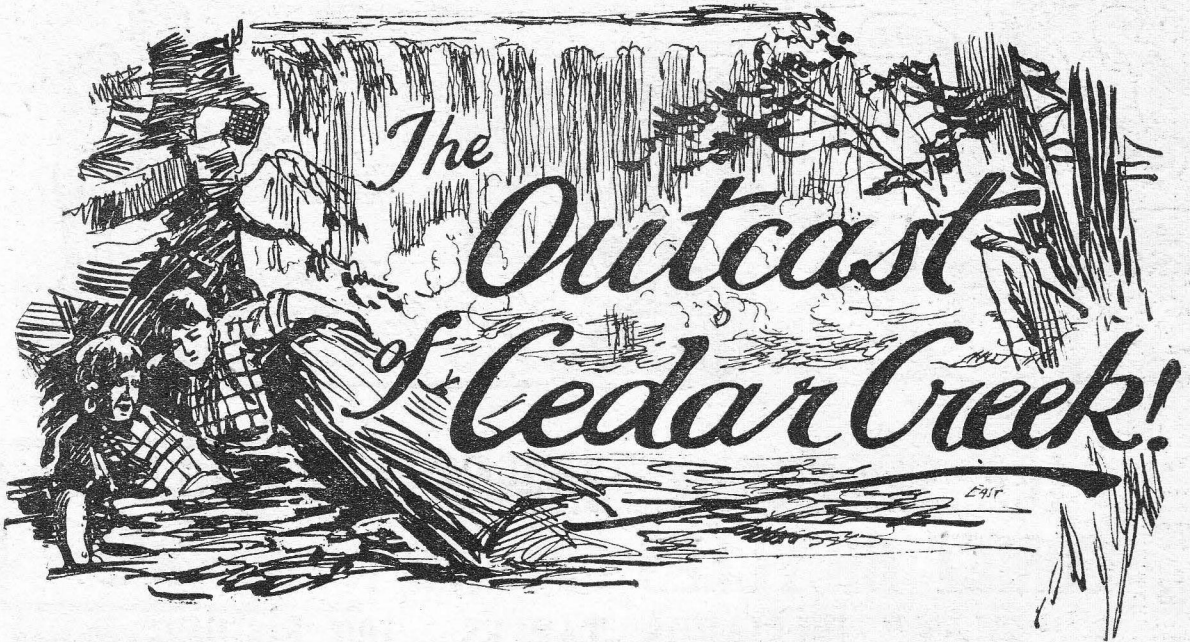
Readers of "The Champion," "Boys' Realm," "Union Jack," "Boys' Friend," "Pluck," "Boys' Cinema," "Young Britain," "Gem," "The Magnet," "The Rocket," and "Nelson Lee Library" are also taking part in the Contest, so that additional attempts may be made with the pictures from these allied journals.



and Your Friends. Get Busy Right Away, Chums!

A STORY OF THRILL AND GALLANTRY!

It is said that fortune favours the brave, and that is so in this case. But the story is more than just one of a very gallant action—it reveals the wonderful sporting spirit of Frank Richards of Cedar Creek—you will like this yarn!

CEDAR CREEK AGAIN!

The Schooldays in the Backwoods of Canada of FRANK RICHARDS, the world-famous writer, and the cheery boys of Cedar Creek School.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
Frank Richards' Foe!

CARAMBO!" Frank Richards jumped. That expressive Spanish word fell suddenly upon his ears, in the shadow of the timber.

Frank was sauntering towards the creek through the trees after morning lessons at Cedar Creek School. His chums—Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc—were canoeing on the creek, and Frank expected to meet them on their way back to the lumber camp.

A swarthy Spanish face looked out among the larches, and Ricardo Diaz, the new boy at Cedar Creek, stepped out into Frank's path.

"Carambo!" The Mexican schoolboy's black eyes glittered at Frank Richards as he muttered the word between his teeth.

Frank halted. The Mexican was standing directly in his path, evidently disposed to dispute his further passage.

Diaz's dark face still showed the signs of his combat with Frank Richards a few days before. There was still a dark circle round his eye, and his nose had not quite resumed its normal size.

"Hallo, Diaz!" said Frank cheerily. Diaz cast a quick glance past Frank, plainly to ascertain whether his friends were near. Then he drew closer to the English schoolboy.

His hand rested on his belt under his velvet jacket, and Frank wondered whether it was grasping a weapon. The Mexican schoolboy was so wild and untamed that any of the Cedar Creek fellows would not have been surprised at anything he did.

"Well, what do you want, Diaz?" asked Frank Richards. "You're in the way, you know."

"You will stop, senorito!" "Well, I've stopped," answered Frank, good-humouredly. "You're not looking for another fight, I suppose?"

Diaz shook his head. "You have beaten me," he said. "You asked for it, you know," said Frank. "I tried to make friends with you when you came, and you preferred to be enemies."

The Mexican made a gesture of contempt. "Vaya! I do not want to be friends with a Gringo!" he said.

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"But I am not a Gringo," said Frank, with a smile.

"Gringo or Ingleso, it is all the same to me. You have beaten me when I have fought with you," said Diaz, coming closer. "Every day since then I have watched you, senorito, to find you away from your friends. They are not with you now, los amigos!"

Frank Richards watched the Mexican keenly. The glitter in Diaz's black eyes was threatening; and Frank wished very sincerely that Bob and Vere Beauclerc had been with him just then. Ricardo Diaz was not an agreeable fellow to meet in the deep shades of the timber, alone—with his hand resting on his belt in the way it rested now.

"Well?" said Frank. "Now I have found you alone," said Diaz. "Now it is not I who will be beaten, senorito!"

The Mexican came closer, with a movement of a panther about to spring. Frank Richards started back a pace.

"What do you want?" he exclaimed. "Let me pass, Diaz!"

"You are afraid!" grinned the Mexican. Frank flushed hotly.

"You'll see whether I am afraid!" he exclaimed, and he clenched his fist. "If you don't let me pass, I'll shift you soon enough!"

And he made a stride towards the Mexican. Diaz's hand swept up from his belt, and there was a sudden gleam of steel in the shadows of the trees.

A long Mexican cuchillo flashed in the hand of the half-Spanish, half-Indian schoolboy, and Frank Richards backed away.

There was no arguing with the cuchillo at close quarters.

As Frank backed away the Mexican followed him up, grinning evilly over his weapon. Frank's foot caught in a root, and he stumbled, and fell on his knees. Before he could rise the Mexican was springing on him.

Whis! A canoe-paddle came whizzing through the air, and it struck Ricardo Diaz on the back of the head.

Diaz uttered a yell of pain, and staggered. The knife dropped from his hand, and disappeared in the grass, as Diaz clasped his head with both hands.

Two figures came running through the

wood—Bob Lawless, with Vere Beauclerc at his heels.

They had come on the scene at a fortunate moment for Frank Richards.

Before the Mexican could recover himself Bob Lawless reached him, and, without stopping to speak, hit out straight from the shoulder. The drive from the sturdy Canadian schoolboy sent Diaz spinning.

He crashed down on his back among the roots and grass, yelling.

"I guess that let's you out!" panted Bob. "Has he hurt you, Franky?"

"Frank, old chap—" exclaimed Beauclerc.

Frank Richards scrambled to his feet. "All serene!" he exclaimed breathlessly.

"I'm not hurt. Goodness knows what that mad idiot would have done, though, if you hadn't come up!"

"Luckily we mosseyed along, I guess!" remarked Bob Lawless. He picked up the cuchillo from the grass. "This is a pretty sticker for a schoolboy to carry around! I reckon we'll tote Diaz along by the scruff of the neck, and report this to Miss Meadows! We don't want bulldozers of his sort at Cedar Creek!"

"I hardly think—" began Frank. "Get up, you greaser skunk!" rapped out Bob.

Diaz groaned. Bob Lawless' drive had fairly knocked him out, and he lay dazed in the grass, blinking at the chums of Cedar Creek.

The rancher's son strode towards him, and seized him by the collar, dragging him to his feet.

"Come along, you pesky polecat!" he said. "You're going to get the order of the boot from Cedar Creek, if you're not sent to the calaboose in Thompson, as well. Get a move on!"

"Carambo—" "I guess I'll give you carambo, whatever that means, if you don't mossey on!" growled Bob. "Bring that paddle along, Cherub, and lay it round him, if he doesn't move fast enough. He's going to Miss Meadows!"

The Mexican panted. "Senorito—I—I—" he gasped.

Whatever the half-savage Southerner had intended, it was pretty evident that the ferocity was all knocked out of him now, and that he was scared.

Another School in the Backwoods Tale in Next Week's Bumper Issue!

"Mosey on!" snapped Bob, jerking at his collar.
 "Hold on, Bob!" said Frank Richards quietly.

"Rot! He's drawn a knife, and he's going to Miss Meadows to be turned out of the school!" exclaimed Bob angrily.

"Vaya! I did not mean—I did not intend—I was only seeking to scare him!" exclaimed Diaz. "I would not have touched him. It was but to scare him!"

"I don't believe you!" growled Bob. "You looked a bit too much like a wild beast, I guess!"

"Let him go, Bob," said Frank. "He couldn't have meant to use that sticker—it was only a fool's trick he was playing. Let him go."

"You're a jay, Frank! I know greasers better than you do."

"I'm right, old scout!" answered Frank, smiling. "I'm not going to speak to Miss Meadows about it. Let him go."

Bob Lawless gave a grunt, but he released the Mexican at last.

Diaz drew away from the three chums, breathing hard.

"You're a silly ass, Franky!" said Bob bluntly. "I tell you I know these critters. That scallywag would as soon use a knife as a white man would his fists!"

"I can't believe it!" said Frank.
 "Anyhow, he'll never use this sticker again," said Bob.

He put the knife under his heel and snapped off the blade close to the hilt. Then he pitched both blade and hilt into the thickets.

The Mexican watched him with flitting eyes, but did not venture to interfere.

"Now I'm going to let you have your way, Frank," said Bob Lawless. "But I guess you're a jay, and I'm going to keep an eye on this bulldozer, I reckon. And, mark you, Ricardo Diaz, the next time you show the cloven hoof you're going to have two dozen with a trail-ropo, as hard as I can lay it on, and then you'll be taken to Miss Meadows. Savvy that? Come on, you fellows! That sulky brute makes me sick!"

Frank Richards & Co. went on through the timber towards the school, leaving Ricardo Diaz alone under the trees. The Mexican shook his fist after them in sullen rage, muttering to himself in the Spanish tongue. Then he swung away sullenly into the wood.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.
The Outcast!

FRANK RICHARDS' brow was troubled as he entered the lumber school with his chums.

In spite of what he had said to Bob he was a little doubtful in his mind as to whether Diaz had meant his threat seriously.

He could not, in fact, quite make up his mind on that point; but he knew the savage, revengeful nature of the half-wild Mexican.

Greasers were not popular at Cedar Creek, but Frank Richards & Co. had really tried to get on civil terms with the new schoolboy. His sullen temper and savage ways had prevented that, and his fight with Frank Richards had followed, in which he had been severely thrashed. Frank was quite willing to shake hands over it, and forget all about it; but the Mexican was too bitter and revengeful for that.

It was a startling and shocking discovery to Frank that so much hatred and revenge could exist in any heart, and he felt now towards the Mexican as he might have felt towards an adder.

Chunky Todgers met the three chums as they came into the playground at the lumber school.

"Seen the Dago?" he asked.
 "Yes," answered Frank shortly.

"I guess he's looking for trouble again," said Chunky, with a grin. "I saw him moseying into the wood, scowling like thunder, and grimacing. He's a queer critter, and no mistake. Bit soft in the roof, I calculate. I say, Franky, have you been rowing with the critter again?"

"Chunky, old chap, you run on as if you were wound up," answered Frank; and he passed on without answering Chunky's question.

"Don't say anything about it, you chaps," he said. "Diaz is unpopular enough here now. All the fellows would be waxy if they knew about this."

"Oh, all right!" growled Bob. "I'm mum. But a galoot who draws a knife on a chap—"

"Great gophers! Did Diaz do that, you chaps?" howled a surprised voice; and Frank Richards spun round angrily, to find Chunky Todgers close behind. The fat schoolboy had followed them from the gates.

Chunky's round eyes were rounder than ever as he blinked at the chums in inquisitive astonishment.

"You fat scallywag!" exclaimed Bob. "You—"

"I couldn't help hearing you, could I?" said Chunky. "I was just going to speak to you, when you said—"

"For goodness' sake don't tattle it all over the school, Chunky!" said Frank Richards sharply.

"Then it's true?" howled Todgers.

"Never mind whether it is or not. Give your chin a rest."

"I'm not a talkative chap!" said Chunky Todgers, with dignity. "I'm not going to ask you any questions, Richards. But what did Diaz draw a knife for?"

"Oh, dry up!"

"But I say, you might tell a chap—"
 Frank Richards made an angry movement with his boot, and Chunky Todgers dodged away, full of excitement.

A few minutes later the chums of Cedar Creek saw him in excited confabulation with three or four fellows.

Chunky's discovery was too startling to be kept.

"Can't be helped," said Bob Lawless, as Frank knitted his brows. "After all, I don't see why the fellows shouldn't know. It's Diaz's own funeral, I guess. He shouldn't have done it."

"It will make things worse for him here," said Frank.

"What does that matter?"

"Well, I suppose it doesn't matter; but I'm rather sorry for the poor brute, in a way."

"Franky, old scout, you're too soft for the Thompson Valley," answered his Canadian cousin. "Diaz is a bad egg, and the sooner he gets out of Cedar Creek the better it will be for the school. He can go to Hillcrest if he likes. Dicky Bird and that gang are welcome to him."

At dinner in the lumber school there was some suppressed excitement among the Cedar Creek fellows. Chunky's startling news had spread.

Miss Meadows observed it, though, fortunately for the Mexican schoolboy, she did not know the cause.

Diaz did not come in to dinner. He was accustomed to returning home for his meals at Old Man Diaz's shack on the creek.

When he turned up at the school after dinner, however, nearly every fellow of Cedar Creek knew what had happened in the wood. Eben Hacke came up to Frank Richards & Co. in the playground and demanded particulars.

"Chunky says the Dago drew a knife on you in the timber, Richards," began Eben.

"Chunky is always talking out of his hat!" answered Frank.

"Isn't it so?"

"Ask Chunky."

"Can't you tell a galoot?" demanded Hacke.

"Nothing to tell."

"Do you galoots know?" asked Hacke, appealing to Bob and Beauclerc.

"Ask Frank," answered Beauclerc, with a smile.

"Well, you, Bob Lawless."

"Ask the Cherub," answered Bob.

"I guess I don't see what you're keeping it dark for!" growled Hacke. "If you don't deny it I take it that Chunky's got it right."

No reply.

"It's a cinch, then, I reckon," said Hacke, "and I guess we'll show that goldarned greaser what we think of a black-jowled Dago that draws a sticker on a galoot."

"Let him alone," said Frank uneasily.

"Bosh!"

With that, Eben Hacke stalked away. And when Ricardo Diaz came in at the gates he found Eben Hacke and a crowd of other fellows waiting for him.

He noted their hostile looks at once, and his black eyes glittered. There was a storm of hissing from the Cedar Creek fellows as he came in.

Eben Hacke shook a large set of knuckles under his nose.

"You goldarned greaser—" he began.
 "Duck him in the creek!" exclaimed Chunky Todgers.

"Good!"

Frank Richards pushed between the Mexican and the excited schoolboys, but there was a rush at the Mexican, and Frank Richards was shoved aside.

Bob caught his chum by the arm.

"You can keep out of it, Franky," he said coolly. "You heard what the rotter said. And he can take his medicine. Let them hoot him."

The Mexican reached the porch of the lumber school, panting, as the angry crowd of schoolboys overtook him. Eben Hacke's hand was on his shoulder when Miss Meadows stepped out.

"What does this mean?" the Canadian schoolmistress exclaimed severely.

Hacke dropped his hand.

"That galoot, ma'am—" he began.

Then he stopped short. It was not his business to "give away" the young rascal to the schoolmistress.

"Cease this at once!" said Miss Meadows sharply. "Diaz, go into the house!"

The Mexican went into the schoolhouse without a word. Hacke and his companions dispersed. But when the Cedar Creek fellows went in to lessons dark looks were cast at the Mexican schoolboy.

The outcast of Cedar Creek was more unpopular than he had ever been before, and he had himself to thank for it, if that was any comfort to him. But his dark, sullen face gave no sign that he cared.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
Face to Face!

FRANKY! Where's Franky?"

Bob Lawless was leading three horses from the corral after lessons, and Vere Beauclerc met him near the gates with a smile.

"Where's Franky?"

"Saying good-bye to Molly," answered Beauclerc, laughing.

"Oh!" said Bob; and he laughed, too.

Outside the gates Frank Richards was chatting with Tom and Molly Lawrence, who had mounted for the ride home on the Thompson trail. He raised his Stetson hat to Molly as Bob and Beauclerc came out, and Molly and her brother rode away towards Thompson.

"Finished already?" asked Bob.

"Finished what?" demanded Frank, colouring.

"You generally don't cut it short when you're chewing the rag with Molly," answered Bob, with a chuckle.

"Rats!"

"Well, here are the gee-gees," said Bob, laughing. "If you've got anything more to say to Molly, we'll ride round that way home—"

"Fathead!" answered Frank. "As it happens, I'm seeing the Lawrencees to-morrow, as it's Saturday—"

"Ha, ha!"

"If you'll tell me what the joke is, Bob, I'll chortle, too!" remarked Frank Richards.

"You're the joke, old chap," said Bob.

"Have you forgotten that we're going to have a ride round the ranch to-morrow, as it's a holiday?"

"That's all right—in the afternoon. I was thinking of taking the canoe out in the morning," said Frank. "We've got a canoe here, you know, and I can ride over and take the canoe down the creek to the Lawrencees. You fellows can come if you like, of course."

Bob grinned and shook his head.

"I dare say you'll be taking Molly out in the canoe," he remarked.

"Well, there's no reason why I shouldn't, is there?"

"None at all, old fellow—only I'm going to ride round the ranch with Billy Cook and the cowboys, and I guess I'll let you look after the lady in the canoe all on your lonesome," grinned Bob. "The Cherub may come and keep you company."

"I'm helping my father on the clearing to-morrow," answered Beauclerc. "Frank will have to take care of Miss Lawrence by himself."

"I guess he can do that all right!" chortled Bob.

"Ass!" said Frank

You'll Meet Your Old Favourites Again Next Week!

The chums of Cedar Creek mounted their horses for the ride home. Close by the gateway two dark eyes were watching them in the dusk. They had not observed Ricardo Diaz; but not a word of their careless talk had been lost on the Mexican.

As they rode away Diaz looked after them with a strange glitter in his black eyes, and his brow was clouded in sombre thought as he plunged into the timber on his homeward way.

Frank Richards was not bestowing a thought upon his enemy at the lumber school.

He rode cheerily on his homeward way, thinking chiefly of the morrow and of canoeing on the creek in the pleasant spring weather.

He was up bright and early in the morning, and after breakfast he mounted his horse to ride to Cedar Creek, though not for school.

"Back to dinner, Bob!" he called out as he started.

Bob Lawless waved his hand, with a grin. "Remember me to Molly!" he answered. And Frank Richards rode away in great spirits.

The horse's hoofs rang cheerily on the trail through the timber, where the green of spring was showing thick among the trees. Frank Richards arrived at Cedar Creek, and put up his horse in the corral.

Then he took the light birch-bark canoe and carried it down to the creek.

Cedar Creek was shining and rippling in the morning sunlight.

Frank jumped into the canoe and pushed off, and plied the paddle as he glided along with the current.

Beyond the island in the stream were the rapids; but at that point Frank intended to land and carry the canoe along the bank to the lower reach—a "portage," as it is called by the Canadians. He had not yet learned to "shoot the rapids" with the skill of his Canadian cousin.

The canoe glided swiftly along the stream, and Frank came in sight of the little island, with the water rippling round it.

He was nearly abreast of the island when a canoe shot out from the thickly-wooded bank right across his path.

Frank Richards uttered an exclamation.

Seated in the canoe, plying the paddle, was Ricardo Diaz, the Mexican schoolboy. Frank steered with the paddle to avoid him, but the Mexican closed up.

"Keep clear!" shouted Frank. "Do you want to run me down, Diaz?"

The Mexican did not answer. The two canoes were almost touching, when the Mexican leaped up from his place and sprang with the activity of a panther.

He landed in Frank Richards' canoe, causing the light craft to dance on the water with the impact.

His own canoe went rocking away, unheeded, to the bank, where it jammed in the thickets that grew out into the water.

Frank Richards stared at the Mexican, amazed by his action; but the canoe was oscillating so violently that he had little time to heed Diaz. He plied the paddle to steady his craft.

The Mexican remained standing, keeping his feet actively as the little craft rocked on the water.

There was a grim and mocking smile upon Diaz's swarthy face.

He made a motion nearer to Frank, and the English schoolboy instantly flashed his paddle out of the water, ready for an attack.

"Keep back!" he snapped.

The Mexican laughed.

"There is plenty of time, *senorito*," he said. "Your friends will not come on the scene as before, *amigo*. *Carambo!* We are alone together this time!"

Frank Richards looked at him steadily, gripping the paddle ready for use as a weapon of defence. It was his only weapon; and he could see that the Mexican had a knife in his belt.

Frank felt a chill at his heart for a moment, though he was not conscious of fear.

For it was borne in upon his mind now, in spite of his former doubts, that his enemy was in savage, relentless earnest; that, incredible as it seemed, Ricardo Diaz intended him deadly harm—and they were alone together on the lonely creek—and his friends were far away.

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In spite of his courage, his handsome face paled a little. Diaz noted it, and he laughed again, a harsh, mocking laugh.

"You wonder to see me here!" he said, in a bantering tone. "I waited for you, *mi amigo*—I have waited an hour by the stream. Yesterday I heard you speak of coming here—alone—and I knew that it would be my chance. We have good memories in my country, *senorito*; we do not forget, and we do not forgive!"

"I think you must be mad, Diaz!" said Frank Richards, as calmly as he could. "If you use that knife, you know what waits for you!"

The Mexican grinned.

"But I shall not wait!" he answered. "Before they find you at the bottom of the rapids, *amigo mio*, I shall be far away. *Por Dios!* I am tired of your school—I do not like your Thompson Valley. I shall be many leagues away before they take you out from the creek, *senorito!*"

"Oh, you are mad!" said Frank. "Keep your distance, Diaz! Come a step nearer to me and I will knock you into the water!"

He raised the paddle, though his heart sank at the thought of using that flimsy weapon against the long, bright *cuchillo* that now gleamed in the Mexican's swarthy hand.

The Mexican half-crouched, his black eyes fixed on Frank Richards, as he came a step nearer.

Frank drew a quick breath.

When the spring came, he knew that the paddle would be of little use against the Mexican knife, and he did not wait.

With a sudden jerk of his arm, he hurled the paddle full at the swarthy face of the Mexican as he came closer. The sudden missile took Diaz by surprise. It struck him across the face, and he reeled back, losing his footing, and sitting down heavily in the canoe.

Before he could rise, or even think, Frank Richards was upon him.

He gripped the right wrist of the Mexican and jammed it on the gunwale with such force that Diaz shrieked with pain, and his nerveless fingers loosened on the handle of the knife.

With a flash the *cuchillo* disappeared into the rippling water beside the canoe.

Frank Richards panted with relief.

But the next moment the Mexican's grasp was upon him, clutching him like a cat, and the two schoolboys were struggling furiously together in the bottom of the canoe.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Valley of the Shadows!

"**C**ARAMBO!" panted the Mexican. Frank Richards did not speak. He was keeping all his breath for the struggle. On firm land Frank was more than a

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match for the Mexican; but in the rocking, dancing canoe it was another matter.

The little craft rolled and dipped as they struggled, and once or twice there came a wash of water over the gunwale.

Neither of them heeded it; nor did they heed the deepening murmur, deepening to a roar, of the rapids now close ahead.

The Mexican was fighting like a tiger, with hands and feet—even with his teeth.

Again and again Frank drove his clenched fist into the swarthy, savage face, but Diaz seemed hardly to feel the blows.

Once the English schoolboy had him pinned down, with a knee planted on his chest, and the Mexican squirmed helplessly under him, spitting like a cat; but a roll of the canoe flung them over, and Diaz came uppermost.

Then his sinuous hands were fastened on Frank's throat, and the swarthy face looked down on him in terrible menace.

"*Carambo!* Now it is my turn!" panted Diaz.

Frank Richards freed his right hand and struck up at the evil face, and Diaz backed his head with a yell of pain; but his savage grip was still on the English boy's throat. A heavy wash of water came over the side of the canoe, now drifting almost broadside to the current, unguided, and swamping heavily as it was rocked by the struggle.

The roar of the falling waters was close at hand, almost deafening.

It struck upon Frank's ears as he struggled to free his throat. The canoe lurched again, and as it lurched, and Diaz reeled, Frank hurled him aside.

Breathless, almost exhausted, he clambered up, gripping the Mexican, who was still clinging to him.

A fearful sight met his gaze as his head rose above the gunwale. The canoe was fairly on the rapids. Here and there, where a rock cropped out of the water, white foam and spray flew in the air in clouds. There was a heavy jar as the canoe struck on a rock and scraped along it, whirled by the water.

Frank Richards did not stop to think.

Death was hovering over both of them now; the canoe was in the grip of the rapids, and shooting the fall—not bow on, with a steady hand at the paddle, but unguided, drifting and helpless, tossed like a cork upon the foaming waters.

Frank clenched his teeth; his face was white.

Diaz scrambled up, to leap at him again; but as he saw the surroundings of the canoe, he paused. He lost his footing and fell upon his knees, clutching at the sides of the canoe.

The struggle was over.

The canoe tilted at an angle that almost hurled out its occupants; shot down like an arrow amid the falling, foaming water.

Frank Richards did not even look at his enemy again.

Death in many forms was on all sides, and he heeded all his care and all his coolness for the slightest chance of life. Diaz, dazed by the peril, was holding on helplessly.

Crash!

There was a rush of water over the canoe and its occupants, and Frank Richards found himself struggling amid foam and dashing water, with a roar like thunder in his ears.

Instinctively, half-stunned as he was, he struck out for his life.

What followed was like a fearful dream—whether it lasted seconds or minutes, Frank Richards never knew. Dashed and buffeted by the wild waters, with a stunning roar in his ears that never ceased, he struggled blindly, breathlessly, for his life. His head came up into the air and the sunlight; he was swimming half-consciously, and the rapids were behind him. The roar was still in his ears, but it was not so thunderous. His wild eyes looked round him, as one waking from a fearful dream, and he still swam, though he was hardly conscious of his own actions.

He was past the rapids, and his hand came in contact with something that floated—a mass of driftwood. His grasp closed on it, and he held on and floated, resting his exhausted limbs.

He had come through the valley of the shadow of death, and he still lived. Almost in that spot, as he remembered dizzily, Vere Beauclerc had dragged him

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from the water, when he was wrecked in the rapids in his early days in Canada. The thought came strangely into his dazed mind, and it made him think of the Mexican. Where was Diaz?

Holding on to the floating trunk, he raised his head higher and looked about him. Where was Diaz? Had the sullen, revengeful Mexican gone to his death in the depths of the stream?

"Diaz!" exclaimed Frank.
A hand was thrown up as something floated past him; he caught for a moment a glimpse of a white, despairing face.

It was the Mexican.
Swept helplessly down the rapids, Diaz was still living, but utterly exhausted, and he was sinking as Frank Richards caught sight of him—that flinging up of the hand was the last sign of life in the wretched Mexican.

Frank Richards did not stop to think. He forgot that the Mexican was his enemy; that it was his evil hatred that had brought this peril upon both of them.

It was the instinct to help the helpless that moved him.
He quitted the friendly driftwood, and plunged in the direction of the Mexican, and grasped him as he was sinking for the last time.

His own strength was almost spent; but with an effort, he brought the sinking body to the surface of the water, and dragged Ricardo Diaz's head into the air.

The Mexican was almost unconscious, but not quite, for he made a kind of movement to fling off the hand that grasped him. Frank did not heed. Still supporting the exhausted Mexican, he struck out with the other hand for the driftwood. He was too far from the bank to hope to reach it; two lives depended now upon his regaining the driftwood he had quitted to save his enemy.

Fortune is said to favour the brave, and it favoured Frank Richards. A swirl of the current brought the trunk closer to him, and he grasped a branch and held on.

For many minutes he held on, without motion, floating on with the trunk into the calmer water, while his spent strength returned.

Diaz lay helpless, motionless, in his grasp, Frank supporting his swarthy face above the water.

The black eyes opened at last.
Behind them the roar of the rapids was faint in the distance. Diaz stared dizzily at Frank Richards. It was some moments before he could realise his position.

"Let me go!" he muttered thickly, at last.

Frank shook his head without replying.
The Mexican made an effort and threw his arms over the floating trunk, relieving Frank of his weight. They drifted on in silence. In the distance now the smoke from the Lawrences' homestead rose against the sky.

Frank Richards clambered astride of the trunk, and broke off a short branch to steer towards the bank. The Mexican watched him in silence, a strange look in his glittering black eyes.

"Safe now," said Frank, glancing at him.
"We shall land in a few minutes."

"Por Dios!"
Still the Mexican was fixing that strange look on Frank's face.

"Porque?" he exclaimed at last.
Frank smiled faintly.

"What does that mean?" he asked.
"Porque—why—why? You have saved my life!" exclaimed Diaz. "You have saved me from the water!"

Frank nodded.
"But why? You know that I would have killed you!" said Diaz.

"I know," answered Frank quietly.
"And yet you saved me!"

"Yes."
"And it was a close call—you came near to going down with me."

"We were lucky."
"But why—why?" exclaimed the Mexican.
Frank Richards laughed. His strength was fast returning now, and he was feeling more like himself.

"I would have killed you in the canoe," said Diaz, "and you have saved my life. Is it that you wish to hand me to the sheriff at Thompson for punishment?"

"No, you ass!" said Frank, laughing. "I got hold of you because you were in danger. That is all."



THE FIGHT IN THE CANOE! The little craft rolled and dipped, as Frank Richards and the Mexican struggled, heedless of the deepening murmur of the swiftly approaching rapids. Nearer and nearer drew the roaring waters, and still the two boys fought—silently, breathlessly.

(See Chapter 4.)

"You forgot that I was your enemy?"
"I suppose I did just then."
"Por Dios! That would not be my way," said Diaz. "In your place, I should have struck. I am not an Ingleso, mi amigo!"
"Lucky for you I am an Ingleso, then!" said Frank. "Here we are. You can get ashore here."

The driftwood bumped on the bank, and Frank Richards jumped lightly into the thicket. Ricardo Diaz followed him more slowly, and Frank lent him a helping hand to land.

He squeezed the water from his clothes, keeping one eye, as it were, on the Mexican. But Diaz made no hostile movement. He seemed buried in wondering thought.

He did not move till Frank Richards turned to go.

"You have lost your canoe, seniorito," said Diaz, in a low voice.
"You've lost it for me," answered Frank.

"Por Dios! But my canoe is along the creek, above the rapids, and I shall find it, and you shall have it for yours."

"You mean that?" asked Frank, staring at him.

"Si, si, seniorito. And that is not all." The Mexican hesitated, and then came towards Frank Richards. "Seniorito Ingleso, I do not know why you have done this. The Ingleso, perhaps, is not like the Mexican. You have saved my life! Seniorito, you need not be on your guard; I am no longer your enemy!"

Frank Richards looked at him very curiously. The Mexican's dark face was earnest; his voice was humble.

"I am from this moment your friend, if you choose to let it be so," said Diaz, in the same low, earnest tone. "I swear it, by nuestra Senora del Soledad!"

"I would rather be friends than enemies, certainly," said Frank, hardly knowing what to reply.

And, acting upon impulse, he held out his hand to the Mexican. Ricardo Diaz grasped it; then, without speaking again, he turned and plunged into the wood.

Frank Richards, in a state of considerable amazement, walked on to the Lawrences' homestead.

Bob Lawless whistled when Frank Richards, at the ranch that evening, told him of what had happened on Cedar Creek.

"I guess the jay was fooling you, Franky," said Bob. "He was thinking of the sheriff and the calaboose."

Frank shook his head.
"I don't think so, Bob."

"I guess you're a prize jay to take any stock in him, Frank," said Bob Lawless emphatically. "I reckon you'll find that greaser lying up for you another time if you let that pass."

"I'm sure not!" answered Frank.
And Frank Richards, as it turned out, was right.

It was a surprise to all Cedar Creek when Frank Richards and the Mexican appeared at the school on friendly terms. With his bitterness and rancour, the Mexican seemed to have thrown aside his sullenness of temper, and after a time even Bob Lawless admitted that it was possible to meet the "galoot" without wanting to punch him. And though the chums of Cedar Creek did not know it, the time was to come when Frank Richards was to be glad, for his own sake, that he had obeyed the generous impulse to risk his life for his enemy.

THE END.

(Next week's roaring Wild West Story is great—the title is "The Cheerful Chinese!" and it is one of the best Backwoods Stories we have had.)

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THE MISFORTUNES OF TUBBY!

Tubby Muffin felt the pangs of hunger, and then saw his Form-master's waiting breakfast—after that things move rapidly. Tubby mysteriously disappears from the school without leaving a single clue as to his whereabouts—what has happened to him?

MYSTERY AND ADVENTURE AT ROOKWOOD!

By Owen Conquest.

(Author of the Rookwood Stories appearing in the "Boys' Friend" every week.)



The Missing Schoolboy!

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Jimmy Silver & Co., the famous chums of Rookwood School.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Rough on Mr. Manders!

GROO! Isn't it cold?"

"Perishing!"

"Talk about the Arctic regions!"

The rising-bell was clanging out its shrill summons to all Rookwood, and in the Fourth Form dormitory there were loud lamentations.

"That bell goes earlier and earlier every blessed morning!" grumbled Jimmy Silver. "We shall be getting up in the middle of the night soon!"

"Personally," said Arthur Edward Lovell, with a yawn, "I intend to take another forty winks!"

"Same here!" murmured Newcome drowsily.

The juniors seemed in no great hurry to be up and doing.

Mornington was the first fellow to get out of bed, but a cold gust of air caused Morny's teeth to chatter. Then, after a glance at the frosty window-panes, he promptly hopped back between the sheets.

"Not good enough!" he drawled. "It's positively freezin', by gad! I'm goin' to follow the illustrious example of Lovell, an' take another forty winks!"

The last note of the rising-bell died away, but there was no sign of activity in the Fourth Form dormitory.

This wintry morning had dawned quite unexpectedly.

The autumn mornings had been chilly, but fairly tolerable. And now Jack Frost had suddenly got busy, and he was in evidence not only on the window-panes, but down in the quadrangle, where the puddles were glassy and frozen.

For perhaps five minutes no one stirred.

Then came the sound of approaching footsteps, and Bulkeley of the Sixth looked in.

Bulkeley stared in astonishment at the two rows of occupied beds.

"Up you get!" he said tersely.

"Have mercy, Bulkeley!" groaned Kit Erroll.

"Yes, rathes!" said Jimmy Silver. "Consider our frail and delicate constitutions, you know!"

"I'll consider the advisability of bringing my boot into play, in a minute!" growled Bulkeley. "I've had to turn out in the cold, and you kids can do the same. Tumble out, all of you!"

Most of the juniors showed signs of complying, and Bulkeley went on his way, apparently satisfied that his warning had taken effect.

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With blue faces and shivering forms, the Fourth-Formers turned out.

By the time another five minutes had elapsed, the only fellow still in bed was Tubby Muffin.

Not only did the Falstaff of the Fourth remain in bed, but he almost shook the dormitory with his unmusical snore.

"Buck up, Tubby!" said Jimmy Silver sharply.

Snore!

"Better try the effect of a sponge!" murmured Mornington.

Jimmy Silver promptly armed himself with a soaking sponge, which he squeezed out over Tubby Muffin's slumbering form.

A cascade of water shot downwards, and the victim gave a yell which a Red Indian might have envied.

"Yaroooh! Gerraway, Silver, you beast!"

"Shake a leg, then!" said Jimmy Silver.

"The breakfast-gong will sound in a minute, and Bootles will be on the warpath if you're late!"

"Bless Bootles!"

"Bless him by all means. I was simply advising you for your own good, porpoise."

Jimmy Silver's advice, however, fell on stony ground.

Even the tempting prospect of steaming eggs-and-bacon could not drag Reginald Muffin from his bed. He was snug and warm, and he was hungry; but his hunger, he reflected, could be appeased later.

The captain of the Classical Fourth shrugged his shoulders, and continued his toilet.

Tubby Muffin mopped the water from his flabby face with a handkerchief, and settled down again.

"The silly ass!" growled Lovell. "He'll get it where the chicken got the chopper!"

"His blood be on his own head!" said Jimmy Silver. "If he chooses to ignore my good advice, he can stand the racket!"

One by one the juniors quitted the dormitory.

Even Townsend and Topham, the dandies of the Fourth, who usually devoted a good deal of time to their toilet, were finished at last.

Tubby Muffin dropped into a doze.

When he awoke again, and blinked round the dormitory, he saw that he was its sole occupant.

"My hat!" he muttered. "I suppose the beastly gong has sounded for brekker ages ago! Why couldn't the beasts have told me?"

The fat Fourth-Former heaved himself out of bed with an effort, and started to dress.

The fat junior scrambled through his

ablutions. He had a wholesome dislike of soap and water at all times, and he used them very sparingly now. His wash was what the juniors would have termed a "cat's-flick."

Finally, with hair unbrushed, and bootlaces dangling, Tubby Muffin rushed downstairs.

He was puffing and blowing by the time he reached the Hall. And when he foundered inside he found that the fellows had nearly finished breakfast.

Tubby Muffin dropped into his place with a grunt.

Mr. Bootles, at the head of the table, looked up sharply.

"Muffin, why are you so late?"

"I—I was delayed, sir, in the dorm."

"Indeed! And what, pray, was the cause of the delay?"

"I—I was mugging up the Latin lesson, sir!"

Mr. Bootles stared. This statement, coming from Tubby Muffin, was extraordinary. It took more swallowing than the leathery bacon had done.

Tubby Muffin paid as little attention as possible to his lessons, even in the Form-room.

"You surprise me, Muffin!" said Mr. Bootles grimly. "I trust your explanation is correct, though I very much fear the reverse is the case."

"I—I assure you, sir—"

"That will do, Muffin!"

"Ahem! Can—can I have some breakfast, sir?"

"You should arrive in Hall at the allotted time, Muffin. Boys are not allowed to wander in at their leisure. You will forfeit your breakfast, and I trust it will be a lesson to you!"

"Oh crumbs!"

Tubby Muffin looked the picture of despair. How could he possibly survive until dinner-time?

Tubby Muffin rolled disconsolately out of Hall. He felt that the world was a very unpleasant place to live in. The idea of going through morning lessons on an empty stomach was appalling.

"Excuse me, Master Muffin!"

One of the maids was coming along with a laden tray, and Tubby Muffin's huge bulk obstructed her progress.

The fat junior squeezed himself against the wall so that the girl might pass. He blinked enviously at the tray, which contained hot rolls and butter, eggs-and-bacon, marmalade, and coffee.

"I say, where are you taking that little lot?" inquired Tubby.

"It's for Mr. Manders," said the maid.

"Trouble in the End Study!"—Next Week's Grand Rookwood Yarn!

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"He's breakfasting in his study this morning."

And she passed on. Tubby Muffin's hungry eyes were riveted upon the girl and the tray until both vanished round a distant corner. "Old Manders is a lucky dog!" he murmured. "That's the best of being a master. You can have your brekker when and where you like."

Instinctively Tubby Muffin followed in the wake of the maid. He dodged into an adjoining doorway as she emerged from Mr. Manders' study.

When her footsteps had died away Tubby came out to investigate.

The door of Mr. Manders' study was ajar, and an appetising odour of fried bacon was wafted out into the passage.

Peering cautiously into the study, Tubby Muffin saw that it was empty.

"Manders hasn't turned up yet," he said to himself. "Perhaps he's forgotten all about his brekker. I shouldn't wonder!"

Becoming bolder, the fat junior stepped into the study, closing the door after him.

In the ordinary way Tubby Muffin would not have dreamed of raiding a master's study—for that was what it amounted to. But he was hungry—very hungry—and it was a shame to spoil good food by letting it get cold.

The fat junior drew a chair up to the table, planted his weight upon it, and got busy.

The hot rolls were delicious. They seemed to melt in his mouth. And the eggs-and-bacon were done to a turn.

"This is prime!" mumbled Tubby, with his mouth full.

He had been deprived of his breakfast in Hall. But what did that matter? Breakfast in Hall was a miserable affair by comparison with this. This was a feast of the gods.

Tubby Muffin disposed of the good things with amazing rapidity.

The tray had been cleared, and the fat junior was about to lean back in his chair, when the sound of approaching footsteps caused him to start up in alarm.

"Manders!" he muttered. There could be no doubt that the approaching person was Mr. Manders, the sour, unsportsmanlike master of the Rookwood Sixth.

Tubby Muffin's heart beat overtime. He was fairly trapped, unless—

There were two ways by which he might possibly avoid detection. One was to plunge beneath the table; the other to hide behind the screen.

The latter seemed the better plan. Tubby Muffin had just concealed his plump bulk behind the screen when Mr. Manders rustled in.

"Bless my soul!" Anger and amazement were mingled in the master's exclamation.

Scarcely daring to breathe, Tubby Muffin crouched in his place of concealment.

Mr. Manders surveyed the empty tray and frowned. His frown deepened, and his anger speedily overcame his amazement.

"Some young rascal—some unprincipled person—has had the effrontery to come in here and consume my breakfast!" he fumed.

Tubby Muffin trembled so violently that the screen shook.

Mr. Manders paced to and fro in the study. He was muttering to himself during his peregrinations. Tubby Muffin distinctly caught the words "flogging," and "make a public example."

By this time the Fourth-Former was feeling decidedly uncomfortable. He wanted to sneeze very badly. He pressed his handkerchief over his nose and mouth, but in vain. That sneeze was determined to make itself heard.

When it did come, it came with startling energy.

"Atishum! Atishoo-oo-oo!" The fat was in the fire now with a vengeance!

Mr. Manders strode towards the screen, and Tubby Muffin, terrified by the expression on the master's face bounded to his feet and scuttled out of the study.

For a moment Mr. Manders stood speechless. Then he strode to the door and shouted along the passage:

"Muffin! Come back—come back at once! Do you hear me?"

The only answer was the sound of

scurrying feet—and they were not scurrying in the direction of Mr. Manders' study!

Tubby Muffin was scared out of his wits, and his one object in life at that moment was to put as much distance between himself and Mr. Manders as possible.

After the feast comes the reckoning; but Tubby had not waited for the reckoning.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Missing!

MR. MANDERS stood in the doorway, breathing hard.

Like Moses of old, he looked this way and that way, and there was no man.

Tubby Muffin had exercised all the speed at his command, and he had fled down the passage as if a thousand furies were at his heels.

"The audacious young rascal!" snorted Mr. Manders. "He shall be punished most severely for this outrage!"

Mr. Manders was far too dignified to think of giving chase to the Fourth-Former. He was content to bide his time. Sooner or later Tubby Muffin would fall into his clutches; and when that happened Mr. Manders would not display the quality of mercy.

Meanwhile, the enraged master sent for the maid, and ordered another breakfast to replace that which reposed inside Tubby Muffin.

In due course the bell rang for morning lessons.

Jimmy Silver & Co., who had been punting a football in the quad, flocked into the classroom.

Mr. Bootles was a mild, good-tempered sort, as a rule; but he expected punctuality from his pupils.

"Where is Muffin?" he asked, glancing at that junior's vacant place.

The juniors shook their heads. No one had seen Tubby Muffin since breakfast.

"Silver!" said Mr. Bootles, after a pause. "Kindly go and bring Muffin to the Form-room, if you can find him!"

"Very well, sir!"

Jimmy Silver did not anticipate either a long search or a difficult one. He expected to run the missing junior to earth in Study No. 2. On reaching that apartment, however, he drew blank.

"My hat!" muttered the captain of the Fourth. "Where can the silly ass have got to?"

Greatly puzzled, Jimmy Silver took up the search in real earnest. He might have been a sleuth-hound, by his methods.

He looked into every study, and he examined the floor as he went. Tubby Muffin could usually be tracked down by means of a trail of crumbs.

But on this occasion there was nothing doing. There was not a single clue to the fat junior's whereabouts.

Jimmy Silver made inquiries at the tuckshop, but Sergeant Kettle declared that he had not had the misfortune of seeing Tubby Muffin that morning.

The gym, the Cloisters, and the library were visited in turn, but with no result.

Jimmy Silver gave it up at last, and went back to the Form-room.

"No sign of Muffin, sir," he reported.

Mr. Bootles looked amazed.

"Have you searched everywhere, Silver?"

"Practically everywhere, sir."

"And there is no trace of the boy?"

"None whatever, sir."

There was a buzz from the class.

The sudden disappearance of Tubby Muffin was startling, to say the least of it.

"Is it possible," said Mr. Bootles, at length, "that the foolish boy has run away from school?"

"I should hardly think so, sir," said Jimmy Silver.

"Muffin had nothing on his mind, sir," said Newcome.

But Newcome knew nothing of the little drama which had been enacted in Mr. Manders' study.

There was silence in the Form-room for some moments—the silence of sheer astonishment.

"Will you ascertain, Silver," said Mr. Bootles presently, "if Muffin's cap and coat are hanging up in his study?"

Jimmy Silver nodded, and quitted the Form-room for the second time.

He returned in a few moments, excited and breathless.

"Well, Silver?"

"Muffin's cap and coat are not there, sir."

Mr. Bootles compressed his lips.

"In that case there can be little doubt that my surmise is correct. Muffin has run away from school."

"I can't believe it," murmured Kit Erroll. "He'd never have the nerve!"

"No jolly fear!"

"He's scoffing grub in some quiet corner," whispered Conroy.

"That's about it."

Mr. Bootles was debating what should be done, when the door of the Form-room opened, and everyone looked up expectantly.

But it was not Tubby Muffin who entered. It was Mr. Manders.

Mr. Bootles darted a questioning glance at his colleague. He did not like Mr. Manders. That gentleman had done little to win the affections of either masters or boys. And he had only himself to thank for his unpopularity.

"Ah, Bootles!" said Mr. Manders, "I looked in for the purpose of requesting Muffin to report to me after lessons."

"Muffin is not here," said Mr. Bootles shortly.

"Not here!"

"No. He has unaccountably disappeared."

The sour face of Mr. Manders became even more sour.

"Muffin must be found at once," he said. "I wish to administer chastisement—"

Mr. Bootles stared.

"Has Muffin offended you, Mr. Manders?"

"Offended me! Oh, no! Not in the least!" said Mr. Manders, with crushing sarcasm.

"He merely helped himself to my breakfast, and then had the audacity to run away from me, and to ignore me when I repeatedly called to him to come back!"

There was a gasp from the class.

"It's clear as daylight now," whispered Lovell. "Tubby's frightened to death of Manders, and he's scototed."

"That's so," agreed Newcome, sotto voce.

Mr. Bootles turned to his colleague.

"You may leave this matter in my hands," he said. "I will communicate the facts to Dr. Chisholm, and ascertain his wishes!"

"Oh, very well!" snapped Mr. Manders.

And the master of the Sixth stalked out, evidently in a very bad temper.

Shortly afterwards Mr. Bootles went to make his report to the Head. He left the Fourth in a state of seething excitement.

"Fancy Tubby bunking!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"That's just what I can't fancy!" said Kit Erroll. "Tubby hasn't the pluck of a tame mouse!"

"But he's gone!"

"Absolutely!"

"Vanished off the face of the earth, by gad!" said Mornington.

"His cap and coat have vanished, too," said Lovell. "That's pretty conclusive evidence that he's bunked. He knew he could expect no mercy from a tyrant like Manders, so he ran away."

"He can't have got very far," remarked Raby.

"About as far as the bunshop in Coombe, I should say!" grinned Newcome.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wonder if they'll send out search-parties?" mused Jimmy Silver.

"Hope so," said Conroy. "I'd rather hunt for Tubby Muffin than for the meaning of some of these Latin words."

"Yes, rather!"

"Jolly thoughtful of Tubby Muffin to run away," said Peele. "It means a holiday for us."

But Peele was unlucky.

When Mr. Bootles returned, the first thing he did was to detail a search-party. But Peele was not included. Neither were Latreyl nor Gower. Whereat there was a great deal of grumbling.

"I have arranged with Dr. Chisholm," said Mr. Bootles, "that two search-parties shall be sent out. Bulkeley will conduct a search in one direction, and you, Silver, will be in charge of a junior party."

"Oh, good!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

"You may take six boys with you," said Mr. Bootles.

And almost every fellow in the Form jumped eagerly to his feet.

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The chosen six proved to be Lovell, Raby, Newcome, Mornington, Erroll, and Conroy. "You will proceed in the direction of Coombe," said Mr. Bootles. "No effort must be spared to bring Muffin back to Rookwood. It will be advisable to make exhaustive inquiries of passers-by, and others. I trust the reckless and foolhardy boy will be found."

"Rely on us, sir," said Jimmy Silver confidently. And the members of the search-party, to the envy of their schoolfellows, marched out of the Form-room.

They had never been so grateful to Tubby Muffin as at that moment.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Still Missing!

"MIND you don't get up to any larks!"

Bulkeley of the Sixth shook a reproving forefinger at Jimmy Silver & Co. as the two search-parties, senior and junior, parted company in the gateway of Rookwood.

"We never lark, Bulkeley," said Mornington, "when we have something thrillin' an' excitin' to occupy our little minds."

"Hear, hear!" said Conroy. "We're going on the track of Tubby Muffin, and we're not going to rest till we find him!"

"He's coming back to Rookwood under escort," said Jimmy Silver. "Our escort, you mean!" said Bulkeley, with a smile.

"Rats!" The juniors headed for the village of Coombe, and the seniors moved off in the opposite direction.

"Mustn't let the Sixth score over us," remarked Lovell.

"No, rather not!" "Tubby Muffin's big enough to be seen," said Mornington, "an' it's quite on the cards that we shall spot him."

Jimmy Silver & Co. launched inquiries as they went.

"I say, have you seen a human barrel of lard?" asked Newcome, of the driver of a market cart.

"Ha, ha, ha!" The driver asked for further particulars, and then shook his head. He had seen no one, he said, answering to the description of Reginald Muffin.

Another man—a hungry-looking wayside tramp—said he had not seen Muffin, but would be glad to sample half a dozen.

"We're not in the habit of carryin' hot muffins about with us," said Mornington.

"If you want work," chimed in Jimmy Silver, "apply to the squire at Coombe Manor."

The tramp gave a shudder. "Bless yer 'eart," he said, "I don't want

work—unless it's a three-hour day, with two hours off for grub!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" The juniors passed on into Coombe. They visited the bun-shop first, of course, but Tubby Muffin had not been there.

None of the tradespeople seemed to have seen the missing junior.

"Better try the railway-station," suggested Lovell. "If he's gone by train, someone is sure to have seen him!"

The little station at Coombe was deserted save for a porter who sat crouched before a blazing fire in the waiting-room.

The porter's head was nodding, and he was on the point of dozing off when Jimmy Silver bellowed in his ear.

"Hi!" The man started up so suddenly that his chair tilted backwards. It bore its human freight with it, and the porter alighted with a painful thud on the floor of the waiting-room.

"Acrobatics while you wait!" murmured Kit Erroll.

"Ha, ha, ha!" Slowly the porter picked himself up. "Wodyer want?" he growled.

Jimmy Silver put the now familiar question regarding Tubby Muffin; but he put it in vain.

"Which nobody from Rookwood 'as boarded a train this morning," grunted the porter.

"How do you know," asked Lovell, "when you've been fast asleep and snoring all the time?"

The porter glared. "The first train 'asn't gone yet!" he said. "Oh!"

The juniors exchanged baffled glances. Tubby Muffin had mysteriously disappeared from Rookwood, and he must have carefully covered up his tracks, for not a single clue was available.

"No go!" said Jimmy Silver, turning on his heel. "We shall have to give it up," said Newcome.

"Looks like it!" After a further hour's fruitless search, the members of the search-party returned rather dolefully to Rookwood.

They did not like going back empty-handed. It was very humiliating to think that a stupid fellow like Tubby Muffin could outwit them so easily.

Curiously enough, Bulkeley's search-party returned at the same moment, from the opposite direction.

"Any luck, you kids?" inquired Bulkeley.

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

"Muffin's vanished off the map!" he said.

"Where on earth can the kid be?" exclaimed Bulkeley.

"Ask me another!"

Seniors and juniors passed through the quadrangle, and Jimmy Silver & Co. went along to the Form-room to make their report to Mr. Bootles.

The Form master looked surprised as the juniors trooped in. He expected to see Tubby Muffin following behind, like Mary's little lamb.

"Do you mean to say, Silver," said Mr. Bootles, "that your search has proved fruitless?"

"That's so, sir!"

"Did you scour the village?"

"Absolutely, sir!" said Mornington.

"And nothing has been seen or heard of Muffin?"

The juniors shook their heads.

"Bless my soul! This is most extraordinary!" murmured Mr. Bootles.

"I knew this would happen," sneered Peele. "The wrong fellows were chosen for the job."

"Hear, hear!" muttered Gower. "Now, if we had undertaken the search—"

"Muffin would have been run to earth in next to no time!" said Latreay.

"Precisely!"

Mr. Bootles stroked his chin in perplexity.

"Very well, my boys," said the Form-master, at length. "I can see that you have done your best. Other methods will have to be adopted. You may go to your seats."

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Tubby Muffin Turns Up!

THERE was a vacant bed in the Fourth Form dormitory that night. Fresh search parties had been sent out in the afternoon, but although they had scoured the countryside, they had found no trace of Tubby Muffin. The fat junior had vanished as completely and mysteriously as if the earth had suddenly opened and swallowed him up.

The Head was thoroughly alarmed by this time, and so was Mr. Bootles.

Mr. Manders was not alarmed. He was furious. His quarry had slipped through his fingers. He badly wanted to castigate Tubby Muffin for having burgled his breakfast.

The arrangements for the castigation were complete so far as the cane and the executioner were concerned, but there was no victim!

Jimmy Silver & Co. were awake half the night. They expected at any moment to hear the sound of footsteps on the stairs, and to see Tubby Muffin brought in under escort. But they were disappointed.

Morning came, but not Tubby Muffin. No information had come to hand as a result of the poster which had been displayed in the village. It was obvious that the missing junior could not be in hiding there.

The Head sent for Mr. Bootles before breakfast.

"Is there no news of Muffin, Mr. Bootles?"

The Form-master shook his head.

"Dear me! This is most bewildering!"

The Head stepped across to the telephone and rang up the local police-station.

A weary voice sounded over the wires.

"Who's that?"

"It is Dr. Chisholm speaking."

The voice became lively at once.

"Oh, yes, sir! Anything wrong up at the school?"

"I am considerably worried concerning the disappearance of one of my junior boys—Muffin by name."

"I see! Has he run away from school, sir?"

"I fear such is the case. Will you institute inquiries, and report any developments to me?"

"Very good, sir! It won't take us long to get on the track of young Crumpet—I mean Muffin."

The police-sergeant spoke with confidence. He anticipated no difficulty whatever in catching the runaway.

"I am much obliged to you!" said the Head.

And he rang off.

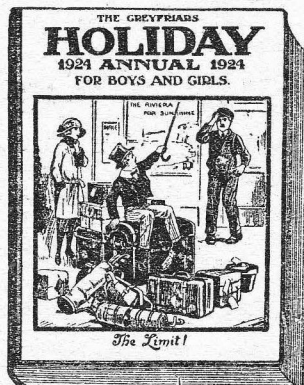
"We shall not be long now!" he said, his face brightening.

But Mr. Bootles did not share the Head's faith in the abilities of the local police.

"Where search-parties have failed, I do not anticipate that the police will succeed," he said.

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"That remains to be seen," said Dr. Chisholm. "We must hope for the best."
Mr. Bootles nodded and went in to breakfast.

The familiar figure of Tubby Muffin was absent from the table. Most of the juniors did not mind this in the least. The absence of the Fourth's champion eater meant a bigger supply of food all round.

"It's a treat to be without our tame porpoise!" remarked Lovell.

"All the same, he must be found," said Jimmy Silver.

"My hat, yes!"

All Rookwood was interested by this time in the fat junior's disappearance.

Hansom, of the Fifth, who rather fancied himself as an amateur detective, had followed a number of imaginary clues. Needless to state, Hansom's deductions ended precisely where they had begun.

Breakfast over, Jimmy Silver & Co. decided on a bout of footer practice.

Time did not permit of the juniors going down to the football ground, so they played up against the wall of the gym.

A goal was chalked on the wall, and the game proved very absorbing—except to the goalkeeper, who happened to be Conroy.

The Colonial junior was bombarded with shots from close range, and whenever he missed the ball with his hands, it struck some other part of his anatomy, causing him to hurl remarks at the marksmen.

"Steady on, you fellows! You're not having coconut shies, you know!"

"My dear chap," said Mornington, "you should stop the ball with your hands, not your chivvy!"

"Br-r-r!"

The game waxed fast and furious.

Conroy was for ever fisting out shots, or being bowled over by them.

And then Kit Erroll took a flying kick, and the ball was ballooned high over the wall and out of sight.

The juniors waited anxiously for it to bounce down again. But it never came.

"It's stuck between the roof of the gym, and the roof of the main building," said Jimmy Silver.

Kit Erroll nodded.

"I'm awfully sorry—" he began.

"Bless your sorrow! You booted the ball up there, now you can jolly well go and get it!"

"Hear, hear!"

Kit Erroll scanned the towering wall. "How the merry dickens am I going to climb that?" he exclaimed.

"Get a ladder, fathhead!" said Lovell.

"Oh, all right!" grunted Erroll.

And he sped away to secure a ladder.

He returned in a few moments, and the ladder was propped against the wall. With the agility of a monkey, Kit Erroll started to climb.

"Keep your eyes open, in case there are any beaks or prefects on the prowl!" he called down.

"That's all right!" sang out Jimmy Silver. "Go ahead!"

Kit Erroll continued to climb.

When he reached the top and clambered over the flat, narrow space situated between the two roofs, the juniors down below heard him give a sudden shout.

"What's up?" shouted Jimmy Silver.

All eyes were turned upwards.

Presently the excited face of Kit Erroll peeped down.

"I've found him!"

"What?"

"Found whom?" exclaimed Lovell.

"I've found Tubby Muffin!"

"My only aunt!"

There was great excitement down below, as well as up above.

In searching for the football, Kit Erroll had stumbled upon a far more important capture.

The shrill voice of Tubby Muffin could be heard, raised in expostulation.

"I won't go down! I refuse! Old Manders will get hold of me, and then—"

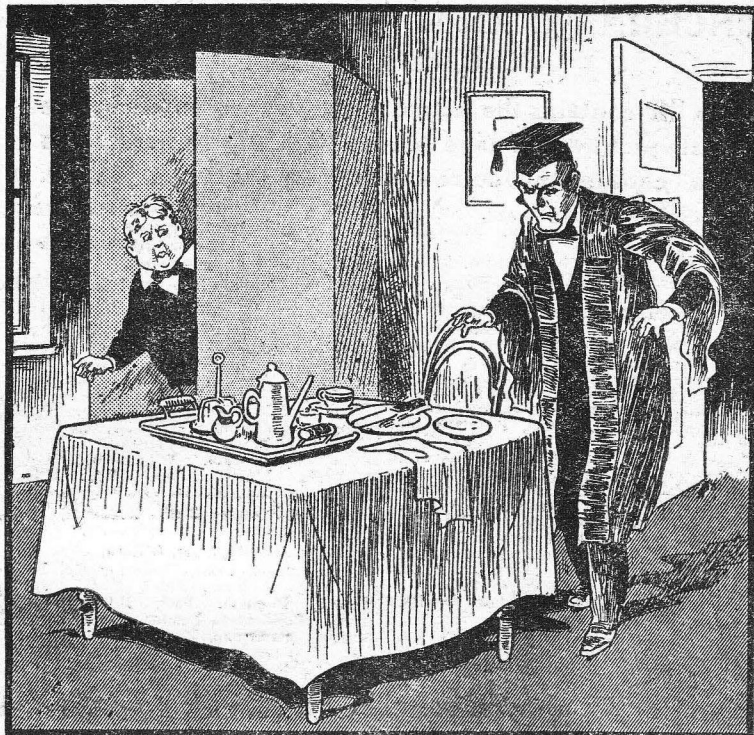
The voice trailed off in dismay as Kit Erroll urged the fat junior to descend the ladder.

Tubby Muffin came down gingerly, and Erroll followed.

"You silly fat porpoise!" said Jimmy Silver. "You'll get it in the neck for this—you'll be simply slaughtered."

Tubby Muffin, who looked blue with cold, alighted at the foot of the ladder.

"I—I say, you fellows—" he stammered feebly.



CORNERED—BUT NOT CAPTURED! Tubby Muffin had just concealed his plump bulk behind the screen when Mr. Manders entered the study. "Bless my soul!" he gasped as he surveyed the empty tray. "Some young rascal—some unprincipled person—has had the effrontery to come here and consume my breakfast!" (See Chapter I.)

"Talk about luck!" said Kit Erroll, who had forgotten to bring down the football in his excitement. "Tubby's been hiding in the flat space between the roofs. He took his cap and coat up with him, but he looks frozen!"

Jimmy Silver scanned the roof.

"How on earth did he get up there?" he exclaimed.

"By a ladder, of course!" said Kit Erroll. "And he pulled the ladder up after him."

"My hat!"

"Then—then he hasn't been away from Rookwood at all?" gasped Newcome.

"Doesn't look like it, does it?"

The juniors stared at Tubby Muffin. He looked the picture of misery. He was sniffing and snivelling.

"I—I say, I feel ill!" he groaned.

"I don't wonder!" said Mornington. "If you've scoffed that rabbit-pie, and goodness knows what besides, you must be thoroughly bilious, by gad!"

"I don't mean that," said Tubby Muffin.

"I—I'm soaked, you know."

"Soaked!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "What do you mean?"

"It rained in the night, and there was nothing to shelter me. I came down once, and tried to find a sheet of tarpaulin or something, but I had no luck. I was soaked to the skin, and I feel awful!"

Jimmy Silver stepped forward, and felt Tubby Muffin's clothing.

"My hat!" he exclaimed. "You're wet through! You mad idiot! You've been fairly asking for a dose of pneumonia!"

"Ow!"

The conversation had reached this stage, when there was a rustle of gowns, and Mr. Bootles and Mr. Manders came up. Their eyes were nearly bulging out of their heads as they surveyed Tubby Muffin.

"What—what does this mean?" gasped Mr. Bootles.

Jimmy Silver explained the situation.

"Muffin," snapped Mr. Manders, when the captain of the Fourth had finished, "you will come with me!"

Mr. Bootles promptly intervened.

"The wretched boy will do nothing of the sort!" he said. "He is ill! He has been

exposed to the elements, and he must be taken to the sanatorium at once!"

"But I insist—"

"Your insistence, Mr. Manders, is futile! This boy is not in a fit state to receive punishment. He must be put to bed without delay, and the doctor must be summoned. Silver, Lovell, Mornington, pray assist Muffin to the sanatorium at once!"

The juniors thus addressed promptly obeyed.

Tubby Muffin was taken to the sanatorium, and it was soon obvious that he was not shamming. His temperature was high, and the doctor, when he came, stated that the fat junior had contracted a bad chill.

Dr. Chisholm was duly informed of what had transpired, and he was very lenient towards Tubby Muffin. He considered that the junior's illness constituted an adequate punishment.

"I will punish Muffin later!" snapped Mr. Manders.

The Head, who happened to overhear this remark, turned round upon the master of the Sixth.

"Kindly do nothing of the sort, Mr. Manders!" he said quietly. "Muffin has behaved very foolishly, but he is paying the penalty. I must ask you not to take any action against him on his recovery!"

Mr. Manders scowled, and muttered something under his breath. But the Head's word was law, and he would be unable to exact vengeance for the stolen breakfast.

Skilled nursing soon pulled Tubby Muffin through, and in a few days he was able to sit up and take lots of nourishment. His rash escapade was over, and he was preserved from the vials of Mr. Manders' wrath.

And Rookwood chuckled for many days afterwards over the exciting events which had arisen in connection with the Vanished Schoolboy!

THE END.

(There will be another long, complete story of Rookwood entitled: "Trouble in the End Study!" in next week's Extra-Bumper issue.)

THE POPULAR.—No. 248.

CONCERNING OUR GRAND FOOTBALL COMPETITION!

This list contains the actual names represented by the puzzle-pictures on page 14 and 15. All you have to do is to choose the correct name to fit each picture.

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Brett, Broadhead, Blyth, Boreham, Blackburn, Bradford, Bassnett, Brittan, Blair, Ball, Barkas, Birrell, Bradley, Barnes, Bulling, Burton, Branston, Buchan, Blake, Bowser, Bishop, Barnes, Barras, Braithwaite, Bullock, Bliss, Bateman, Best, Bagge, Barson, Broadhurst, Broad, Bolam, Breisford, Blenkinsopp, Beedle, Birch, Bellamy, Bainbridge, Bowen, Burnham, Boyle, Blackwell, Bennie, Ballantyne, Buchanan, Bamber, Byers, Banks, Brooks, Blood, Baker, Bird, Bromlou.

Cockle, Crosbie, Cross, Clennell, Cameron, Chedgoy, Cock, Chadwick, Clough, Curry, Cookson, Cope, Cook, Crilly, Chaplin, Collier, Crockford, Campbell, Crown, Chance, Chipperfield, Crompton, Charlton, Conner, Craig, Cosgrove, Eherrett, Crossley, Carler, Clarke, Cotton, Cunningham, Cairns, Clunas, Connolly, Cassidy, Carr, Cowan, Chapman, Chambers, Clay, Cresswell.

Dunn, Dickson, Dorrell, Dawson, Davies, Donaldson, Dinsdale, Dimmock, Duckett, Duncan, Domy, Davison, Duckworth, Dockray, Danskin, Dreyer, Denoon, Denyer, Duffus, Dunlop, Dixon, Doyle, Doran, Dale, Emerson, Evans, Ellerington, England, Ellis, Edelston, Edgley, Eggo, Elliott, Edge, Edwards, Emmett, Ewart.

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Howarth, Haworth, Hampton, Harrow, Harland, Hopkin, Hudspeth, Harris, Hamill, Hill, Hardy, Hamilton, Hawes, Handley, Hufton, Hine, Hughes, Heap, Higginbotham, Hoddinott, Hebden, Hilditch, Howson, Hunter, Hayes, Hutchins, Hannafoard, Harold, Howie, Henshall, Hodges, Halstead, Huggall, Hogg, Henderson, Harper, Hulton, Hillhouse, Hair, Hart, Haines, Hole.

Irvine, Islip, Iremonger, Irwin, Jennings, Jack, Jackson, Johnson, Kirtton, Kelly, Keeshaw, Keenor, Kay, Knowles, Kane, Keenyside, Kidd, Kilpatrick, Kean.

Linfoot, Longworth, Low, Lindsay, Little, Lonsdale, Lockhead, Longmuir, Lea, Lieveley, Lane, Lockett, Legge, Lofthouse, Lenny, Lyner, Lawson, Lambie, Lacey.

Moss, Mort, Mosscrop, Meehan, Maitland, Mitchell, Murphy, Morgan, Milton, Mercer, Marshall, Magee, Moore, Martin, Mills, Mason, Mew, Matthews, Moule, Myers, Marsden, Middleton, Maidment, Mehaffy, Mee, Moody, Musgrove, Malcolm, Morton, Manderson, Meiklejohn, Muirhead, Moffat, Mutch, Meredith, Marriott, Mackie, Menlove, Mitton, Marks, Marsh, M'Intyre, M'Neil, M'Kinlay, M'Nabb, M'Intosh, M'Donald, M'Call, M'Grory, M'Claggage, M'Lean, M'Candless, M'Coll, M'Lacklan, M'Stey, M'Alpine, M'Kenna, M'Inally, M'Nair, M'Minn, McBain, McCracken.

Nuttall, Neesam, Neil, Needham, Nash, Nisbet, Nelson.

Osborne, Ormston, Orr, O'Hare.

Pym, Pringle, Price, Parker, Poole, Pateron, Pearson, Penn, Plum, Page, Preston, Probert, Pagnan, Peel, Potts, Palmer, Prouse, Puddefoot, Pender, Pape, Peacock, Pantling, Partridge, Peers.

Quantrill, Quinn.

Robson, Rollo, Raitt, Richardson, Rawlings, Ruffell, Robbie, Rig, Radford, Ridley, Reay, Ramsay, Robb, Ritchie, Ranskin, Reed, Rooke, Roe.

Spiers, Smart, Stephenson, Seddon, Sewell, Smelt, Smith, Scott, Slade, Spencer, Seymour, Spaven, Sampy, Seed, Storer, Stage, Shea, Steele, Simms, Smailes, Symes, Sturges, Sayles, Spottiswood, Scattergood, Sinclair, Stuart, Sayer, Suteliffe, Salt, Summerfield, Shaw, Sillito, Sneedon, Sommerville, Shone, Streets, Sampey, Stannard, Skinner, Sage.

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York.

MORGAN O' THE MAIN!

(Continued from page 5.)

The Captives!

THE morrow dawned bright and fair, and at the appointed time the captives, each in his san benito, or flame-coloured robe, commenced what was to be their last walk on earth. In the exact centre of the town a small hill rose to the height of, perhaps, a hundred feet above the sea-level, and on the top were stakes, each surrounded by bundles of faggots. To this ghastly spot the prisoners came.

The pathetic procession slowly wound its way through the tortuous streets of Carthage; in front walked a monk bearing aloft a cross, at the side of each of the unfortunate walked other monks, urging them to repentance.

But the hardy buccaneers spurned their ministrations, and, with fearsome mutterings, bade the priests desist. Though some had to be half carried, so swollen and inflamed were their joints by the constant torture, and all bore scars both old and new, to witness the suffering of hot iron, the cruel lash, and biting steel, not a man of them showed craven fear. They laughed, and hurled rough jests at each other and at their guards, as if no fiery death awaited them. They sang rude ditties to drown the voices of the choir of priests that brought up the rear.

And, hand on hip, Olon watched them go to their fate. As they filed past one of them stopped, and, careless of the soldier's pikes, seized him.

"Sink me!" he cried, in a great voice. "Here be Cap'n Olon, a-come to save us from the stake!"

With a curse Olon threw him off. "Out of my way, ye dog!" he snarled. "Get ye and your mates to the warm welcome that awaits ye!"

In a second the man had him by the throat, and it took three of the others to pull him off.

"Ye foul rat!" shrieked the captive. "There be a round dozen o' us that were with 'ee when ye took the San Jose. Rot me, but ye ain't skunk enough to let us perish, Cap'n Olon?"

"Get ye to the stake!" screamed the half-breed, as soon as he got his breath. "An' whilst ye burn, think o' the treasure that ye ha' lost!"

A fanfare of trumpets made Olon turn, and there, landing from a pinnace, was the admiral. Don Jose, who had slept the night aboard, was surrounded by his own body-guard from the Santa Maria; but, elbowing his way through the throng, Olon went up to him.

"I trust, Senor Admiral," he said, in tones he strove to make courteous, "that you ha' not forgotten your promise to let me taste your wine o' Spain. I ha' a most plaguey thirst this morn!"

And as he proffered the request a look of cunning showed on his evil countenance, then in a moment it had gone.

"My captain will conduct you to the ship," was the answer, "for, as the representative of His Catholic Majesty, I have to see the heretics burn. But, Captain Olon," he went on, "it does you credit that you wish not to see the deaths of your pirate friends."

"Sink me, Master Spaniard, but ye ha' a pretty wit! My stomach's none so squeamish as that, for I'd see the rogues burn wi' pleasure. But, body o' me, a man must drink!"

With a look of unutterable contempt, Don Jose turned his back on the man, and, accompanied by a couple of handgog rascals as villainous as himself, Olon dropped into the pinnace and was rowed away.

The captives had by now reached the place of doom; in groups of three they were chained to stakes, the faggots heaped up, and it but wanted the presence of his Excellency the admiral for the torches to be applied.

(You simply must not miss next week's long instalment of our new romantic serial.)

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The Failure of Dick's Mission.

"H A, Dick, lad!" said the imprisoned Duke of Monmouth. "Had things gone otherwise with us you would have risen high in the State, and your sword would have been a stout prop to my throne. But 'twas not to be, and I suppose I must accept a life of exile, like my poor father, but without the happy return that awaited King Charles."

Dick shifted uneasily in his chair. "I think your Grace hangs unduly upon the result of your Grace's letter," he ventured. "You have even now said that the King never forgives."

"The matter stands thus," said Monmouth. "James was ever unpopular. Will he risk the dislike of the kingdom that must follow on my death? My words, which he must even now have before him, point out a strong danger, and he will see me again. I knew it; I feel it. And yet—"

His head fell on to the bosom of his ruffled shirt with the reaction that comes to sanguine men.

"Oh, sir, do not count upon anything but putting the sea between yourself and the axe," "Is more real than you allow yourself to believe," urged Dick. "The scaffold is built already; the headsman is prepared. There will be no reprieve, and in a few hours 'twill be too late!"

"What is your plan, then?"

"In a few moments they will come for me, and lead me to the gate. This peruke and cloak will disguise you. You can affect excess of grief, and hide your face in your kerchief. At the water-stairs there is a boat, and swift rowers will carry you down to our ship, which sails the instant you are aboard of her!"

"And you?"

"I throw myself upon yonder couch, and before they discover aught you are far away."

The duke's eyes sparkled with emotion, and he held forth his hand.

"Boy, Heaven will bless you for your loyalty to an unfortunate man. They would assuredly hang you; and it shall never be said that James Scott, whatever his faults—and they have been many—secured a brief spell of life by the death of his friend! No, Dick! We Stuarts know how to die when the time comes, and too many have made sacrifices for us already!"

There came a tap upon the door, and both started.

"'Tis the answer to my letter!" exclaimed the duke, as the door opened a few inches.

"Forgive me, but your Grace's visitor must depart," said the Lieutenant of the Tower. "One moment longer, my good friend!" called Monmouth, whitening to the lips.

The door closed, and Dick started to his feet.

"I implore your Grace; there is yet time. See, the peruke will fit you, and you have but to stoop to disguise your height."

"Hush, boy! I have said, and you cannot change me!"

Dick raised his arm in a gesture of wild entreaty; but the duke shook his head with a sad smile.

"Urge me no more," he said. "And Dick knew that his mission had failed. He stood trembling violently, tears gushing from his eyes, unable to speak; and Monmouth bent over the table, from which he took a little trinket, set in gold.

Like many of his time, the duke was a believer in charms and fortune-telling, and the geegaw he now handed to Dick was, in his eyes, an infallible protection against death by drowning.

"You go on a long voyage, dear lad," he said. "This will be of service to you; and, whatever may be in store for me, 'twill remind you that Monmouth held you dearly in his thoughts. And so, farewell!"

He took him by both hands, and looked tenderly at him, Dick all the while convulsed with sobs.

"Be on your guard," he managed to falter. "We shall not be far away, and will attempt a rescue. The headsman, too, he—"

"Your Grace," said the lieutenant, entering, "I must remove this gentleman!"

Their hands clasped for the last time, and Monmouth bent and kissed him on the forehead.

"'Twere well, sir," said the lieutenant, in a low voice, "that your hair should still appear of the same hue!"

Dick replaced his peruke, with some confusion, and followed him to the door.

Then he turned and looked back. The duke stood erect, raising his shapely hand in token of adieu. And through the barred window behind him the yellow dawn was breaking!

The Last Scene of All.

A SEA of faces filled the slope of Tower Hill, and the mob was packed as tightly as herrings in a barrel. From the first light of morning the folk of London town had been journeying eastward, and by nine of the clock there was not space enough left to hold another soul.

All eyes were riveted upon a huge, square platform, draped, by the king's permission, with black; and round the platform were ranged many companies of foot and troops of horse, with muskets loaded and swords drawn.

Inside the Tower itself another figure was waiting, hoping against hope, looking, at every unusual sound, in the direction of Whitehall for the message that never came!

My Lord Bishop of Ely and his Grace of Bath and Wells had come to help that man to die; and, while he listened to all they had to say, they were a little disappointed that he seemed inclined to die in his own fashion.

Drs. Tenison and Hooper had talked long and earnestly with him; and the "Protestant duke" bore himself with a manliness that impressed all who saw him.

He still clung to the belief that the evil moment would be delayed; but as the hands of the clock went remorselessly round hope faded away, and he knew that in a few moments he must face the inevitable.

Without, the crowd preserved a solemn silence, and every heart beat with the flutter of suspense.

The tension was becoming unbearable, and a low whisper began to circulate.

It had its origin in certain centres, where two or three fierce-visaged men would talk among themselves, and, talking, take care that those about them should hear what was said.

"A shame—a crying shame—and not to be borne, I say!"

Peter Pouch's rascals were doing their duty, and in half a score of places the people began to murmur.

Of Master Ketch nothing was to be seen. He was hidden away at the foot of the scaffold, his eyes scanning the crowded windows that looked over Tower Hill!

Half-way between the river and the hill-top were five men, standing with bent heads, and the shock of a recent discovery was heavy upon them.

Harry Lavender's old company of the Foot Guards had marched for Rochester with day-light, sent thither by an order from the king.

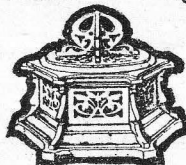
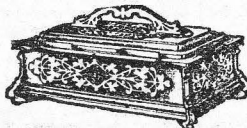
"Ned," whispered Peter Pouch, when they learned the news, "place your hand under the skirt of my coat, so, and there will you find a leatheren pocket. Think it not, lest there be cutpurses abroad; but take out ten guineas, which is half of my savings of a lifetime. When this is over we may perchance be separated, and money is a means of safety."

On the last stroke of ten a solemn bell tolled out from the chapel of St. Peter, inside the Tower.

"He is coming!" said everyone. And a thrill passed through the crowd. The troops opened an avenue, and the

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THE POPULAR—No. 248.

The League of Seven are in Great Danger! Will They Escape from the Clutches of James I?

sheriffs of London and Middlesex passed down to the outer gate.

The bell tolled at intervals, and then came the rumble of wheels.

There was a flash of red and a glitter of steel at the gate, and the escort came forth, surrounding a coach, beside which walked three officers, with loaded pistols.

Within sat the Lieutenant of the Tower and James, Duke of Monmouth!

One last despairing look did the unhappy man cast westward, and then his handsome face grew calm.

Cries rose on all sides, and the atmosphere was full of lamentation.

Harry Lavender, with a brace of pistols under his coat, kept his eye fixed on the scaffold.

A man in black had slunk up the ladder, his face hidden by a mask, and now stood beside the block, rolling an anxious eye at the windows.

The coach came slowly on, every head bared, and grief in every eye; but though the five friends suddenly raised their voices in a loud shout of "Rescue!" the only result was a surge of soldiery, which bore them backward and jostled them apart.

"Keep your mouth shut, Master Richard!" whispered Ned, as he dived under the arm of a stout citizen. "'Tis no good to him now!"

The crowd subsided, and the coach passed by.

As the duke alighted he saluted the troops, and smiled as he went up the stairs.

"Do you desire to make a speech, your Grace?"

"No," replied the duke. "I was never good at speeches, and did I make one now I know it would not be heard."

Harry Lavender, his face set and white, edged his way inch by inch until he came within a few yards of the scaffold, and Daventry followed him.

"What are you about? Are you mad?" he whispered.

Captain Lavender's reply was to shout "Rescue!" with all the force of his lungs, and the executioner turned a terrified look in his direction.

"Sir," muttered a gentleman in a green velvet coat, "'tis too late; and, though I feel for you, 'twere better to consult your own safety! See, you have already attracted the notice of yonder mounted man, who is looking in our direction!"

Lavender was at first inclined to resent such interference from a stranger, but there was something so well-meaning in the little gentleman's tone that he simply bit upon his lip, and peered at the officer of the horse with an angry gleam in his eye.

"But for my accursed wound!" he murmured.

"Ha, a wound!" whispered the stranger. "Then have you all the more cause for caution. 'Tis a sad business, but 'twill soon be over now; and, by my faith, the duke bears himself like a gallant soldier!"

Monmouth did indeed comport himself with a brave dignity that was apparent to all, and his tall, graceful figure and handsome face brought tears to many an eye unused to weeping.

He delivered a packet to his servant, and said a few low words to him.

He looked proudly round, refusing to have his arms bound or his face covered, and then, taking off his peruke and his coat, stood erect in the faced shirt, which is still preserved to this day.

Once for a fleeting moment his gaze wandered to the west again; but there came no gallop of hoofs, no hurry of mounted messenger bearing the expected reprieve. And, looking down into the faces of the now silent multitude, his eyes met Dick's, and he smiled.

Then, after a brief prayer, he knelt before the block, the onlookers drew in

their breaths, and then the axe fell! And so ended one of the greatest men in history!

Trapped!

"YOU have acted the fool, Harry!" whispered Daventry. "Your wound has made you mad! Here come the horse, bent on your capture!"

Daventry forced himself in front of Lavender as he spoke, and a dozen jack-booted troopers rode straight for the spot.

"This way, for your life, if you value it at a groat's purchase!" cried the little gentleman in green, pulling Lavender deeper into the press. "Room, friends—room! This poor fellow has been much affected at the spectacle, and must have air!"

The crowd opened a little, and the little gentleman put his lips to Lavender's ear.

"Bend low, and work your way round to the right!" he whispered. "I will cover you!"

And, laying hands upon a man whose coat was not unlike the captain's, the stranger forced him backwards, to his great astonishment.

"A flagon of wine, sir," said the little man, "if you will but allow me to handle you thus for twenty yards!"

And, whether the man was willing or no, he found himself twisted and turned in a pair of very strong arms, in spite of expostulations and threats.

The horseman, attracted by the green coat, followed for a moment; but the officer had taken careful stock of Lavender's set face, and, suddenly catching sight of it some little distance off, as the wounded captain glanced incautiously over his shoulder, he cried:

"This way, men! Yonder is our fox, and we will soon track him to his lair!"

Daventry, who overheard the words, looked in vain for burly Peter Pouch and Dick; but, seeing them not, he struggled in the wake of the horsemen, and was almost ridden down by one of them, who came back at the trot at a word from the officer.

Lavender had reached the edge of the throng, and ran swiftly into a lane-end.

The captain of horse spurred after him, and a pistol-shot rang out on the air.

In an agony of fear, Daventry gained the lane as the mounted men surged into it, filling it from side to side.

The officer was hatless, and down his brow a thin red stream was pouring. Harry Lavender was speeding between the houses that lined the narrow way, and in another moment he would have reached a turning; but it is always those "other moments"

that make or mar us.

His boot caught in the faulty pavement, and he fell headlong, struggled up, and was about to make a last bold dash for it, when round the corner came a flash of scarlet, as a troop of Dragons rode into the lane at the other end, and bore down upon him with a hoarse cry.

The captain was in a trap, and escape was hopeless!

Royalist versus Rebel.

A HAND was laid on Daventry's shoulder with so hard a grip that he turned with a sick heart.

"Stand where you are! We may do more good free than fettered!" whispered Peter Pouch. And, drawing him aside, they climbed the steps of a tumble-down dwelling, the better to see what was about to happen.

From the spot where Harry Lavender stood at bay, sword in one hand and pistol in the other, to the mounted officer whom he had wounded, it was perhaps forty strides of a tall man, and a like distance to the fresh arrivals.

The pavements, or, rather, the lack of it, being full of deep holes, and heaps of

garbage, the horsemen stopped as by a common impulse, feeling that their man was securely hemmed in, and the wounded officer drew his pistol, advancing at a foot pace.

"Yield, you rebel dog, or I shall shoot you down!" he cried, levelling full at Harry Lavender's breast.

"I yield," said the captain, letting his arms fall to his sides, and coming towards him.

Daventry ejaculated a deep oath.

"Hold!" whispered Peter Pouch, his gristed eyebrows meeting across his nose. "Be on your guard, sir, for I know him when he smiles, and his smile is dangerous!"

Harry Lavender had lessened the distance by ten paces, and was putting his pistol in the breast of his coat.

The officer lowered his barrel, raised it again, wavered in doubt of the rebel's intentions, and, deceived by the steady eye that met his own, finally allowed his hand to rest upon his embroidered holster-cap.

It was at that moment that Harry Lavender came abreast of the only open door on the right side of the street, and, under pretence of picking his way, turned aside to avoid a pile of earth that cumbered the road there.

This brought him to the house-step, and, with a giant bound, he was out of sight in an instant.

The officer fired!

A mighty clang answered the report, and when they had rushed to the door it was shut, and bolted on the inside.

"What now?" exclaimed Daventry.

"Stay here and watch," whispered Peter Pouch.

"Hang it, man, don't look as if all the cares of the kingdom rested on your shoulders! You are a spectator among this couple of hundred that have come to look on. I will seek the back of the lane. We meet where we can, but to eastward, remember, on the river's bank."

And Peter, cool, old campaigner that he was, quietly stalked off with no sign that he had any concern in the matter.

Daventry, accordingly, bracing himself for whatever might befall, remained on the step, which raised him above the rest of the mob, and saw the troopers fling themselves against the door.

Every second of time that it should resist their efforts was in Harry Lavender's favour; but already a dozen redecoats had hastened round to the rear of the houses, and Daventry groaned inwardly at the impossibility of being in two places at once.

Meanwhile, Peter Pouch had sauntered away, whistling, and he had not gone many yards when a tall man, in a shabby doublet of a fashion long disused, fell to whistling the same air in a soft and peculiar note as he passed him.

Peter's eye opened and closed down instantly, and the man, turning on his heel, followed him.

At the corner the shabby one overtook him, and walked beside him without seeming to have any connection with the burly ex-sergeant.

Peter spoke sharply. "Stephen Mouse, know you the ways of this street? Is there chance for a man backwards?"

"No; but the roof is flat, as yonder blue-coat hath discovered."

Peter followed the direction, and saw a well-known figure crouching behind the parapet, high up above them.

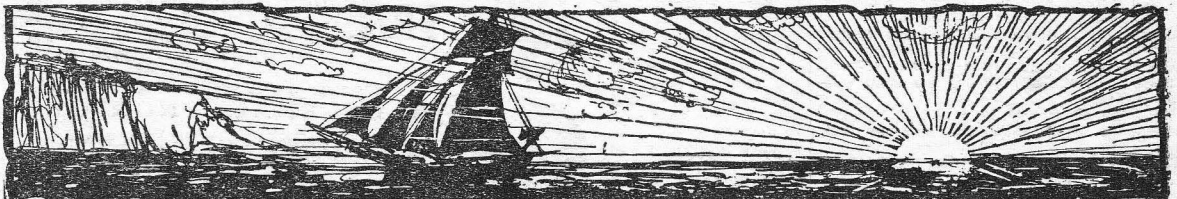
"He sees us," said Stephen Mouse. "Show him five fingers, and beckon him this way."

"Which means?"

"That he can get down through the fifth house, where old Lazarus Isaacs, the usurer, dwells."

Peter raised his huge fist, opened it wide, and made a hasty signal.

(Another instalment of our serial next week.)



Next week there will be another set of pictures to solve . . . look out for them! 27



OUR GRAND NEW COMPETITION.

Readers of the POPULAR have the biggest opportunity ever offered in the new "Footballers' Names" Competition. You will find all particulars concerning this truly wonderful offer on page 14 of this issue of the POPULAR. The prizes are princely, and I shall be very much surprised indeed if all my chums do not roll up and do their best in a competition which has such a big appeal to everybody. This is not a thing to keep to yourself. Let any friend who is not as yet a reader of the POPULAR know about the splendid prize-list. The big programme of awards is enough to make a fellow gasp. There are handsome prizes in hard cash—First Prize, £100; the Second Prize, £50—while you also have the tempting prospect of winning one of the 30 James' Motor-bikes, or the Comet Cycles, or a Wireless Set, a Model Railway, or any other of the valuable prizes which are just waiting for owners. Just study the instructions carefully. Don't send in your sets of pictures until the right date for entries to be forwarded. Keep each set carefully. THERE WILL BE A SECOND SET OF PICTURES NEXT WEEK. And don't overlook the fact that this new "Footballers' Names" Competition is the most sensational and most generous offer ever made. That it will send the POPULAR up even higher in the estimation of everybody, I have not a doubt.

Next week's programme of stories:

"COKER'S REIGN OF TERROR!" By Frank Richards.

A splendid yarn of Greyfriars this. Look out for a treat next week. Coker is still perfect, and he is not proving such a success that anybody would yearn to make a song of it. The fur flies. Coker is just the fellow to make the most of his brief authority, and he interprets his privileges in such a way as to cause no end of trouble. It is all quite in accordance with Coker, who is erratic. Of course, his heart is in the right place, but he is headstrong, as Potter and Greene would tell you. Mind you read about the new exploits of Horace.

"THE CHEERFUL CHINEE!" By Martin Clifford.

Another rattling yarn of the Cedar Creek establishment for next Tuesday. You will say this story is top-notch. Cedar Creek has slipped into its place as a school all on its own, something absolutely out of the common, and a college where book learning is supplemented by a crowd of other useful facts about life in the wilds, and how to meet the peril of the plains. There is no better series of tales of ranches and cowboys than you get in the POPULAR every week.

"TROUBLE IN THE END STUDY!" By Owen Conquest.

Facts speak for themselves pretty plainly in the Rookwood story for the coming issue of the POPULAR. The title gives one an inkling of the sombre truth that things are not as they might be with the "Co." Jimmy Silver & Co. are passing through a pretty bad time. Misunderstandings are as plentiful as conkers in a chestnut avenue, and, as is always the case, each member of the distinguished company knows jolly well that the trouble is caused by the other fellow. You will be interested in the narrative which shows the junior captain of Rookwood facing difficulties like a giddy hero, and his comrades standing four square to all the winds that blow.

"THE SCHOOL WITHOUT FOOTBALL!" By Martin Clifford.

St. Jim's is in the throes of a fight with the Anti-Football League. That mischievous and evil-minded organisation has put the cat among the pigeons. There are troubles galore, and in next week's splendid yarn of Tom Merry & Co. we get a notion of what is sure to happen when a league, working on such lines runs amuck amidst the oldest privileges of Britons.

"MORGAN O' THE MAIN!" By Tom Stenner.

Don't miss the fighting off Carthage in next week's instalment of our grand serial of the old buccaners. The more you read of Morgan, the fiercer fighter, and romantic hero of so many adventures, the greater your esteem for him. Morgan's history as Governor of Jamaica, and king's man, as well as pirate, is well known. This is a great story, marked with grip and grit.

"THE LEAGUE OF SEVEN!" By Morton Pike.

Only a couple of words are called for here. Next Tuesday we see the wind up of a brilliant narrative. The climax is not to be swept aside as the inglorious termination to a foolhardy exploit. For the men who made the League of Seven are left on the broad highway of further adventure and romance.

"THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL."

Any reader of the POPULAR who has not yet made sure of his copy of the "Holiday Annual" should hurry up, for the risk of getting left at the end is a real one.

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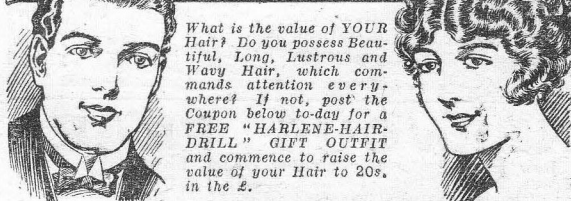
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