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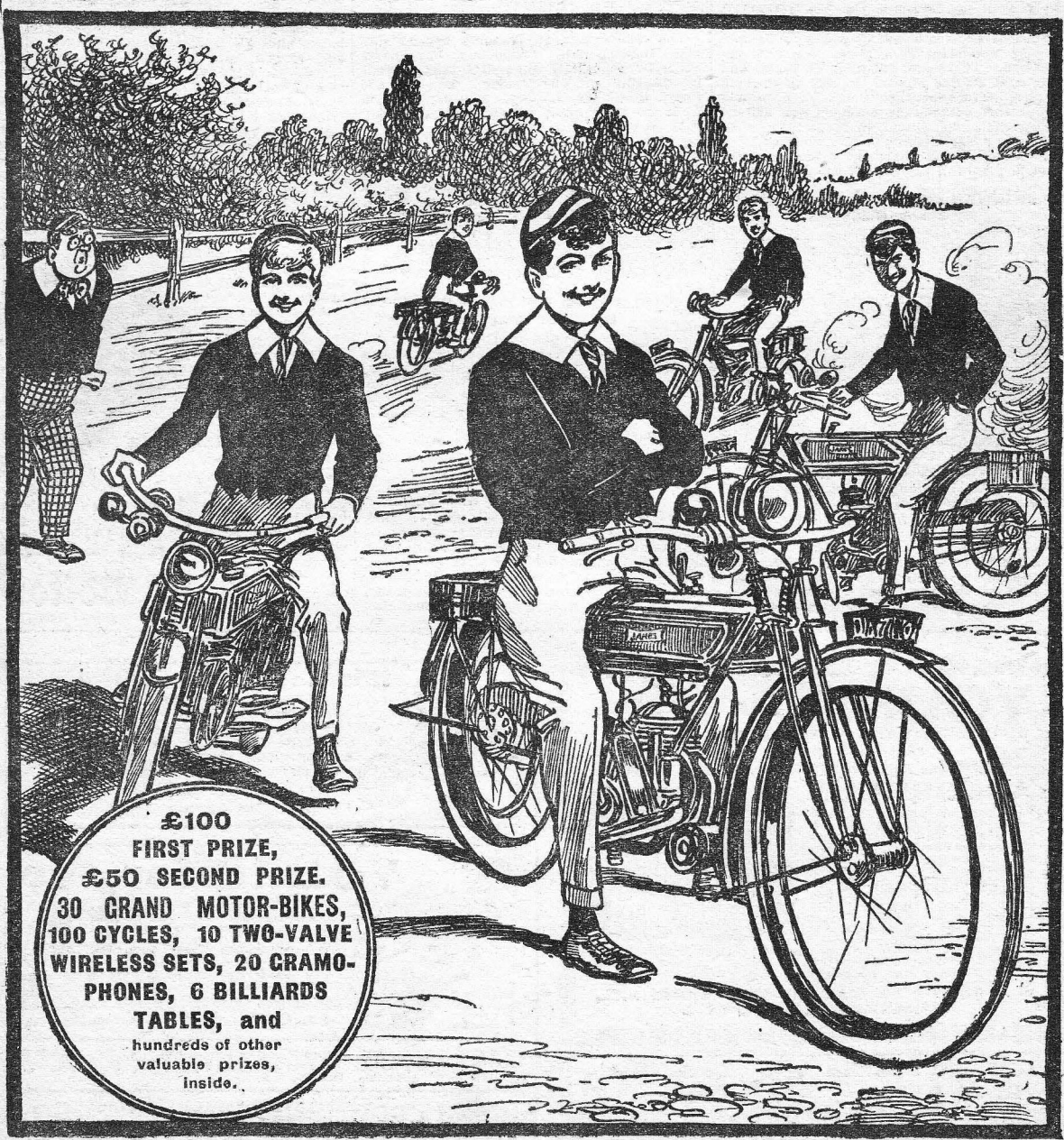
Week Ending  
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# The POPULAR 2<sup>D</sup>

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

**A PRIZE COMPETITION.**

If there were any time to spare it would be cheery to follow the adventures of a prize as it makes its way to the home of the lucky winner. There is not any time, so I shall not attempt the job, though it would be interesting, especially when one thinks of the regiments of prizes to be won in our wonderful Footballers' Names Competition. There are hundreds of them, and they will all find billets. I hope all POPULAR readers have kept their chums well primed about this magnificent offer. There will be heaps of winners, and it is quite a good touch to a day when a prize comes tumbling in. Added to all that, our grand competition is plum-full of interest all the time.

**"SKINNER COMES A CROPPER!"**

By Frank Richards.

It is not clear that there will be any overwhelming amount of sympathy over the mess he lands himself in next week. It is a real clipper of a yarn, but the result for Skinner is—well, not nice. Skinner has a swelled head. Perhaps you will suggest that this is no news. But on this occasion Skinner suffers from a double-size cranial inflation, and seeks to prove himself a better man than Ferrers Locke. The detective pays Greyfriars a visit, and finds a mystery waiting for him on the doorstep. Skinner sneers at Locke's reputation, and lots of quaint things happen, all of which will interest you amazingly next Tuesday.

**"RIGHTING A WRONG!"**

This is the best sort of employment anybody can take on. Next week's Backwoods tale presents a situation which you would have thought impossible at Cedar Creek. Frank Richards is still under a cloud. Things look as black as night for him, and, despite his splendid record, he is expelled because of the accusation levelled at him. His chums are determined their pal shall be

reinstated. They set to work in grim earnest, and the story of their activities makes fine reading.

**"THE FIGHT FOR TOM MERRY'S LIFE!"**

By Martin Clifford.

You know how it is some special day gets remembered. Something happens—a chum is desperately ill, and it falls to your lot to ride for the doctor. You do not forget that kind of thing. You can't! You wake up of a night weeks after, dreaming that you are still buzzing along on your jigger in quest of help. Well, that's something the style of next Tuesday's yarn of St. Jim's. There is a memorable ride through the night to London to get a specialist to save the life of Tom Merry. The POPULAR has never given a stronger complete about St. Jim's. The young leader of the school is down in the Valley of the Shadow owing to being overtaken by a terrific storm. Look out for this tale.

**"THE SNEAK OF THE THIRD!"**

By Owen Conquest.

Lovell minor is one of the spoiled, pampered sort. You take an invincible dislike to this type. The soft, conceited fellow who wants things all his own way is intolerable. Lovell is knee-deep in trouble next week. The bright spirits of the noble Third hate sneaks, worms, and funks, and they are plain-spoken to a man. Lovell's experiences may seem rough, but they are most healthy for a chap of his temperature.

**"MORGAN O' THE MAIN!"**

It is good to see how this fine serial is unfolding. I knew it would shape well, and mightily please "Popularites" who are keen as mustard on the deeds of pirates. Morgan was a real pirate, no putty make-believe. He swept the nearer seas with his ship, and his adversaries were hopelessly outmatched

time and again—just by pluck and seamanship and a dash of something more. For it was this way—Morgan had the gift of leadership. He was idolised by his followers—not all willing followers at the start, either; but once a man came under the spell of Morgan, the newcomer fell to it, and served his commander to the death.

**THE "HOLIDAY ANNUAL!"**

Thanks to E. A. W., of Chelmsford, who tells me that a copy of the "Holiday Annual" fell to his lot on his birthday. "I think," he says, "that the introduction of 'Billy Bunter's Annual' is a grand idea. I have a particular liking for school stories, and the illustrations are, to my mind, particularly good." Speaking for myself, I am quite content to leave this week's note about the topping volume in the capable hands of my Essex friend.

**A WORD FOR THE ARTIST.**

One of my friends drops me a line about what the artist does for the stories. "Every one of the boys should be recognised," says this writer. "It is not merely so with such characters as Gussy and Trimble. There is Cardew with his fair hair brushed straight back, and his cynical face; Herries, dark and rugged, and yet differently dark and rugged to Grundy; Talbot, with his little lock of wavy hair straying over his forehead. It is wonderful!" I was glad to get this tribute to the hard-working delineator. He sometimes gets regarded merely as part of the scenery, and so misses his due.

**OBSCURE ACTS.**

A delightfully chummy letter from a reader in Hong Kong shows me that the POPULAR is highly thought of out in far Cathay. That's what the poets call China, anyway. My correspondent refers to the sad way in which so many noble things get overlooked. But is it really so? Is not the answer to this complaint to be found in the lines of Shakespeare in the "Merchant of Venice"? "How far that little candle throws its beams! So shines a good deed in a naughty world!" Things do not get forgotten—not really. It is especially so with the good things. Their influence spreads and spreads like the rings in a pond when a stone is thrown into the water.

**"DO YOU FILE YOUR PAPERS?"**

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Your Editor.

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By  
**FRANK RICHARDS.**

(Author of the stories of Greyfriars appearing in the "Magnet" every week.)

**THE FIRST CHAPTER.**  
**Bunter Finds Things!**

**W**HEN Peter Todd, of the Remove Form at Greyfriars, made up his mind to wake up Lord Mauleverer, the good-natured slacker of the Remove, he did not take into his calculations Billy Bunter.

William George Bunter prided himself on the fact that he knew everything that was going on—and knowing it considerably before most fellows.

Peter had sent a letter to Mauleverer which gave Mauly the idea that the letter was from his uncle. The news contained in the note was to the effect that Mauly had lost all his money and was a pauper.

The first the Removites knew about the matter was when Mauly's name appeared on the list of entrants for the Holton Scholarship—and, needless to say, it made a sensation.

But then Billy Bunter, poking his nose into Mauly's study, found Peter Todd's letter there, and with it in his hand he made a dash to spread the news.

Billy Bunter burst into the Common-room like a whirlwind, and cannoned violently into Bulstrode and Fisher T. Fish, who stood just inside the door. Bulstrode staggered back, and Fish collapsed on to the floor in a heap.

"You fat idiot!" roared Bulstrode. Fisher T. Fish scrambled up, red with wrath.

"You slab-sided mugwump!" he shouted. "You lop-eared jay! I guess you're nosing around for trouble! Galoots like you ain't fit to live! I guess we'd rope you to the nearest tree in the Yewnited States—just a few!"

"Sorry, Fishy—"  
"Yep; that's all very well—"  
"I've got news of Mauleverer!" shouted Bunter excitedly. "I know why he's entered for the Holton! I know why he's changed so much!"

Peter Todd looked up quickly. He knew Bunter's inquisitive habits, and guessed that he had been prying. An anxious look came into Peter's eyes, for he didn't want the jape spoilt just yet.

"Shut up, you rotter!" he exclaimed. "You don't know anything!"

"Oh, yes, I do!" said Billy Bunter triumphantly. "Up till now I haven't objected to being one of Mauly's best friends. You all know how pally we were. But now that he's a rotten pauper—"

"What!"

"Dry up, Bunter!" roared Todd.

"Now that he's a rotten pauper I can't possibly be on intimate terms with him," went on Bunter loftily. "Of course, I shall cut him completely—bar him absolutely. I'm not a particular chap, but it wouldn't do to be pally with a pauper."

"This madness seems to be catching," remarked Bob Cherry. "Bunter's gone off his rocker now. We all know that Mauly's a millionaire—"

"He used to be," chuckled Bunter gleefully, "but he isn't now! He's lost all his tin. That's why he's changed—that's why he's entered for the Holton!"

There was a moment's silence.

Harry Wharton looked thoughtful, and he regarded Bunter contemptuously.

"Been nosing again, I suppose?" he said. "Where did you get this yarn from? Who's been stuffing you up with fairy-tales?"

"It's the truth!" shouted Bunter.

"You're a member of my study, Bunter," said Peter Todd grimly, grasping Bunter's fat arm, "and if you say another word I'll make your life a misery! I don't allow you to come here with tomfool yarns like this! Outside—quick!"

Once outside, Todd meant to worm the truth from Bunter. He meant to ascertain exactly how much Bunter knew, and then threaten instant slaughter if he breathed another word.

But Billy Bunter had no intention of leaving the Common-room until he had shown the letter round. He wriggled in Todd's grasp, and squealed with pain.

"Let go, Todd, you beast!" he roared. "Oh, really—"

"Outside!" hissed Peter Todd.

But Bunter felt in his pocket hurriedly, and flung the letter into the air.

"There you are, you fellows! Read that!" he gasped triumphantly. "It's from Mauly's uncle!"

Peter Todd made a dash for the letter, but Snoop, Stott, and Bolsover major had got it, and were reading it eagerly.

"My only topper, listen to this!" shouted Bolsover excitedly. "Bunter's right! Mauly has lost all his giddy tin, and his uncle tells him to enter for the Holton Scholarship! Oh, my hat! Faicy Mauly coming up to the scratch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Stott and Snoop.

The Famous Five rushed forward and grabbed the letter.

"You rotters!" exclaimed Harry Wharton hotly. "If Mauly's lost his fortune it's nothing to laugh at."

"Read the letter out," said Peter Todd. "We might as well know the facts. If we don't read it ourselves these rotters will spread a false yarn round the school."

Harry Wharton realised that Todd was right, and that the only way to help Mauleverer was to read the letter and learn the exact truth. Wharton read it aloud, amid gasps of wonderment. When he had done, Peter Todd took the letter.

"We'll return this to Mauly," he said. "He'll have to know that Bunter took it."

Todd hoped that nobody would guess that the letter wasn't genuine, and the less Harry Wharton looked at it the less likelihood of his guessing the truth.

"There, didn't I tell you Mauly was a pauper?" grinned Billy Bunter. "I found that letter in Mauly's desk."

"Yes, and you'll find something else!" interrupted Harry Wharton angrily. "You prying toad, we'll teach you a lesson!"

"Bump the cad!"

"Slaughter him!"

"Chuck him outside!"

"Duck him in the fountain!"

Billy Bunter backed away in alarm. "I—I say, you fellows," he gasped, "I—I didn't find that letter in Mauly's desk! It was in the passage—"

"Don't make it worse by telling lies!" "Mauly gave it to me!" panted Bunter. "He told me to read it out to you—"

But Bunter was not allowed to say another word. The indignant juniors piled upon him like an avalanche, and he disappeared amid a cloud of dust. When he had been bumped until he ached in every limb, and the floor had nearly collapsed under the strain, they let him go. He crawled away, too exhausted and too sore to utter a word.

"Now, you chaps, it's up to us to give this letter back to Mauly and explain things!" panted Peter Todd. "The letter says that he wasn't to say a word to anybody—that's why he's been so secret."

"Poor old Mauly!" said Harry Wharton seriously. "No wonder he looks pale! No wonder he's changed!"

"I never thought that he had it in him," said Bob Cherry. "My hat, he's come up to the scratch like a brick! He's proved that, when the necessity arises, he can work as

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well as anybody. He's got grit—sterling grit! Good old Mauly!"

"The goodness of the esteemed Mauly is terrific," remarked Hurree Singh. "He is full of the ludicrous pluckfulness!"

"I always said that he could work if he liked," said Peter Todd. "This proves that I was right. Poor old chap, it must have been a terrific shock to him. And think of the determination with which he has applied himself to work. It's wonderful, you chaps."

"Yep, I guess Mauleverer's got a whole heap of sand," said Fisher T. Fish.

"Let's go up to him and explain things," said Harry Wharton. "Now we know the truth, there must be no more chipping, you chaps. Mauly's got to be left in peace and quietness. Anybody found ragging him, or talking sneeringly of him, will be bumped."

"Hear, hear!"

"Mauly's a splendid chap!"

"Rather!"

And the Removites crowded out of the Common-room, and went to Lord Mauleverer's study. But there was no noise; there were no more laughs because he had entered for the Holton Scholarship. The juniors understood now, and there was nothing humorous said of Mauleverer's changed habits. It was something to be admired.

They invaded Mauleverer's study like a flood, and he looked up from his books in surprise and alarm.

"Bead, don't bother me now, my dear fellows!"

"Shan't keep you a minute, Mauly, old man!" said Harry Wharton quietly. "That howling rotter, Bunter, took a letter from your desk—hand it over, Tiddy—and we know all about your troubles!"

"Oh, bead, the dooce you do!" ejaculated Mauleverer blankly.

He looked alarmed for a moment; then, as Wharton explained, his expression changed.

"It's grand of you, Mauly," finished up Wharton. "We never thought you had enough 'go' in you. But you've placed your shoulder to the wheel like a man, and we'll all help you in any way we can."

"Rather!"

"We're proud of you, Mauly."

"Say the word, and we'll do anything you like."

Lord Mauleverer smiled faintly; he felt a big lump in his throat, and vainly tried to swallow it.

"You're jolly decent, my dear fellows," he said quietly; "but there's nothing you can do except leave me alone, so that I can work in peace. I'm altered now, you know. I've got no money, so it won't do to slack my time away. I've got to work hard."

"Right-ho, we'll clear," said Bob Cherry. "All the same, if you want any help, you've only got to ask, and there'll be a dozen chaps ready and willing. I'd call for three cheers for Mauly, you chaps," he added, "but old Quelch would be roused out of his den in a jiffy. Still, you can take the cheers for granted, Mauly."

And the Removites went quietly away, leaving Lord Mauleverer staring before him with dim eyes. There was some compensation for working hard, after all. As a slacker he had been popular, but as a worker he was respected as well.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### The Letter for Wingate.

**L**ORD MAULEVERER strolled slowly across the Close in the dusk of the evening. It was the day following Bunter's discovery, and the school-boy earl had worked harder that day than ever he had worked before. And he had not finished yet. He meant to put in another hour or so before bed-time.

He had come out now because he had a bit of a headache; the cool, evening air would probably do him good. There were several other juniors about. The Famous Five were standing near the gym, talking. Bulstrode was having an argument with Mark Linley and Peter Todd. Billy Bunter, as usual, was hanging round the tuckshop.

But nobody disturbed Mauleverer. It was generally thought that he had come out to think of his work in the cool air, and he was not bothered. But Mauly was not thinking of his work at the moment; he was thinking of his troubles.

"Bead, I can't realise it even yet!" he told himself, as he strolled towards the gates. "I expected a letter from uncle explaining more fully, but he hasn't written."

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Still, I wrote last night, so I ought to get a reply to-morrow."

He might possibly get a letter by the evening's post, although it was not probable. It was, as a rule, only local letters that came at night. He walked out of the Close into the lane, and looked down towards Friardale.

"The postman's coming now, bead!" he murmured.

He waited, somewhat anxiously, for he badly wanted some news. But when he asked the postman if there was a letter for him, the man shook his head.

"Only one for Master Wingate," he said. "If you're goin' indoors, young sir, perhaps you wouldn't mind putting it in the rack for me? There ain't no other letters at all."

"That's all right," said Mauleverer. "I'll take it."

"Thank you, sir."

And the postman went on his way.

Mauleverer looked at the letter absently; he was thinking of other things. He turned and walked thoughtfully back into the Close. He was still thinking deeply when he entered the School House, and walked upstairs unconscious of Wingate's letter in his hand.

In the Remove passage he passed Billy Bunter, and paused.

"I want a Latin grammar, Bunter—" he began.

Bunter sniffed.

"I'm rather particular who I talk to!" he said loftily. "You may be a lord, but you're a rotten pauper!"

Lord Mauleverer coloured.

"You cad!" he exclaimed hotly.

His fist shot out, and Billy Bunter went down with a howl. The blow had caught him fairly upon his little round nose, and he hit the floor with a terrific bump. Bunter had never known Mauleverer to use his fists so promptly before, and he was taken by surprise.

"Ow—yow!" he howled. "You rotter! You—"

"Want some more?" asked Mauly quietly.

Bunter floundered to his feet, and scurried down the passage. A study door opened, and Vernon-Smith put his head out.

"Hallo, it's you, Mauly!" he said. "What was that terrific bump just now?"

"Bunter. He hit the floor rather suddenly," answered his lordship.

Vernon-Smith stared.

"Did you knock him down, then?" he asked.

"Yaas, my dear fellow. The cad called me a pauper to my face, and I don't allow that sort of thing from Bunter!"

"Good old Mauly!" said the Bounder approvingly. "I caught Snoop sneering at you a little while ago, and I sent the young sweep off with a pair of fat ears. But it seems that you're well able to look after yourself. We shall make a fighting-man of you before long!"

Mauleverer smiled, and went to his study. Wingate's letter was still in his hand. By this time Mauleverer had completely forgotten its existence, and he laid it unconsciously on the edge of the table. If he thought of it at all, he must have regarded it as something of his own. But it is doubtful if he did think of it, for he was wondering who he could borrow a Latin grammar from. His mind was entirely occupied with his work.

"I'd better go round to Smythy," he thought. "He'll lend me his Latin grammar, if he's got one."

And he left the study.

The door was left a little ajar, and a moment after he had disappeared round the bend of the corridor the fat form of Billy Bunter rolled into view. He was rubbing his nose tenderly.

"The beast!" he muttered viciously. "I'll never speak to Mauly again!"

He glared at the study door.

"I expect he's in there. My hat, the door's ajar!" he exclaimed, peering forward through his big spectacles.

A scowl came over his face.

"I've a jolly good mind to go in and pour ink all over his rotten books and papers!" he muttered. "I'll have a squint in, anyhow!"

And Bunter, after a glance up and down the passage, inserted his head into Mauleverer's study. His bulky person followed his head, and he stood beside the table, looking at the papers straggled thereon.

"Latin and French—ugh!" he exclaimed.

"What a blithering ass Mauly is! Hallo! A letter! I wonder— My hat, it's addressed to Wingate!"

Bunter stared at the letter.

"What the dickens is it doing here!" he thought. "Oh, I expect the postman gave it to Mauleverer, and Mauly is going to take it to Wingate. I wonder what's inside it?"

Bunter's curiosity was incapable of being satisfied, and he turned the letter over inquisitively.

"My only aunt, it's not stuck down very well!" he murmured. "I could get that flap up in two ticks! I've opened harder letters than this before now! Still, I don't think I'd better risk it!"

Billy Bunter's fingers had been at work, however, and the letter was open. When his curiosity had got the upper hand of him he forgot all else except the immediate satisfying of his desire. He never looked ahead or considered the risks. Consequently, he was frequently caught in the very act of prying into other people's affairs.

He inserted his fat fingers into the envelope and removed the contents.

"Doesn't look like a letter—"

Bunter paused and started.

A heavy tread sounded in the passage, coming nearer. Suppose it were Mauleverer! Bunter dropped the letter and rolled hurriedly to the door.

Perhaps it was Wingate himself!

Bunter gave a gasp of alarm. His watch-chain caught against the doorhandle, but he pulled it free and fed.

And on Lord Mauleverer's table Wingate's letter lay—opened!

## THE THIRD CHAPTER.

### Mauly in Trouble!

**T**HE Owl of the Remove only just got out of sight in time.

North of the Sixth appeared round the corner and halted in front of Mauleverer's study. He tapped on the door and entered.

"About those books you asked for, Mauleverer," he began. "If you come— Why, the young ass isn't here!"

He looked round the study and grinned. The last time he had entered it had been fitted up with more luxury than any Sixth Form study at Greyfriars. Now it was carpetless and bare.

"Wonder where Mauleverer can be?" thought North, looking at the table. "He seems to be getting along all right. I'm blessed if I know how he'll shape in the Holton exams—"

North paused. Right before his eyes was an envelope, and it was addressed to "George Wingate, Captain of Greyfriars." What on earth could it be doing in Mauleverer's study?

The prefect picked it up, and then started. "Great Scott! It's from the Courtfield printer!" he ejaculated.

The envelope was empty, and he looked hastily on the table. A moment later he uttered a gasp of astonishment, and his face became grave. For on Mauly's table, beside the envelope, he had found the printed answers to the questions in the Holton Scholarship examinations!

North was greatly startled.

"They must have come by to-night's post!" he muttered. "By Jove, this is mighty serious! Mauleverer must have taken the letter and opened it! Perhaps he's copied the answers, and has popped out now to borrow some gum so that he can stick the envelope up again."

The prefect's face was quite pale with alarm.

"I never thought this of Mauleverer!" he muttered anxiously. "Yet what else can I think? Here are the papers on his desk! Nobody else could have put the things here, that's certain."

He hesitated, then hurried out of the study.

He burst into Wingate's room, and found the skipper of Greyfriars lounging in an armchair, reading.

"Hallo! What the dickens— Oh, it's you, North!" exclaimed Wingate. "What's the idea? You look startled, old man!"

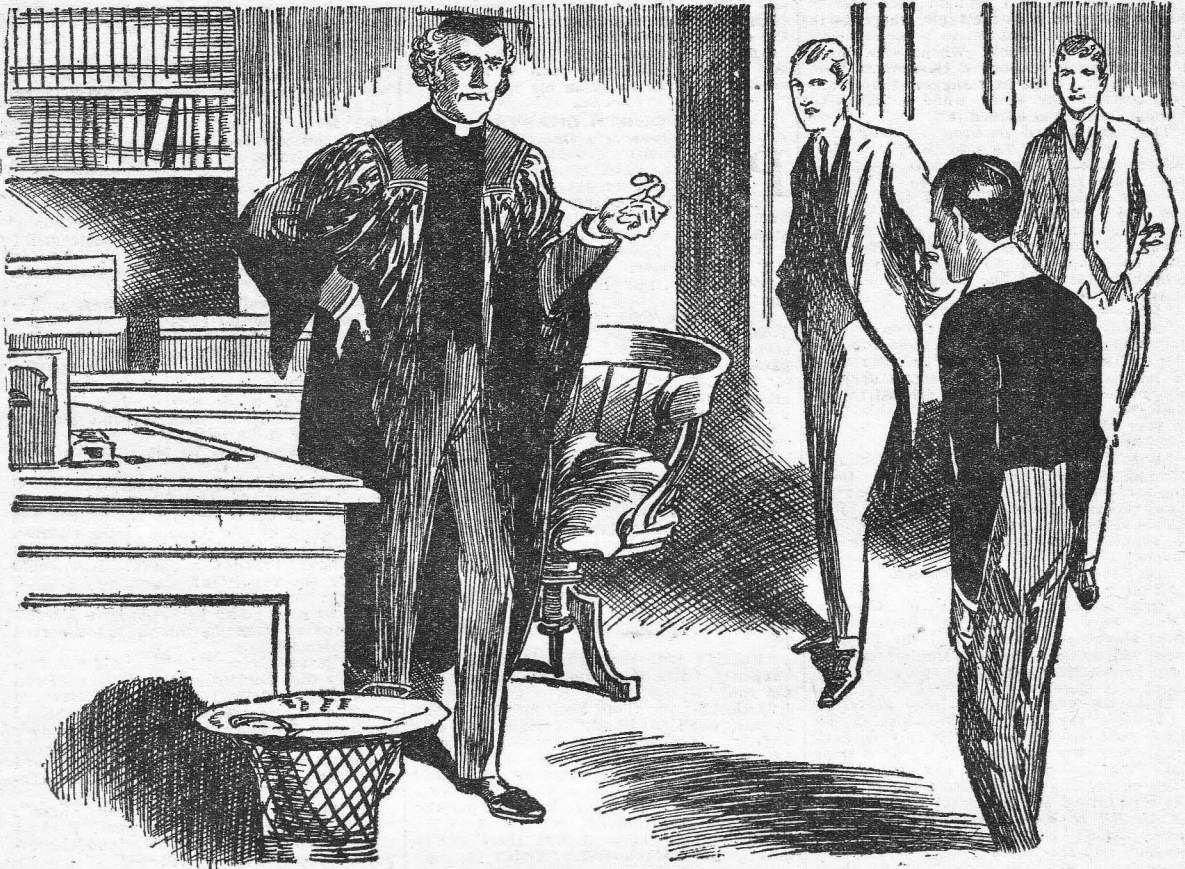
"I am startled," said North gravely. "Look here, Wingate. Something jolly serious has happened!"

Wingate rose to his feet and stared at North.

"Do you know anything about the Holton exam papers?" asked the latter.

"I expected them by to-night's post," said





**CONFESSION OR EXPULSION!** "Go to your room, Mauleverer, and think this out carefully," said the Head. "In the morning I will send for you again, and if you still persist in your denial I shall be compelled to expel you publicly." (See Chapter 3.)

Wingate. "But they haven't come; I looked in the rack ten minutes ago."

"They have come!" said North.  
 "Oh, good! I can look over—"  
 "I found them in Mauleverer's study," went on North. "They had been taken from the envelope, and were lying on his table. Mauleverer wasn't there when I made the discovery."

Wingate stared incredulously.  
 "You're joking!" he exclaimed. "You don't seriously mean to say that you found the printed papers on Mauleverer's table?"

"I did!"  
 North laid them on the table, and Wingate glanced through them. Then he looked at the prefect seriously.

"This is terrible, North!" he said. "I always thought that Mauleverer was as straight as a die, whatever his other faults. Yet if you found these papers on his desk there's only one conclusion to come to—he opened the letter for the purpose of cribbing!"

North nodded.  
 "It's as plain as possible," he said. "Of course, you've heard the yarns the juniors are saying—that Mauleverer has lost all his money? Well, he's entered for the Holton, so that he can remain at Greyfriars. Jolly plucky of him, I thought. But if he's trying to win by foul means he deserves to be hounded out of Greyfriars."

"I'll go and see him," said Wingate briskly. "No sense in delaying matters. We'll hear what he has to say, and then take him to the Head. Come on!"

And the two prefects left. When they arrived at Mauly's study the door was closed. They entered without knocking, and found his lordship seated at the table poring over Vernon-Smith's Latin grammar.

Mauleverer looked up in surprise.  
 "Begad, you startled me, my dear fellows!" he said. "I suppose you've come about those books I asked for?"  
 "No; we've come about something quite different," said Wingate grimly. "Do you

know anything about a letter, addressed to me, that came by to-night's post?"  
 Lord Mauleverer started, and the prefects exchanged glances.

"A letter? Oh, yaas, there was one!" said Mauleverer. "Awfully sorry, Wingate! The postman gave it to me at the gates. Didn't I put it in the rack?"

"No. North found it on your table," said Wingate quietly.

"Begad! Then I must have brought it up here unconsciously!"

"And I suppose you opened it unconsciously?" suggested Wingate sharply.

"Opened it?" repeated Mauly blankly.

"Look here, it's no good pretending, Mauleverer!" said Wingate sternly. "The letter was found on your table, opened. It contained the answers to the Holton exams, as you know. It will be better if you own up straight away!"

"Own up!" gasped the dandy of the Remove. "Begad!"

"You're found out, Mauleverer, so it's no use bluffing! We've got all the evidence we want. The exam papers were found on your table; and if you've made a copy of them you'd better hand them over to me at once; then we'll go to the Head."

"The Head!" ejaculated Mauleverer dazedly.

Wingate uttered an exclamation of impatience.

"You young idiot!" he exclaimed angrily. "Can't you see that you're found out? Can't you see—"

Mauleverer grasped the meaning of it all at last.

"But—but it's not true!" he exclaimed, in alarm. "I took the letter off the postman, Wingate, and I suppose I brought it into my study. I was thinking deeply, and hardly remembered what I did. But I know that I didn't open it. Begad, you don't think I'm a rotten cheat, do you?"

"We've got 'the proof!'" said North roughly.  
 "I—I don't know what you mean!" said

Mauly quickly. "I didn't open the letter! I didn't know what it contained, even. How should I? Begad, you can't be serious, my dear fellows!"

"That'll do, Mauleverer!" said Wingate. "I don't like to think this of you, but the facts are as clear as daylight! You'll have to come to the Head's study with me. No, don't say any more!"

Mauleverer stared at the two prefects as though in a dream.

He followed them out into the passage, his mind in a whirl. He was trying to think what he had done with the letter—wondering if he had, indeed, opened it, unconscious of his action.

But after a moment's thought he was positive that he had simply laid the letter down. Somebody must have entered his study during his absence and opened it. But who would do such a thing? Mauleverer gave it up.

They arrived at the Head's study, and Dr. Locke listened gravely as Wingate related the facts. When the captain of Greyfriars had done, the Head remained for a moment in silence; then he looked up at Lord Mauleverer.

"Is this true, Mauleverer?" he asked.  
 "No, sir."

"You deny Wingate's accusation, then?"  
 "Yaas, absolutely, sir."

"Be careful what you say, Mauleverer," warned the Head. "The proofs are very, very convincing, and I cannot see how you can possibly prove your innocence. Why not own up, my boy? You will make matters no better by inventing lies!"

Mauleverer coloured.  
 "I've never told a lie yet, sir," he said quickly. "Begad, I shouldn't begin now! I admit I took the letter from the postman; but I didn't open it!"

"Did you have anyone else in your study with you?"  
 "No, sir."

"You were quite alone all the time?"  
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**Haven't You Got a Copy of the "Holiday Annual" Yet? Hustle and Get One Now!**

"Yaas, sir. After I brought the letter in I must have laid it on the table, where North found it. Then I went out to Vernon-Smith's study to borrow a book. When I came back I started work, without a thought of Wingate's letter. I can only suggest that somebody entered my study while I was with Vernon-Smith, and opened it."

The Head pursed his lips.  
"This is absurd!" he said sharply. "It is inconceivable to imagine anyone going into your study for the sole purpose of opening a letter which was addressed to Wingate, and which, moreover, nobody but yourself knew was there. You had a reason for opening it—a very good reason. If North had not happened to enter, you would probably have stuck the envelope up again, and placed it in the rack!"

"But—"  
"Nobody would have been the wiser, and you would have won the Holton Scholarship. The plan miscarried by a sheer piece of mischance. It was a disgraceful plan, Mauleverer, and I am deeply grieved to find that you have such a dishonourable trait in your character!"

Mauly looked distressed.  
"But it's not true, sir!" he exclaimed. "Begad, it's all a wretched mistake! Don't you see, sir, that I couldn't know that the letter contained the exam papers? How should I know? And it would be absurd to suppose that I opened it on the off-chance!"

The Head elevated his eyebrows.  
"That is a point, certainly—" he began. "One moment, sir!" put in Wingate. "Most boys at Greyfriars know where these things are printed, and the printer's name was on the envelope. Mauleverer must have known that the papers were expected about this time!"

"Dear me, yes!" said the Head gravely. "I don't say that he premeditated the act," went on Wingate. "In my opinion, Mauleverer had no idea of such a thing until the postman gave him my letter. Then, seeing that it was from the printers, the temptation was too great for him, and he decided to avail himself of the opportunity which chance had placed in his hands. But for North's lucky visit to his study, we should have known nothing about it!"

The Head nodded slowly.  
"I believe you are right, Wingate," he said. "Now, Mauleverer, surely you can see that denial is useless? If you own up now, at once, I will let you off with a public thrashing. But if you still persist in your innocence—which we know to be impossible—I am afraid that expulsion—"

Mauleverer went like chalk, and he swayed. "Expulsion!" he muttered thickly. "Oh begad!"

"Yes, expulsion!" exclaimed Dr. Locke sternly. "You deserve it thoroughly, you wretched boy! I am disposed to deal with you leniently, but—"

"Oh, sir, it's not true—it's not true!" The Head's eyes flashed.

"Do you still deny the charge, Mauleverer?" he demanded.

Lord Mauleverer raised his head, and his eyes flashed, too.

"Yaas, sir," he said huskily. "I'm innocent!"

Something in Mauleverer's manner caused the Head's anger to die down. Somehow, Mauleverer did not look like a boy who was guilty of a very serious charge. And, too, he bore a splendid character at Greyfriars. It was amazing that he should have done such a thing as this, and, but for the conclusive evidence, the Head would have hesitated before believing him guilty.

As it was, there was nothing else to do. Nevertheless, Dr. Locke did not mean to act with unnecessary haste.

"Go to your room, Mauleverer, and think this out carefully," he said quietly. "I am sure you will realise how impossible it is for you to persist in your innocence. In the morning I will send for you again, and if you have not altered I shall be compelled, very reluctantly, to expel you publicly!"

"I would rather be expelled, sir, than own up to something which I never did!" said Mauleverer stoutly. "I am innocent, and I shall say the same in the morning!"

"You may go, Mauleverer!"

"Thank you, sir!"

And Lord Mauleverer went, leaving the Head to discuss the matter with Wingate.

and North. There could be no two ways of thinking about the matter, they decided; the evidence was absolutely conclusive.

And so it seemed. Billy Bunter's curiosity had landed Mauleverer into a fix which seemed likely to result in his ruin.

#### THE FOURTH CHAPTER. Mauleverer's Decision!

PETER TODD came along the Remove passage, whistling cheerfully. Turning the corner, he came face to face with Lord Mauleverer. Todd had bumped into his lordship before he could stop.

"Ow! You fathead, you've busted my toe!" roared Peter.

"Sorry, my dear fellow. I—I didn't see you!"

Mauleverer's voice was husky, and Peter Todd forgot his toe, and looked into the schoolboy earl's face. It was pale and haggard.

"My hat! What's the matter, Mauly?" asked Todd concernedly.

Mauly almost sobbed.

"It's all up, Todd!" he muttered hoarsely. "I'm going to-morrow!"

"Going!"

"Yaas; the Head's going to expel me!"

"Expel you!" gasped Todd. "Have you gone dotty, old man?"

"It's true," said Mauleverer miserably, as Johnny Bull came up.

And he explained the facts to the two astounded Removites. They stared at his lordship in blank amazement when he had done.

"My only Sunday tile!" gasped Johnny Bull.

"But it's not true, Mauly?" asked Todd anxiously. "You didn't open the letter really, did you?"

"I thought you chaps knew me better than to ask such a thing!" exclaimed Mauly bitterly. "I'm innocent, my dear fellows, however strong the proofs may seem!"

"Of course you are, Mauly!" said Bull loyally. "I don't believe a word of it! Some horrible rotter opened that letter on purpose to get you into trouble!"

"But nobody knew it was there except me!" groaned Mauleverer. "That's the difficult part of it!"

Johnny Bull rushed down the passage and entered the Common-room. It was full of Removites, and in five minutes they had heard all. They were startled and astounded, and almost to a man they stood by Mauleverer's word.

Billy Bunter listened eagerly, and, although he felt somewhat alarmed that his action had landed Mauleverer into such a tight corner, he was relieved to know that he himself was safe.

"I say, you fellows—" "Shut up, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Cherry," protested Billy Bunter, "I think Mauleverer's a rotter, you know! It's all piffle to say he didn't open the letter! He must have opened it! He—" "Dry up!" roared Bulstrode.

"I don't see why I should! Mauly's only a dirty cheat—" "Smack!"

Bob Cherry's hand landed on Bunter's cheek with heavy force, and the Owl of the Remove uttered a wild howl.

"Ow! Yoooop! Ow-yow! You rotter, Cherry! You—"

The juniors were not in a humour to put up with Bunter's nonsense, and a dozen hands grasped him. The door was opened, and Bunter shot out into the passage, and cannoned against the opposite wall with a heavy thud that shook the building, and caused Bunter to yell with agony.

Then the door slammed, and the Removites went on discussing the latest sensation. There was not a laugh to be heard, not a smile to be seen. Everyone was serious and grave.

Mauleverer to be expelled!

It was appalling! Mauly was very popular in the Remove, and to have him leave the old school in such a way would be simply tragic.

Peter Todd was not in the Common-room. He stood on the School House steps, staring out into the dim Close. A terrible thought was in his mind.

"Can it be possible that Mauly is guilty?" he asked himself again and again. "Good heavens, I've placed the poor chap in a terrible position! Whether he's guilty or not, it's all the same. I'm the cause of his

trouble. If I hadn't worked that jape on him this would never have happened."

Todd was in a great way.

"What can I do?" he muttered frantically. "Even if I explain about that fake letter it won't alter matters. Mauly will still be expelled. Great Scott, if Mauly goes I'll go too! I couldn't stop at Greyfriars, knowing that I had been the cause of his downfall."

He thought it all out until his brain was in a whirl.

"Mauleverer's innocent. I'm sure of it!" he told himself at last. "He couldn't do such a thing. It's not in him. He's one of the straightest chaps I've ever met, and I believe in him thoroughly. It's up to me to prove that he's not guilty. Yes, the onus is on my shoulders."

Peter Todd walked into the House with a set expression on his face.

"By Jove, I've got it!" he muttered. "I've got Mauly into this fix, and it's up to me to get him out at all cost. If I can't find the real culprit I'll go to the Head and say that I opened the letter myself. It's the only honourable thing to do. I can't possibly allow Mauly to be sacked!"

And Todd went up to his study to think things out.

Lord Mauleverer, in his own room, paced up and down, trying to think what he should do. He was not a coward, but he was cut to the quick by the thought of the morrow. How could he stand in Big Hall before all the fellows, branded a cheat? How could he face the expulsion?

It was impossible!

Had he been guilty he would have faced it all, knowing that he thoroughly deserved his punishment.

But he was innocent! He could not face it under such circumstances. Wretched and miserable, Mauleverer paced his study.

Two days ago everything had been bright and sunny for him, now the world was dark and drear. He was penniless. He was dishonoured. Never in his life before had Mauleverer suffered with such terrible keenness.

"What can I do?" he asked himself. "Begad, I believe I shall go mad! I can't stand much more! I can't stand the expulsion to-morrow! It will—"

The school clock struck solemnly.

Mauleverer started, and glanced at his watch. A thought had just entered his mind. There was a train from Friardale—the last train from London. Why not rush down to the station and board that train? It mattered not where it was bound for; so long as he got away from Greyfriars it would do.

There was just time for him to catch it if he ran. But there was no time for hesitation, and Mauleverer made up his mind promptly.

"I'll go!" he muttered between his teeth. "Yaas, I'll slip out without a soul knowing, and leave Greyfriars for ever—for ever! Begad, I—I—"

His eyes were moist, and a lump came into his throat that nearly choked him. But he shook himself, and set his teeth more firmly.

Then he slipped out into the passage. Not a soul was about, and he could hear an excited chorus of voices proceeding from the Common-room. Without making a sound, Mauleverer left the School House.

He crossed the Close at a trot, and made for the place where the juniors usually clambered over the wall when they broke bounds. He expected every moment to be stopped, but at last he stood in the lane, free.

"Begad, to think that I should leave Greyfriars like this!" he muttered bitterly.

He turned, with a choking cry in his throat, and ran down towards Friardale as fast as he could go. Going through the village he slowed up a little. His pale face and drawn looks caused a few people to stare after him, but Mauly did not care.

He arrived at the station only just in time. The train was already rumbling in the distance. He rushed to the booking-office, and then remembered that he had only eightpence or ninepence on him. Still, a ticket for a place eight miles away would be better than nothing. To get away from Greyfriars—that was the great thing.

He got his ticket, and went on to the platform breathlessly.

The train steamed in, and stopped, hissing with impatience. Mauleverer walked up to the train, looking for a compartment to



himself. He did not want to face strangers just then.

A door opened, and a gentleman alighted. Mauly saw that the compartment was empty, and he made for it. He did not even glance at the gentleman.

But his arm was suddenly grasped. "Good gracious! What in the world are you doing here, my boy?" exclaimed a surprised voice. "What are you getting into the train for?"

Lord Mauleverer started, and stared up. "Uncle!" he exclaimed blankly.

**THE FIFTH CHAPTER.  
As Rich As Ever!**

**S**IR REGINALD BROOKE looked at his nephew in astonishment as the train steamed out of the station. Then, without a word, he marched Mauleverer outside.

They walked for a few moments in silence, then Sir Reginald took Mauly's arm.

"You look pale, young 'un," he said gently. "What's the trouble? I've come from London especially to see you."

"Don't take me back to Greyfriars, nunky!" said Mauleverer anxiously.

"Don't take you back! Why, bless me—"

The old gentleman gazed at Mauly in astonishment.

"What is it? What is the matter, Mauleverer?" he asked. "Tell me all about it."

Mauleverer was full of the affair of Wingate's letter, and he explained everything—although he did not say why he had entered for the Holton Scholarship.

"I didn't open the letter, nunky!" he finished up earnestly. "I'm not a rotten cheat! Begad, you don't believe I opened it, do you?"

Sir Reginald Brooke laughed. "Believe it?" he exclaimed. "Why, of course I don't! I know you well enough, my boy, and I know that you would never descend to such despicable methods to win a scholarship. When we get to the school we will thrash the matter out with the headmaster, and it will be all right. Don't you worry!"

"Begad, I feel another chap already!" said Mauleverer, whose cheeks now showed signs of colour. "Your coming has done me a world of good, nunks! I've been getting on all right. I've been working hard!"

"Which reminds me," said Sir Reginald. "What in the world made you enter for the Holton Scholarship?"

Mauleverer stared.

"Why, you told me to!" he ejaculated. "I told you to?" Sir Reginald laughed.

"Nonsense!"

"But you did, nunky! Begad, I've got your letter!"

"My letter! I haven't written to you—Oh, yes; when I said I couldn't send a cheque!" exclaimed the baronet. "I was very worried at the time—a trifling matter, it turned out. But I didn't tell you to enter for the Holton Scholarship!"

"I don't mean that letter, nunky. The one after it."

"But I haven't written since!"

"Yaas, you have!" persisted Mauleverer. "Begad, you must remember! You told me that I was ruined, that I was a pauper, and that I should have to work for a living in future."

Sir Reginald gasped. "A pauper!" he ejaculated. "Good gracious!"

"Yaas, I took it rather well, nunky," said Mauleverer. "I didn't give way, but just set to work as you told me. I've been having tea in Hall, and I've cleared my study of all that luxurious furniture, so that I shall get used to a life of struggle."

"A life of struggle!" gasped the baronet. "Yaas!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Sir Reginald Brooke, stopping in the road and holding his sides. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Mauly stared in amazement.

"What's the matter, uncle?" he asked.

"Did you get a letter from me telling you all that?" asked the baronet breathlessly.

"Did you follow all those instructions?"

"Yaas, every one, nunky. And as I'm poor now—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Begad, it's nothing to laugh at—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Sir Reginald. "Oh, Mauleverer, this is doing me a world of good! Bless my soul, it's the funniest thing I've heard for years! Ha, ha, ha!"

"But—but—" "Where's the letter?" gasped Mauly's uncle.

"On my table, at Greyfriars," replied the amazed Mauleverer. "Do you want to see it?"

"Yes, I should love to see it!" ejaculated the baronet. "You must show it to me when we get there! How on earth you mistook the writing for mine is more than I can imagine!"

A light began to dawn upon the slacker of the Remove.

"Isn't the letter yours, nunky?" he gasped.

"No! I've never seen it!" replied the old gentleman, with a chuckle. "Somebody has been playing a trick upon you, my boy! You're not a pauper; there was no need for you to enter for the Holton Scholarship!"

"Then—then—"

"You're still a millionaire!" said Sir Reginald. "In fact, I think you're richer to-day than you were a week ago. Your lawyers are back, and you will be able to use your cheque-book again. And I've brought you twenty pounds in cash to be going on with!"

"Begad!"

That was all Mauleverer could say at the moment. But he recovered his voice presently.

"I believe I know, begad!" he exclaimed

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thoughtfully. "The fellows have often had discussions about me—most of them saying that I couldn't work, however urgent the necessity. It's a plot, nunky! They faked that letter so that I should be put on my mettle! Begad, what a relief!"

"But you've shown them that you can work—eh?" chuckled the baronet. "Bravo, Mauleverer! I admit that I had doubts myself! This has pleased me as much as it has them. You won't come to any harm through it—it's done you all the good in the world."

"Yaas, but there's this wretched bizney about Wingate's letter!"

"Oh, we'll soon set matters right!" said Sir Reginald confidently.

And they approached Greyfriars, talking lightheartedly. Lord Mauleverer felt as though he was treading on air. His troubles—which had seemed insurmountable an hour ago—now faded away like dreams.

**THE SIXTH CHAPTER.**

**Bunter Owns Up!**

**P**ETER TODD put his head into Lord Mauleverer's study in the Remove passage.

"Empty!" murmured Peter. "Good biz!"

He had decided to investigate thoroughly before going to the Head and confessing that he had opened Wingate's letter. That would have been a terribly drastic course, but Todd would have done it to save Mauleverer.

He entered Mauly's study and closed the door.

"Now, it's quite on the cards that there are some signs here of the chap who opened that giddy letter," thought Todd. "There are only two likely fellows to suspect, Bunter and Snoop. They're the blighters who go nosing into other people's affairs, and I've strong suspicions against Bunter. It's just the sort of thing he would do."

But a thorough search of the study revealed nothing. Todd became disheartened, and moved towards the door. Then he darted forward. Something shiny had caught his eye against the doorpost, and he picked it up.

Then a whoop of delighted triumph left his lips.

"The seal from Bunter's watch-chain!" he ejaculated. "It was that fat rotter, then! My hat, I'll go down to the Common-room now, and make him confess!"

And Todd lost no time. He rushed pell-mell downstairs, and burst into the Common-room. The Removites were gathered in clumps, talking animatedly. And almost everybody in the room declared that he believed Lord Mauleverer innocent.

Bunter had managed to slip in again, although he now took care to keep his tongue still. He was talking in a low voice with Snoop and Stott. Peter Todd stood in the middle of the room.

"Chaps!" he shouted. "Mauleverer's innocent!"

"We know that, ass!"

"Is it proved?"

"Has he been cleared?"

"Not yet, but he will be to-night!" said Peter calmly.

"Good egg!"

"All serene!"

"Half a tick!" said Harry Wharton. "How do you know he'll be cleared to-night, Toddy?"

"Because I'm going to clear him!" replied Peter.

"You are? How?"

"You'll see in a minute!"

Todd walked across to Billy Bunter carelessly, and held out the seal.

"This yours, Bunter?" asked Todd.

"Yes, you rotter!" exclaimed Bunter, grabbing it. "Where did you get it?"

"I found it. Where did you lose it?"

"Oh, I—I— Yes, I remember now," said Bunter, with a sudden look of alarm as he remembered his watch-chain catching on the door of Mauleverer's study. "I bumped against the door of the Form-room. It must have come off then."

"Liar!" said Peter Todd calmly.

"Oh, really, Todd—"

"Liar!" repeated Todd. "I found it in Mauleverer's study! It came off your chain when you went in there and opened that letter of Wingate's!"

There was an excited buzz.

"Own up, Bunter!"

"If you don't we'll boil you in oil!"

"I haven't been in Mauleverer's study!" shouted Bunter indignantly. "I wouldn't go in the rotter's study at any price!"

"Half a minute!" said Vernon Smith. "I saw Mauly bit Bunter over, and three minutes later Mauly came to my study and stopped five minutes. I'll bet Bunter went into Mauly's room during that time, and he opened the letter so that Mauly would be blamed!"

"Own up, you cad!"

"Did you go into Mauleverer's study, Bunter?" asked Peter Todd.

"No, I didn't!" roared Bunter frantically. "I've never seen the rotten letter! I didn't mean Mauly to be blamed! I only wanted to see—I—I mean—"

"Only wanted to see what?" asked Todd calmly.

"Nothing!" shouted Billy Bunter nervously. "You're all down on me! What was the letter doing in Mauly's study, anyhow? He'd have opened it even if I hadn't—"

"You admit you opened it, then?"

"No!" howled Bunter, who hardly knew what he was saying in his nervousness. "I didn't go to Mauly's room at all! I only popped in for a tick—"

Peter Todd grinned.

"You've admitted it three or four times, my son!" he said. "Come on, you're coming to the Head with me and Wharton!"

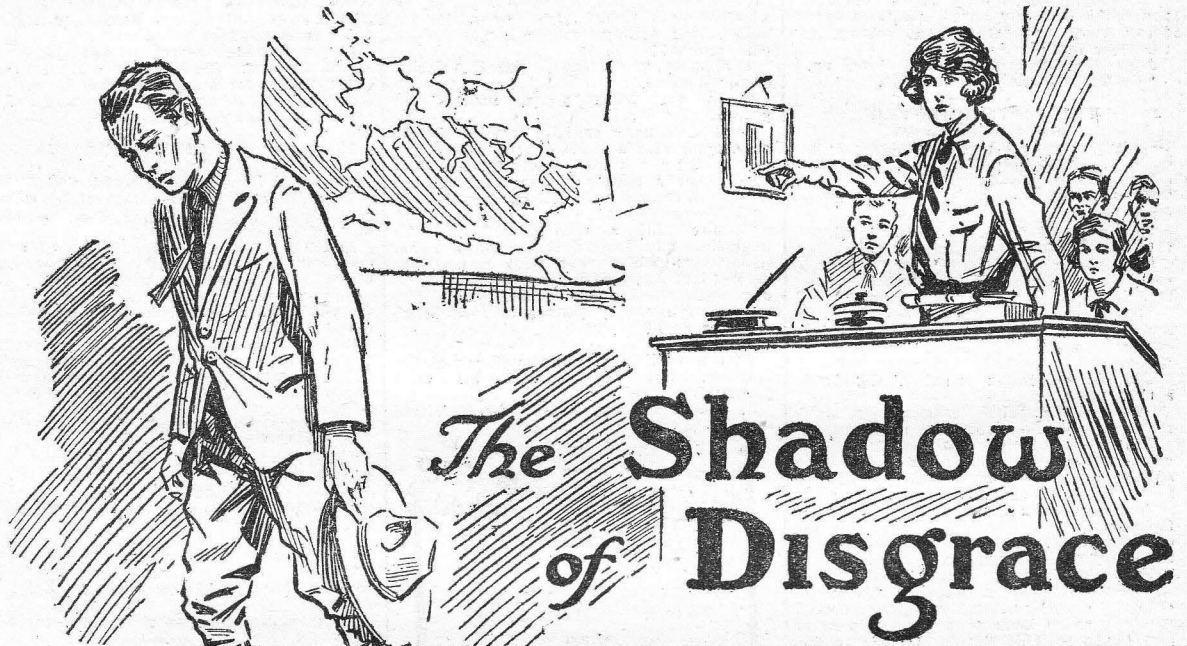
"I'm not! I'm—"

But Bunter was grasped by firm hands.

(Continued on page 22.)  
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**STIRRING TIMES AT THE SCHOOL IN THE BACKWOODS!**

Frank Richards is under a shadow of disgrace. There is someone working behind a screen—someone who is seeking his revenge upon the Canadian schoolboy.



Another Topping Tale of the Cedar Creek Chums!

**THE FIRST CHAPTER.**

**The Cut Direct!**

**"MOLLY!"** Frank Richards stood rooted to the ground.

He was leaning on the gate of Cedar Creek School when Molly Lawrence came along. Frank was waiting for his chums—Vere Beauclerc and Bob Lawless—to come up from the creek, but he detached himself from the gate with a bright smile as Molly appeared.

To his amazement the girl walked on with a set, averted face, not even glancing at him.

"Molly!" repeated Frank blankly.

Molly Lawrence went on into the playground, seemingly deaf.

Frank Richards looked after the Canadian girl's graceful form, the colour rising in his cheeks.

He had always been good friends with Molly Lawrence and her brother Tom ever since he had come to the school in the backwoods; and now Molly, for reasons utterly unknown to Frank, had cut him dead at the school gates.

Frank could do nothing but blink after her in blank amazement, and he was still rooted to the spot when Bob and Beauclerc came up from the creek and found him.

Bob Lawless clapped his English cousin on the shoulder with a powerful clap, and Frank jumped.

"Hallo! Gone to sleep standing up, like a horse?" inquired Bob.

"N-n-no!" stammered Frank Richards.

Beauclerc looked at him curiously.

"Anything wrong?" he asked.

"Ye-e-es. I—I think so, at least."

"What's wrong?"

"Molly—" began Frank.

There was an explosive chuckle from Bob Lawless.

"Molly!" he repeated. "Oh, Franky! Thinking about Molly—eh? What's the row? Has Molly been giving another galoot the glad eye? Has she turned on you the stony shoulder? Poor old Franky!"

"Fathead!" was Frank's reply.

"Has Chunky Todgers pushed you out of favour?" grinned Bob. "Or is it Yen Chin?"

"Look here, Bob, don't be an ass!" said Frank, rather gruffly. "Molly's offended about something, I think—at least, she's

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just passed me without speaking, and she wouldn't look at me."

"Then she doesn't know a good thing when she sees it," said Bob Lawless gravely.

"Be serious, Bob. I don't know what's the matter—"

"Why not ask her?"

"Well, she wouldn't stop—"

"Let's follow on, then, and if she won't stop I'll get a trail-ropo, and we'll lasso her!" said Bob, still humorous.

"Ass!"

"Well, I only want to be obliging. But if you can think of something else instead of Molly, what about having a ride down to Hillcrest? I want to punch Gunten's nose."

"Bother Gunten! I—I wish I knew what was the matter—"

"With Gunten?"

"No!" roared Frank. "Hang Gunten!"

"All in good time," answered Bob. "At present, punching his nose will do. If you're coming for a ride—"

"I'm not!" growled Frank Richards.

"Don't play the goat, Bob," said Vere Beauclerc, who could see that Frank was really distressed. "Let's go and see Molly. I dare say there's nothing much the matter."

"Oh, all right!" said Bob. "There she is, talking to Katie Dawson. We certainly can't have her giving Franky the marble eye, and making him ratty with his old pals. Come on!"

The chums of Cedar Creek crossed the playground to where Molly Lawrence was standing by the schoolhouse.

The girl made a movement as if to go into the house as she saw them, but Bob Lawless called to her:

"Hold on, Molly!"

Molly Lawrence hesitated. But the three schoolboys had joined her in another moment.

Molly's face was a little flushed, and she carefully avoided looking at Frank Richards. "Molly!" said Frank, in a low voice.

The girl did not answer.

Bob and Beauclerc exchanged an odd look. It was pretty evident that Molly was seriously offended, though why they could not guess.

Frank Richards certainly was not the fellow to give any girl cause for offence. And Molly, on the other hand, was a straightforward and sensible girl, not at all liable to take offence for a frivolous cause.

It was rather a mystery, and a painful one

to Frank Richards. The flush in his cheeks deepened.

"Won't you speak to me, Molly?" he asked.

Then the girl looked at him.

"No!" she answered.

"Why not?"

"You know well enough!"

"But I don't!" said Frank, in distress.

"I really don't, Molly!"

"Don't call me Molly!" exclaimed the girl sharply.

"But—but why not?"

"Because I don't like it—from you!"

Katie Dawson looked on in amazement.

"I say, what on earth's the row, Molly?" asked Bob Lawless, in bewilderment. "What has poor old Franky done?"

"He knows!" said Molly, with a disdainful curl of the lip.

"I don't!" said Frank.

"He would not like you to know, as you would despise him, I suppose," said Molly bitterly. "That is why he is telling falsehoods now."

Frank Richards almost staggered.

"Falsehoods!" he repeated.

"Molly!" exclaimed Bob.

Molly Lawrence turned and walked into the schoolhouse. Katie Dawson, after a curious look at Frank Richards, followed her. Frank and his chums looked at one another.

"For goodness' sake, Frank, what have you done?" exclaimed Bob.

"Nothing."

"But—but Molly—"

"I can't understand it!" Frank said. His eyes gleamed. "Bob! Don't you believe me? Why, I—I—"

"Shush!" said Bob soothingly. "Of course I do! Don't I know you're the real white article? So does the Cherub—don't you, Cherub?"

"Yes, certainly!" answered Beauclerc. "Molly has some queer bee in her bonnet. Or perhaps somebody's been making mischief. Perhaps her brother may know what's the matter."

"Good! Tom may be able to explain," said Bob Lawless. "Let's look for Tom. This is getting interesting."

The Co. looked for Tom Lawrence. But he had gone on the creek in a canoe, and did not reappear till nearly time for afternoon classes. Frank Richards & Co. caught him hurrying to the schoolhouse.

"What's the matter with Molly, Tom?" asked Frank.

**Frank Richards Is Under a Cloud—But He Is No Quitter!**



"Nothing, that I know of," answered Lawrence.  
 "She won't speak to me!"  
 "Won't she? Well, that doesn't hurt you, does it?" asked Tom cheerily. "She talks to me too much sometimes!"  
 "I seem to have offended her somehow."  
 "So have I—lots of times," answered Molly's brother. "You should have seen her the day my dog got her new hat!"  
 "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob.  
 "She was wrathy, I can tell you!" grinned Lawrence. "I remember now—she was grumpy this morning about something. It wasn't my dog, though. Hallo, we shall be late!"  
 The bell had ceased to ring, and Tom Lawrence hurried into the lumber school. Frank Richards & Co. followed. Molly's brother had been unable to shed any light on the mystery, and evidently he did not regard it as a matter of much importance.  
 Frank Richards took a different view—perhaps because he was not Molly's brother. And his handsome face was sombre as he went into class with his chums.

**THE SECOND CHAPTER.**

**A Warning to Gunten!**

**M**ISS MEADOWS found Frank less attentive than usual to lessons that afternoon.  
 A dozen times, at least, Frank Richards stole a glance towards the spot where Molly sat.  
 Miss Lawrence certainly was aware of it; but she did not turn her head in his direction, and appeared unconscious of his existence.  
 It was all the more discomfoting for Frank, because the other boys and girls in the class noted it, and were surprised. Frank and Molly had been good chums, and this open and palpable rift in the lute could not fail to excite remark.  
 Tom Lawrence, now that his attention had been called to the matter, seemed surprised, too, and he glanced several times at his sister and at Frank Richards. He was plainly as puzzled as the rest.  
 After school, when the Cedar Creek boys and girls came out, Molly went to the gate to wait for her brother to lead out the horses. Chunky Todgers, who was all curiosity, bestowed his valuable company upon her; but Molly appeared deaf to the inquisitive Chunky's remarks. Little Yen Chin, the Chinese, met the Co. as they came from the corral, and shook a yellow finger admonishingly at Frank Richards.  
 "Flanky velly bad boy!" said the little Chinese.  
 "What do you mean, you silly heathen?" exclaimed Frank crossly. He was in a rather restive mood. Molly's unaccountable conduct, and the curiosity it caused in the lumber school, worried him.  
 "Miss Molly velly much mad," said Yen Chin. "Give ole Flanky marble eye! Flanky velly bad boy. Oh, yes!"  
 "I've done nothing, you pigtailed ass!"  
 Frank, with an angry brow, led on his horse. Tom Lawrence arrived at the gates at the same time with his horse and his sister's. Frank looked at Molly, who took no notice of him.  
 Frank stepped towards her. He was angry now, as well as mortified.  
 "Look here, Molly!" he exclaimed. "Will you tell me what's the matter?"  
 "I won't speak to you," answered Molly quietly. "Let us go, Tom."  
 "But, I say, old girl," said Tom Lawrence, puzzled and perplexed, "what's the matter with Franky? If he's done anything, can't you give it a name?"  
 "Let us go."  
 "I've done nothing that I know of!" said Frank.  
 Molly gave him a scornful look, but did not speak.  
 "If he has, you can tell me, Molly," said Tom Lawrence, and he was looking a little grim now. "If any galoot here has offended you, I'm the fellow to punch his head!"  
 Without answering, the girl mounted her horse and rode up the trail.  
 Tom looked at Frank Richards rather darkly.  
 "What have you been up to?" he demanded.  
 "Nothing."  
 "Oh rot!" said Lawrence gruffly. "Molly wouldn't get her rag out like this for nothing!"

"If you don't believe me—" began Frank hotly.  
 "I guess I don't! I stand by Molly!"  
 Frank's eyes flashed.  
 "Then you can put your hands up!" he exclaimed. "I can't row with Molly, but I'm not taking any nonsense from you, Lawrence!"  
 "I'm your man!" answered Tom, at once.  
 "Hold my horse, will you, Chunky?"  
 But Bob Lawless pushed between.  
 "Hold on, both of you!" he said. "You're not going to scrap. Nothing to scrap about. Keep your temper, Franky; and you'd better light out, Lawrence."  
 Beauclerc caught Frank's arm, and pulled him back. Lawrence gave him rather a surly look; but he mounted his horse and rode on up the trail after his sister.  
 They disappeared through the timber.  
 "Now for Hillcrest!" said Bob, and the Co. rode away, Franky with a gloomy and thoughtful brow.  
 He was worried and troubled by Molly's conduct, and by his quarrel with her brother also. He had always been chummy with Tom Lawrence, but it was pretty clear that the present state of affairs would end in a "row."  
 "It's all serene, Franky!" said Beauclerc, as they rode under the trees. "Tom will ask Molly what the trouble is, and it will all be cleared up to-morrow. I'm afraid somebody has been making mischief."  
 Frank Richards nodded without replying.  
 The three chums, with Bob Lawless leading, rode by a short cut through the timber, towards Hillcrest School. They came out into the trail between Hillcrest and Thompson town, in time to meet the Hillcrest fellows on their homeward way.  
 Dicky Bird and Fisher and Blumpy came along together, and they stopped at the sight of the Cedar Creek fellows.  
 "Hallo! Looking for trouble?" called out Dicky Bird.  
 "Not this time!" answered Bob Lawless, laughing. "We're looking for Kern Gunten."  
 "He's coming along the trail," answered Dicky. "What has Gunten been up to this time?"  
 "Same old game," answered Bob. "We've promised him a hiding every time he plays poker with a Cedar Creek chap. We shall cure him in the long run."  
 Dicky Bird frowned.  
 "That rotter is a disgrace to the school," he said. "I wish you had him back at Cedar Creek. Here he comes."  
 Kern Gunten, the Swiss, came tramping along the trail, with his chum Keller. He stopped, with a scowl, as he saw Frank Richards & Co. Dicky Bird and his friends went on. They were always ready for a row with Cedar Creek, but they had no intention of championing Kern Gunten. The blackguard of Hillcrest was nothing to them.  
 "Well, what do you want?" asked Gunten, between his teeth, as Frank Richards jumped down into the trail.  
 "I think you can guess," answered Frank. "You've been playing cards again with Yen Chin, the Chinese. You've got to let the heathen alone!"  
 "Is it your business, hang you?" snarled the Swiss.  
 "I guess it is," answered Bob Lawless. "We're looking after the heathen. I've given him the trail-robe this morning, and now there's the same for you!"  
 "You can put up your hands, if you like," said Frank Richards scornfully.  
 The Swiss gave him a bitter look.  
 "You'll be sorry you've made an enemy of me," he said, in a low voice. "More sorry than you can guess at present!"  
 "Are you going to lambaste us all?" asked Bob humorously.  
 Kern Gunten was backing away towards the trees that bordered the trail. He made a sudden spring to escape into the timber; but Bob Lawless had a coiled rope in his hand, and it flew at the same moment.  
 Gunten, caught in the noose of the lasso, came spinning back into the trail, with a yell.  
 "Just where you're wanted, old scout!" grinned Bob Lawless.  
 He jumped from his horse, and caught up the lasso, and laid the loose end of it upon Gunten with a strong arm. The Swiss schoolboy yelled and squirmed in the trail.  
 "Now will you give Yen Chin a wide berth?" asked Bob politely. "We're looking after the heathen, as I think I mentioned. I'll keep this up till you promise!"

"Ow! Yow! Let up!" roared Gunten.  
 "Will you promise?"  
 "I—I— Ow! Yes!" howled Gunten.  
 "Good man! Better keep your promise this time, or you'll really get a licking!"  
 Bob Lawless coiled up the trail-rope and jumped upon his horse. Gunten sat up in the grass, and shook a furious fist after the chums of Cedar Creek as they rode away.

**THE THIRD CHAPTER.**

**Blow for Blow!**

**F**RANK RICHARDS & CO. arrived at Cedar Creek only just in time for lessons the following morning, and Frank did not see Molly until he joined the class in the lumber school-room.  
 He glanced at her, but her face was averted.  
 His glance next sought her brother; and Tom Lawrence surprised him with a grim and threatening look.  
 There was evidently trouble brewing in that quarter.  
 It was not a happy morning for Frank Richards.  
 He was feeling sore and angry; but he did not want to fight Tom Lawrence, with whom he had no quarrel—and that, it was clear, was what he was booked for when morning lessons were over.  
 The whole affair was intensely puzzling and irritating.  
 Miss Meadows was quite sharp with Frank two or three times that morning as he made random answers.  
 He was glad enough when the class was dismissed. As he left the lumber school with his friends, Eben Hacke tapped him on the arm.  
 "Lawrence is going to wait for you in the timber," he said.  
 "Oh, rot!" growled Frank.  
 Hacke sneered.  
 "I suppose you're coming?" he said.  
 "What does he want me for, then?"  
 "I guess you know—he's going to lambaste you for insulting his sister!" answered Hacke.  
 "That's a lie!" said Frank savagely.  
 "I reckon you can tell Lawrence that!"  
 "I'll tell him so fast enough! Are you chaps coming?" asked Frank, turning to his chums.  
 "I guess so!" answered Bob. "Come on, Cherub!"  
 The Co. went out of gates, followed by a good part of Cedar Creek. The news of the coming fight had spread.  
 None of the girls joined the procession, however. The affair had not been mentioned to them.  
 Lawrence was waiting in a glade near the creek, with Dawson and Hopkins. He gave Frank Richards a grim and angry look.  
 "Are you ready?" he exclaimed.  
 "Quite!" answered Frank. "I'd rather know what we are to fight about, though."  
 "You know well enough, you rotter! Molly's told me."  
 "I can't even guess what she's told you, then."  
 "Listen to him!" exclaimed Lawrence savagely. "If you two fellows know what he's done, you're as rotten as he is, for keeping friends with him!"  
 "Rot, my son!" answered Bob Lawless. "Franky's done nothing he's ashamed to tell his friends—and he's told us nothing. You're talking out of your back teeth!"  
 "Well, I reckoned he wouldn't tell you," said Lawrence. "You wouldn't speak to him again if I told you!"  
 "You're welcome to tell them, if you've anything to tell," answered Frank Richards, with a shrug of the shoulders.  
 "He's written to Molly," said Lawrence, in a voice trembling with rage. "She wouldn't tell me at first, because she was afraid it would lead to a fight; but I made her tell me. He's written to her—a letter only a sneaking cad and a coward would write!"  
 "I haven't!" shouted Frank. "It's a lie!"  
 "Molly said so!"  
 "She—she couldn't have said so. I tell you—"  
 Frank broke off as Lawrence struck full at his face.  
 "Now come on!" said Tom, between his teeth.  
 The invitation was not needed; Frank was

**Who is Trying to Ruin Frank Richards? See Next Week!**

coming on. He was utterly bewildered by the accusation; but his anger was at boiling-point now, and the blow was the finishing touch.

He came on with a fierce rush, and in a second more the two were fighting hammer-and-tongs.

A breathless circle of fellows surrounded them, looking on.

Bob Lawless and the Cherub were looking dismayed, as they felt. Their faith in Frank Richards was not shaken; they knew that he was loyal and honourable to the core. But the accusation was a staggering one.

Molly could not be mistaken in such a matter; and her word was above doubt. They simply could not guess what it all meant.

Frank's fierce rush drove Lawrence back, but he disputed every inch of the way, fighting furiously.

There was a breathless silence in the crowd as the fight proceeded.

The adversaries were pretty well matched. Frank had a more scientific knowledge of boxing, but Lawrence was rather the bigger of the two; and it was, as Chunky Todgers remarked, anybody's fight.

It was pretty plain that the sympathy of nearly all the onlookers was with Tom Lawrence. Bob and Beauclerc were probably the only fellows present who retained their belief in Frank Richards.

Crash!  
Frank Richards went down on his back, the first to touch grass. Lawrence stood panting, waiting for him to rise.

"Bravo!" sang out Eben Hacke.

Frank staggered to his feet.

His head was singing, and he was dazed; but he was full of pluck and resolution. He came on again fiercely.

"Go it, Lawrence!"

"Pile in, Tom!"

The cries were all for Molly's brother.

But, in spite of Frank's heavy fall, he was gaining the upper hand now, and Lawrence was driven round the ring. He went down at last, and he was not so quick to rise as Frank had been.

Hopkins helped him to his feet.

Frank Richards stepped back. Lawrence had one eye closed, and his nose was streaming red. The sight of his former friend's face recalled Frank to himself, and calmed him.

"Lawrence—" he began.

"Come on!" gasped Lawrence.

Frank backed a pace or two.

"Lawrence, I tell you, on my honour, I never wrote—"

"Liar!"

"Go it, Lawrence!"

Frank Richards had to defend himself as Lawrence came fiercely on. His teeth were set now, and his eyes gleaming. There were mocking murmurs from the crowd, where Frank's attempt at peace-making was taken for a sign of failing pluck.

He did not think any more of peace; but put all his skill and strength into the combat.

He was gaining now, and his success seemed assured, though he was paying dearly for it.

Lawrence was staggering, and it was clear enough that he was beaten; but he would not give in.

With failing strength, but dogged determination, he fought on to the finish.

Crash!

There was a murmur in the crowd as Lawrence went down again, and sank back helplessly into the grass after a feeble attempt to rise.

Frank Richards stood a little uncertainly on his feet, looking down at his fallen enemy.

Lawrence made another attempt to rise. But he had over-taxed his strength, and he could not get upon his feet. He sank back again with a groan.

"All over, I guess," said Bob Lawless, in a low voice. "Here's your jacket, Franky."

"I'm not done yet!" gasped Lawrence.

"You are done," said Frank Richards quietly. "And I'm sorry we came to this, Lawrence! I'm willing to give you my word that I don't even understand what you've accused me of."

"Liar!"

Frank set his lips.

"And there's plenty of us here to back up Lawrence!" exclaimed Eben Hacke, pushing forward.

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Frank gave the bully of the lumber school a contemptuous look.

"I'm ready for you, if you choose!" he answered. "I've licked you once, Hacke, and I dare say I can do it again!"

"I guess I'll give you the chance—"

"I guess you won't!" growled Bob Lawless, pushing him back. "Franky's not fit now for another fight. That may do for Dakota, Hacke, but it won't do for Canada! Shut up!"

"Leave him to me!" muttered Tom Lawrence. "He's a liar and a coward, and another time—"

"I'm neither," said Frank; "and if you could stand up, I'd make you sorry for giving me those names!"

Lawrence made an effort to rise, but he could not. As he sank into the grass again there was a sudden cry, and Molly came running through the trees.

#### THE FOURTH CHAPTER. Miss Meadows' Inquiries!

"O H, Jerusalem!" muttered Bob Lawless, in dismay.

Molly ran to her brother's side, the schoolboys making way for her. She dropped on her knees in the grass.

"Tom!"

Lawrence's bruised face became crimson. "I—I've done my best, Molly," he muttered. "I—I've got the worst of it. Another time—"

He staggered to his feet with Molly's help. The girl's flashing eyes turned upon Frank Richards.

"You coward!" she breathed.

"Molly!"

"You brute!"

"Dash it all, it was a fair fight, Molly," exclaimed Bob Lawless, "and your brother started it!"

But Molly did not heed.

"Coward!" she repeated. "Brute!"

"Molly," muttered Frank wretchedly, "I never wanted to touch him! He will tell you himself that he forced me—"

"Yes, because you insulted me!" exclaimed Molly Lawrence. "That was why! You deserved it! It is shameful!"

"But I never did, Molly!"

"Don't speak to me! Come away, Tom!"

"Look here, don't interfere, Molly!" said Tom Lawrence sturdily. "It was a fair fight, and Richards got the best of it. Next time I'm going to get the best of it. I'm going to thrash him for writing that letter, if I get a licking every day for a whole term!"

"I've written no letter!" said Frank. "I don't even know what you mean!"

"I dare say you're ashamed of it now," said Lawrence.

"I tell you—" shouted Frank.

"Go ahead!" said Lawrence bitterly. "You can bully now I can't lift a finger. Go ahead!"

"That's unfair, and you know it!" said Frank, calming himself. "I tell you both—"

"That's enough!"

Lawrence turned away to bathe his face in the creek, his sister going with him. Frank Richards put on his jacket, and looked round at the lowering faces of the Cedar Creek fellows. He saw in almost every face that he was condemned.

"I'd like you fellows to know that it's all a mistake, somehow," he said. "I've never written a letter to Molly Lawrence in my life! Why should I write to her when I see her every day but Sundays?"

"Molly's word is good enough for us!" said Dawson curtly.

"Quite good enough!" chimed in Chunky Todgers. "I'm shocked at you, Richards! I am really, you know! What was it you wrote?"

"Nothing, you fat fool!" shouted Frank. Chunky shook his head solemnly.

"Molly's got the letter," he answered. "I saw her take it out of her pocket and read it. She wouldn't show it to me. But she's got it."

"Come on, Frank!" said Beauclerc. "You must do something to your face before you go in."

Frank Richards nodded and left the glade with his chums.

It was little enough that could be done to his face. After all that could be done it showed very plainly the marks of the

combat, though it was not so bad as Lawrence's.

It was pretty certain that Miss Meadows' eyes would be upon both of them when they returned to the lumber school. In a case of slight damage Miss Meadows knew how to be judiciously blind, being aware that boys would be boys, and that a little "scrap" generally meant no harm. But the present case was rather more serious.

Frank Richards and Lawrence were both among the number of the Cedar Creek fellows who stayed at the lumber school for dinner, and when they went into the dining-room, Miss Meadows, who was at the head of the table, glanced at them very severely.

She made no remark for the present, however, but her expression showed that the matter was to be inquired into later.

After dinner Frank Richards went out with his friends, feeling very limp and restless. The fight had told severely upon him, though he had finished the victor.

"Feeling bad?" asked Bob Lawless sympathetically.

"Rotten!" answered Frank.

"I'm afraid there's going to be trouble with Miss Meadows," said Beauclerc uneasily. "She can't pass this over. Frank, have you really no idea what it's all about?"

Frank Richards shook his head.

"Not the least!" he answered.

"You haven't written any letter to Molly?" asked Bob.

"I've said I haven't!" exclaimed Frank angrily. "Are you beginning to think the same as the rest?"

"Easy does it, Old scout! Don't quarrel with your pals," answered Bob soothingly. "It beats me hollow. If Molly says she's had a letter, she's had a letter right enough."

"Not from me!"

"She thinks it's from you, then. And she knows your fist well enough—she sees it every day in class. It beats me to a frazzle!"

And Bob Lawless shook his head hopelessly. His faith in his cousin and chum was being put to a very severe test.

As for the rest of the lumber school, there was no doubt as to their opinion. When Frank came in to afternoon classes grin looks were given him on all sides—from girls as well as boys. He was condemned by all excepting his chums. Even the junior classes of Mr. Slinmeyer and Mr. Shepherd looked over towards Frank with disapproving looks. Frank's handsome face—note so handsome now—wore a rather dogged expression. But for the faith of his two loyal chums, he would have felt very bitter indeed.

Miss Meadows came into the school-room, looking unusually stern. Lessons did not begin at once. Frank Richards and Tom Lawrence were called out before the class.

"You two boys have been fighting?" asked Miss Meadows sharply.

"Yes, ma'am."

"I understood that you were friends," said the schoolmistress. "Yet, to judge by your looks, you have been fighting in a savage manner. I require to know the cause of this."

The two schoolboys were silent.

"I will ask you first, Richards," said Miss Meadows very quietly. "For what reason have you quarrelled so bitterly with Lawrence?"

"I haven't quarrelled with him, Miss Meadows," answered Frank.

"Then it is your fault, Lawrence?"

"I don't mean that, Miss Meadows," exclaimed Frank hastily. "We—we had a row. Lawrence thinks—"

"Well?"

"I don't mind telling you, ma'am," said Frank, his cheeks flushing—"in fact, I'd like you to know, so that you can find out what's happened, if you care to. Everybody's down on me for what I'm supposed to have done, and I don't even know what it is!"

Lawrence's lip curled, but he did not speak. Miss Meadows glanced sharply from one to the other.

"I shall certainly inquire very closely into this!" she exclaimed. "Lawrence, what is it you accuse Richards of?"

"He can tell you, if he chooses," answered Lawrence.

"Very well; tell me, Richards. If you have committed no fault, you need not object to telling me."

"I don't object at all, Miss Meadows. Lawrence thinks I've written to his sister—"





**THE ACCUSATION!** Tom Lawrence staggered to his feet with Molly's help. The girl's flashing eyes turned upon Frank Richards. "You coward! You brute!" she breathed. (See Chapter 4.)

"I know you have!" interjected Lawrence. "That's not true!" "I've seen the letter!" "That's not true, either, as I've never written—"

"Be silent, both of you!" exclaimed Miss Meadows. "If Richards has written to your sister, Lawrence, what does it matter, as they are friends?" "He knows what rot he wrote!" growled Tom.

"I did not write!" shouted Frank. "Oh, you deny it now, of course!" said Tom Lawrence, with a sneer. "It's your own fault, though, if Miss Meadows knows. I wasn't going to say a word."

"I shall certainly know the whole matter," said Miss Meadows. "Do you mean to say, Lawrence, that there is some offence in a letter written by Frank Richards to your sister?"

"He knows," answered Tom doggedly. "Is the letter in existence now?" "Yes."

"It can't be!" said Frank. "I repeat that I've never written—"

"Your sister has the letter, Lawrence?" asked Miss Meadows, motioning Frank Richards to be silent.

"Yes, ma'am." Miss Meadows glanced towards the breathless class.

"Molly, you have a letter written to you by Frank Richards, which is the cause of this quarrel?"

"Yes, Miss Meadows," answered Molly quietly. "Bring it to me at once."

"Very well."

There was a breathless hush as Molly Lawrence went out before the class, taking a letter from her pocket as she did so. Frank Richards stared at her blankly. As he saw her hand the letter to Miss Meadows he began to wonder whether he was dreaming.

**THE FIFTH CHAPTER.**  
**Condemned!**

**M**ISS MEADOWS took the letter from Molly's hand. All eyes were fixed upon her face as she quietly unfolded it and glanced over it.

The schoolmistress' brows knitted as she read.

"Richards!" "Yes, ma'am?" faltered Frank.

"How dared you write this?" Frank Richards felt as if his head were turning round.

"Write that?" he repeated. "I—I didn't! I've never seen it before!"

"Silence! I will read this letter out to the class, as the matter has become so public," said Miss Meadows. "I desire that all Cedar Creek should know what to think of a boy who could write such a letter to a good and self-respecting girl such I know Molly to be."

There was deep silence in the school-room as Miss Meadows read. Frank Richards listened like a fellow in a dream. The letter ran—audible in every corner of the big school-room, as Miss Meadows read in her clear voice:

"Molly Lawrence,—I'm fed-up—fed right up—with your running after me as you do. I haven't cared to say so, but it's getting too tiresome. A fellow wants some of his time to himself, and doesn't want to be always having girls hanging after him. I don't want to be brutal, but that's how it stands. Give some other fellow the glad-eye, and give me a rest."

"F. R."

It seemed to Frank Richards that he was dreaming a hideous dream as he listened to that string of offensive brutalities. That was the letter—the letter he was believed to have written!

He stood dumb, his face quite pale—while Molly's was crimson, and Tom Lawrence was gritting his teeth.

Bob Lawless jumped to his feet, and ran out before the class, his sunburnt face furious.

"It's not true!" he shouted. "Not a word of it! Frank never wrote that—he couldn't! Only a beastly cad and worm could have written such a letter, and Frank didn't—he couldn't!"

"He couldn't!" exclaimed Beauclerc. "Miss Meadows, it's impossible!"

"You are evidently unacquainted with this boy's true character," said Miss Meadows.

"I am sure you were no parties to his conduct."

"Frank couldn't do it!" shouted Bob. "He's always respected Molly, as we all do. He would rather have been hanged than write such a letter."

"It's in his fist!" growled Tom Lawrence. "It's full of lies—you all know it's all lies—and Frank Richards wrote every lie there!"

Frank panted for breath.

"Miss Meadows, let me see the letter!" The schoolmistress handed him the letter with a cold, contemptuous look.

Frank stared at it, and Bob and Vere Beauclerc looked at it, and then they stepped back without a word. For the letter was in Frank Richards' handwriting—the clean, neat, handsome handwriting that was well known at Cedar Creek, and had often been remarked upon. Every turn and trick of his writing was there, and it was impossible to believe that it was not Frank Richards' pen that had traced the words.

Frank stood dumbfounded. For a moment his brain swam, and he wondered whether, in some moment of aberration he could possibly have written that cruel, insulting letter.

Frank looked round with a haggard face, and he almost staggered as he saw that his chums' looks were averted. His eyes sought Miss Meadows' face, to read only stern condemnation there.

"Richards—" the schoolmistress was beginning.

Frank panted.

"I—I— Believe me, I—"

"You need say no more, Richards. This is a very painful shock to me!"

"I—"

"For the present, Richards, you may leave the school-room. I must consider how to deal with you. You may go home now."

Miss Meadows' hand pointed towards the door. Frank Richards cast a last look round, but his chums did not meet his glance; and then, with slow and faltering steps, the unhappy boy tottered from the school-room.

THE END.

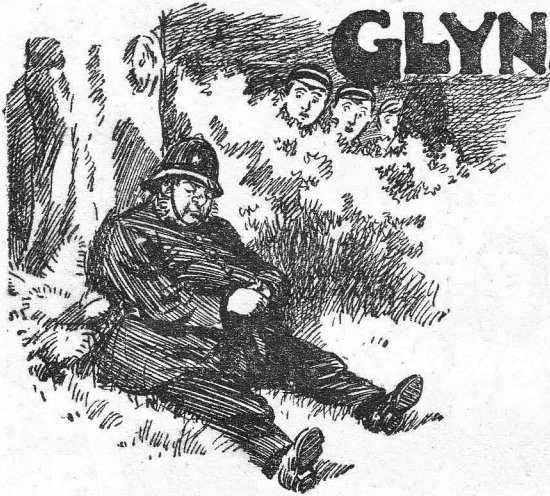
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## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### The Robbery in the Wood!

**O**LD 'ard, young gent!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's was walking through the Rylcombe Wood, on his way back to the school, when a coarse, evil-looking man detached himself from the trees, and stood right in his path. The swell of St. Jim's halted.

"Bai Jove! Pway allow me to pass, my man!" he exclaimed.

"'Arf a mo, young gent!" said the unkempt man in front. "I jest wanted to speak to you a minute. Which I thought as 'ow a young gent like you wouldn't mind giving a bloke a 'elping 'and. I'm out o' work, guv'nor, and I've got a wife and six kiddies starvin' at 'ome. Spare a few coppers to a pore, 'ard-working man!"

D'Arcy started back from the man. "Bai Jove! You are the wascal who wan away in Wylcombe High Sweet yesterday affah stealin' a poor woman's handbag!" exclaimed D'Arcy, after a close inspection of the rascal before him.

"You got away with all the money the poor woman had! You uttah w'etch! I wufuse to give you any money! As a mattah of fact, I wegahd it as my duty to appwehend you and hand you ovah to the police."

So saying, D'Arcy pushed back his cuffs, jammed his monocle tighter in his eye, and advanced in a warlike manner on the amazed rascal.

Arthur Augustus, although a dandy, had heaps of grit. He was like a raging lion when roused. He never shirked what he considered to be his duty, as befitting a scion of the noble race of D'Arcy.

The rascal in the wood gave a roar as the swell of the Fourth landed a smashing blow on his red nose.

"Yoooghh! Oh crumbs! Ow-wow!" he howled, staggering under D'Arcy's onslaught. "Elp! Yow-wow! Rescue, 'Arry!"

Next minute there was a crashing in the trees, and another man, more evil and unsavoury looking than the first, rushed up.

"Orr right, 'Erbert!" he said. "We'll soon settle this young bantam's 'ash!"

"Come on then, you wottahs!" exclaimed D'Arcy through his clenched teeth. "I'm prepared to give you both a feahful thwashin', bai Jove!"

He squared his shoulders, and hit out to right and left at the pair of rascals. 'Arry howled, and fell heavily under a terrific uppercut that landed on his stubby chin. 'Erbert gave ground, and roared as each blow D'Arcy aimed at him found a billet on his person.

The two tramps realised that they had bitten off more than they could chew when attempting to molest the swell of St. Jim's.

THE POPULAR.—No. 251.

D'Arcy was still driving 'Erbert along the woodland path under a rain of terrific drives and uppercuts, when 'Arry staggered to his feet and took a knuckle-duster from his pocket.

He rushed up to the plucky junior from behind, and dealt him a smashing blow.

The knuckle-duster struck D'Arcy just above the temple, and, with a cry, he staggered and lost his footing.

The swell of the Fourth made a gallant effort to rise from the ground; but his senses reeled, a mist came before his eyes, and he fell forward, stunned.

The two miscreants laughed brutally, and bent over the inert figure of the swell of St. Jim's.

Swiftly they ran through his pockets, and took everything of value they could find.

D'Arcy's senses came back to him while the rascals were still in the act of robbing him. He fought back the swirling mist, and struggled to his feet, with his two assailants hanging on savagely to him.

"Help!" cried the junior desperately.

"Wescue, St. Jim's—"  
"Gussy!" came Jack Blake's voice through the trees. "That's Gussy shouting! This way, chaps!"

There were sounds of hurrying footsteps, and the two tramps, with looks of alarm, hurled D'Arcy to the ground, and dashed into the wood in the opposite direction.

Next minute Tom Merry & Co. and Jack Blake & Co. burst through the trees. They looked in amazement at D'Arcy, who was sprawling at full length on the path.

"Aftah the wottahs, deah boys!" gasped the swell of the Fourth, staggering up again. "I have been attacked and wobbled by two miscewants—one was thiat wascal we saw wob a lady of her handbag in Wylcombe yesterday. This way!"

Despite the aching of his head, D'Arcy led his chums into the wood in the direction taken by his two assailants.

The juniors spread out on different routes in the hope of being able to intercept the rascals. They scoured the wood thoroughly, but at last, gathering in Rylcombe Lane, they realised that they would have to give up the search as hopeless.

"The cads have managed to get away somehow!" said Tom Merry angrily. "They must have a hiding-place. What have you lost, Gussy?"

"My wallet, containin' thwee pounds is missin', deah boys!" said D'Arcy in dismay. "The wogues have also got my gold tickah, my fountain-pen, and my diamond tiepin!"

"Oh, jemin'y!" moaned Blake. "If only we could lay hands on those two! Hallo! Here's Crump!"

P.-c. Crump, the village policeman, came up, looking pompous and important. The

juniors told him of the robbery in the wood. "Ho, my heye!" gasped Crump. "That's the second robbery committed by them raskils to-day! They broke into a farm-house this mornin', and made off with a cashbox and joolery. They're wanted for other robberies, too! Which you young gents can rely on me to do my best to harrest them, and recover the stolen valibles."

But this was small consolation to Tom Merry & Co. and Gussy.

They did not have a great deal of faith in the powers of P.-c. Crump.

Vowing to leave no stone unturned until they had found D'Arcy's assailants, they returned to St. Jim's for prep.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Very Amazing!

**B**ANG! Crash! Thump! Bang! Those were the sounds that greeted the ears of Tom Merry & Co. on reaching the Shell passage in the School House.

Kangaroo and Clifton Dane of the Shell were standing outside Study No. 11, and they were kicking and thumping on the door at a furious rate.

"Let us in, Glyn!" howled Kangaroo through the keyhole.

"Will you open this door, you ass?" hooped Dane.

Bang! Kick! Thud! Crash! "My hat!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "Has Glyn locked you out?"

"Yes, the ass has been stuck in here all the afternoon on his own!" said Kangaroo, in exasperation. "We don't mind letting him have the study to himself on a half-holiday, but we do object to being kept out when we want to do our prep. Glyn! Glyn, you awful ass! Open this door!"

"Rats!" came Glyn's voice from within. "I'm busy! Run away and play, there's good chaps!"

"We want to do our prep!" howled Kangaroo furiously.

"Do it in the Form-room, or anywhere else you like! You can't come in here! I'm too busy."

"You burbling jabberwock!"

"You frabjous idiot!"

Kangaroo and Clifton Dane glared at the closed door of Study No. 11.

They had the doubtful pleasure of sharing that room with Bernard Glyn. The inventor of St. Jim's was not an ideal studymate. He was always littering the room with weird apparatus and dabbling with chemicals that imparted fearful odour to the atmosphere.

Many and varied were the inventions that Bernard Glyn had evolved. Most of his inventions were very ingenious, and they really worked.

**The World-Famous Detective Visits the Old School! There is Trouble for Someone!**



Glyn, to give him his due, was a clever youth, but his study-mates did not always appreciate Glyn's cleverness.

That Glyn was at work on another invention was apparent. He always preferred to have the room to himself when evolving a masterpiece. He averred that the others got in his way, and upset things, and made themselves nuisances generally.

Kangaroo and Clifton Dane usually allowed Glyn a clear field for his operations. But they expected to have the use of their own study to do their prep. They regarded it as a fearful check for Glyn to lock them out!

"Let us in!" roared Kangaroo.  
"Presently," replied Glyn, in a tired voice, from the other side of the door. "I'm too busy now."

"Open the door!" bawled Clifton Dane.

"Rats!"  
Kangaroo bestowed a last terrific kick on the door, and stamped away. Clifton Dane breathed sulphurous threats through the keyhole, but, finding that these made no impression on the youthful inventor of St. Jim's, he also kicked the door, and went into Kerruish's study, to "prep" with him.

An hour passed, and dusk deepened into darkness, but still Glyn worked on in Study No. 11. The other Shell fellows could hear him banging away in there, and strange whirrs and buzzes sounded at times.

Kangaroo and Clifton Dane returned together. The door was still locked. Kangaroo glared through the keyhole, and gave a gasp.

"My hat! The chump's in there—in the dark!" he exclaimed. "He hasn't even troubled to light the gas!"

"He must be off his rocker!" said Clifton Dane. "I say, Glyn!"

Thump, thump, thump!  
The two exasperated Shell fellows began to beat a tattoo on the study door.

"Open the door, you shrieking idiot!" howled Kangaroo. "Are you going to stay in there all night, or— Oh-ooohh!"

He broke off as a scream came from inside Study No. 11. The sound of that scream fetched a number of Shell fellows out of their studies in alarm.

"Who was that shrieking?" asked Tom Merry. "Has one of the housemaids fainted, or seen a mouse?"

"Nunno!" stuttered Kangaroo. "It—it came from inside our study! Oh! There it goes again!"

Another ear-splitting screech, more terrifying than before, rent the air. It came from inside Study No. 11. It trailed off into a deep, heart-rending moan, and then all was deathly silent and still.

"Gug-good heavens!" muttered Grundy. "Something's happened to Glyn! He's swallowed some of his awful chemicals, and poisoned himself. I knew something would happen to him one of these days, with all that murderous muck he's got in there! Hark!"

A chorus of moans and blood-curdling shrieks came again from inside the darkened study. They were scarcely human. The juniors outside were by now thoroughly scared.

"I—I say, we'd better get the door open somehow!" exclaimed Kangaroo, after shouting to Glyn and getting no reply, except those horrible moans and wails. "Something's happened. Fetch a form, somebody!"

A form was quickly fetched. Tom Merry & Co. grasped it, and, turning it round, dealt the locked door a heavy blow.

Crash!

Then, quite unexpectedly, the door flew open. All was darkness within. But as the juniors looked fearfully in a horrible apparition presented itself, forming, it seemed, out of nothingness. It was the weird, glowering form of a skeleton, terrible to look upon. It was moving slowly towards the door, its grisly arms gradually stretching out, and its fingers clutching towards the petrified juniors in the passage.

The grisly skull had a demoniacal look, and the great jaws began to move, emitting a low, reverberating howl.

The sight of that weird apparition and its moaning struck chill terror to the hearts of the juniors in the Shell passage.

With a chorus of terrified yells they turned, dropped the form, and fled for dear life down the passage. Even the bravest of them was scared out of his wits, and no wonder! They had not expected such a

gruesome sight. A luminous skeleton, moving about in the darkness, and uttering those awful noises, would have frightened anybody.

The skeleton moved along the darkened corridor, waving its arms and moaning—as it went. The Shell fellows watched it with eyes that almost goggled from their heads in horror.

The apparition walked into the wall at the end of the passage, and then, turning, began to walk along the corridor.

It touched the wall at the corner of the Fourth Form passage, and turned. It then moved slowly down the passage, howling and moaning in a blood-curdling manner.

Study doors opened, and scared faces looked out. Yells of terror arose when the Fourth Formers beheld the walking skeleton. Several jumped back again into their studies and slammed the doors hard.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, blinking out of the doorway of Study No. 6: "Gug-good heavens! I say, deah boys—"

"Yooogh-wah — wooogh-ahhhhh!" wailed the skeleton.

Blake, Herries, and Digby gazed in numbed horror at it.

Then they made one dive into Study No. 6, and Digby shut the door.

Taggles was coming up the stairs at the end of the passage, with a large can of paste and some rolls of wallpaper. He was on his way to finish off a little paper-hanging job in Mr. Raitton's room.

Just as Taggles reached the top of the stairs the grisly skeleton turned the corner.

Taggles stood stock still, and dropped the can of paste. The can overturned and went down the stairs, and there was a loud yell from below—a yell that was almost as terrible to hear as those uttered by the skeleton.

"Yarooooogh! Yah! Ow-wowow!" Gerald Knox of the Sixth had been following Taggles up the stairs. The can of paste had completely bowled him over. Knox fell down half a dozen stairs, and landed on the mat at the bottom with a terrific thud, and the paste came down on top of him.

He was smothered.  
"Yerrrrrugh!" gurgled Knox.  
There was a clatter on the stairs, and

## GHOSTS!



**Bang! Crash! The door of the study flew open suddenly, and on the threshold there stood a fearful apparition. It was a weird, glowing form of a skeleton, and the arms stretched out towards the petrified juniors in the passage. (See Chapter 2.)**

Taggles came rushing down. He fell over the recumbent figure of Knox, and sat down heavily in the paste. Knox grabbed him.

"You clumsy idiot!" howled the enraged prefect. "You—gerrugh!—you fool! Look what you've done! Oooohh!"

"Elp!" moaned Taggles, struggling. "I've seen a ghost! Leggo, Master Knox! Which there's a horrible happarishon hup there! I saw it with my own eyes!"

"Good heavens! Knox—Taggles! What does this mean?"

It was the stern voice of Dr. Holmes. The Head was standing before them, looking down in shocked amazement.

Knox and Taggles staggered up. In furious tones Knox told the Head what had happened.

"I couldn't help it, sir!" gasped Taggles. "Which I saw a ghost at the top of the stairs! An awful sight it was, too!"

"A ghost! Don't talk such nonsense, Taggles!" rapped the Head. "One of the juniors, perhaps, masquerading in a sheet to frighten you!"

"Nunno it wasn't, sir!" stuttered the terrified porter. "Which it was a skeleton, glowing hall hover with mysterious light—"

"Good gracious!"

"I saw it with my own eyes, sir!" gasped Taggles. "The skeleton was moving along, waving its arms and making awful noises! It stretched out its bony fingers towards me, and—"

"Taggles, you ought to be ashamed of yourself!" exclaimed Dr. Holmes, looking hard and severely at the school porter. "You are undoubtedly under the influence of intoxicating liquor! Kindly return at once to your lodge, and do not appear again in public until you are sober!"

"I'm not—I'm not!" roared Taggles indignantly. "Wot I says is this 'ere, sir—"

"Do not get excited, Taggles!" cried the Head, with an imperious wave of the hand. "I will instruct the maids to clear up this paste. Taggles, kindly go!"

Taggles went, feeling quite dazed. Knox stamped furiously away, gouging paste out of his eyes and ears and hair, and leaving a long, long trail of paste in his wake.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### Out with the Ghost!

**G**LYN, you spoofer!"  
"You awful bouncer!"  
"It was one of your tricks, after all!"

Bernard Glyn was surrounded in the Shell passage by a crowd of excited juniors. Next to Glyn was the skeleton that had terrified them, and had caused such discomfiture to Knox and Taggles.

The youthful inventor of St. Jim's grinned broadly.

"Yes; this merry skeleton represents my latest invention!" he chuckled. "It isn't a real skeleton. I carved the bones out of wood, and put 'em together on a specially constructed frame. That frame is operated by the mechanism inside, which causes the skeleton to walk, and move its arms and fingers, and turn. The bones are covered with phosphorous paint. I call it my spectroscope. Quite a natty affair, isn't it?"

"My only summer bonnet! It's marvellous!" breathed Tom Merry, in great admiration. "So that's what you have been working on all the afternoon and evening!"

"I've been working on it for a long time in secret!" said Glyn warmly. "A wonderful piece of mechanism like this isn't constructed in a day, I can tell you!"

"How on earth do you make it yell?" demanded Kangaroo.

"Oh, that's another little invention of mine!" said Glyn. "The howls are produced by means of a small phonograph record of a human yell, magnified and distorted by a special apparatus inside the skeleton. That apparatus, wound up once, will keep the skeleton howling and moaning and shrieking for two hours at a stretch."

"Great pip!"  
"Well, Glyn, you're a giddy knock-out!" said Blake. "You scared us all stiff with that merry contraption, and we don't mind admitting it, either!"

"Of course, you chaps will keep mum about this!" said Glyn anxiously. "If the Head or any of the masters get to know of the existence of my spectroscope, they'll be

(Continued on page 16.)

THE POPULAR.—No. 251

# GRAND NEW COMPETITION!

## The Opportunity of a Lifetime!



**FOOTBALLERS' NAMES**  
COMPETITION

**First Prize**  
**£100**

**30 MAGNIFICENT "JAMES" MOTOR-BIKES.**  
(Complete with Lamp, Horn, and Licence-holder.)

**Second Prize**  
**£50**

**100 SPLENDID "JAMES" COMET CYCLES.**  
(Complete with Lamp, Bell, etc.)

**20 GRAMOPHONES.**

**40 FOOTBALL OUTFITS**  
(Boots, Stockings, Shorts & Shirt).

**50 Pairs of BOXING GLOVES.**

**100 Pairs of ROLLER SKATES.**

**10 Two-Valve Wireless Sets.**

**6 "RILEY" BILLIARDS TABLES.**

**20 MODEL STEAM LOCOMOTIVES** (With Rails.)

**250 BOOKS** and other Consolation Prizes.

**100 FISHING RODS.**

**100 MATCH FOOTBALLS.**

## RULES AND CONDITIONS

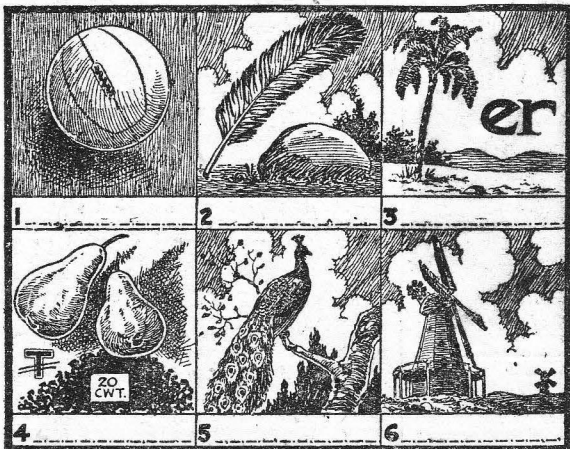
*which must be strictly adhered to.*

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.

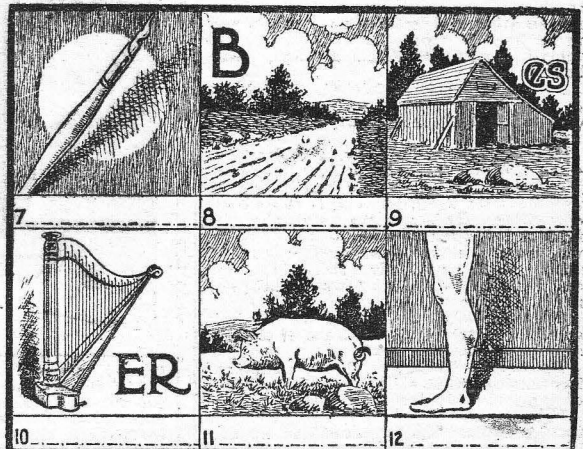
2.—The Second Prize of £50, and the others in the splendid variety of prizes will be awarded in order of merit.

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.

No. 1 SET.



No. 2 SET.



**FIRST SETS OF PICTURES GIVEN FOR NEW READERS! GET—**

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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 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, in the First Set, the picture clearly means BALL. In the same way you have to discover the names indicated by all the other pictures.

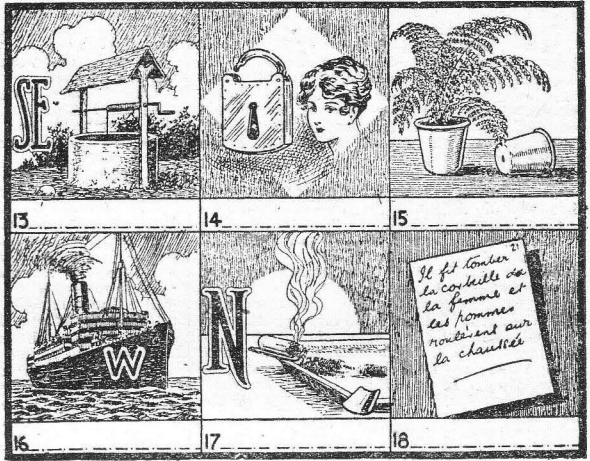
In all there will be EIGHT SETS OF PICTURES, so keep your solutions until the other sets appear. Look out for the fifth set of pictures next week.

### 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 the next page.

This list contains the actual names represented by all the puzzle-pictures, so that all you have to do is to fit the correct name to each picture.

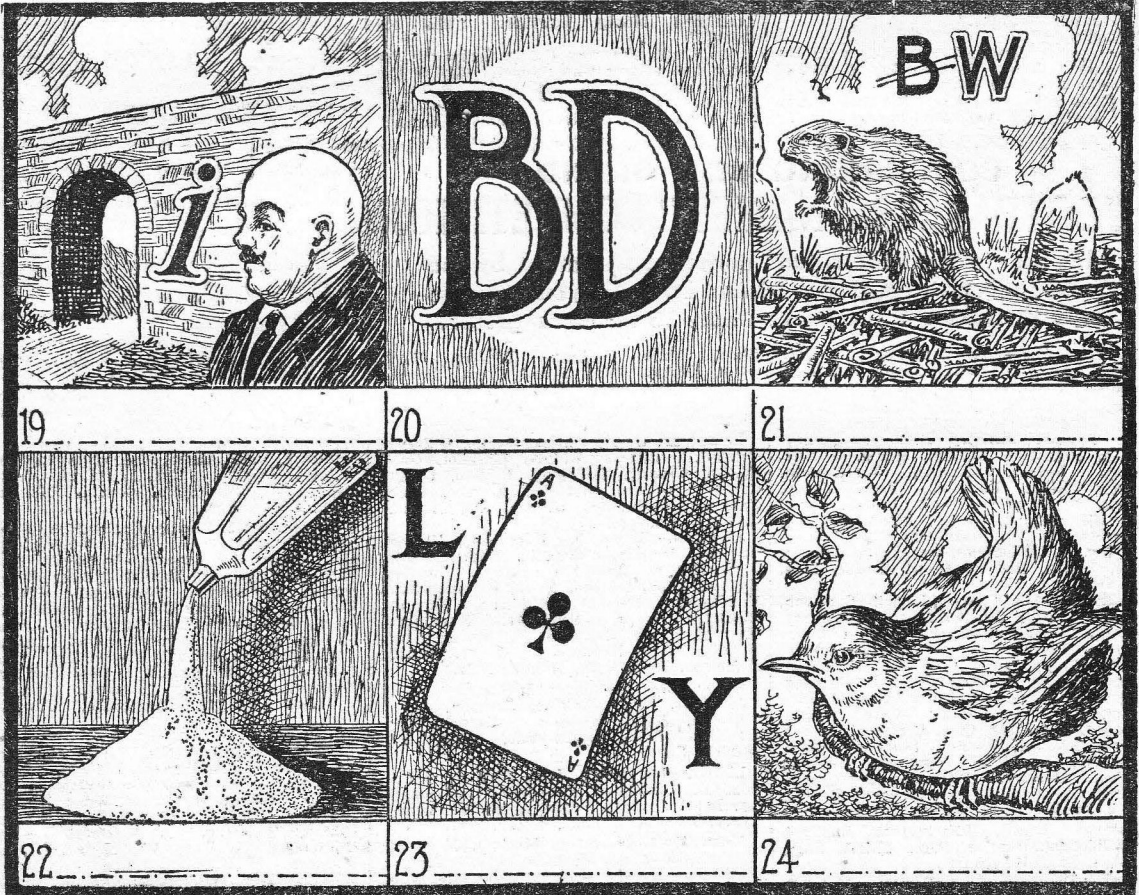
Readers of "The Champion," "Boys' Realm," "Union Jack," "Boys' Friend," "Pluck," "Boys' Cinema," "Young Britain," "Gem," "The Magnet," "The Rocket," and "Nelson Lee Library" are also taking part in the Contest, so that additional attempts may be made with the pictures from these allied journals. No. 3 SET.



No. 4 SET.

ONLY FOUR MORE SETS TO COME!

ENTER  
THE  
GREAT  
CONTEST  
TODAY!  
HERE  
ARE  
THE  
FIRST  
FOUR  
SETS OF  
PICTURES  
FOR  
YOU!



—ON THE TRACK OF THE MYSTERY OF THE FOOTBALLERS' NAMES!

## "GLYN'S SPECTROSCOPE!"

(Continued from page 13.)

down on me like a hundred of bricks. It's already caused Taggles to drop a can of paste down the stairs all over Knox—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I just managed to grab the spectroscope in time to get it out of sight," said the schoolboy inventor, with a grin. "Not a word, you chaps! We'll be able to have some fun with this!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I say, it will be just the very thing for a jape on Rylcombe Grammar School!" exclaimed Tom Merry suddenly. "Gordon Gay and his gang have been getting jolly cheeky lately. Only yesterday they threw chunks of turf at us in the High Street, and knocked Gussy's topper into the horse-trough—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys, I fail to see any cause for wibald laughtah in that!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus frigidly. "I weaghd those Gwammawians as a set of wauff wottahs! My fopphah was quite wuined!"

"Never mind! We'll get our own back on them!" chuckled Tom Merry. "Glyn, old chap, we'll take your giddy spectroscope to the Grammar School to-night, let it walk around their quad and howl, and it will give Gordon Gay & Co. the dickens of a scare! And when we tell them how we spoofed them, they'll be ready to kick themselves!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors of the School House.

The schoolboy inventor grinned.

"Right-ho!" he said heartily. "It will be great fun! I'll hide this merry contraption in the woodshed, covered over with a black cloth, so that it will be all ready for us to take out to-night."

"Good egg!"

The juniors departed, chuckling over the projected jape on Gordon Gay & Co. of Rylcombe Grammar School.

Bedtime came, and the Shell and Fourth were herded off to their dormitories by

Kildare and Darrel. The prefects saw lights out without a suspicion that anything was in the wind.

As eleven boomed from the school clock-tower, Tom Merry jumped out of bed.

"You chaps awake?" he asked.

"Rather!"

Monty Lowther and Manners and several others scrambled up, eager for the midnight jape. Bernard Glyn led the way from the dormitory when all were ready to go out. Blake & Co. were already up, and were waiting outside.

They traversed the dark, silent corridors with the utmost caution, and at last reached the lower box-room. Tom Merry had already taken the precaution to open the window before bedtime. They all climbed through the window, dropped silently into the quadrangle, and crept across to the woodshed.

Glyn fetched his marvellous spectroscope from its hiding-place.

Underneath the black cloth that shrouded it, the bones of the skeleton glowed in a weird, mystic manner.

"They managed to get it over the school wall without mishap, and they set out cheerfully for Rylcombe Grammar School."

Glyn carried the spectroscope, which was still wrapped in its black cloth.

"Hark!" said Tom Merry suddenly.

Deep, reverberating snores came from just inside the Rylcombe Wood on their right. Tom Merry, Blake, and Lowther looked behind a cluster of bushes, and beheld the portly form of the village constable lying in an attitude of sweet repose on the grass.

"Crump!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Asleep when he ought to be on duty!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "The old rascal!"

"So that's the way Crump looks out for those two rotters who robbed Gussy in the wood this afternoon!" said Jack Blake, in disgust. "No wonder they get off scot-free! Chaps, we ought to teach Crump a lesson!"

"We'll give him the fright of his life!" chuckled Glyn. "My spectroscope will do the trick! When he wakes up and feasts his peepers on that—"

"Ha, ha, ha! Get it going, old chap!"

Glyn uncovered the glowing skeleton, and wound up the mechanism.

He set the spectroscope down in the Rylcombe Lane, and it commenced to walk. Simultaneously, deep, doleful moans issued from its moving jaws.

"Crump!" cried Tom Merry, going up to the slumbering constable and shaking him. "Wake up, Mr. Crump! There's a ghost walking in the lane! Evil spirits are abroad!"

"Ho!" gasped Crump sleepily, struggling to his feet. "Wot's this? A ghost? You young rips is pullin' my leg, and—"

"Look!" cried Monty Lowther, in tones of direst terror.

P.-c. Crump, when he got into the lane, looked. He halted abruptly when he saw the grisly, glowing skeleton, and he stood rooted to the ground in horror. His round eyes almost popped from his head.

"Whooo-ah—ooooo—wagh!" howled the spectroscope.

"Mum-mum-my heye!" gurgled Crump, finding his voice at last. "Gug-good 'evings! I— Oh, 'elp!"

As the spectroscope walked towards him, with clutching fingers outstretched, P.-c. Crump took to his heels and fled precipitately. He did not stand upon the order of his going, but tore towards Friardale as though he had a thousand devils on his track.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the St. Jim's juniors. P.-c. Crump disappeared round a bend in the lane, but his terrified bellows could still be heard in the distance.

Glyn switched off the moaning apparatus of his spectroscope, and threw the black cloth over it. He allowed it to walk along, however, saying that it was too heavy to carry.

"Might as well let it walk!" grinned the schoolboy inventor. "Poor old Crump! He's awake now, with a vengeance, isn't he?"

"Ha, ha! Rather!"

The juniors, with the spectroscope stalking along beside them, continued up the lane.

Just before the crossroads, the road was up. There was a large hole in the road surrounded by poles on which red lamps hung, and the whole was looked after by a

(Continued on next page.)

### CONCERNING OUR GRAND

## "FOOTBALLERS' NAMES" COMPETITION

This list contains the actual names represented by the puzzle-pictures on pages 14 and 15. All you have to do is to choose the correct name to fit each picture.

Ashurst, Anderson, Armstrong, Aitken, Adams, Amos, Alderson, Allen, Armitage, Achibald, Ashmore.

Brett, Broadhead, Blyth, Boreham, Blackburn, Bradford, Bassnett, Brittan, Blair, Ball, Barkas, Birrell, Bradley, Bulling, Burton, Branston, Buchan, Blake, Bowser, Bishop, Barnes, Barras, Braithwaite, Bullock, Bliss, Bateman, Best, Bagge, Barson, Broadhurst, Broad, Bolam, Brelsford, Blenkinsopp, Beedie, Birch, Bellamy, Bainbridge, Bowen, Burnham, Boyle, Black, well, Bennie, Ballantyre, Buchanan, Bamber, Byers, Banks, Brooks, Blood, Baker, Bird, Bromlow.

Cockle, Crosbie, Cross, Clennell, Cameron, Chedgoy, Cook, Chadwick, Clough, Curry, Cookson, Cope, Cook, Crilly, Chaplin, Collier, Crockett, Campbell, Crown, Chance, Chipperfield, Crompton, Charlton, Conner, Craig, Cosgrove, Cherrett, Crossley, Carter, Clarke, Cotton, Cunningham, Cairns, Chunas, Connolly, Cassidy, Carr, Cowan, Chapman, Chambers, Clay, Cresswell.

Dunn, Dickson, Dorrell, Dawson, Davies, Donaldson, Dinsdale, Dimcock, Duckett, Duncan, Dornay, Davison, Duckworth, Dockray, Danskin, Dreyer, Denoon, Denyer, Duffus, Dunlop, Dixon, Doyle, Doran, Dale.

Emerson, Evans, Ellerington, England, Ellis, Edleston, Edgley, Eggo, Elliott, Edge, Edwards, Emmett, Ewart.

French, Ferguson, Ford, Forshaw, Fletcher, THE POPULAR.—No. 251.

Flood, Flint, Feebury, Fleming, Fleetwood, Flynn, Fox, Foxall, Fort, Forbes, Fowler, Fazackerley, Findlay, Featherstone, Forsythe, Frame, Fyfe, Finney, Forster, Fitton, Fairclough, Fern.

Grimshaw, Gill, Gilchrist, Gough, Gillespie, Grimsdell, Gittins, Gibson, Graham, Goldthorpe, Grundy, Gallogley, Gibbon, Gomm, Gregory, George, Getwood, Groves, Greig, Gardler, Gallagher, Glancy, Greenfields, Gourlay, Goodchild.

Howarth, Haworth, Hampton, Harrow, Harland, Hopkin, Hundspeth, Harris, Hamill, Hill, Hardy, Hamilton, Hawes, Handley, Hutton, Hine, Hughes, Heap, Higginbotham, Hoddinott, Hebden, Hilditch, Howson, Hunter, Hayes, Hutchins, Hanaford, Harold, Howie, Henshall, Hodges, Halstead, Hugal, Hogg, Henderson, Harper, Hulton, Hillhouse, Hair, Hart, Haines, Hole.

Irvine, Islip, Iremonger, Irwin, Jennings, Jack, Jackson, Johnson, Kirton, Kelly, Kneeshaw, Keenor, Kay, Knowles, Kane, Keenlyside, Kidd, Kilpatrick, Kean.

Linfoot, Longworth, Low, Lindsay, Little, Lonsdale, Lockhead, Longmuir, Lea, Lievesley, Lane, Lockett, Legge, Lofthouse, Lenny, Lyner, Lawson, Lambie, Lacey.

Moss, Mort, Mosscrop, Meehan, Maitland, Mitchell, Murphy, Morgan, Milton, Mercer, Marshall, Magee, Mpoore, 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, McIntyre, M'Neil, M'Kinlay, M'Nabb, M'Intosh, M'Donald, M'Call, M'Grory, M'Cluggage, M'Lean, M'Canless, M'Coll, M'Lacklan, M'Stey, M'Alpine, M'Kenn, M'Inally, M'Nair, M'Nunn, McBain, McCracken.

Nutall, Neesam, Neil, Needham, Nash, Nisbet, Nelson.

Osborne, Ormston, Orr, O'Hare, Pryn, Pringle, Price, Parker, Poole, Paterson, Pearson, Penn, Plum, Page, Preston, Probert, Pagnam, Peel, Potts, Palmer, Prouse, Puddefoot, Pender, Pape, Peacock, Pantling, Partridge, Peers.

Quantrill, Quinn, Robson, Rollo, Raitt, Richardson, Rawlings, Ruffell, Robbie, Rigg, Radford, Ridley, Reay, Ramsay, Robb, Ritchie, Ranskin, Reed, Rooke, Roe.

Spiers, Smart, Stephenson, Seddon, Sewell, Smelt, Smith, Scott, Slade, Spencer, Seymour, Spaven, Sappy, Seed, Storer, Stage, Shea, Steele, Simms, Smailes, Symes, Sturges, Scales, Spottiswood, Scattergood, Sinclair, Stuart, Sayer, Sutcliffe, Salt, Summerfield, Shaw, Sillito, Sneddon, Sommerville, Shone, Streets, Sampey, Stannard, Skinner, Sage.

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Martin Clifford Writes Only for the POPULAR and "Gem" I



bad-tempered watchman, who sat in a little wooden hut to keep his lonely vigil.

"That's the old blighter who reported us for cutting through old Popson's field when we were late for call-over the other evening," said Tom Merry. "The watchman is a nosey, interfering, bad-tempered old fossil! Let's give him a fright as well."

"All serene!"

The juniors stealthily approached the hole in the road. The watchman was nodding over his little fire. He did not hear their approach. Glyn set the spectroscope working.

The watchman looked up with a start as those weird moans broke upon his ears. He slid off the box he had been sitting on when his startled eyes beheld the moving skeleton.

The watchman, though well advanced in years, sprang to his feet with the agility of a youngster. He was evidently made of sterner stuff than P.-c. Crump, however, for, picking up a brick from a heap near by, he took aim at the grisly spectre.

Biff!

"Wooocogh - aw - agh - yahhhha - ahhhh!" shrieked the skeleton, wobbling under the impact of the brick.

The watchman did not tarry longer, but ducked under the poles and ran as fast as his legs would carry him in the direction of Rylcombe.

Glyn gave a cry of alarm on seeing his invention struck by the brick, and he dashed forward.

The skeleton was shrieking in a truly terrifying manner, and it was hopping round and round in the road and flinging its arms about wildly.

The brick striking it had evidently deranged some of the mechanism!

"Yah-ahhh-aw-waugh-ahhhhhh!" howled the skeleton.

Before Glyn could grab it, the spectroscope cannoned into the nearest pole, toppled over, and fell down the hole in the road, shrieking and moaning like a soul in torment.

"Oh, jeminy!" gasped Tom Merry. "What a horrible noise it's making! Switch it off, Glyn, for goodness' sake! We'll have the whole giddy countryside turning out in a minute."

Glyn dragged his invention out of the hole and set it on its feet; Monty Lowther gave a yelp as one of the whirling hands struck him forcibly on the nose.

"Put the brake on the moaning apparatus, can't you, Glyn?" demanded Blake.

"I—I can't!" gasped the schoolboy inventor, desperately pushing buttons and turning little levers. "It's got jammed somehow. The beastly thing is wound up, and it will howl like this for another hour at least!"

"Oh, jeminy!"

"Isn't there any means of stopping it?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Only by smashing up the whole giddy apparatus—and I'm not going to do that!" said Glyn fiercely. "We shall have to let the thing howl itself out—"

"You—you burbling idiot, how can we!" hooted Blake. "It's worse than a whole nursery of babies squalling! Hark at the confounded thing! Let's knock it over and tread on it, chaps!"

"No, you jolly well won't!" roared Glyn, grabbing his howling invention. "Leave my spectroscope alone!"

"How the dickens can we get it back into St. Jim's with it making all that row?" demanded Tom Merry. "It will wake everybody up, and—"

"The only thing to do is to take it into that empty house over there and wait for the spring to run down!" gasped Glyn. "Come on!"

Standing back from the Rylcombe Lane, with the wood behind it, was an old, tumble-down house that had been empty for years. Rumour had it that the place was haunted, and nobody had cared to live there.

Tom Merry & Co. followed Glyn towards the house.

As they did so, they saw a small army of villagers, headed by P.-c. Crump and the watchman, dashing along the Rylcombe Lane towards the spot. They were all armed with sticks and staves—some even had guns.

"Oh, my only hat!" groaned Tom Merry. "Here come the villagers! They're after laying the ghost! If they get hold of us—"

"Wun like anything, deah boys!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The St. Jim's juniors dashed into the empty



**TOM MERRY & CO'S CAPTURE!** The two rascals, terrified by the howls of Glyn's spectroscope, fought wildly with the juniors, but the odds were against them, and in a few minutes Tom Merry & Co. had the miscreants down and out. P.-c. Crump and the villagers broke in to find the juniors sitting on their prisoners. (See Chapter 3.)

house through the broken window. Glyn carried the spectroscope, which was still raising the midnight echoes with its howls. The "bones" of the skeleton glowed brightly in the darkness.

The villagers, hearing the howls of the "ghost," and seeing the gleaming skeleton, raised a wild shout and galloped towards the house.

P.-c. Crump, brave now that he had others with him, led the way.

"Ere we are!" he roared, dragging open the gate of the old house. "We've tracked the ghost to its lair!"

Tom Merry & Co., hiding in the lower rooms, blinked at each other fearfully. The spectroscope was shrieking as loudly as ever. "Oh dear! We'll catch it for this!" moaned Blake. "Glyn, you raving fethead—"

"Hark!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

There was a sudden commotion from below. Next minute the rickety wooden door leading to the cellars of the old house opened, and two wild-eyed figures appeared.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave a cry.

"Bai Jove! The two wuffians who attacked me this afternoon! Gwab them, deah boys!" The rascals, terrified by the howls of Glyn's spectroscope, which they believed to be the ghost of the haunted house, fought wildly with the juniors. In the terrific scum that ensued, the spectroscope was knocked over and trampled underfoot, despite its youthful inventor's frantic efforts to save it.

The shrieks of the spectroscope ceased with the breaking of the works. Tom Merry & Co. by then had the two miscreants down and out.

P.-c. Crump and the villagers broke in to find the juniors sitting on their prisoners.

"My heye!" gasped P.-c. Crump. "Wot the dickens is this 'ere?"

"We've caught the robbers!" cried Tom Merry. "This old house is their headquarters, I believe. Hold 'em, kids, while I go down and investigate!"

Tom Merry, Blake, and Talbot went down into the cellar, and, as Tom had surmised, they discovered the secret headquarters of 'Arry and 'Erbert. The cellar was littered with empty bottles and remains of recent meals. Valuables of all sorts were stowed away in boxes. Amongst the loot they found Gussy's wallet, watch, fountain-pen, and tiepin.

The two rascals upstairs were searched, and all their money taken from them. Gussy recovered the three pounds 'Arry and 'Erbert had relieved him of. P.-c. Crump and the villagers marched their prisoners away in triumph.

"Which that was a verry clever trick o' you young rips, I will say!" said P.-c. Crump, in departing. "You played ghosts to frighten these willains out of their 'iding-place—wot?"

"Ahem! Er—quite so, Crump!" said Tom Merry.

The village constable wagged a warning forefinger at the St. Jim's juniors.

"Wot I says is this 'ere, this mustn't occur again!" he said. "Hif Hi 'ears any more o' that ghost business, I shall 'ave to report yer!"

"Don't worry, Crump; you won't hear any more of this ghost!" said Glyn, ruefully surveying the remains of his trampled spectroscope. "The thing's done in!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry & Co. They returned to St. Jim's without having played their projected jape on Gordon Gay & Co. But they felt pleased that they had caught the two rascals, 'Arry and 'Erbert, and thus recovered Gussy's valuables—thanks to Glyn's Spectroscope!

THE END.

(There will be another grand long dramatic story of Tom Merry & Co., entitled "The Fight for Tom Merry's Life!" in next week's bumper issue.)

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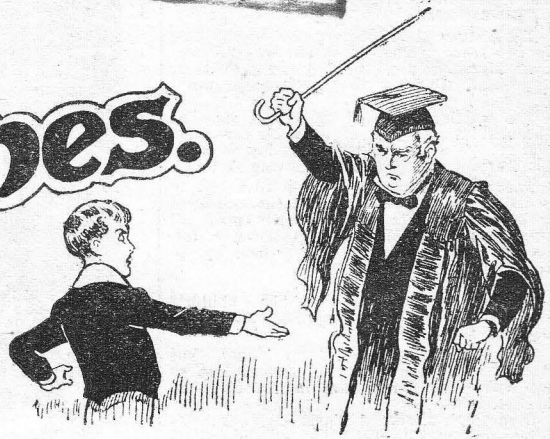
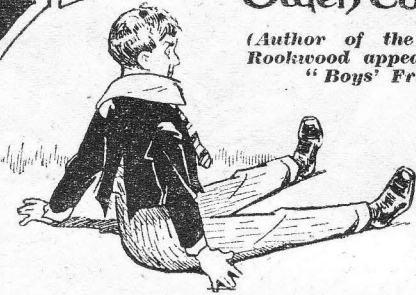
THE SCAMP OF THE THIRD AGAIN!

Teddy Lovell is in trouble again this year. ~~choice~~ cannot see the error of his ways, which are not the ways of the Rookwood fags. He has a lot to learn and the lesson will ~~come~~. Time will show!

# A Fag's Misfortunes.

By  
Owen Conquest.

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



A Dramatic, Long, Complete Story dealing with the adventures of Jimmy Silver & Co., the Fistical Four of the Fourth Form, Rookwood.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### Teddy Too!

WHAT about Teddy?" Arthur Edward Lovell asked that question with a peculiar doggedness in his manner. Jimmy Silver suppressed a groan. Raby grunted, and Newcome whistled. And Arthur Edward's expression grew a little more dogged.

Teddy—otherwise Lovell minor—occupied a large space in the thoughts of Lovell major, which was very right and proper. He did not occupy so large a space in the thoughts of Lovell's chums.

In fact, in discussing what was to be done with that half-holiday, Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome had quite forgotten the existence of Lovell minor. They could not be expected to remember the existence of fags in the Third Form; and, moreover, they did not like Lovell minor. He was not an attractive young gentleman.

They were ready to be civil—as civil as possible—to Lovell minor, for his major's sake. But they were far from yearning for his company. In fact, the less they saw of the cheery youth the better they liked it.

"What about Teddy?" repeated Lovell, his tone growing resentful.

"Teddy's hardly up to a long tramp over Coombe Heath," remarked Raby, with an air of judicious consideration. "He'll lag."

"He'll get tired, poor little chap!" murmured Newcome.

"No need to walk as if it was a race," said Lovell. "I suppose we're not bound to cover miles and miles, walking on a half-holiday? Teddy hasn't seen much of the country round here yet."

Raby grunted.

Lovell's concern for his young brother, creditable as it was, had already caused soreness in the end study. Lovell's chums had recognised that it was possible to have too much of a good thing, even if Lovell minor was a good thing, which was doubtful.

"Oh, bring him, by all means!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Bring all the Third Form!" suggested Newcome, in a sarcastic vein. "Let's turn it into a school walk!"

"If you don't want my minor—" began Lovell, his voice rising.

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"Oh, we do—we does!" said Raby. "Bring him! Fetch him! We'll wait! We don't mind how long we wait! Anything for the pleasure of having your minor's company!"

"Look here, Raby—"

"Shut up all round!" said Jimmy Silver, in the authoritative tones of Uncle James of Rookwood. "Let the kid come. It may do him good. Let's go and rout him out."

Lovell snorted, and turned back into the quadrangle. His chums followed him meekly. They had already learned that it was no use arguing with Arthur Edward Lovell where his minor was concerned. But they were feeling very restive on the subject.

It was an unwritten law at Rookwood, as at most schools, that fellows in different Forms did not chum together much. They were of different ages; they had different interests—different ways of looking at things. More especially did that apply to fag Forms. Jimmy Silver had a cousin in the Third, for whom he had a real cousinly regard; but sometimes he hardly exchanged a word with him for weeks together. It was the natural order of things. It was not good for a fellow to hang about with fellows older than himself.

But Lovell was breaking the unwritten law in his affectionate regard for his young brother, the spoiled darling of the family circle at home. And, in the opinion of his chums, it was not likely to do Teddy Lovell much good.

Teddy had been about a week at Rookwood now, and he had not taken kindly to the discipline of school.

He had found that the spoiled darling business was no use at Rookwood. He had learned, with intense indignation, that he could not always have his own way.

He could not even turn his nose up at a fellow who did not meet with his lordly approval, without risk of getting a forcible punch on the said nose.

Which was very surprising and painful to Teddy; but very good for him, all the same, in the long run.

But Arthur Edward was deeply concerned about it.

It was very decent of Arthur Edward. Some elder brothers would have resented the fuss that was made of Teddy at home, and would have felt bitter about being expected to play second-fiddle to Teddy on all occasions. There was not a trace of that about Lovell. In his eyes, as in his father's,

Teddy was a very important person indeed, and it was distressing if Teddy was not satisfied.

His chums liked him for it, though it was exasperating, and they bore with him as well as they could. The Co. were having lessons in the exercise of patience and forbearance in these days.

Lovell marched round the quadrangle, looking for Teddy, who was not visible. Then he headed for the Third Form room, from which the sound of voices proceeded. He threw open the door and looked in. There were a number of fags present—Grant and Pipkin and Stacey and Wegg and Teddy Lovell. And they were evidently not upon amicable terms. Teddy was standing, with a scowling brow, glaring at the other fags, and they were glaring at him with expressions of contempt and derision.

"Baby-face!" Wegg of the Third was observing, as the Fistical Four appeared in the doorway.

"Little cad!" said Pipkin.

"Scowling like a giddy demon in a pantomime!" said Grant. "Mustn't chuck a paper ball at his highness! Hands off his lordship, you know! Yah!"

"Let me pass, you rotters!" said Teddy savagely. "I'm going out."

"You'll go out when we choose!" retorted Wegg; not that Wegg cared twopence whether Teddy went out or stayed in, for that matter.

It was Teddy's tone and manner that Wegg did not like.

"I'm going out now!" roared Teddy.

"You try to pass!" said Wegg.

"Yes, do!" said Pipkin.

Teddy clenched his hands and glared. It was only too clear that if he tried to pass, the other fags intended to collar him. Once more it was borne in upon Teddy that his lofty will and pleasure was not the supreme law.

"You rotters!" he repeated.

"Nice names you're calling us, you young Hun!" said Stacey. "Blessed little hooligan!"

"Punch his nose!" suggested Pipkin.

"So I will!"

Arthur Edward Lovell strode into the room at that point. He was in time to save Teddy's nose from the threatened punch. The fags all turned their heads to stare at him.

"What do you Fourth Form cads want

Our Rookwood Stories are Read All Over the World!



here?" demanded Wegg belligerently. "You get out of our Form-room!"

"Come along, Teddy!" said Lovell, unheeding.

He took his minor by the elbow, and walked him to the door. Teddy went willingly enough. He was beginning to dread what might happen in the Form-room. A yell of derision from the fags followed.

"I'll lick you presently, young Lovell!" howled Wegg.

"Yah!"

"Baby!"

Teddy's face was crimson with resentment and indignation as he went out into the quadrangle with the Fistical Four. Lovell was looking angry. Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome preserved expressionless countenances. And the Fistical Four and Lovell minor turned out of the gates of Rookwood together—not in a merry humour.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Adolphus is Sorry He Spoke!

LOVELL minor halted about a dozen yards from the gates of Rookwood School. He looked back towards the school, and then at his companions.

"Where are we going?" he asked.

"For a walk," answered his brother.

"I don't want to go for a walk!"

Jimmy Silver regarded the landscape with an interested eye. Raby and Newcome studied the pattern of the footprints in the dusty road. It was left to Arthur Edward Lovell to settle the point with his minor. His chums only hoped he would be quick about it.

"We're going to have a ramble right across Coombe Heath, Teddy, old chap," said Lovell.

"Too jolly far for me to walk!" said Teddy. "I've not got a pair of dashed seven-league boots on."

"Oh, we needn't go so far as that, of course!" amended Lovell. "We'll take you to see the old quarries, Teddy."

"What rot!"

"Come on, kid!"

"You go on," said Teddy. "I'm not coming, thanks. I don't want to see any old quarries."

Lovell minor moved a little away. Now that his major had seen him clear of the hostile fags, he was evidently tired of his society.

Lovell major glanced hastily at his chums, colouring; but they did not catch his eye; they took care not to catch it.

"Teddy!" exclaimed Arthur Edward, troubled and worried.

"So-long!" said Teddy.

"I thought you'd like a walk with us, Teddy."

"Well, I don't, thanks!"

"Look here, where are you off to, Teddy?" exclaimed Lovell suspiciously, and beginning to get a little angry at last. "You're not on friendly terms with the fags, and you're not going to mooh about by yourself. What are you up to this afternoon?"

"I'm going out with a chap."

"What chap?"

"Oh, a chap!" said Teddy vaguely. "Good-bye! Get on with your walk!"

He started off again, but this time Lovell caught him by the shoulder and stopped him.

Teddy looked at him with a gleam in his eyes.

"Let go!" he snapped.

"Whom are you going out with?" asked Lovell.

"I sha'n't tell you!"

"Is it Peele of the Fourth, or Lattrey—the cads who gave you cigarettes the first day you came?"

"Find out!"

"I'm going to find out!" said Lovell grimly. "The pater's left you in my charge, Teddy, and I'm not going to see you disgrace yourself."

"Will you let me go, you bully?" said Lovell minor, between his teeth.

"Not unless you tell me whom you're going with!"

Teddy panted.

"Let me alone, you beast!" he shouted furiously. "I'm going to the Bird-in-Hand to be introduced to some chaps there! So put that in your pipe and smoke it! Now let me go!"

Lovell's grip tightened.

"Come on!" he said.

"I'm not coming!" shrieked Teddy.

"You are!"

And Teddy came! With Lovell's grip like iron on his shoulder, he had no choice about the matter.

Lovell was really angry now. It was partly his affection and concern for Teddy himself that made him angry. But that he was angry there was no doubt at all.

The fag walked with him some paces, apparently too much surprised to resist. Lovell called to his comrades.

"Come on, you fellows!"

"All serene!" said Jimmy Silver shortly.

The three juniors followed Lovell in silence. That pleasant afternoon's ramble was not very attractive now. The chums of the Fourth did not exactly want to be turned into policemen to look after a recalcitrant fag, and after the first few minutes of surprise, Teddy began to struggle.

Lovell changed his grasp from the fag's shoulder to his collar, and his grasp was very businesslike. Teddy was marched on.

"Help!" yelled Teddy suddenly, as two or three Rookwood fellows came in sight on the road. They were Smythe & Co. of the Shell.

"Shut up, you little fool!" exclaimed Lovell.

"Let me go, then!"

"You're coming with me!"

"Help!" roared Teddy. "Help!"

Smythe & Co., who were strolling on ahead at a leisurely pace, stopped and looked round, in astonishment. They stared blankly at the Fistical Four and their prisoner.

"Oh, gad!" ejaculated Adolphus Smythe.

"What's this game?" grinned Tracy.

"Bullyin' your minor, Lovell—what?"

"Looks like it!" remarked Howard.

"Shut up, you silly goats!" was Lovell's polite reply. "Go and eat coke!"

"Help me, you fellows!" yelled Teddy.

"Why don't you let the kid go?" demanded Smythe warmly. "You're a rotten bully, Lovell!"

Smack!

Lovell's left hand came across Adolphus Smythe's face in a sounding smack. Poor Lovell's temper was excited, and if he could be patient with the exasperating Teddy, he could not display the same patience towards the dandy of the Shell.

Smythe gave a howl, and staggered back as he was smitten.

"Oh! Ow! Why, you ruffian—"

"You asked for that, Smythey," said Raby. "Why can't you mind your own bizney?"

Adolphus Smythe breathed wrath and vengeance. He was not a fighting man, when he could help it; but even the elegant Adolphus could not submit to having his noble face smacked with impunity. He pushed back his cuffs and rushed at Arthur Edward.

Lovell had to release Teddy to put up his hands.

He met Smythe's rush savagely, hitting out with right and left, and following up the blows with a vigour that quite dazzled and confused the nut of the Shell.

Adolphus gave ground hastily, feebly defending himself from the onslaught.

It was a relief to the worried and irritated Lovell to punch somebody; and Smythe of the Shell had the benefit of it.

The hapless Adolphus was knocked right and left. In the satisfaction he derived from punching Adolphus, Lovell forgot Teddy for the moment.

And Teddy, the moment he was released, had scudded off in the direction of the school.

Jimmy Silver made a movement to follow him, but stopped. It was no business of his to collar Lovell's minor. And the absurdity of starting on a walk, dragging a fag along by the collar, was apparent to Lovell's comrades, if not to Lovell.

Teddy vanished round the bend of the lane, while his major was still hammering the unhappy Adolphus.

Tracy and Howard looked on grimly. They could not interfere with Jimmy Silver & Co. on the spot to see fair play. Adolphus Smythe was driven back to the ditch beside the lane, and a right-hander that landed on his chest, sent him spinning backwards into it.

Fortunately the ditch was dry. But there were beds of nettles in it. The dandy of the Shell reposed in a bed that he found far from comfortable, and he yelled dismally.

"That's enough for you!" growled Lovell.

"Yow-ow-ow! I'm stung!" wailed Adolphus.

"Help me out, Tracy, you ass! Howard, you fool—"

Tracy and Howard ran to his aid, and

Lovell turned back to his comrades. Then he noted that his minor had vanished.

"Where's Teddy?" he exclaimed.

"He cut off—"

"Why didn't you stop him?" roared Lovell. "Which way did he go?"

"To Rookwood," said Newcome. "Look here, Lovell—"

Lovell did not wait for him to finish. He started running up the road in pursuit of the vanished Teddy. Jimmy Silver & Co. stared after him, and then at one another.

"Well, here's a go!" said Jimmy. "Are we going back, too?"

Raby gave a snort.

"I'm not going back!" he said. "If Lovell likes to play the fool on a half-holiday, let him! I'm not going to!"

"Same here!" said Newcome.

"Well, I suppose we can't go chasing a cheeky fag all over Rookwood," said Jimmy Silver. "Let's get on. If Lovell wants to come, he knows where to find us."

The three Fourth-Formers walked on, leaving Smythe sitting on the grass by the road, bemoaning his injuries, Tracy and Howard looking as sympathetic as they could.

## THE THIRD CHAPTER.

### Ragged by the Third!

TEDDY LOVELL looked round him cautiously, as he came up to the School House at Rookwood, after a breathless run home.

He had an appointment with Peele & Co. that afternoon. The black sheep of the Fourth had "taken up" Teddy, chiefly because that proceeding was annoying to the end study. They found Teddy an apt pupil. He found it very entertaining to play nap in the black sheep's study, all the more because it proved his independence of his elder brother's counsels. But nap in the study was risky, for Arthur Edward Lovell had taken a hand once, and the features of Peele & Co. still showed traces of it. That afternoon Teddy was going out with the Giddy Goats, but the delay in the Form-room where he had fallen foul of the Third, and then his start with Jimmy Silver & Co. had made him very late.

He was wondering whether he would find Peele & Co. still indoors, as he hurried to Study No. 1 in the Classical Fourth.

He found the study empty.

Peele & Co. had long been gone. They had not waited long for their fag comrade.

Teddy Lovell looked round the empty study with lowering brows. His afternoon's excursion was spoiled, all through his interfering major, he considered.

"Oh, it's rotten!" he muttered, as he turned out of the study again, in a dismal mood.

He had been looking forward with great excitement to that afternoon's adventure. There was little real harm in the foolish fag. It was chiefly the desire of adventure and excitement that caused him to fall in with the plans of Peele & Co. The fact that his brother had interfered between him and his new friends only roused his willful obstinacy.

He loafed about in the deserted passage for some minutes, thinking.

He knew where Peele & Co. had gone, but he hesitated to follow them there alone. And it was possible that he would fall in with his brother, who would collar him again. But hanging about Rookwood by himself was not agreeable, especially with the fear of falling in with his Form fellows.

He grunted angrily as he came down the stairs at last.

In the lower passage, as luck would have it, he came upon Wegg & Co. The fags were evidently going out, but at the sight of Lovell minor they changed their intention at once.

"My hat! Here he is!" exclaimed Wegg. "Here's Baby Face!" grinned Pipkin.

Teddy would have hurried on, but the fags surrounded him in a moment. They closed round him, and hurried him into the junior Common-room, deserted just then.

Teddy made one or two dives to escape, but he was headed off, and hustled into the room, Pipkin closing the door when they were all inside, and setting his back to it.

The new junior stood panting, with flushed face, glaring at his tormentors.

"Nice-looking kid—what!" grinned Grant.

"Nice manners! Nice, pleasant, agreeable countenance!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "Cads!" growled Teddy.  
 "Who are you calling a cad?" asked Wegg ungrammatically, but very politely.  
 "You!" retorted Teddy at once.  
 "Come on, Baby Face!" challenged Wegg, prancing round Teddy, and making weird and wondrous evolutions with his grubby fists. Sparring he would have called it. "Put 'em up!"

"I—I'm not going to fight you!" faltered Teddy.

Wegg chuckled.  
 "That's your little mistake; you are!" he answered. "Haven't you called me a cad?"  
 "So you are a cad!" answered Teddy independently. "Rotten cad!"

Bang!  
 Wegg's grubby knuckles landed on Teddy's nose, and the new fag staggered with a howl of anguish.

"Hurrah!" chortled Pipkin.  
 "Go it, Wegg!"

Wegg's knuckles swept at Teddy's nose again. But this time Teddy, excited by the pain in his nose, played up. He rushed at Wegg at the same time, and the two met with a terrific collision. The next moment they were locked in a deadly embrace, struggling, wrestling, pommelling, and yelling, which was the variety of fighting favoured in the Third Form.

Teddy put in two or three doughty punches upon Wegg's face, which made the Third-Former blink. But Wegg was bigger and heavier, and he gave back more than he received. And in a few minutes he had Teddy's head in chancery, and was "pasting" the new fag in great style, amid loud yells and cheers from his comrades.

But there was a sudden yell of agony from Wegg, and he released Teddy and tottered back. The fag had suddenly backed his shin, and Wegg was hors de combat. He hopped on one leg, clasping the other with both hands, and wailing with pain and wrath.

Teddy stood gasping, and sulkily defiant. From all the fags in the room came a howl of wrath and contempt.

"Hacking, by gum!" yelled Pipkin. "Kicking shins in a fight! Hooligan!"

"Ow, ow, ow!" came from Wegg. "Ow! My shin! Yow-ow! Oh!"

"Serve you right!" panted Teddy. "Let me alone, then!"

Even Teddy was half-ashamed of what he had done. But the general condemnation only increased his sulky obstinacy. He glared defiance at the fags.

"Rag him!" shouted Stacey.  
 "Collar the hooligan!"

Teddy made a rush for the door, and in a moment he was struggling and kicking and howling in the grasp of the fags. Wegg was leaning on the table, wailing; but every other fag had his hands on Teddy Lovell. There was no doubt that he deserved punishment, and there was certainly no doubt that he was going to get it.

And he did get it.  
 Hacking a fellow's shin was foul play, as well as being a cruel and brutal action in itself, and the Third-Formers left the hapless Teddy in no doubt as to what they thought of it.

Teddy's yells and howls died away in breathless exhaustion, as he was bumped on the floor, rolled over, hustled, and ragged.

His collar was torn out, with his tie, his jacket was split, his clothes looked like rags, when the fags had finished with him. And they were not finished till they were tired.

Then, Wegg having a little recovered, the fags streamed out of the room with backward glances of contempt and scorn. And Teddy Lovell sat on the floor feeling as if he had been through an earthquake, and gasping for the breath that would not come.

#### THE FOURTH CHAPTER. Sneak!

"SEEN my minor?"  
 Arthur Edward Lovell asked that question as soon as he came in at the gates of Rookwood. Tommies Dodd and Cook and Doyle, of the Modern Fourth, were near the gates, and he called to them.

"He's gone in, old top," answered Tommy Dodd, "some time ago—"

"Thanks!"  
 Lovell walked on quickly to the School House.

A crowd of excited-looking fags came out of the House as Lovell arrived there. Wegg called to him.

THE POPULAR.—No. 251.

"Looking for that young cad—what?"  
 "I'm looking for my minor," answered Lovell.

"You'll find him in the Common-room—what's left of him!" growled Wegg vengefully.

"Have you young rascals—" began Lovell angrily.

"He hacked my shin."  
 With that statement, and a sniff, Wegg limped on with his comrades, and Lovell hurried to the Common-room. Teddy Lovell had just succeeded in tottering to his feet, and he was leaning on the table, panting and gasping, when his brother came in.

"My hat!" ejaculated Lovell, as he noted the fag's dusty and dishevelled condition.

"You've been through it!"  
 "Grooogh!" gasped Teddy.

"Better have stayed with me, after all," said Lovell grimly. "Did you get into a fight with Wegg?"

"Grooogh! Yes."  
 "He says you hacked his shin."

"Ow! So I did! Serve him right!"  
 "You shouldn't have done that, Teddy," said Lovell, very gravely. "That's not Rookwood style, you know!"

"Hang Rookwood! I hate Rookwood!" panted Teddy furiously. "I've written to father to take me away, and he won't! Look at me! The whole crowd of them set on me! Oh! Ow—"

"No wonder, if you kicked a fellow's shins! That kind of dirty trick is barred here," said Lovell angrily.

"I'm going to my Form-master!" gasped Teddy. "I won't be treated like this!"

"What are you going to Mr. Bohun for?"  
 "To tell him!"

"Don't be a young ass!" said Lovell un- easily. "Sneaking won't do any good. You'll have the Third down on you more than ever for that!"

"I don't care! I hate them!"  
 Lovell minor limped to the door, and Arthur Edward caught him by the shoulder.

"Stop, Teddy—"  
 "Let go!" said Teddy, in concentrated tones. "You try to bully me here, and I'll yell for a prefect! Bulkeley will soon stop you!"

And Teddy jerked his shoulder away from Lovell's detaining grasp and stamped out into the passage.

In the passage he stood troubled and uncertain for some minutes.

But the aches and pains he felt all over him—for the fags had not handled him gently—decided him. He trod away at last to Mr. Bohun's study. The master of the Third was in his quarters, looking over a pile of exercises, and he gave Lovell minor a rather impatient look.

"What—what are you in that state for, Lovell minor? Are you not capable of keeping yourself presentable?" snapped Mr. Bohun. Mr. Bohun was a kind man, as a rule, but his new pupil had tried his temper rather severely more than once already.

"I've been ragged!" burst out Teddy, with breathless indignation.

"Ragged!" repeated Mr. Bohun. "Do you mean you have been fighting with your Form-fellows?"

"I've been set on and ragged, and I—"  
 "Well, well, go and make yourself tidy," said Mr. Bohun.

"I've been beaten!" shouted Teddy, in indignant wrath. "Bumped on the floor and beaten. It's not fair!"

Mr. Bohun looked steadily at him across the table.

"Do you wish to lay a serious complaint before me, Lovell minor?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."  
 "In that case I will inquire into the matter."

"That's what I want, sir," said Lovell minor, much relieved. "I want them all punished."

"You have nothing to do with that, Lovell minor. Kindly do not make such a remark again," said Mr. Bohun, frowning. "Against whom do you make complaints?"

"Grant, Pipkins, Stacey, Wegg, Wyatt, and Peters—"

"I will call them here. See if there is any junior in sight in the corridor."  
 Teddy looked out.

"There's my brother, sir—at the window—"  
 "Call him!"

"Arthur!" called out Teddy.

Arthur Edward Lovell spun round from the window at the end of the corridor, where he was glumly staring into the quadrangle. He frowned inquiringly at his brother.

"Mr. Bohun wants you!" said Teddy. Lovell hurried up.

"Ah! Come in, Lovell! Will you kindly find some boys of my Form, and tell them to come here?" Mr. Bohun gave the names.

"Lose no time, please! Well," added the Form-master, as Lovell stood rooted to the floor, "why do you not go?"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Lovell. And he went!

#### THE FIFTH CHAPTER. Called Over the Coals!

"FEEL any better, old top?"  
 Grant of the Third asked the question. Wegg was rubbing his shin painfully. The fags had ad-

joined to the football ground to watch a match that was going on between the Sixth and Fifth. Wegg, as the recipient of the injury in the Common-room, was a distinguished person at present. He had a lump on his shin, dark and painful, and had already shown it to half the fags at Rook-

wood.

"Not much," said Wegg. "I can stand it, though! Little beast, kicken! a fellow's shins!"

"Rotten!" said Algy Silver—Jimmy's cousin in the Third, who had joined the fag crowd on the football-ground. "I'd have boiled him in oil!"

"You jolly well ragged him!" said Grant, with satisfaction.

"We did, rather!" assented Pipkin.  
 "You kids are wanted!" said a gruff voice behind the group—as Arthur Edward Lovell of the Fourth came up.

The fags gave him defiant looks.  
 "That's the sneaking little hooligan's major!" jeered Pipkin.

"You ought to keep your minor in better order, Lovell!" said Silver II., with a patronising air. "He'll get lynched in the Third if he goes on like this!"

"Mr. Bohun wants you lot in his study!" growled Lovell, angry and ashamed of his errand.

"What lot?" asked Jimmy's cousin.  
 "All who were in the ragging?"

"Have you told Bohun?" yelled Grant, in amazement and wrath.

"Of course I haven't, you little rotter!" growled Lovell. "Confound your cheek, I've a good mind—"

"Then how does he know anything about it?" demanded Stacey.

Lovell did not reply to that.

"I've given you your Form-master's message," he said, and turned away.

"Did your minor sneak to him?" howled Grant.

Without answering, Lovell strode off, his ears burning. The fags looked at one another with feelings almost too deep for words.

"Well, you're in for it!" said Silver II. "Better go and get it over. If that young cad's sneaked we'll make his life not worth living in the Third."

Wegg & Co., with rather dismal, as well as vengeful faces, started for the School House. Silver II. resumed watching the football, passing cheeky comments on the senior play as the game proceeded, and occasionally remarking, in a patronising tone, "Rather good, Bukeley. Not bad that, Knowles! Go it, Hansom! Are you falling asleep?"

The hapless fags fled into their Form-master's study, Wegg limping. The damage to his shin made Wegg limp a little, but as he arrived at Mr. Bohun's door he limped a lot—quite an artistic, anguished limp. If Teddy Lovell had sneaked, Wegg did not see why Mr. Bohun should not know the whole story, and his limp was for Mr. Bohun's special behoof.

"Come in, all of you!" said the Third Form master severely. "Wegg, Lovell minor states that—"

"Kindly keep still, Wegg! What do you mean by tottering about my study in that ridiculous way?"

"I—I can't help it, sir!" said Wegg, with a moan.

"What do you mean? Is there anything the matter with your leg?"

"Yes, sir!"  
 "Bless my soul! What is it?"

"I—I'd rather not say, sir! I'm not a sneak, sir!" said Wegg, with a grim look at Teddy Lovell.

Have You Seen the Rookwood Story in This Week's "Boys' Friend" ?



"Nonsense! What is the matter, Wegg? Tell me at once!"

"My shin's been hacked, sir," said Wegg, with affected reluctance.

"Show it me!"

James Wegg pulled back his trouser-leg, and displayed the injury. It was a very ugly-looking bruise, and the Form-master's brow darkened as he looked at it.

"Good heavens! You have been kicked very brutally, Wegg! Who did this?"

"Oh, sir, I—I'd rather not say!"

"I shall certainly insist upon knowing, Wegg. However, let that remain for a moment. I sent for you all because Lovell minor states that he was set upon, and used roughly, in the Common-room."

The fags gave Teddy glances of utter disgust and scorn, which made the new junior's ears tingle, in spite of himself. Grant shook a fist at him behind Wegg's back.

"You were all concerned in this," continued Mr. Bohun. "I require to know the reason of this unmannerly usage of a new boy."

"Hasn't Lovell minor told you, sir?" asked Wegg craftily.

"He has told me he was attacked."

"Well, he knows why, sir!" said Wegg, and he put on a really artistic stagger, in order to draw attention to his injury once more.

Then Mr. Bohun understood.

"Lovell, minor!" he rapped out. "Was it you who caused that injury to Wegg?"

"I kicked him," said Teddy sulkily.

"Was that before the ragging?"

Teddy Lovell did not reply, but the Third Form fags answered in a sort of chorus:

"Oh, yes, sir! That was why."

"I think I understand," said Mr. Bohun. "Lovell minor, what explanation have you to give of this brutal action?"

Teddy's eyes began to gleam. Quite unexpectedly, he found himself in the position of accused, instead of accuser.

"He was punching me, sir!" he grunted.

"Do you mean that you were fighting with?"

"Ye-es, sir!"

"And you kicked a boy you were fighting with?" exclaimed Mr. Bohun, raising his voice.

"I didn't want to fight him," said Teddy sulkily. "He made me!"

"Sneak!" came in a hiss from the Third-Formers.

"Silence! Wegg, if you forced him—"

"He called me names, sir," said Wegg; "and I wasn't hurting him—not much. He called me names!"

"It appears," said Mr. Bohun, in a deep voice, "that you quarrelled with your Form-fellows, Lovell minor; that you fought with Wegg, and that you kicked him in a brutal and cowardly manner. I am not surprised that the other boys ragged you, as you call it. You have been guilty of a detestable action!"

The fags grinned at one another. "Old Bohun" evidently wasn't such a bad sort after all, they considered.

Teddy stared at his Form master, almost speechless with rage and dismay. He had not expected this. He had come there to demand punishment on all who had ventured to lay hands on his lordly person. And now—

"Ragging," continued Mr. Bohun, "cannot be allowed. You will take fifty lines each."

"Yes, sir!" murmured the fags.

They did not mind fifty lines very much.

"And you, Lovell minor, will be caned," said Mr. Bohun. "You have acted disgracefully. Wegg, go to the matron at once and show her your bruise, and request her, in my name, to do what she can for the injury. You others may go. Lovell minor, hold out your hand!"

Mr. Bohun picked up his cane.

Quite a jocular gang of fags streamed out of the study. Teddy Lovell stared at his master. He could not quite realise the situation.

"Do you hear me, Lovell minor?" snapped out Mr. Bohun.

"I—I—" stuttered Teddy.

"Hold out your hand at once!"

It was on Teddy's lips to refuse; but, fortunately for himself, he did not utter the refusal. His hand came out slowly, but it came.

Swish!

"Now the other hand!"

"I—I—I—"

"Obey me, boy!"

Swish!

Mr. Bohun laid down the cane.

"Now you may go," he said. "Remember,

Lovell minor, that if you allow yourself to act like a hooligan again, your punishment will be more severe!"

Lovell minor did not answer. He quitted the study, squeezing his hands, his heart full to bursting with rage and bitterness.

**THE SIXTH CHAPTER.**  
**The Order of the Boot!**

"HERE'S old Lovell!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. were rambling among the quarries on Coombe Heath, when Arthur Edward Lovell was sighted in the distance.

Lovell was striding along, with his hands driven deep into his pockets and a moody frown on his brow. Jimmy Silver whistled shrilly, and Lovell glanced up and caught sight of his chums. He joined them, with a nod.

"You've come, after all," said Newcome.

"Yes," said Lovell curtly.

The Co. did not ask any questions about Teddy. Lovell's look was enough to tell them that there had been unpleasant happenings at Rookwood, and that he did not wish to talk on the subject.

The Fistical Four rambled on the heath, more or less cheerily; Lovell's gloom mood cast its shadow over his chums. The sun was sinking beyond the hills when they turned their steps in the direction of Rookwood.

The juniors were following a footpath across the fields from the wood towards Coombe Lane, which brought them within view of the garden gate of the Bird-in-Hand, at the back of the inn, when three figures slipped quietly from the gate, and hurried up the path. They were Peele, Lattrey, and Gower, of the Classical Fourth, sneaking away from the inn after their surreptitious visit there. Lovell's eyes glittered as he saw them.

"Those cads!" he said. "They were going to take my minor there this afternoon. I suppose he was late—"

"Well, he didn't go, after all," said Jimmy Silver.

"They were going to take him, though!" Lovell quickened his steps.

"What are you up to?" asked Raby.

"Look here, we want to get in to tea. We're late already."

"Get in to tea, then! I'm going to punch those cads! I told them I would if they didn't leave my minor alone!"

"Oh, bother!" grunted Raby.

But Lovell's chums hurried on with him to overtake Peele & Co.

The three black sheep looked round with rather startled expressions as they heard hurrying footsteps behind them. They were relieved to find that the pursuers were only their Form-fellows. Their guilty consciences had pictured a prefect or a master.

"Hallo, you chaps!" said Lattrey.

"You've been to the Bird-in-Hand—out of bounds!" said Lovell.

"Have they made you a prefect, by any chance?" growled Peele.

"You were going to take my minor there!" "Take him!" sneered Lattrey. "We were going to let him come! He didn't want much takin'. Oh, you rotter!"

Bump!

Lattrey went down in the grass heavily, as Arthur Edward Lovell hit out. He stayed there.

"Now, you two!" said Lovell, who was evidently on the war-path, and not disposed to count odds.

Peele and Gower backed away in alarm.

"Look here, you fool—" stuttered Peele. Lovell rushed on.

The two slackers of the Fourth tackled him together, as there was no help for it. But they did not fare very well. In a couple of minutes they were on the ground, and Lovell was glaring down at them.

"You so much as speak to my minor again!" said Lovell, breathing hard. "Look out, if you do! Every time I hear of it, I'll go for you—like that! You'll get tired of it in the long run!"

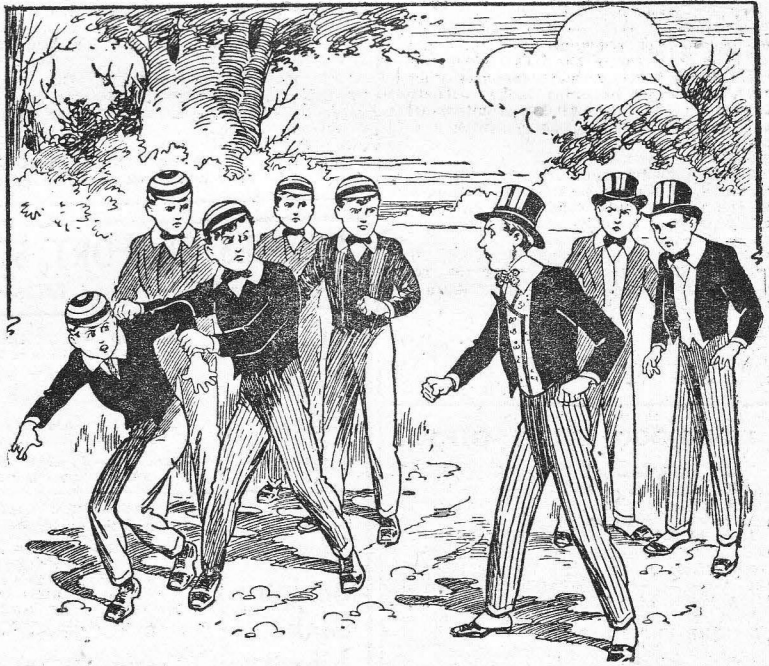
"Hang your minor!" gasped Lattrey. "Keep the sneaking little scoundrel away from our study! Speak to him! He's not fit for a decent chap to speak to!"

Lovell drew back his boot, and Jimmy Silver caught his arm, and hurried him on.

The Fistical Four tramped on to Rookwood, Peele & Co. following more slowly, dabbing their noses as they followed.

Lovell's drastic measures were rather effective. It was highly probable that the black sheep of the Fourth would drop the acquaintance of Lovell minor. Encounters like this were rather too high a price to pay for the doubtful pleasure of Teddy's society.

Teddy Lovell was hanging about the Fourth Form passage when Jimmy Silver & Co. came in. He gave the Fistical Four a dark look, and turned away to avoid his brother. Lovell tramped on up the passage doggedly, with his chums. He, on his side, was not



A BIG HANDFUL FOR THE CO. ! Smythe & Co. turned round and looked at the Fistical Four and their yelling prisoner in amazement. "Oh gad! What's this, game?" asked Tracy. "Bullying your minor, Lovell—what?" "Help me, you fellows!" yelled Teddy Lovell. (See Chapter 2.)

pecially desirous of speaking to Teddy just then.

"Waiting for the merry sportsmen—what?" giggled Tubby Muffin, as he passed the fag. "Banker in the study—what?—Mind a prefect doesn't catch you! He, he, he!"

"Haden't you better cut out, young fellow?" said Kit Erroll good-naturedly.

Teddy grunted, and went into Study No. 1, to wait for his Fourth Form friends there.

The Giddy Goats came in at last. Teddy had not ventured to light the gas. The study was deeply dusky, and the black sheep of the Fourth did not observe him at first. Peele was muttering an oath, as he felt for the matches and lighted the gas.

Then the Fourth-Formers saw their visitor. Teddy looked at them rather timidly. The three juniors were showing signs of the trouble with Arthur Edward Lovell, though Teddy did not guess, then, what had happened. And the trio were in a vile temper.

"You!" ejaculated Peele savagely. "I—I was late this afternoon," faltered Teddy. "My brother kept me. I'm sorry I missed you chaps, but—"

"Hang your brother, and you, too!" "Wha-a-at!"

"Get out of this!" growled Gower, rubbing his nose.

Teddy blinked at them. This was a change, with a vengeance.

"I—I—" he began.

"Kick him out!" muttered Gower. "That bullying brute, Lovell, may look in any minute, and if he finds him here—"

"I don't care if he does!" said Teddy. "Don't you?" sneered Gower. "Well, we do! We're not going to fight your confounded brother regularly every day on your account, I can tell you!"

"Have—have you been fighting him?" faltered Teddy.

"You scrubby little cad!" said Cyril Peele, in concentrated tones. "We only took you up to make your brother wild! Do you think we want sneaking little fags in this study? Out you go!"

Teddy jumped back as Peele made a stride towards him.

The change of front in the Giddy Goats' study almost dazed the hapless fag.

Peele followed him up, and grasped him by the collar, spinning him round towards the door. Peele had made up his mind that Lovell minor had to be dropped—lest worse should befall him. And, having made up his mind to that, he had no reason to hide, further, the contempt and dislike he felt for Lovell's brother.

He spun Teddy, yelling, to the door. "Let go, you bully!" yelled Teddy. "I'll kick your shins! I'll—"

"Will you?" said Peele grimly.

He dropped Teddy on his feet in the doorway, and drew back his foot. His boot landed on the fag, and Lovell minor went spinning out into the passage, with a wild howl.

The door slammed on him.

Teddy Lovell collapsed against the opposite wall. There was no welcome for him now in the Giddy Goats' study, and to the end study he was angrily resolved not to go, and downstairs he knew what kind of welcome awaited him among the Third. The fury in his breast died away in utter wretchedness, as he limped away down the stairs.

THE END.

(You simply must not miss next week's splendid Rookwood story. The title is "The Sneak of the Third!" Tell your pals!)

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THE POPULAR.—No. 251.

**MAULY—SWOT!**

(Continued from page 7.)

"I'm not going!" he howled frantically. "I'm not going!"

But he went, all the same. He couldn't help himself! The Famous Five and Todd rushed the yelling Bunter along the passages to the Head's study. They burst in like an avalanche, and Bunter sat on the Head's floor with a bump.

Mauleverer was in the study with his uncle. Wingate was there, too, and Mr. Quelch. The Head sprang to his feet.

"Good gracious, what is the meaning of this disgraceful—"

"It's all right, sir!" panted Harry Wharton. "We've brought Bunter here!"

"Wharton, how dare you!"

"Bunter opened that letter of Wingate's, sir!" exclaimed Peter Todd. "He's admitted it!"

"I haven't!" roared Bunter.

Wingate strode forward, a black frown on his brow. He yanked Billy Bunter to his feet with a jerk.

"No lies, Bunter!" he said sharply. "Did you open that letter?"

"I—I—" "Did you open it?" thundered Wingate.

"Ye-es, Wingate!" gasped Bunter weakly. "I didn't see anything, though! I thought that if— I only undid the flap and took something out! Then North came along!"

Dr. Locke sprang forward.

"What is that?" he exclaimed. "You admit that you opened the letter, Bunter?"

"Yes, sir!"

"And North came along the next moment?"

"Yes, sir," said Bunter faintly.

"Then Mauleverer couldn't possibly have seen the exam papers," said Wingate. "By Jove, I'm glad! So you were telling the truth all along, Mauleverer! I'm awfully sorry I doubted you!"

"Begad, that's all right, Wingate!" said Mauly easily, as lighthearted as a sandboy now that his troubles had disappeared. "The evidence was black against me. It was all my fault, though, begad, for forgetting to give you the letter!"

"I'm glad, Mauleverer," said the Head quietly. "You may go just as soon as you like, and I must deal with Bunter as he deserves."

Bunter shivered.

"I shall give him a sound thrashing, which, I trust, will make him think carefully before

he opens other people's letters another time," said the Head grimly.

"Begad, you're a good 'un, Toddy!" exclaimed Mauleverer. "These chaps are all good 'uns, nunky! They've saved me!"

They left the Head's study, and soon a series of anguished howls arose. They were quite audible where the Famous Five, Todd, Mauleverer, and his uncle were standing.

"Did I tell you, my dear fellows," asked Lord Mauleverer, "I'm not a pauper, after all, you know? That was all some silly jape!"

Peter Todd grinned—he guessed that the truth was out.

"And I think I can lay hands on the culprit," chuckled Sir Reginald Brooke.

"Yes; I wrote that letter, Mauly," said Todd easily. "At least, I had it typed. And Reggie Coker signed it, so that it was all above board. We didn't say that you were a pauper, you know—we only said that it would be awful if you did find yourself to be one!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Begad, I feel so relieved that I forgive you, Toddy!" drawled Mauleverer.

"I've proved my contention, anyhow," said Todd. "You can work when you like, Mauly—so when we want anything done in a hurry, we'll come to you!"

"Begad!"

Lord Mauleverer felt himself again with twenty pounds in his pocket. His furniture was restored to its original place the very next day, and Mauly took care that he didn't do the work himself.

Without any delay he had resumed his old place as slacker of the Remove. And the rest of the juniors rather liked him better in that capacity. He seemed more like the old Mauly.

And that night his lordship stood a magnificent feed to a select circle of friends; and Billy Bunter had the nerve to seek an invitation. Needless to say, he was at once barred.

Mauleverer had had enough of Bunter to last him quite a long time.

THE END.

(The great investigator, Ferrers Locke, at Greyfriars School next Tuesday. You must turn to page 2 and read the particulars of the coming story of Harry Wharton & Co.)

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

**The Story.**

**A**S the buccaneer returned the young boy's firm handclasp, he saw before him a youth who could not have been more than sixteen years of age, with a frank, open countenance and fearless eyes. Instantly Morgan took a strange liking to the boy, and, judging by the expression of Harry's face, the liking was returned.

"I came to tell you, sir," said Harry, turning to his father, "that the Carolus should be afloat within the hour, for even now the sea is a foot deep around her."

There was an almost fanatical light in the old man's eyes as he listened to his son's words. Then, raising his hand, he said solemnly:

"So we renew the quest for the murderer of my firstborn!"

Barney and his captain stared at each other in mute astonishment. So this was why the gentle-looking knight and his youthful son sailed the Carib Sea! They had come to hunt down one who had murdered their kin. And as he looked at father and son, Morgan felt a sudden misgiving. Would this frail old man and this young lad be able to hold that rough crew of theirs in check? The buccaneer had seen enough to know that it wanted but a spark to set the men—the scum of the seas that they were—upon their captain and his son. It was in fact only Sir Robert's dauntless bearing that kept the dogs to heel but an hour or so ago. He could but suppose that in his haste to track down the murderer of his eldest son, the knight had got what men he could. And, even if he kept his crew in hand, would they stand by him as he fought the Dons?

That the Spaniards had done Sir Robert's

son to death, Morgan did not doubt. He turned sympathetically to the knight.

"Know you the Don who did this dastard deed?"

At Morgan's question the old man's eyes flashed fire, he drew himself upright and looked the buccaneer straight in the face. "Captain Henry," he said in clear tones, "the murder of my son Charles was no work of the Spaniards."

"No work of the Spaniards?" repeated Morgan incredulously. What did the old man mean? There was no one but the Dons in that part of the world—at least no enemy of the English, for the natives hated their Spanish masters with an undying hatred. Then, as Barney's eyes put the question, Morgan asked gently:

"But who else would do so foul a deed, Sir Robert?"

The old man trembled with passion, then, in almost articulate tones:

"A renegade who calls himself an Englishman, sir," he cried. "Would that these hands could tear the life from his vile body!" And, throwing himself into a chair, he buried his head in his hands. Harry tried to soothe him as best he could, and presently, mastering his emotion, Sir Robert turned to Morgan.

"I crave your indulgence, captain, but Charles was my first born," he said with simple dignity.

Morgan nodded sympathetically; then, when Sir Robert was more composed, he came a step nearer.

"Perchance I can help you to your vengeance, sir, for I know most of the English in this part of the world."

The knight looked up a trifle sharply.

"Methought you said you were a trader from England," he replied, half-questioningly. Then, raising his voice, he asked:

"Know you where to find that fiend, Captain Morgan? Morgan o' the Main they call him!"

For a moment Morgan thought that the knight had taken leave of his senses. He looked at the old man in amazement, too taken aback to do more than stare. So Morgan was accused of this foul murder!

The thing was too absurd for words—Sir Robert's troubles must have driven him mad!

As for Barney, his face was a picture. Surprise and resentment, and a fierce anger that his idolised captain should be accused of so dastardly a deed struggled for mastery.

"And so this Morgan is the murderer of your son?" said the buccaneer at last, after a moment's tense silence.

The knight rose, and laid a trembling hand on Morgan's arm.

"Show him to me," he implored, "and I shall be eternally your debtor."

But Morgan, innocent though he was, knew that now was not the right moment to reveal himself.

"I have heard of Morgan many a time," said the buccaneer quietly; "but, whatever his faults, it never has been said that he killed men in cold blood."

"But I say that the fiend has," stormed the knight, heedless of his son's restraining touch.

"When his brig took the packet in which Charles was voyaging to Port Royal, with despatches for Sir Jamie Fergusson, the Governor, Morgan, after forcing the rest of his captives to walk the plank, carronaded my poor boy!"

And the old man's voice broke into a sob.

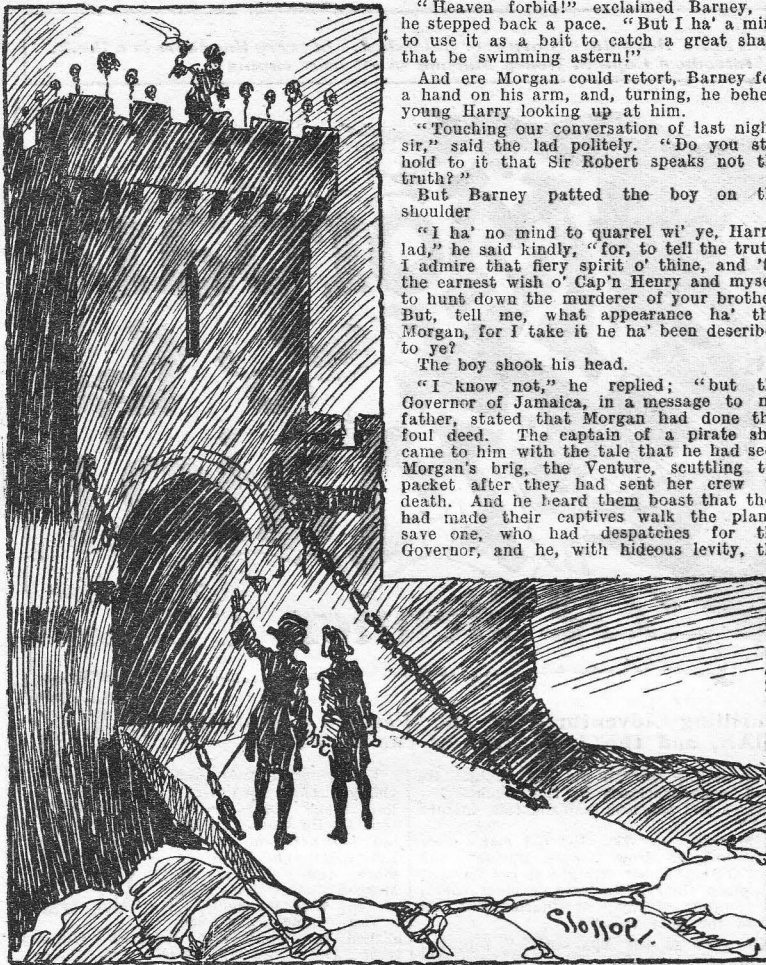
This last accusation was more than Barney could stand—he could keep silent no longer.

"Blister me, Sir



Another Long Instalment of Our Grand New Pirate Serial Next Week!

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Morgan and Harry reached the castle on the top of the hill, and immediately there was a great bustle from behind the walls. The drawbridge was lowered, and they made their way across it. The buccaneer stopped half-way and pointed upwards. "Those things are the heads of all monsieur's enemies, Harry!" he remarked. (See page 27.)

knight!" he cried. "But do ye mean to tell Cap'n Morgan placed men alive in the barrel o' a great gun and fired them to pieces? If ye do, 'tis a lie!"

"'Tis no lie!" flared up the lad, who had hitherto been silent. "And you who call my father liar, I cast it back in your teeth!" And, throwing back his head, Harry glared defiance at the tall Barney.

But Sir Robert sharply bade his son be silent, and, turning to Morgan with a pale smile—

"'Tis the hot blood of youth, captain," he apologised. "I know you must be tired; so, if it please you, we will continue our conversation in the morn'."

And taking them both aboard the *Carolus*, which was now afloat, he gave them each a cabin. And hardly had their heads touched the pallet when they were fast asleep.

When they woke the sun was high in the heavens, and the *Carolus* some distance from land, and laying a course for Jamaica. Morgan, attired in clothes that Sir Robert had sent to his cabin, felt a new man, and Barney, his wound washed and newly bandaged, was in high spirits.

"Sink me, cap'n!" he cried, as he encountered Morgan on the deck; "but do I see ye in a periwig?"

"You do, Barney mine," answered his captain. "And 'tis mighty becoming, is it not?"

"Ye might give me the old one—the one ye said was the latest fashion in London town," said Barney.

"So ho, Barney," smiled Morgan. "And shall we dub you man of fashion after all?"

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"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Barney, as he stepped back a pace. "But I ha' a mind to use it as a bait to catch a great shark that be swimming astern!"

And ere Morgan could retort, Barney felt a hand on his arm, and, turning, he beheld young Harry looking up at him.

"Touching our conversation of last night, sir," said the lad politely. "Do you still hold to it that Sir Robert speaks not the truth?"

But Barney patted the boy on the shoulder

"I ha' no mind to quarrel wi' ye, Harry, lad," he said kindly, "for, to tell the truth, I admire that fiery spirit o' thine, and 'tis the earnest wish o' Cap'n Henry and myself to hunt down the murderer of your brother. But, tell me, what appearance ha' this Morgan, for I take it he ha' been described to ye?"

The boy shook his head.

"I know not," he replied; "but the Governor of Jamaica, in a message to my father, stated that Morgan had done this foul deed. The captain of a pirate ship came to him with the tale that he had seen Morgan's brig, the *Venture*, scuttling the packet after they had sent her crew to death. And he heard them boast that they had made their captives walk the plank, save one, who had despatches for the Governor, and he, with hideous levity, the

not do to say who he was. For if he told Sir Robert the story of Ollon's death he must at the same time reveal that he himself was Morgan o' the Main. And then the knight would think that he but used the dead Ollon to hide his own crime.

No, he would wait until they reached Jamaica, when he would be able to prove that he had nothing to do with the death of the unfortunate Charles.

There was not the slightest doubt that the half-breed was the villain, and that he had used Morgan to cloak his own vile misdeeds. And had not Barney told him that it was a custom of the brutes to kill all his captives so that none be left alive to speak against him; and had not his mate told him further that Ollon had been roused to have captured English ships? The murderous dog had met the fate he so well deserved, when, after failing to betray him to the Dons, he had jumped into the sea to escape the hanging which was his due—and the sharks had done the rest.

"When we reach Jamaica," said Morgan, "I will give you proofs that the murderer of your son is dead."

And with that the knight had to be contented.

### Mutiny on the High Seas

FOR two days the *Carolus* kept on her way, and though Sir Robert often glanced at Morgan with a puzzled look in his shrewd eyes, he was courtesy itself. Harry made no secret of his liking for Captain Morgan, and the two became inseparable companions, with Barney a rather silent third. Jo and Jupe, though they cared not for their messmates, speedily made themselves at home, and it seemed that the ship would come to Jamaica without mishap.

Strange to say, they caught no sight of the *Don*, and Barney, whose leg was nearly well again, took to grumbling a little at what he termed inaction. But on the third day came a sudden change.

Jo made his way to the poop deck and asked to speak with Captain Henry; and, as Morgan took him apart, he saw that the man was bursting with news.

"Cap'n," he began, after a hasty glance round to see that none of the crew were near, "there be mischief afoot among the seam forrard."

"Then we must even deal with it," answered Morgan lightly, though he knew that Jo would not have sought him out without good cause.

"Red-Beard hath sworn vengeance on Sir Robert, and ye as well," went on the sailor earnestly, "and he hath the crew with him. There be only Jupe and I to reckon on, and though the rogues keep us out o' their counsels I ha' learnt that 'tis their hope to take the ship and sail her for a pirate—but when they mean to strike I know not."

Barney's eyes lit up when Morgan called him over to hear what Jo said.

"Rot me, cap'n," he cried exultantly, then at Morgan's glance his voice became a hoarse whisper; "but we'll teach the rogues to play at pirates!"

But hardly had the grin left Barney's face when the whole fore-part of the ship became alive with men. Armed with cutlasses and pikes, and here and there a pistol or so, for Sir Robert kept the firearms under lock and key, they surged forward in a yelling mob.

Red-Beard, that beard of his waving in the breeze like an oriflamme, roared to them to carry the poop and put those upon it to the sword. The man must have seen Jo speaking to Morgan, and, fearing that his plans were known, had taken the bull by the horns.

"On my bully boys!" he roared lustily; "but leave the old cock to me!" And he pointed with his cutlass to Sir Robert, who had rushed to the gangway that led to the lower deck.

Then, as they swarmed round the foot of the ladder, a sturdy figure forced its way through them, and, though some stabbed viciously and others tried to seize him, Jupe swarmed up like a monkey and ran to Morgan's side. Then, with Sir Robert in the middle, the five prepared to sell their lives dearly.

The Story that has made a World-wide Sensation—"Morgan o' the Main!"



**A Fight for Life!**

FOR a moment the yelling pack hesitated, but Red-Beard darted to the ladder and howled to his men to charge. With yells of rage they made an ugly rush for the poop. Sir Robert's pistol flashed, and one went down with a bullet through his arm; the next moment the air was filled with wild shouts. Again and again they tried to cut their few opponents down, Red-Beard all the while striving to get at Sir Robert himself. And as Morgan and those with him, firing with unerring aim, dropped their assailants, there came a sudden cry from behind them. Turning his head for a second, Morgan saw young Harry, who for the moment they had forgotten, at death grips with a huge ruffian. The helmsman, leaving the ship to look to herself, had sprung upon the youngster. But Harry ran the man through in a second, and hardly had the body reached the deck when the lad himself had seized the helm. For the Carolus, bereft of a guiding hand, was dipping to all points of the compass, like a nervous debutante at Court.

"Bravely done, Harry lad!" cried Morgan, as the vessel came up to her helm.

So terrible was the execution done to the rebel rats that after a while the crew began to falter.

"On, ye rats!" Red-Beard bellowed, as he saw them hesitate. "Or 'tis Execution Dock for the lot o' ye!"

And, spurred by his words, they made another rush, and though the defenders poured a hot fire upon them, with yells and execrations they gained a footing on the upper deck. Hurling their now useless pistols into the surging sea of faces, the five fought wildly against the surging crowd. But the end could not be long delayed, for Sir Robert fell to the deck sorely wounded.

They made a last desperate effort, and drove the mutineers back to the waist again. As they stayed snarling with baffled rage, Red-Beard, who throughout had shown skill worthy of better things, gave a sudden order.

"Over the side with ye!"

As a dozen of them leapt to obey the order Barney gave a hoarse chuckle.

"So they find it too hot eh, cap'n?" he cried.

"I think not," said Morgan quietly. "Red-Beard means to take us in the rear."

Even as the mutineers charged up the ladder once again there came a cry from Harry at the helm:

"They're boarding from the sea!"

In a moment a dripping figure hauled itself aboard, then another, and yet another. And all along the bulwarks others did the same.

Leaving the ship to look to herself, Harry rushed upon the foremost, and as he did, Morgan ran to his side.

"Back to back, lad!" panted the buccaneer.

And back to back they fought as men possessed. First one and then the other went down before those flashing blades. Young though he was, Harry was a wonderful swordsman. Speedily four of their assailants lay gasping on the deck, and as the others for a moment drew back, with a yell of triumph Red-Beard and those with him, carried the poop.

"On, ye rats!" cried he. "We ha' them at last!"

As Mate Barney and the twain retreated step by step, Sir Robert—who was seriously wounded—by painful effort, reached his cabin. Then when Red-Beard bellowed for a last effort, the knight's pale face appeared in the cabin doorway.

"Hold!" he cried.

There was no denying the old man's tone, and with one accord the mutineers lowered their weapons. Red-Beard thrust himself to the fore.

"How now, old dotard?" he said roughly. "We ha' ye like rats in a trap!"

But, holding on to the door-post for support, the old knight looked scornfully at the other.

"So you think, traitor," he said quietly, but with such meaning that the rascals shivered with an unknown fear. Then, with a painful effort, he threw the cabin door wide.

"Look inside, ye dogs!" he cried, in a terrible voice. "And when ye look, say what prayers ye know!"

Then, as the mutineers gazed at him in stunned surprise, Red-Beard—with a hoarse laugh—placed a foot in the doorway.

And there, on a narrow strip of wood, he saw a lighted candle. And the strip of wood was placed across the open mouth of a large locker, which they use on ships to store arms or ammunition.

For the moment Red-Beard's swarthy face turned a sickly yellow. A look of horror came to his eyes—then, on the instant, a hand dropped to his belt.

But the knight was watching him as a cat a mouse. Before the man could draw his weapon, Sir Robert pointed with drawn sword to the flickering candle.

"One false move," he said, "and yon candle falls in to the locker! And the powder which is there will send you all to Kingdom Come!"

The whole body of them fell back in terror at the old knight's dauntless speech. Their tongues clove to the roofs of their mouths with fear, for they knew that Sir Robert would not hesitate to carry out his threat.

"Leave the old man be!" they cried to Red-Beard. "Ask what terms he may want?"

"Terms!" cried the old knight, and his voice became almost a whisper as he went on: "I make no terms with mutinous dogs! Down with your weapons!"

But even as the words left Sir Robert's lips he pitched forward into Red-Beard's arms—dead!

For a moment the villain held him close, then quenching the guttering candle, he let the body fall to the floor. With a cry of triumph he rushed from the cabin.

"Cut them down!" he roared. "He will trouble us no more!"

But, on the instant, a stern command rang out:

"Stay, ye dogs!"

Morgan forced a way through the press of men with Harry at his side. The lad flung himself down by the side of his dead father, while the buccaneer, touching the snarling Red-Beard on the shoulder, pointed to the sea.

"A visitor for you, Red-Beard!" he said curly.

Following the buccaneer's gaze, Red-Beard looked across the heaving waves.

There, barely half a mile away, was a huge ship bearing straight down upon them!

Like a man in a trance, Red-Beard stood watching the oncoming vessel, while with cries and exclamations, his mates crowded the bulwarks. What ship was this that had stolen upon them like a thief in the night? And as they looked, a cry of horror rose from the mutineers' throats, for as the new-comer came up to her helm, rows of grinning cannon showed themselves at her ports.

"'Tis a curst King's ship!" cried one, in terror. "We be taken like rats in a trap!"

Then suddenly there came a hoarse cry of relief from Red-Beard, who had been studying the oncoming vessel closely.

"Rot ye, for cowards!" he cried. "'Tis no King's ship, but a jolly pirate the same as we mean to be, for look 'ee?" he screamed, pointing with a grimy hand, "she's flung Black Roger to her mizzen!"

Taking heart of grace, the mutineers saw the pirate symbol fluttering in the breeze. Once more they turned to cut down Morgan and his men, but lithe as a panther the buccaneer sprang to the rail, and placing hands to his mouth, hailed across the sea:

"Ahoj there—the Venture!"

Harry jumped to his feet in startled surprise, and the mutineers fell back in terror, and the next moment a hundred figures sprang into the rigging of the oncoming brig.

Then a mighty roar came from over the waters:

"'Tis Morgan—Cap'n Morgan!"



The newcomer rushed into the centre of the room. "Monsieur Oregon!" he cried. "On guard, and let me kill you for the thief you are!" The Governor sprang to his feet. "Pierre!" he said. Hardly was the word out of his mouth when the floor on which the angry man stood collapsed, and with a shriek he went hurtling to the depths below. (See page 27.)

**Morgan Makes a New Friend!**

**I**N response to Morgan's hail, the Venture ran alongside, and as she came the mutineers of the Carolus looked at each other with terror in their eyes.

For he who had called himself Captain Henry; the man they had striven so hard to kill, was none other than that fierce buccaneer Morgan o' the Main!

The surging mob sprang from the Venture's shrouds and flung themselves to the deck of the Carolus. The terrified mutineers threw down their weapons, and turning tail fled to hide themselves. At Morgan's orders, Red-Beard was seized, and as men led him away, the buccaneer felt a grasp on his arm.

Harry Trevoise stood trembling by his side. "Why, Harry lad!" said he. But, with a cry, the youth interrupted him.

"Is it true," he asked hoarsely, "that you are Morgan?"

"Even so, Harry lad," said Barney, with a chuckle. "Morgan o' the Main at your service!"

Harry flung off the buccaneer's arm as if stung.

"Captain Morgan," he cried furiously, "you said that the murderer of my brother was dead! But now I know that you said so to hide your own vile deed!" Then, springing back, he tore his rapier from his sheath.

"Dastard!" he shouted. "On guard, or I kill you like a dog!"

Morgan looked quietly at the boy for a moment, then went up to him:

"I am at your mercy," said he, with a strange smile, "so you can prick me with your bodkin if you wish!"

Furious though he was with one whom he thought to be the murderer of his brother, Harry could not meet the buccaneer's eyes. He felt a hot flush come over him, but with an effort he threw back his head, and cried defiantly:

"It came from the Governor of Jamaica that you captured the packet Gloria, and killed my brother in cold blood."

"Sink me! But if he said so, the governor be a liar!" cried a voice from the crew, and as they turned their heads to see who had spoken, a short, one-armed man forced his way into the open.

"Young Springald," he said, as he looked Harry in the face, "let me tell ye that the packet Gloria was not taken by Cap'n Morgan, but by a Frenchie named Ollon!"

There was no mistaking the ring of truth about the man's words, and as Harry turned shamefacedly to Morgan, the buccaneer rapped out the question.

"What know you of Ollon?"

"What do I know o' him?" said Shortlegs shortly. "I sailed w' the dog on that cruise."

Blushing more furiously than ever, Harry threw his rapier to the deck, then, lifting his head, he looked around him.

"Captain Morgan, I ask your pardon!" he cried.

The buccaneer stepped forward and seized Harry's hand in a grip that made the lad wince. Then as he returned the warm handshake, Harry spoke again.

"Captain," said he, and his voice was pleading, "my vengeance is done. The murderer of my brother has gone to his death. Have you room for a masterless man among your lads?"

Then, the Venture's crew roaring their appreciation, Harry Trevoise, of Polruan, in the Duchy of Cornwall, took service with the very man he had sworn to kill.

Sir Robert was buried at sea. With some of Morgan's men on board in charge of the thoroughly cowed mutineers—for they saw the body of their one-time leader swinging from the yard, where Morgan had hung him for his crimes, and the buccaneer had threatened them with a same fate if they dared make trouble again—the Carolus made for Jamaica, there to await her owner's return, and Harry Trevoise sailed as gentleman adventurer with Morgan on his good ship, the Venture.

**The Challenge!**

**H**ER head to the eastward, and a good breeze behind her, the Venture sped through the creaming seas. Harry was standing by Morgan's side on the poop when the buccaneer drew a packet from his blue surcoat.

"Barney!" called Morgan, and as the mate came up he opened the letter, for letter it was. "Hast ever received a cartel?"

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"Cartel!" snorted the mate. "What should I be doing with cartels? If I challenge a man I do so by word o' mouth. A fig for your cartels!"

"List to this, then. 'Twill be something new to you." And with that Morgan commenced to read:

"From his Excellency Don Jose de Firando, Admiral of Spain, to Captain Henry Morgan, of the buccaneers.

"Greeting!

"Whereas by the machinations of the Evil One himself you have escaped the fate which is your due, I, Don Jose de Firando, challenge you to meet me in mortal combat to decide the issue between us. And if you are willing the said combat to take place at the island Tortuga, within a month from the receipt by you of this cartel, Monsieur Philippe Oregon, Governor of Tortuga, to decide the manner of the duel. Each of the combatants is to have but one attendant. And should you fail to accept this cartel, I, Don Jose de Firando, Admiral of Spain, dub you coward and poltroon.

"Given on my carrack the San Salvador, at Carthagena."

As Morgan ceased there was dead silence for the space of a minute. Then Barney, recovering from his astonishment, burst into a hoarse laugh.

"Blister me!" he exclaimed. "But the admiral ha' taken leave o' his senses to think that ye will thrust yourself into his clutches again!"

Morgan looked up to his mate's face with a smile.

"On the contrary, Barney mine," said he lightly. "I have a mind to try another fall with Master Admiral."

"Rot ye, cap'n!" shouted Barney. "Tall's the right word, for fall it will be. Why, a babe could see that 'tis a simple trap to take ye once again!"

And Harry, who had listened to all this in amaze, felt that the mate was right.

"Monsieur Philippe Oregon!" sneered the angry mate. "Why, old 'Skin the Goat,' Governor o' Tortuga though he be, would sell his miserly soul for a couple of doubloons, and well ye know it, Cap'n Morgan." And Barney pointed an accusing finger at his smiling captain.

"Gently, Barney, my old war-dog, gently!" retorted Morgan. "I know that 'tis on my account that you work yourself up so. But, Barney, Monsieur Oregon is friend to we buccaneers. Even had Don Jose tempted him with untold wealth he dare not play traitor to me. The brethren o' the coast would hang him as high as Haman if any harm came to me."

But Barney would not be satisfied.

"If ye want my advice," he grumbled, "'tis to take no notice o' the Don's challenge."

"Too late even had I wished," said his captain quietly. "For Judd, who sailed the Venture when we had our to-do at

**INTRODUCTION:****HOW THE ADVENTURE STARTED!**

From north to south and east to west of the Spanish Main the Spaniards are searching for the famous buccaneer, Captain Henry Morgan. The latter has crossed their path many times, and had come out on top in all the encounters.

Morgan hears of the big attempt to capture him with a smile on his lips, for he is not called "Cock o' the Main" for nothing.

In Carthagena are several of Morgan's crew awaiting their death. The Governor has sworn to burn them at the stake; but Morgan receives news of this, and, disguised as a Spanish admiral, Don Jose, he visits the port, and rescues his men from the merciless clutches of the Dons.

But he is captured whilst moving out of the port by the genuine admiral, Don Jose, who arrives unexpectedly. But it takes more than the hold of a ship to keep Morgan a prisoner, and later, under the cloak of darkness, he makes his escape, and joins his mate, Barney, and two of his crew on the land. When wandering along the coast they fall in with a knight, Sir Robert Trevoise, whose ship has been careened on the sandy shore. The pirates are taken into the tent of the knight, and they are narrating their adventures to the old man when someone hurriedly enters.

"This is my son!" said Sir Robert.  
(Now read on.)

Carthagena, and is now upon the Carolus, has taken back my answer. I meet Don Jose within a week."

"And, pray," growled Barney, "how did ye come to get this precious cartel?"

"Judd," replied Morgan, "still Judd. When he was about to leave Jamaica to find us, a Spanish sloop came in under a flag of truce. And her captain was desirous of finding me, so Judd took his message as he thought to meet me. Don Jose should already be at Tortuga, for 'tis two weeks since we parted company with the Carolus."

Seeing that the matter had gone too far to be stopped, Barney came to his captain's side.

"Morgan," he said, and Harry could have sworn that there was a huskiness in the mate's throat, "if there should be treachery I'll comb the pit itself to avenge ye."

"He shall pay for the murder of my lads," said Morgan sternly. And both Barney and the lad knew that their captain was thinking of that arch-fiend, Don Jose de Firando, Admiral of Spain.

The Venture ploughed her way through the Carib Sea, and Barney had many a chat with young Harry on the subject of Monsieur Philippe Oregon, Governor of Tortuga. Barney had had dealings with the Frenchman, and so, in fact, had Morgan. At Tortuga, said Barney, the buccaneers would land to carouse and spend their money, and the governor saw to it that they did spend. He would invite them to his castle on the hill and feast them right royally; then when their wits were dulled with wine, monsieur would propose a main with the dice. And in the morn the buccaneers would find that nearly all their hard won gains were in the pockets of the governor.

But what cared they? Off to sea they would go and take another rich prize, then back to Tortuga, once again to lose their gains as before. So it was no wonder that Monsieur waxed fat in that castle of his. He was like a bloated spider, gorged with the wealth of those that came to his lair. Well he deserved the name of Skin the Goat, by which he was known in those seas.

This was the man who was to hold the balance evenly between Morgan and the Don. It obviously would be no policy of monsieur's to fall out with Morgan. Yet why did Don Jose trust himself at Tortuga, and with but one attendant, too? Had he a secret understanding with the governor?

And of this and other things Harry and the mate conversed as the good ship Venture made her way to Tortuga.

**The Governor of Tortuga!**

**W**ITH mainsail backed, the Venture lay rising and falling in the trough of the sea. At her side was a boat, and into this Harry had just lowered himself, for, much to Barney's disgust, Morgan had left him with the ship and taken Harry as his sole companion.

"You know what is to do," said Morgan, as he prepared to follow the lad into the waiting boat. "Three days from now put into Tortuga to take us off, to show the Spaniard that we keep the terms of his challenge. But the two of us will land."

But Barney looked gloomily into the heaving sea.

"If ye be there to come off!" he growled. But the buccaneer clapped hand to his shoulder.

"Why, then, Barney mine," he cried merrily, "if not, you can be Morgan o' the Main."

Then, as his men lined the bulwarks to give him a parting cheer, Morgan set the rag of a sail the boat carried, and laid her head for Tortuga, which they saw a dim blur in the gathering twilight.

The wind favoured them, and it would be a matter of half an hour or so at the most before they landed. Looking over his shoulder, Harry saw the Venture like a gull in the distance as, white wings spread, she tacked to make her way to the northward once again.

The day was fast closing, and whether it was the cold, for the sea mist floated over their heads, or whether it was a premonition of coming evil, Harry felt a cold shiver run down his spine. But, throwing off his momentary depression, he called Morgan's attention to a blaze of lights that suddenly shone to sea from where Tortuga lay.

"'Tis old Skin the Goat's castle," was

**Do Your Chums Know What They Are Missing by Not Reading "Morgan o' the Main" ?!**



Morgan's answer. "I've been there often enough, but never on such a strange errand as this."

A few minutes later they came to the harbour front, and as they pulled through the shipping, Harry saw but few vessels at anchor, and none of these the buccaneer craft.

"The Don has timed his visit well," said Morgan, "for there will be no Brothers of the Coast to meddle with him."

A brig—or one called in the jargon of the time, a pink—was tied up to a wooden jetty, and Morgan bade Harry jump ashore and secure the boat alongside her.

Monsieur Oregon had not thought to meet the buccaneer as he landed, but as he was not aware of the hour of Morgan's arrival, his presence was hardly to be expected. Morgan, who knew the place like a book, took Harry's arm and led him past the few wretched hovels that clustered round the sea-front to the blaze of lights where monsieur had his castle.

Outside the castle, which stood on the brow of a low hill a hundred feet or so above the sea-level, Morgan stopped.

"Holla, there!" he cried. Immediately there was a great bustle from behind the castle walls, then a man, flambeau in hand, appeared above the battlements.

"Who calls?" he shouted. And when Morgan told him who they were, there was a rattling of chains, and a decrepit drawbridge was lowered. And as he walked towards it Harry saw that it bridged a dry moat. Half-way across Morgan bade him look to the frowning gateway above them.

"See you anything above the gate?" he asked quietly.

Harry craned his neck to look, and presently descried what in the darkness appeared to be round-shaped objects set on top of spikes. Then, as he turned questioningly to Morgan, the other answered him.

"'Tis the heads, Harry lad, of those that once were enemies of monsieur's."

And, with that, he led the way through the frowning gateway. Again Harry experienced that strange foreboding of evil to come, and as the massive doors thudded to behind them, it seemed to him that they had thrust themselves into the lion's jaws.

Their guide led the way without a word down a network of passages, and up a long, winding staircase; then, at the top of the staircase, he turned sharply to the left, and knocked at a small door confronting them.

"Tomere de Dieu!" cried a thick voice from behind the door. "Am I to have no peace?"

But, without more ado, their guide thrust the door open, and stood aside to let them pass.

"Captain Morgan—Monsieur the Governor!" he announced, and with that he shut the door behind them and tramped off.

Monsieur stifled the angry exclamation that rose to his lips, and, jumping to his feet, rushed to embrace the buccaneer.

"Welcome, captain!" he cried effusively. "As welcome as the flowers in spring!"

But Morgan kept him at arm's-length, and pointed to Harry. "My companion, monsieur," said he. "And both of us are hungry."

Monsieur instantly called for Jean, he called for Paul; in fact, he called for all the saints on the calendar to come and minister to the needs of the two. Morgan he had set at his right hand, with Harry at his left. Three or four servants hastened to replenish the table, for their governor had just dined. At his side stood a half-empty bottle of burgundy, and it was easy to see by monsieur's appearance that it was not the first bottle he had opened during the evening.

As Morgan ate, monsieur poured into his ear a flood of apologies for not meeting him. He told of Don Jose's arrival, and how, like Morgan, he had but one with him. And as he talked Harry took stock of him.

Monsieur Philippe was of the middle size. Owing to a life of self-indulgence his cheeks were inclined to flabbiness. His eyes were a trifle close set, giving a somewhat cunning expression to the face. Yet, with it all, there was an air of hearty good fellowship about the Governor that made him very popular with the buccaneers.

Monsieur would drink with the hardest, gamble with the most reckless, and test his skill with rapier or pistol against the hardest of them all.

As he laughed uproariously at some jest of Morgan's, Harry found it hard to believe that this easy-going, boisterous individual was the fiend who cut off the heads of his enemies and impaled them over his castle gates. Then, of a sudden, he saw monsieur in his true colours.

There was a rush of feet on the stairway outside, the door was flung open, and a man burst into the room.

"Monsieur Oregon," cried the newcomer, as he tugged at his sword, "on guard, and let me kill you for the thief you are!"

In a moment the Governor was on his feet, his face empurpled with rage.

"Pierre!" he cried.

Hardly was the word out of his mouth when the floor on which the angry man stood collapsed, and, with a shriek, he went hurtling to the depths below. Then, before Harry could realise what had occurred, the boards were back in their proper place.

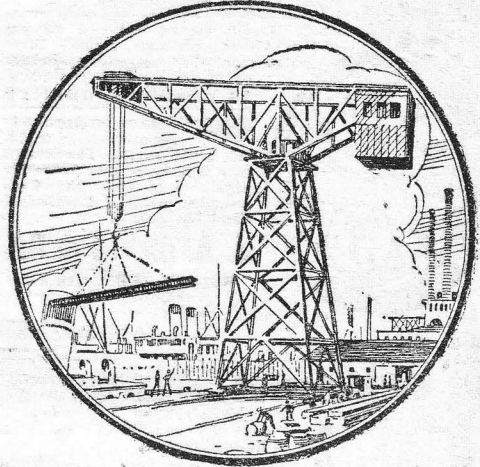
Monsieur Oregon gave a hoarse laugh.

"Rascal," he said, as if in apology, "he is insufferable. For the more matter of a thousand doubloons which he lost to me at dice, the rogue seeks my life, for he conceives that I cheated him. So Pierre"—and he pointed to a dark face that showed for a moment behind the arras—"pulls a lever when I call, and the impetuous poor wretch tumbles into an underground dungeon."

"And breaks his neck!" interrupted Morgan, who has been watching all with an expressionless face. "So Monsieur the Governor rids himself of his enemies!"

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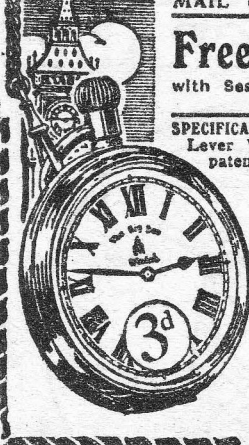
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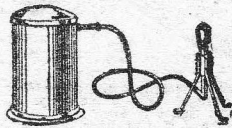
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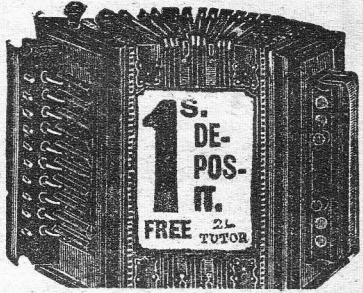
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