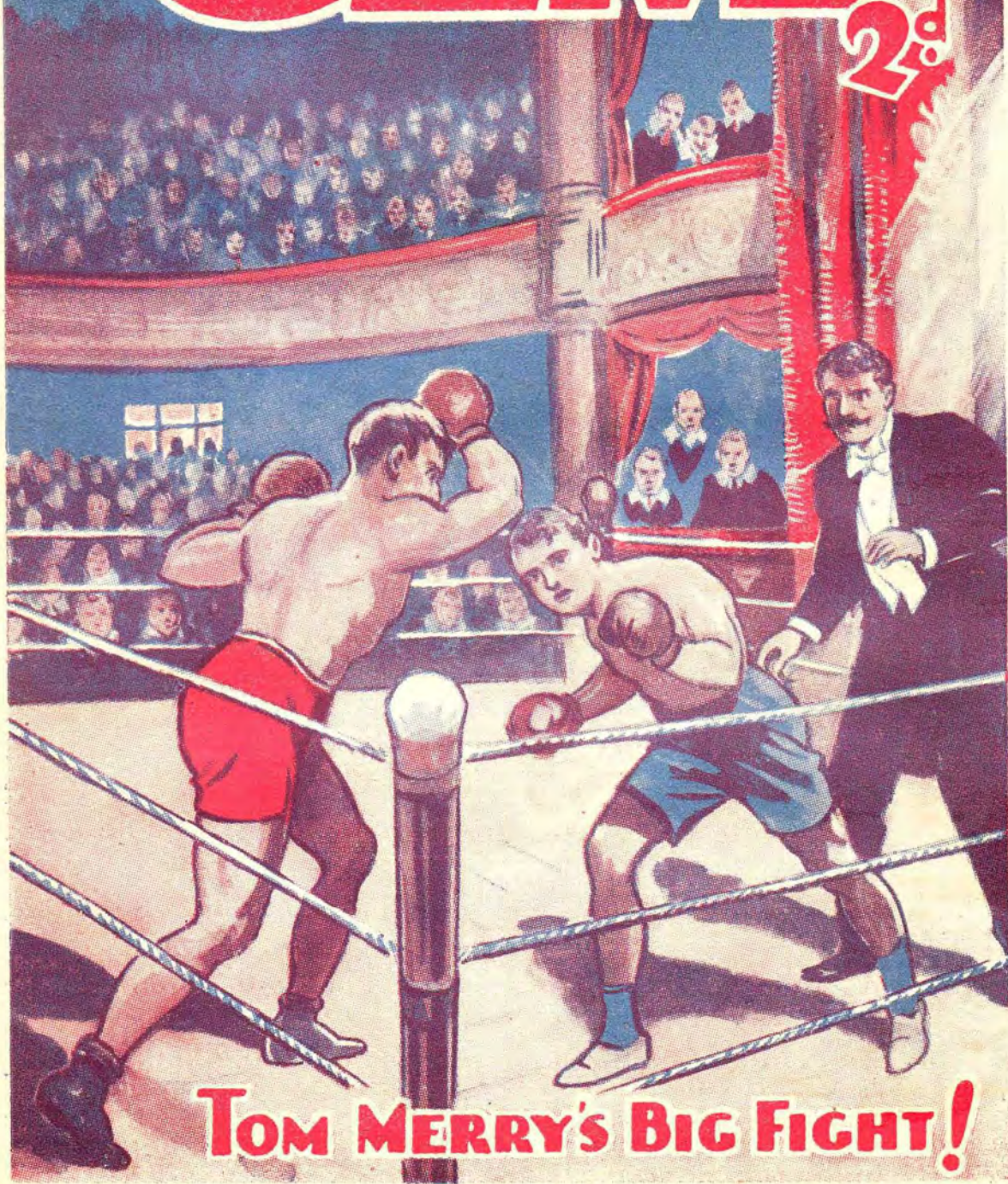


"THE MAKING OF HARRY WHARTON!" GREAT GREYFRIARS STORY STARTS INSIDE!

The GEM

2d



TOM MERRY'S BIG FIGHT!

SECONDS OUT! TIME! TOM MERRY'S IN THE RING IN THIS—

TOM MERRY'S BIG FIGHT



Stretching the ruffian Ginger in the road with an upper-cut, Tom Merry's rescuer took the offensive and attacked the other two ruffians. Biff! Cracker joined his leader in the dust, and Joe hit the ground a few moments later.

CHAPTER 1.

Supporting the Empire!

"THE question is—"

"Whether we can raise the tin," said Blake thoughtfully.

"Certainly not, deah boy.

The question is—"

"Whether we can dodge the prefects," said Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's in a tone of mild remonstrance, "I am surprised at you! That is not the question at all. The question is—"

"Whether we can get our prep finished in time," said Monty Lowther.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy extracted his eyeglass from the pocket of his elegant waistcoat, and jammed it into his eye. Having lodged it there to his satisfaction, he surveyed the juniors gathered in Tom Merry's study majestically. There were seven fellows there in all—Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther of the Shell, and Blake, Herries, D'Arcy, and Digby of the Fourth Form.

They were debating the question—whatever it was—very earnestly. Blake was going through his pockets and counting the various coins he extracted therefrom. Herries was examining a bad shilling with intent gaze, as if by the intensity of his stare he could turn it from a bad one to a good one. All the juniors were looking very serious, as became fellows who had a difficult problem to solve; and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, standing in an elegant attitude by the mantelpiece, was laying down the law.

It was rather a favourite practice of D'Arcy's, laying down the law, but his THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 1,471.

majestic opinions sometimes fell upon unheeding ears. It was said of old that wisdom cries out in the streets and no man regards it, and the same applies to the studies of junior schoolboys.

"The question," resumed D'Arcy, "is—"

"To be, or not to be, that is the question," said Monty Lowther solemnly. "I know that, because I've read it in Shakespeare. To be, or not to be, that is the question—whether 'tis good or bad for my digestion."

"Pway don't be funny now, Lowthah, at a serious moment," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy severely. "It is not a question of money. You are quite w'ong there, Blake. It is not a question of money at all."

"How are we to get in if we can't pay for admission?" demanded Blake.

"That's all wright. It's not a question of money. I've got lots of money."

"Now you're talking!" said Lowther. "Why couldn't you say that at first? Gentlemen, it's Gussy's treat; and after Gussy has come to the rescue in this noble manner, it's up to us to risk the prefects and blow the prep."

"Hear, hear!"

"Weally, Lowthah, I wish you would let me finish!"

"Life's too short!" said Monty Lowther, with a shake of the head. "Gentlemen, now that the question is settled—"

"But it isn't settled!" shrieked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I insist upon speakin'. It is not a question of money. It is not a question of the pwefts; we can dodge pwefts. We've done it before, and can do it again."

"Hear, hear!"

"Likewise it is not a question of

pwep. We can mug up enough to get through to-morrow mornin' in class; and, anyway, it only means a wow, and we've been in wows before."

"Bow-wow!" said Lowther. "So we have!"

"The question is one of form."

"Eh?" said six voices at once.

"The question is one of form," pursued Arthur Augustus victoriously.

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Blake.

"Here's Gussy getting on the high horse again, and he won't get off in time for us to start for Wayland. I know him."

"It's a question of form, deah boys."

"Which Form?" asked Lowther.

"Fourth, Fifth, or Shell?"

"I don't mean that kind of Form, you ass!"

"Oh!" said Lowther, appearing to comprehend all of a sudden. "I understand. You mean about the seats at the Wayland Empire. That's all right, Gussy. We shan't have to sit on forms there, as we do here; we shall have good seats in the stalls."

"I'm not alludin' to that kind of form, eithah!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "It is a question of good or bad form."

Blake took out his watch.

"I suggest that we give Gussy two minutes to talk, and then get on and do as much of our prep as we can before it's time to start for Wayland," he said.

"Agreed!"

"I wefuse to talk for two minutes—I mean for only two minutes. I have some vewy important wemarks to make. The question weally is—whethah it's good form to go to the Wayland Empire without permish?"

"Go hon!"

—GRAND LONG YARN OF FUN, ADVENTURE, AND BOXING!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

"In the first place, the Wayland Empire is a music hall. I know that music halls have greatly improved in modern times, but I have some doubt whethah the Head would allow us to go to a music hall."

"That's why we're not going to worry the Head about it at all," explained Blake. "I believe in being considerate towards a chap, even if he's a head-master. We're not going to bother him. I refuse to bother him. I won't allow you to bother him."

"Certainly not!" said Tom Merry. "I'm surprised at you, Gussy! Chap can't help being a headmaster, and you must admit that Dr. Holmes is a very good specimen—a very good specimen indeed. He's a brick. I disapprove strongly of worrying him about this. I shan't mention the matter to him, for one."

"You are deliberately misundah-standin' me, you wottahs!" said Arthur Augustus, breathing hard through his aristocratic nose. "I think it pwob that the Head would not approve of our goin'. The question is whethah it would be good form to go to a place that the Head might disappwove of. I want to go as much as you do, but I decline to be guilty of bad form."

"Nawfully deep question to decide," said Monty Lowther, shaking his head. "I'll tell you what, Gussy. You shall stand the seats as you're rolling in money, and we'll go without you, and you can spend the evening thinking whether it's good form or not. You can let us know what you've decided when we get back."

"Hear, hear!" said the other fellows heartily.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his monocle a little tighter into his eye and bestowed a withering look upon the hilarious juniors.

"I wedard you as asses. You will get into some twouble if I am not there to look aftah you. Besides, I want to go. Only I want to have it settled whethah it would be good form to go to a place the Head mightn't approve of. Suppose we ask Kildare for passes out and tell him we're goin' to the Wayland Empire?"

"And that we're not going to do our prep because we've got other engagements!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Time's up," said Blake, putting his watch back into his pocket. "You've had your innings, Gussy. Now let's grind for half an hour till callin'-over."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Look here, Gussy," said Tom Merry, laughing, "the Wayland Empire is a decent place. If it weren't nobody here would want to go. But masters and prefects sometimes don't understand things, and they have objections to chaps going out in the evening, and they are awfully obstinate about preparations being done. Least said soonest mended, so we'll go, and trust to luck for the good form."

"Hear, hear!"

"I'll tell you what," said Lowther. "I'll put it to Mr. Lathom, if you like. I'll ask him his opinion in a general sort of way without mentioning that we're going, and see if he approves of the Empire. How's that?"

"Well, that would be all wight," said D'Arcy doubtfully. "But how are you goin' to mention it without lettin' on?"

"Leave that to me," said Lowther airily. "You're not the only chap in the school gifted with tact and judgment, old man. Follow me!"

"Vewy well, I agree to that!"

Arthur Augustus followed Lowther downstairs, with a rather puzzled brow. The other juniors followed them, grinning. They were pretty certain that the humorist of the Shell was only pulling Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's aristocratic leg, and that he had no intention of giving the Fourth Form master any hint of his intended excursion.

Mr. Lathom was chatting with Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, in the Hall, and Lowther waited till Mr. Railton went into his study. Then he approached the Fourth Form master very meekly and respectfully.

Mr. Lathom blinked at him genially over his glasses. Mr. Lathom was always genial and good-tempered and absent-minded, and all the School House fellows agreed—not in Mr. Lathom's hearing, of course—that Lathom was a good little ass.

"Well, Lowther, what can I do for you?" said the Fourth Form master good-naturedly, seeing that the Shell fellow wished to speak to him.

"If you please, sir, we've been having a little discussion, and I want to ask your advice, sir," said Monty Lowther meekly.

"Certainly, my boy—certainly!" said Mr. Lathom.

"We've been talking about the Empire, sir," pursued Lowther blandly

The star turn of the Wayland Empire was Tiny Tim, a boxer who rendered Tom Merry a good service by rescuing him from footpads. But there came an evening when Tiny Tim couldn't perform his boxing turn, and it was then that Tom Merry was able to repay his debt of gratitude. One good turn deserves another!

—"whether it's not a Briton's duty to put all other considerations aside and support the Empire?"

"Most decidedly!" said Mr. Lathom. "It is the duty of every true-born Briton to support the Empire."

"Thank you very much, sir! I was sure you would agree with me," said Lowther.

"I'm glad to see that you juniors discuss such interesting and instructive questions," said Mr. Lathom—"very pleased indeed!"

And the little Form-master walked away with a very genial nod.

Monty Lowther turned to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Satisfied?" he asked.

The juniors grinned, but Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle into his eye and regarded Monty Lowther with a glance of the utmost severity.

"You uttah wottah, Lowthah! You have been pullin' Mr. Lathom's leg. He thought it was the Bwitish Empire you were alludin' to, not the Wayland Empire."

"Go hon!" murmured Tom Merry.

Lowther shook his head.

"I've got Mr. Lathom's assurance that it's our duty to support the Empire," he said. "That's quite good

enough for me. If you know better than your Form-master—"

"But Mr. Lathom meant—"

"I know what he said. Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows," said Monty Lowther, looking round, "Gussy agreed to leave it to the decision of Mr. Lathom, and Mr. Lathom has counselled us to support the Empire and to put any other considerations aside."

"Hear, hear!" said the juniors.

"Therefore, it is our duty to dodge the prefects and leave over the prep and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And support the Empire," said Lowther. "This is where Gussy shuts up!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Stick to your bargain, Gussy," said Tom Merry. "It's up to a D'Arcy to stick to his word, you know."

"But I—"

"Now we'll go and do as much prep as we can," said Jack Blake.

And Arthur Augustus gave in.

CHAPTER 2.

Too Cautious!

IT was not very long since the new Empire had been opened in Wayland town.

Wayland had been a very sleepy old town at one time, waking up only on market day. But the tide of modern progress had reached even that quiet old place in the heart of Sussex.

Wayland was waking up. There was a brand-new Hotel Royal. There was a cinema, and now there was another sign of progress and civilisation—a local Empire.

"Twice nightly" stared at the Wayland folk from all the hoardings and dead walls in the town and round it.

Naturally, the chums of St. Jim's wanted to visit the place and see the show. Excepting for an occasional circus, the fellows did not have opportunities of seeing many shows.

And, according to the published advertisements, the programme was quite a refined one. It would not hurt the juniors to hear Mr. Curil singing "Why Did She Fall for the Leader of the Band?" or Miss Belle Bouncer rendering "I'll Follow My Secret Heart."

Neither were the trick cyclists or the character-sketch artistes at all harmful to the youthful imagination.

Best of all, there was a boxing turn, and that was what appealed to the minds of the juniors. Tom Merry especially, who was a very keen boxer, wanted to see Tiny Tim box with the Limehouse Slogger.

In spite of Arthur Augustus' doubts and misgivings as to the good form or otherwise of visiting the local Empire, the party made up their minds to go.

And Arthur Augustus made up his mind to go with them—perhaps because he was really afraid that they would get into mischief without his fatherly care, or perhaps because he wanted to go.

On such an occasion, as Lowther said, preparations could be put off, and after calling-over the juniors prepared to get out.

They would be able to see the "first house," getting there a little late, and leaving before it was quite over in order to be back at St. Jim's for bed-time.

"Keep it awfully dark, dear boys," said Arthur Augustus. "I fancy Knox of the Sixth has a wotten eye on us for some weason. I have been vevy

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tactical with him, but some of you fellows might let the cat out of the bag, you know."

Jack Blake grunted.

"I suppose you've been doing that already!" he growled.

"Weally, Blake, I have been doin' nothin' of the sort! Knox happened to see me bwingin' my coat down from the dorm, that's all."

"What did you let him see you for?" roared Blake.

"I weally fail to see how I was to prevent it. But I hoodwinked him all wight!" the swell of St. Jim's said, with a chuckle. "He asked me if I was goin' out."

"And did you tell him?" demanded Digby sulphurously.

"Certainly not! I told him that it was wude to inquire into anothah fellow's affairs," said D'Arcy. "He gave me fifty lines, the beast! Howevah, I think the wemark put him in his place, don't you?"

Blake groaned.

"Put him on the watch, more likely, you ass! Knox is always looking for a chance to catch us, and now you've given him one."

"Wats!"

"Knox'll come nosing along to the study presently to see if we've gone out," grunted Digby, "and he'll find us out."

"We shall have to wisk it, deah boys. Are you weady?"

"Yes," said Blake. "We're meeting the Shell chaps in the quad. Slip out of the House one by one, and don't let anybody see you."

"Wight-ho!"

The juniors descended the stairs one at a time, and slipped out of the School House. The dusk was deep on the old quadrangle of St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus was the last to leave the House, and he slipped out with such elaborate precautions that five or six fellows at least spotted him as he went.

"Hallo, Gussy!" called out Kangaroo of the Shell. "Going out?"

D'Arcy turned to the School House junior and made a sign of great caution.

"Hush, deah boy!"

Kangaroo stared at him.

"What is there to hush about?" he asked.

"I'm goin' out without a pass, and doin' it vewy secwetly," the swell of St. Jim's explained.

"Oh, you look as if you are!" said Kangaroo. "Knox was watching you from the Common-room as you came down. You'd better come in and start afresh."

"Oh wats!"

And Arthur Augustus disappeared.

Knox, the prefect, came down the passage. He glanced out into the quadrangle, and then looked at the Australian junior.

"Did D'Arcy go out into the quad just now, Noble?" the prefect asked.

"D'Arcy?" repeated Kangaroo.

"Yes. Did you see him?"

"See him?" said Kangaroo.

Knox knitted his brows.

"Did you see D'Arcy go out?" he demanded.

"Out?" said the Cornstalk reflectively.

Knox gritted his teeth. He had old grudges to pay off against the chums of the School House, but there was evidently no information to be gained from Kangaroo. The prefect went out into the quad.

Kangaroo looked out after him, and gave a low, shrill whistle.

Knox turned back angrily.

"Who are you whistling at?" he demanded.

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"Whistling!" said Kangaroo.

"Take fifty lines!" shouted Knox.

"Lines!" repeated Kangaroo imperturbably.

Knox strode out into the dusk, and Kangaroo chuckled. He had given a signal to the truant juniors, and that was all he could do.

The chums of Study No. 6 had just joined Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther by the school wall when they heard that whistle through the dusk from the direction of the House. Blake, who was just mounting the wall with the assistance of the slanting trunk of an old oak-tree, dropped to the ground again.

"That's Kangy's whistle," he said.

"It means danger."

"I'm afraid Knox is on the watch, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "Howevah, we're goin', all the same. Buck up before he gets here!"

"Ass!" said Tom Merry politely. "We don't want to be caught out. You fellows lie low, and I'll put Knox off the track."

"Bettah leave it to me, Tom Mewwy, deah boy—"

"Shurrup!" Tom Merry looked away towards the lighted front of the School House, with an anxious brow. He caught sight of a moving figure. "You chaps buzz off!" he whispered. "We can't chuck it up now, Knox or no Knox. You chaps get off to Wayland, and I'll follow you later. I've got an idea for putting Knox off the scent. Book a seat for me, and keep it for me at the Empire."

"But you—" began Lowther.

"Buzz off; I'm leader!"

"But weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Here comes Knox, you ass! If he catches us, we can't go! Buzz off!"

Tom Merry dashed back into the quadrangle. Knox evidently knew which part of the school wall to make for; he had climbed out by means of the slanting oak more than once himself, as a matter of fact—though that was a dead secret.

"I can see you there!" called out Knox. "Stop!"

"Buck up!" murmured Blake.

"Leave it to Tommy!"

"Weally, Blake—"

Blake shoved D'Arcy up the wall without waiting for him to finish. D'Arcy's silk hat rolled over into the road, and the swell of St. Jim's followed it. There was the sound of a dreadful crunch as he sat on it.

"Oh! My toppah!"

"Quiet!"

"I have busted my toppah!"

"Shut up, you fathead!"

"But I shall have to go back for anothah toppah—"

Blake grasped Arthur Augustus' arm and dragged him away, and the juniors ran down the road.

CHAPTER 3.

Not Out of Bounds!

BUMP!

"Ow!" roared Knox.

Tom Merry had rushed back under the elm-trees in such a hurry that he dashed right into Knox, and the prefect reeled back and fell, and the Shell fellow sprawled over him.

But for that timely accident the little party for the Wayland Empire would certainly have been spotted in getting over the wall.

Tom Merry was sprawling on the prefect, and seemed in no hurry to rise. He grasped Knox, and jammed him down on the ground, apparently under the impression that he was getting hold

of a much less august person than a prefect of the Sixth.

"I've got you, Figgins!" he yelled. "You New House boulder! I've got you!"

"Groogh!" gasped Knox. "Ow! Gerroff!"

"Got you this time, Figgins—"

"I'm not Figgins!" yelled Knox. "I'm not a junior, you young villain! I'm Knox!"

"Oh, don't be funny, Figgy, old boy!" said Tom Merry. "I can't see you in the dark, but I know jolly well that you're Figgins! And—"

"Leggo!"

"Rats!" said Tom Merry, still sitting astride of his enemy's chest, and pinning him down by sheer weight. "Not till you own up that the School House is Cock House of St. Jim's!"

"Gerrup!"

"Not just yet, Figgy! I'm quite comfy, thanks!"

Knox made a big effort to throw off the junior. But Tom Merry had the advantage, and he kept it. He persisted, too, in thinking that it was Figgins of the New House he was sitting on. As he had said, he could not see him in the dark, so the mistake was quite natural.

"You young scoundrel!" said Knox sulphurously. "I'll report you to the Housemaster for assaulting a prefect! I'll hammer you! I'll cane you! I'll smash you! I'll have you gated for a term! I'll—"

"What a flow of eloquence you're getting, Figgy!" said Tom Merry admiringly. "Blessed if I knew you could roll it out like that! Go on!"

"I'll—I'll smash you!" gasped Knox. "I'll—"

"Hear, hear!"

"I'll throttle you!" roared Knox.

"Go hon!"

"Will you let me get up?" shrieked Knox. "I tell you I'm a prefect, and you know it jolly well, Tom Merry, you young villain!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Knox struggled furiously.

Although the Sixth Former was not athletic, and Tom Merry was the best athlete in the Lower School, probably his age and size would have told in a stand-up tussle. But Knox was down, and his enemy was sitting on him, and that made all the difference. The prefect struggled frantically, but he could not throw him off. He gasped and panted under the firm weight of the junior.

"You young hound!" he muttered, choking with rage. "You know perfectly well that I'm Knox!"

"Keep it up!" said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"Will you let me get up?" shrieked Knox.

Tom Merry grinned in the darkness. His friends were safe enough away by that time, and he could afford to discover his mistake, and realise that the fellow he was sitting on was not Figgins of the Fourth.

"I say, is it really you, Knox?" he asked.

"You know it is!" yelled Knox.

"You're sure you're not Figgins?" said Tom Merry, in a tone of hesitating doubt.

"You—you—you—"

"Are you sure you're not Figgins?" asked Tom Merry calmly.

"Yes," spluttered Knox.

"Then I'm sorry, Knox, old man," said the Shell fellow. "I'm willing to overlook the whole occurrence if you are."

"You—you villain! I'll have you flogged! I'll—"

"Will you?" said Tom Merry. "You're going to have me punished for biffing you over and sitting on you?"

"Yes!" screamed the furious Knox. "You're going to make it as bad for me as possible?"

"You'll see that I am, you young hound!"

"Then there's no hurry for me to get up!" said Tom cheerfully. "If it's to be as bad as possible, I may as well earn it! What do you think, Knox?"

"I-I-I-I—"

Knox made another desperate effort. He sank back, gasping and exhausted. Tom Merry was not to be shifted until he chose.

"Suppose we agree to make it pax?" said Tom, in a voice as gentle as that of a cooing dove. "I'm willing to let bygones be bygones, if you are."

"I'll smash you!"

"Then I'm afraid I shall have to continue thinking that you are Figgins, and keep you here till you're in a better temper."

"I-I-I-I—"

"Better not wriggle like that, Figgins. You'll get my knee in your ribs if you do! There! What did I tell you?"

"Ow, ow!"

"Better make it pax!" suggested Tom Merry.

Knox panted with rage. It was miles beneath his dignity as a prefect to dream of making it "pax" with a mere junior. But he was quite helpless, and he had a natural disinclination to call for help and be discovered in such a ridiculous position.

"I—I'll let you off, Merry!" he stut-tered.

"It's pax?"

"Yes," said the prefect, between his teeth.

"Good enough!"

Tom Merry jumped up.

Knox leaped to his feet, and although he had made it pax, he made a wild grope after his assailant. But Tom Merry did not wait for that grope. He had disappeared under the darkness of the trees. Knox ground his teeth and stumbled on towards the school wall, but he found no one there.

"Merry! Where are you?"

There was no reply.

Knox set his teeth and strode away towards the School House. He entered the House, and found Mr. Linton in the Hall. Mr. Linton was master of the Shell—Tom Merry's Form.

"I have to report one of the Shell for breaking bounds, sir," said Knox.

"Indeed!" said Mr. Linton. "Who is it?"

"Merry, sir!"

"He was at calling-over," said Mr. Linton.

"He has gone out since, sir, and is out of bounds now!" said Knox.

"Very good. I will make a note of it," said the master of the Shell. And he went into his study.

Five minutes later there was a tap at Mr. Linton's door.

"Come in!" said the Shell master.

Tom Merry entered.

Mr. Linton gazed at him blankly. Tom Merry advanced to the Form-master's table and laid a sheaf of impot paper thereon.

"My lines, sir," he said.

"Your—your lines!" stammered Mr. Linton.

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry, in a tone of mild surprise. "Don't you remember, sir, you gave me lines this afternoon in classics?"

"Yes, yes!" said Mr. Linton. "But—but I have just heard from Knox that you were out of bounds, Merry."



D'Arcy's topper rolled off into the road, and the swell of St. Jim's followed it. There was the sound of a dreadful crunch as he sat on it! "Oh, my toppah!" he exclaimed. "I have busted my toppah!"

Tom Merry looked astonished.

"Out of bounds, sir!" he ejaculated.

"Certainly. I have made a note of it," said the Shell master, frowning and erasing a note in his pocket-book.

"But I'm here, sir," said Tom Merry innocently.

"Yes, as I can see," said Mr. Linton tartly. "I suppose Knox was mistaken. Have you been outside the school walls since calling-over, Merry?"

"Certainly not, sir!"

"Where have you been?"

"I was in the quad, sir," said Tom Merry, with perfect truth. "Then I was in my study. Then I remembered I'd forgotten to bring my lines to you, sir, so I brought them."

"And you have not been out of bounds?"

"No, sir."

"Knox must have made a mistake, then," said Mr. Linton. "Very well, Merry, you may leave your lines. You may go."

"Yes, sir."

And Tom Merry went.

In the passage he paused to smile, and then quietly walked out into the quadrangle. He took his cap from under his jacket and put it on his head, and scudded away for the school wall.

He was over the wall in a twinkling, and he chuckled as he dropped into the road.

He had certainly not been out of bounds before, but he was now; but of that Mr. Linton remained in cheerful ignorance.

CHAPTER 4.

Enter the Bantam!

TOM MERRY took the short way to Wayland market town, sprinting by the shadowy path over the meadows and then through the wood.

It was possible that he would be able to overtake his friends before they reached Wayland, and he kept up at a steady trot. He left the fields behind, and came along the footpath through the wood at a steady run.

The woods were very dark and silent round him.

After dark the woodland was little used, and Tom Merry, as he trotted under the dark shadows of the trees, remembered—rather late in the day—that the path was not quite safe in the evening. Lately there had been several outrages by footpads in the vicinity, and Tom, as he thought of it, would have been glad to overtake his friends.

But he was by no means nervous, and he had no fear.

He ran on, and suddenly, as he caught sight of several dark forms ahead of him under the shadows of the trees, he called out cheerfully:

"Hold on, kids! Here I am!"

The dark figures stopped.

Tom Merry ran on, nothing doubting that he had overtaken the party from St. Jim's. A hand came from the darkness and grasped his shoulder, and then he realised his mistake.

He struggled to get away from the grasp upon his shoulder; but it tightened, and another hand fastened on him.

"Show a light 'ere, Cracker!" said a hoarse voice.

A match scratched out, and the light fell on Tom Merry's face.

For a moment he caught a glimpse of three rough figures, with grimy, stubby faces, and then the match went out.

"Let me go!" said Tom Merry quietly.

There was a hoarse chuckle.

"Not quite so fast, young shaver! Keep a 'and on 'im, Joel!"

"I've got 'im!"

"Let me go!"

"Not till you've 'anded out your ticker and your loose change, my covey!" said the hoarse voice again. "Now, then, sharp's the word!"

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed.

He knew that he had fallen into the hands of the gang of footpads who had been at work in the district for the past week, and for whom the local police had been looking everywhere but in the right place. It came into his mind, too, that there was more reason than he had thought of for calling-over and keeping within bounds, and that those irksome rules were not made simply for the purpose of worrying cheerful juniors. He was in an awkward position, and he knew it; but he had no intention of being robbed if he could help it.

He stood quite still in the grasp of the ruffians, to throw them off their guard; and then, with a sudden and unlooked-for wrench, he tore himself away from the hands that were grasping him and sprang away.

There was a yell from the owner of the hoarse voice.

"Collar 'im!"

Tom Merry dashed down the footpath towards the Wayland Road. If he could get over the stile into the road, he would be safe. But the three ruffians were tearing on his track, muttering savage oaths as they ran.

Tom Merry ran on desperately.

Whiz!

A heavy cudgel flew by his head, and crashed into the bushes. If it had struck him he would have fallen stunned to the ground.

"Stop, you young 'ound!"

Tom dashed on.

The stile was in sight now, and beyond it the glimmer of a road lamp. One minute more. He dashed on desperately, and at that moment his foot caught in a trailing root, and he stumbled and fell heavily to the ground.

Bump!

The foremost of his pursuers stumbled over him and fell. There was a shout.

"I've got 'im!"

"Old him, Ginger!"

"Wot!" said Ginger savagely, between his teeth, as he grasped the fallen junior, and planted a heavy knee on him. "The young 'ound! I'll make 'im smart for this! Gimme your stick, Joel!"

"Ere you are, Ginger!"

A shudder ran through Tom Merry. He seemed to feel already the heavy cudgel crashing down upon him in the darkness.

He made a desperate effort to tear himself loose, but the heavy knee was grinding into his back, and he could not move.

"Help! Help!" shouted the junior wildly.

"I'll 'elp yer!" muttered Ginger.

"I'll 'elp yer, me covey!"

"Help!"

"Hallo, there!"

It was a voice from the road. A figure in an overcoat had paused by the stile, and was looking into the footpath. Ginger, already grasping the cudgel, paused with an oath. The man in the overcoat vaulted over the stile in a twinkling, and the next moment he was on the scene. Tom Merry felt the heavy knee go from his back, and he heard a thud and a deep grunt as Ginger rolled on the grass. A hand grasped him, and, too confused and bewildered to know quite what was happening, he was whisked over the stile into the road.

He staggered, gasping, against a tree. There was a chorus of oaths from the trio of ruffians on the footpath, and they came bounding over the stile. The Wayland Road was lonely, and they were evidently not inclined to relinquish their prey.

"Hold my coat!" muttered Tom Merry's rescuer.

The overcoat was thrown to him, and he caught it mechanically. The man who had helped him was a small fellow—not much taller than the boy himself—and his clean-shaven face looked very youthful in the glimmer of the lamp. He had a square jaw, and little,

twinkling eyes, and there was a grin on his face now, as he stood and waited for the three ruffians to come up.

"I—I say," gasped Tom Merry, "better cut—there's three of them—" "You watch me!" said the little man.

He put up his hands as the three ruffians came rushing down upon him.

Tom Merry watched him, breathless. It passed like a dream—he had no time even to go to the aid of his rescuer.

The little man seemed to move on springs. He met the towering ruffian Ginger with an upper-cut that might have been delivered by a sledgehammer to judge by the force of it, and Ginger went down into the road with a crash.

The other two ruffians started back, startled, and Tom Merry's rescuer took the offensive, prancing up to them, and hitting out.

Biff! Biff!

Crash! Bump!

Joe and Cracker were in the dust beside their leader, and the little man danced round them in a state of great excitement, calling on them to get up and have some more.

"My hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "It must be a blessed boxer!"

The footpads did not seem inclined to have any more. Cracker crawled away into the ditch, and his comrade Joe wriggled into the darkness and disappeared. Ginger did not move. He lay in the road with one hand clasping his damaged jaw, groaning.

"They don't want any more!" grinned Tom Merry. "Thank you very much for helping me, sir. You're a jolly hard hitter!"

The stranger grinned.

"Going to Wayland?" he asked.

"Yes."

"So am I. I'll walk with you, in case those coves should give you any more trouble. You shouldn't be in the wood alone after dark, kid!"

"I know that—now!" said Tom Merry.

And he walked by the side of his new acquaintance, leaving the unfortunate Ginger still lying in the dust, groaning and muttering threats of vengeance.

"I'm much obliged to you, sir," Tom Merry said, as they went down the road. "Blessed if I should have thought you could handle those chaps like that!"

The other chuckled.

"Keeps my hand in," he said. "That was nothing to me, sonny. But you'd better go home another way!"

"There'll be a party of us going home," said Tom Merry. "I'm going to meet some chaps at the Wayland Empire, you see; they started first."

"Oh, you're going to the Wayland Empire, are you?" said the stranger.

"Yes; the first house," said Tom. "It's twice nightly, you know."

The other chuckled again.

"Yes, I know," he said. "I ought to know. That's where I'm going myself. I'm there every night for both houses."

"You must be jolly fond of the place!" said Tom Merry, in surprise.

Another chuckle.

"There's a good turn there, though," said Tom Merry. "I don't know that I care about the singing and the trick cycling very much; but there's a good boxing turn."

"Good!" said his new acquaintance, with great interest. "Have you seen it yet?"

"No, not yet; but I've heard about it, and I want to see Tiny Tim, the bantam," said Tom Merry. "You've seen him?"

"Lots of times," said the young man

HIS GUNMAN GUARDIAN!

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RICHARDS**

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cheerfully. "He's a terror. He could have handled those coves just the same as I did!"

"You handled them well enough," said Tom Merry, with a laugh.

"Here we are, at the Wayland Empire," said the other, as they entered the lighted street. "Good-bye, kid, and glad I happened along!"

"Didn't you say you were coming in?" asked Tom.

"Not at the front entrance, though," said his new friend, with another of his chuckles. "My way's to the stage-door."

"You belong to the company?" asked Tom breathlessly.

"Just a few! You see, I'm the Bantam!"

"My hat!"

And the Bantam chuckled again and went his way, and Tom Merry entered the brilliantly-lighted vestibule of the Wayland Empire.

CHAPTER 5.

At the Empire!

"HERE you are, Tommy!"

Monty Lowther was waiting in the vestibule for his chum.

"I've missed a turn, waiting for you," he said. "We've got the seats all right—all in a row, in the stalls. Stalls are cheap here—two shillings a time. Where did you pick up all that dust?"

"I had a scrap coming here," said Tom Merry. "Let's get in."

They made their way into the auditorium.

The third "turn" was about to commence when they joined the rest of the party from St. Jim's in the stalls.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon Tom Merry.

"So you got here all wight, deah boy? You got widd of Knox?"

"Yes," said Tom, laughing. "But I got some more knocks coming—worse than the Knox at St. Jim's."

"Been in a row?" asked Blake.

"Grammar School cads?"

"No; footpads!"

"Bai Jove! I remarked to you, Blake, that there would be some twouble if I didn't look after you. I considah—"

"It's all right," said Tom. "I was set on by three ruffians on the footpath. I oughtn't to have come that way, really. But a chap chipped in and did them brown. Who do you think it was?"

"St. Jim's chap?" asked Manners.

"No fear! The Bantam!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"Tiny Tim, who's doing a boxing turn here," said Tom Merry. "You should have seen the way he knocked them out! He's got an upper-cut that's a real daisy! I should like to have the gloves on with him. We'll give him plenty of hands when he does his turn here—what?"

"Yaas, wathah! It was wippin' of him!"

"Silence!" said the audience. And the chums of St. Jim's ceased to talk as the next turn started.

It was Miss Belle Bouncer, soprano, and she described, with powerful lungs, how she wanted to return from a far-off shore, and a distant strand, to the green and grassy moor, to the loved homeland.

Miss Bouncer, having heroically struggled up to her top note, and almost reached it, the audience clapped and cheered, the St. Jim's juniors joining in heartily.

"Twick cyclists next," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, consulting the programme. "I am wathah cuwious to see

COLD COMFORT!



Badly-battered Boxer: "Have I done 'im any damage?"

Disgusted Second: "No, but keep on swinging your arms about—the draught might give him a cold!"

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them. They are stunnin' in the pictures on the posters, you know! I was thinkin' that I could do it myself."

The trick cyclists were very good.

There were two of them, and they rode machines forwards and backwards, and made them stand still, and dance to the band, and they rode them upside down, and they crawled through under the bars while whirling round on the machines, and altogether astonished the unsophisticated natives of Wayland with their dexterity.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy kept his eyeglass upon them all the time, watching them eagerly. The thought was evidently working in the mighty brain of the swell of St. Jim's that he could play that trick.

"Bai Jove, it's wippin'!" said D'Arcy, when the trick cyclists finally rode off the stage with their feet in the air, and working the pedals with their hands. "I wathah think I could do that, though. I'll show you fellows in the quad to-morrow."

"Better make your will first!" grunted Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Hallo! Here's Curil!" cried Blake.

"He's going to sing!"

Monty Lowther uttered an exclamation.

"Curil, by Jove!"

"Seen him before?" asked Tom Merry.

Monty Lowther chuckled.

"I should jolly well say so! Do you remember once I wanted to go on the stage?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes, rather!"

"Yaas, and you wan away fwom school with a touwing company," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy severely. "I did not approve of that pwoceedin' at all, Lowthah."

"Well, that chap Curil was a member of the company," said Monty Lowther. "He was a tenor, and he drank like a fish, and sang like a rook. He undertook to teach me musical comedy business, and I dare say he would have done it if the Head hadn't made me come back to school. He's on the halls now, it seems. I believe that's supposed to be a come-down in his profession. You get more money and less kudos. We'll go round and see Curil after the performance. He will be glad to see an old friend."

"Won't be any time," said Manners. "We shall have to miss the last turn, anyway, to get home to St. Jim's in time for bed."

"We'll miss the last two, and see old Curil first," said Lowther.

"Shurup! He's starting!"

Mr. Curil was a tenor—the programme said so—but he sang so flat that, as Monty Lowther remarked, he would have been more aptly described as a fiver.

But, as the song was a comic one, that did not matter. Mr. Curil would rather have sung about aching hearts and Cupid's darts, and forests dark, and hark! the lark. But the public preferred "Why Did She Fall For the Leader of the Band?" and other popular hits, and so Mr. Curil had to sacrifice art to utility, as so many great artistes have had to do.

And certainly Mr. Curil had a very good reception.

"Now for the boxers!" said Tom Merry.

And the audience were all very keen. It was clear from their looks that the boxing turn was the great draw of the evening's entertainment at the Empire.

When the curtain went up again, and the stage was disclosed with a roped ring and two men in scanty attire and boxing-gloves, and there was a cheer.

The Bantam—Tom Merry's kind rescuer—was there, and the Limehouse Slogger—a much bigger man, with a very determined-looking jaw.

Tiny Tim, who was not much bigger than any one of the juniors, though he was twenty-five years old, looked a mass of muscle and sinew. He stripped well, and the juniors looked at him very admiringly. Strength and pluck appealed to them.

"This is going to be a jolly good turn!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

And it was.

In the first round it was evident neither boxer was sparing himself to make the exhibition boxing match as exciting to the audience as possible.

Mr. Bowkoe, the manager of the Wayland Empire, was keeping time himself, resplendent in evening clothes and a gorgeous shirtfront.

The Slogger was a good man, but, big as he was, he did not seem to be quite up to the form of the Bantam.

He was evidently trying his hardest to get the better of his wiry, nimble little adversary. But Tiny Tim was too quick for him.

There was an angry gleam in the Slogger's eyes as the rounds went on.

The well-padded gloves prevented much damage from being done, but a good deal of punishment was given and taken, and the audience cheered every sounding "biff." There were six rounds, and at the end the Slogger was very groggy, and could hardly keep his feet.

The Bantam was cheered loudly.

He ducked his head to the audience gracefully, and, catching Tom Merry's eye in the stalls, nodded to him cheerfully.

The boxers retired amid a round of cheering, and then Monty Lowther rose.

"I'm going to see Mr. Curil."

"Yes, let's go round," said Tom Merry. "The next turn's not much. I'd like to see the Bantam off the stage. He's a jolly good little chap! If they'll let us behind, let's go."

"Vewy well, deah boys."

And the St. Jim's juniors left the auditorium.

An attendant in a gold-laced cap, upon the information that Lowther was an

old friend of Mr. Curil's, and upon the receipt of a tip of half-a-crown from Arthur Augustus, took a message to the immortal renderer of "Why Did She Fall For the Leader of the Band?"

He returned in a few minutes with a civil invitation to the juniors to follow him, and they followed him willingly, and were duly introduced into the gentlemen's dressing-room behind the scenes.

CHAPTER 6.

Behind the Scenes!

MR. CURIL greeted Monty Lowther very affectionately. He shook hands with the St. Jim's junior, and with all his friends in turn, in the most cordial way in the world, and so did Tiny Tim, the Bantam.

The accommodation for the artistes at the Wayland Empire was not extensive, and all the gentlemen shared a single dressing-room.

It was a big room, with whitewashed walls and furniture of the barest character.

The Brothers Bung, who performed comic duets and tumbling feats on the stage, were there, smoking cigarettes and refreshing themselves after their labours.

Tiny Tim had changed into his ordinary clothes. The boxer was good nature itself, and very cheery to the juniors.

Mr. Curil was inclined to be despondent.

He apologised for his surroundings, and hinted that this was not in the least what he had been accustomed to.

Indeed, as Lowther afterwards remarked, Mr. Curil was one of the gentlemen who dreamt that they had dwelt in marble halls.

"On the halls at last, Monty Lowther," said Mr. Curil, with a shake of the head. "Had to come to it in the long run. You wouldn't have thought it, would you, when you used to see me playing in musical comedy to crowded houses, and the whole house rising to it?"

Lowther didn't remember having seen that touching spectacle; but he was too polite to say so.

"But you're making a big success in this line, Mr. Curil," he said.

Mr. Curil looked despondent.

"To such base uses may we come!" he sighed. "Imperial Cæsar, dead and turned to clay, may stop a hole to keep the draught away, as Shakespeare puts it. An operatic tenor who has sang 'La Donna e Mobile,' has had to come down to singing comic dance songs!"

"Too bad!" said Lowther sympathetically.

"But they liked it, didn't they?" said Mr. Curil.

Lowther grinned. Although Mr. Curil appeared to be very much ashamed of having come down to the halls, he was very keen for the admiration of the audience he affected to despise, and inordinately proud of every "hand" that his performance received.

"Liked it!" said Lowther. "I should say so!"

Mr. Curil shook hands with him again.

"They rose to it, didn't they?" he said eagerly.

"I should think they did!" said Lowther.

"Even this kind of thing can be done well," said Mr. Curil. "I do it well; that makes all the difference. Boy!"

The call-boy in attendance upon these

gentlemen of genius put his shock head in at the door.

"Another of the same!" said Mr. Curil.

The mysterious direction was apparently understood by the boy, for he grinned and darted off.

He returned in a few minutes with a dirty tray, upon which were a glass containing whisky and a jug of water.

"I suppose you young gentlemen don't indulge?" said Mr. Curil.

"Thanks, no!" said Tom Merry.

"You don't need it," said Mr. Curil. "Keep off the drink, my boys, that's my advice to you—and I know! Never touch it!"

Mr. Curil touched it himself as he spoke. Evidently he was not the kind of person who followed his own wise counsel.

The whisky-and-water brought a new flush to Mr. Curil's cheeks and a sparkle to his eyes.

"You should have seen me in 'Rigoletto,' in the old Karl Tulip Company!" he said. "I used to get the 'hands' then, I did! You never saw me play the Duke, did you?"

"Nevah!" said D'Arcy.

"They were the days!" said Mr. Curil pathetically. "Every night a new triumph, young gentlemen! Crowded houses applauding till you'd have thought the roof would come off! And now—now I'm on the halls! Another of the same, Billy."

Billy waited.

Mr. Curil turned a fishy eye upon him. It was pretty clear that Mr. Curil had already had a good many of "the same"—more than were good for him!

"Well, why don't you hop it?" he said.

"Miss Noser says I'm to take the money, sir," said Billy stolidly.

"Filthy lucre!" said Mr. Curil, with a sigh going through his pockets. "I suppose none of you young gentlemen has half-a-crown lying round loose?"

"Yaas, wathah, sir, if you would do me the honah to accept—"

"Merely as a loan," said Mr. Curil. "I will call upon you to-morrow and return it. Cut off, Billy, and give Miss Noser my compliments, and say a little more whisky this time."

Billy grinned and vanished.

The next dose of "the same" made Mr. Curil more affectionate, pathetic, and confiding than ever. Tom Merry, Blake, and Herries were talking boxing with the Bantam, but Mr. Curil confided to the other fellows, who listened very respectfully, great stories of his early triumphs in that famous Karl Tulip Company, now defunct.

"We gave 'em grand opera in English," sighed Mr. Curil. "You should have heard me sing in those days, young gentlemen! People go to the pictures now instead, or to the music-halls. There was a time—ah, there was a time—"

Mr. Curil slid off his chair, and Lowther caught him and set him upon it again.

The tenor was getting very hazy now.

He blinked at Monty Lowther, and, apparently taking him for some manager with whom he had had an altercation in those glorious days, he said:

"No, sir! Certainly not, sir! I decline to sing without an accompaniment, sir! I am surprised that you should suggest it, sir! If your pianist is drunk, sir, it reflects upon your management, and I finally and

absolutely refuse to sing without an accompaniment!"

"Bai Jove! I believe he's gettin' squiffy!" said Arthur Augustus, looking distressed.

"Go hon!" murmured Lowther.

"Blighted ambitions," murmured Mr. Curil. "If I do take a drop now and then, sir, what of it? I repeat, what of it?"

"Here, it's time you travelled!" said the Bantam, taking Mr. Curil by the arm, and lifting him quite easily from his chair, though Mr. Curil, like most tenors, was a good weight. "I'm going to see you 'ome."

Mr. Curil pressed an arm affectionately round the Bantam's neck.

"Speak to me, Thora!" he urged.

"My 'at!" said Tiny Tim. "If the manager sees you like that—"

"I dreamt that I dwelt in marble halls," said Mr. Curil dreamily.

"You'll dream you've got the push if Mr. Bowkoe comes in," said the Bantam. "You'd better come and put your 'ead under the tap if you're goin' to sing in the second 'ouse. Kim on!"

"You young gents goin' our way?"

"Yaas, wathah! We'll help you with Mr. Cuwil," said D'Arcy.

And the Bantam piloted poor Mr. Curil out of the stage door into the street, the juniors going with them.

Mr. Curil's lodging was a short way from the Empire, and the Bantam shared the same "digs." It was evidently not the first time that the good-natured boxer had seen Mr. Curil safe home when he had had too many of "the same."

"Will he be all wight?" asked D'Arcy, rather anxiously.

The Bantam grinned.

"Oh, he's always like this!" he said.

"He'll put his 'ead in cold water, and come round in time for the second 'ouse. Good-evenin', my lads, and glad to have met you!"

"Good-evening, sir!" said Tom Merry, shaking hands with the boxer.

"Good-bye, Mr. Curil."

"Farewell!" said Mr. Curil. "Fare thee well, and if for ever, still for ever, fare thee well! Even though unforgiving, never 'gainst thee can my heart rebel!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Farewell!" went on Mr. Curil, shaking hands with the Bantam under the impression that he was shaking hands with Monty Lowther. "My kind young friend, adieu—or, rather, au revoir! I'm coming to see you!"

"Pway do!" said Arthur Augustus politely. "We shall be delighted to see you at St. Jim's, Mistah Cuwil!"

"Good egg!" said Monty Lowther. "Come over to-morrow afternoon. It's a half-holiday, and we'll have tea in the study. You will come, Mr. Tim?"

"Suttin'ly," said the Bantam, "if you youngsters like!"

"Pway do!"

"Delighted!" said Blake.

"Ripping!" said Manners.

"My kind young friends, adieu!" said Mr. Curil, still shaking the Bantam's hand as the juniors went down the street.

"You come in!" said the Bantam.

The boxer forcibly released his hand from Mr. Curil's affectionate grasp and dragged his unfortunate friend into the house.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, as the juniors walked out of Wayland and took the path home. "It's wotten to see a man like that, isn't it? I suppose it's wuff comin' down in the world atah bein' a gweat opewatic singah."

Monty Lowther chuckled. "I do not see anythin' to laugh at, Lowthah," said the swell of St. Jim's severely.

"I shouldn't wonder if he has been a singer," admitted Lowther. "Must have been a jolly long time ago, to judge by his voice. Still, he's a good chap, and we'll give him a good time at St. Jim's to-morrow."

"Only—only I hope he won't have any of 'the same' before he comes over," said Tom Merry rather dubiously. "It might cause trouble."

CHAPTER 7.

Not Quite a Success!

"JOLLY near bed-time!" said Blake, as the juniors, having dropped over the school wall, stood under the shadows of the old elms in the quadrangle of St. Jim's.

"I twust Knox is not lookin' out for us," remarked Arthur Augustus. "He may be waitin' at the door to question us as we go in."

"This way!" said Tom Merry. "That is the way to the New House, deah boy."

"I know it is, fathead!" "I decline to be called a fathead, Tom Mewwy; and I do not see any use in goin' to the New House when it is nearly time to go to bed in the School House."

"That's because you're what you decline to be called!"

Blake grasped D'Arcy's arm and led him on towards the New House. Figgins & Co. were talking in the Hall when the juniors entered. School House and New House at St. Jim's—or the junior portions, at all events—were deadly rivals, and Figgins & Co. looked warlike at the sight of the newcomers. But Tom Merry held up his hand in sign of pax.

"What are you kids doing out of your House at this time of night?" demanded Figgins. "Come over here to look for a set of thick ears?"

"Weally, Figgy—" "No," said Tom Merry, laughing; "we want you to walk over the quad with us, that's all."

"What on earth for?" asked Kerr. "Is it a feed?" demanded Fatty Wynn, the Falstaff of the New House. "I'll come with pleasure. It's rather late for a feed, but we can buck up, and—"

"It isn't a feed, Fatty." "Oh!" said Fatty Wynn, his interest in the matter diminishing at once. "What the dickens do you want us to walk across the quad for?"

"To see us home." "Oh, don't be funny!" said Figgins. "What do you want us to see you home for?"

"We couldn't go home in the dark," said Blake. "Knox is looking for us. He had an idea that we've been out of bounds, because we haven't been in the School House for the last hour or two. See?"

"Oh, I see! And if we walk over with you—"

"It will look as if we're coming back from a little party in the New House," explained Tom Merry. "Of course, as a matter of fact, we have been out of bounds."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If we're asked any questions we shall have to own up, of course; but if we can keep up appearances it may be all right. Will you come?"

"Like a bird!" said Figgins.

And the School House fellows and their good-natured rivals and deadly

enemies walked across the quad in only coming back from the other House. You heard what they were saying?"

"Bai Jove, there is Knox all wight!" said Arthur Augustus, as they came in sight of the open, lighted door of the School House.

Knox was standing there, talking to Langton of the Sixth and keeping one eye on the dusky quadrangle. The juniors began to talk loudly as they neared the House, so that the two prefects should hear them.

"Thanks awfully, Figgy!" said Tom Merry. "We've passed a very pleasant evening!"

Which was strictly true. "Not at all!" said Figgins. "We'll return your visit as soon as you like." "Yaas, wathah; we've had a wippin' time!" said Arthur Augustus, entering into the little scheme as soon as he understood it.

"Come in and have some ginger-beer in my study," said Blake hospitably.



"There's time to get back before the doors are locked." "Thanks!" said Fatty Wynn. "We will!"

And the juniors, in the most innocent manner in the world, walked into the House.

Knox eyed them suspiciously and doubtfully. He had known that they were out of the School House because he had looked for them; but if they had been visiting Figgins in the New House there was no fault to be found with them.

"Where have you kids been?" he demanded sharply.

"Us?" said Figgins. "We've been in our own House."

"We've just come from there, Knox!" said Monty Lowther blandly. "Yaas, wathah!"

"Have you been in the New House all the time?" demanded Knox, biting his lip with vexation.

"All which time?" asked Tom Merry.

"All the time you've been out of your House!" said Knox angrily. "I've already reported you to your House-master for being out of bounds, Tom Merry."

Tom Merry grinned; he knew that. "Oh, let them alone, Knox!" said the good-natured Langton. "They're

"I believe they've been out of bounds," said Knox.

The juniors went on to the stairs. Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, was in the passage, and Knox called to him. Kildare was never "down" on Tom Merry & Co. without reason, and it pleased Knox to make him take official note of their delinquency.

"Kildare," he called out, "those juniors have been out of bounds for hours!"

"Have you, kids?" said Kildare, looking round towards the juniors, who had to stop as the captain of St. Jim's called to them. "Where have you just come from?"

"From the New House," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!" "Oh, all right! Cut off!" "They're lying!" said Knox. "I know perfectly well that they've been out of bounds!"

"We're not lying!" said Tom Merry, flushing. "And you're a rotten—ahem!—you're quite wrong, Knox!"

"You have really just come from the New House?" asked Kildare.

"Yes, certainly!"

"Have you been out of bounds at all?"

"Ahem!"

"H'm!"

"Oh," said Kildare, "you have, then?"

"Well, yes; as a matter of fact, we have," admitted Tom Merry cheerfully. "We've just come from the New House, as I said; but before that—ahem!"

"I told you so!" sneered Knox. "They were lying!"

"Weally, Knox, you wottah—"

"They were not lying," said Kildare sharply, "and you have no right to say so, Knox. They have just come from the New House, and that was what I asked them. As soon as I asked them if they had been out of bounds, Tom Merry admitted it. I don't see what you always want to be down on those kids for, Knox. The way you question them is enough to make them tell lies, if they were inclined that way."

"So you are going to let them off for breaking bounds after calling—over!" said Knox savagely.

"Nothing of the sort! I don't suppose they've been doing any harm, but they'll take a hundred lines each for going out of bounds. You hear me, kids?"

"Yes, Kildare."

"And you'll do them to-morrow afternoon," said Kildare.

"Bai Jove!"

"I say, Kildare, we're expecting friends to-morrow afternoon," said Tom Merry meekly. "Could we leave the lines till to-morrow evening?"

"Yes; if you like," said the good-natured skipper. "Only don't let this occur again."

"You are a bwick, Kildare, deah boy!"

The juniors went up the stairs, and Knox looked at Kildare with a bitter expression. As head prefect, Kildare was empowered to deal with the matter as he liked, and Knox could not interfere once the captain of St. Jim's had taken it into his hands.

"So that's how you keep the juniors in order, is it, Kildare?" snarled Knox.

"Yes," said Kildare. "And I don't want any advice from you." And he turned his back upon the surly prefect.

"I'd have licked the young rascals all round," said Knox savagely to Langton.

"I dare say you would," said Langton. "But they'd have been none the better for it. You were always a bit of a bully, Knox."

And Langton walked away, leaving Knox biting his lips.

"Where's the ginger-beer?" said Fatty Wynn, as the juniors crowded into Study No. 6. "What a beast Knox is! Sorry you've got lines."

Blake handed out the ginger-beer from the study cupboard.

There was a step in the passage, and Knox looked in. The bully of the Sixth could never let well or ill alone. "You New House boys clear out!" he growled. "It's time you were in your own House!"

Pop!

Kerr was opening ginger-beer, and somehow or other—perhaps by accident—the cork shot through the doorway. There was a yell from Knox as he caught it under the chin.

"Ow! You young villain—"

"Awfully sorry!" said Kerr, as the ginger-beer bubbled and foamed into a glass.

"I'll thrash you till—"

"No, you won't!" said Kerr coolly. "You're not a New House prefect, Knox, and you can't touch us! Hands off!"

Kerr grasped the ginger-beer bottle in a businesslike way, and Knox started back, in spite of himself.

"Yaas, wathah, Knox!" said Arthur Augustus severely. "You are exceedin' your authority in intahfawin' with fellows of the othah House—"

"Oh, let him come on!" said Figgins. "I'm quite interested to see whether Knox's napper is as hard as this ginger-beer bottle."

Knox glared at the juniors for a moment, and then strode out of the study.

"Poor old Knox!" sighed Tom Merry. "Always running up against something. Gentlemen, here's to us, and long may we live!"

"Hear, hear!"

And the young rascals drank their own health in ginger-beer with much satisfaction, and then Tom Merry & Co. saw Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn off at the School House door. And the New House juniors called out a very cheery good-night to Knox as they departed.

CHAPTER 8.

Levison Plots Mischief!

TOM MERRY was rather thoughtful in class the next morning. He was thinking of the visitors that were to arrive in the afternoon.

Mr. Curil and the Bantam—and, indeed, all the other performers at the Wayland Empire—were free in the afternoons, and they had doubtless been glad of the invitation to pass a few hours in the school to kill time. For gentlemen of Mr. Curil's lively disposition, at least, there was little distraction in a quiet old place like Wayland. Mr. Curil and the Bantam were coming, and it was "up" to Tom Merry & Co. to give them as good a time as possible.

The chums of St. Jim's were hospitable, and they wanted to see the two

gentlemen from the Wayland Empire there, and to make much of them. Tom Merry owed a debt of gratitude to the Bantam, and he was not the kind of fellow to forget a debt of that sort readily. And Mr. Curil was an old friend of Monty Lowther's. But Tom could not help feeling a little worried.

If Mr. Curil should indulge in any of "the same," as he called his little stimulants, on the way to St. Jim's, it might lead to trouble.

At St. Jim's, of course, there would be no intoxicants of any sort, and Mr. Curil would have nothing stronger to drink than tea or ginger-beer. But Tom Merry could not help feeling anxious as to the state Mr. Curil might be in when he arrived.

After morning lessons—which were a little more troublesome than usual, owing to the neglect of preparation the previous evening—Tom Merry & Co. prepared for the reception of their visitors.

Funds, fortunately, being in a healthy state, considerable preparations were made for a really stunning "brew" in the study, and Figgins & Co. of the New House were asked to the feast—an invitation they accepted with alacrity, especially Fatty Wynn. As Fatty Wynn nobly observed, there were times when such things as House rows ought to be "off," and this was one of them.

"I twust poor old Cuwil will be sobah when he awwives," said Arthur Augustus, who had been thinking over that matter as well as Tom Merry. "Of course, it's wotten bad form to find fault with a guest, but it would attwact a lot of attention if he started doin' a song and dance in the quad, for instance."

"I should say so!" grinned Blake. "If he's squiffy, we'll duck his head in the fountain and bring him round!"

"He might object to such a pwoceedin', deah boy. I twust, howevah, he will have too much good sense to be squiffy. And, of course, there will be nothin' in the nature of stwong dwink here, though, in othah cires, pewwaps it would be up to us to provide him with the kind of wewfeshment he pwefers. But it would be impos here."

"Go hon!" said Digby. "We could borrow a bottle of whisky from Taggles if you really want to do the right thing by Curil."

"Weally, Dig—"

"Shurrup!" said Blake. "There's Levison listening with all his ears!"

"Levison, I veward it as wotten to pay attention to conversations not intended for your ears!" said Arthur Augustus severely.

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"So you're expecting a squiffy visitor, are you?" he said. "Good! Is that Curil you're speaking of, the Curil from the Wayland Empire?"

"Yaas, wathah! A chap who has been a gweat tenah," said D'Arcy. "Now he is only—"

"A fiver," said Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"I've seen the chap in Wayland," said Levison. "He drinks like a fish. I've seen him reeling home tipsy. Ripping kind of a friend for a St. Jim's chap, especially such whitewashed angels as you chaps! Not that I was ever taken in—I know you are only spoofing!"

Jack Blake introduced his boot into the discussion at this point, and Levison gave a howl and departed.

"It would have been wisah not to have let Levison know anythin' about it, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, with a shake of the head.

"Well, you did it, you ass!" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Let's go down to the gates and wait for them," said Tom Merry. "Then if Curil has been looking on the wine when it is red, we can take him for a little walk before he comes in."

"Good egg!"

Tom Merry & Co. strolled down to the gates, gathering up Figgins & Co. on the way. The New House juniors were equally interested in the Bantam, if not in Mr. Curil. Several other fellows, too, who learned that Tiny Tim was coming, were greatly interested. They had all learned of his boxing turn at Wayland Empire, and there were few of the St. Jim's fellows who were not interested in the manly art of self-defence.

Levison of the Fourth stared after the chums with a peculiar gleam in his eyes. He burst into a sudden chuckle and walked away, looking for Gore of the Shell. He found Gore in the quad-range.

"Well, what are you grinning at?" was Gore's query.

"I've got a little joke on!" said Levison, with a chuckle. "Tom Merry and that lot are expecting a visitor. Whom do you think?"

"Blessed if I know or care!" said Gore.

"It's Curil, the chap who sings at the Wayland Empire. He's a tipsy soaker, and the chaps are in a worried frame of mind lest he should get squiffy here and make a scene."

Gore laughed.

"My hat! That would be funny!"

"Chip in and help me, then, and we'll manage it," said Levison. "They're going to give him ginger-beer to drink. You can guess how an old toper will like that. You know Taggles keeps a bottle of whisky in his lodge?"

"More than one, I believe," said Gore.

"Well, if we could raid it—"

The Shell fellow stared.

"What on earth do you want to raid a bottle of whisky for?"

"Not to drink," grinned Levison. "But if we could somehow make Curil a present of it while he's here, and get him squiffy, think of the fun!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gore.

"You'll lend a hand?" asked Levison eagerly. "I'll get Taggles away somehow, while you raid the bottle from his lodge—"

Gore shook his head.

"It would be rough on Tom Merry and the chaps," he said.

"That's what I want! What do you mean? You're up against them as much as I am," said Levison.

"I'd rather not. Tom Merry did me a good turn only a short time ago, and I'm not up against him, as you call it. I'd rather let him alone."

"Look here, Gore—"

"Leave me out," said Gore. "And I'd advise you to drop it, Levison. It's not playing the game, anyway."

"Lot you care about playing the game," sneered Levison.

George Gore made no reply to that, but he walked away.

Levison was left biting his nails with annoyance. He reflected a few moments, and then looked for Mellish of the Fourth. He found Mellish in the tuckshop, and expounded his precious scheme to him.

Percy Mellish chuckled gleefully over it.

"Jolly good wheeze!" he said.

"You'll help?" said Levison eagerly. "I'll get Taggles away from his lodge, and you can cut in and—"

"No jolly fear!" said Mellish promptly. "Suppose Taggles caught me there?"

"Oh, he wouldn't; I'd keep him away! There's no risk."
 "Then I'll tell you what," said Mellish. "I'll get Taggles away, and you can cut in and get the stuff!"
 "Ahem! You see—"

"I see that you want me to pull the chestnuts out of the fire, and I can see that I'm jolly well not going to!" grinned Mellish. "I'll do what I said."

"Oh, all right, then!" said Levison ungraciously. "Go to Taggles with some yarn—tell him Herries' bulldog is loose in the Head's garden—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And while the two cads of the Fourth were elaborating their scheme to take advantage of Mr. Curil's unfortunate weakness, Tom Merry & Co. were waiting at the gates for their visitors, in blissful ignorance of Levison's scheme.

They had not long to wait. Two figures came in sight in the lane, and they recognised the Bantam and Mr. Curil.

Much to their relief, Mr. Curil was walking quite straight, and was evidently not under the influence of liquor. Probably the Bantam had seen to that. And the juniors greeted their visitors most heartily, and marched them in at the gates of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 9.

With the Gloves On!

QUITE a crowd of fellows gathered in the little tuckshop kept by Dame Taggles, where Tom Merry & Co. had taken their guests for liquid refreshments in the shape of ginger-beer and lemonade after their walk.

Mr. Curil was decidedly affable, and he told stories cheerfully of his early triumphs in the great days of the famous Karl Tulip Company.

But the Bantam was the favourite, and it was about him that most of the fellows gathered. Tiny Tim was a good-natured fellow, and so brimming with health and fitness that he could not be anything else but good-tempered. He rose at once to the suggestion that he should put the gloves on in the gym

and give the fellows a little exhibition of what boxing was really like. And they adjourned to the gymnasium in great spirits.

"Who's goin' to 'ave the mittens on with me?" the Bantam asked, with a grin. "I'll promise not to 'it 'im 'ard."

"Pewwaps I had bettah," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "It will weequah a weally good boxah to stand up against Mr. Tim at all."

"Yes, Gussy's the man," grinned Figgins. "Shall we get a bolster for you to fall on, Gussy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Figgins—"
 "I should like to try the gloves on with you, Bantam," said Tom Merry, laughing, "but we'll give Gussy first show."

"Yaa, wathah!"

"It's a D'Arcy's place to lead," explained Blake. "Gussy can show us the quickest way to the floor."

"Weally, Blake—"

The "mittens" were produced, and Tiny Tim stripped off his coat and pushed back his sleeves. The splendid development of his arms called forth glances of admiration from the juniors. Arthur Augustus handed his elegant jacket into Blake's care, and gave his eyeglass to Digby. Then he donned the gloves and stepped up to face Tiny Tim.

The boxer handled him very gently.

Arthur Augustus, elegant youth as he was, was a very good boxer, but he found that he could not touch the professional at all.

Tiny Tim treated him to a succession of gentle taps on the chest, the nose, the chin, and the forehead, and Arthur Augustus' counters were always in vain.

In five minutes the swell of St. Jim's was in a breathless state, and he had not succeeded in touching the smiling face of the boxer.

The juniors were laughing.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy, at last. "I'm afraid you're wathah too much for me, Mr. Bantam!"

"Extraordinary!" murmured Monty Lowther.

Arthur Augustus peeled off the gloves with a shake of the head.

"I should like to see old Kildare twy," he remarked. "I am afraid it is no good any chap here twyin'. I can't do anythin' myself."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let me try on the mittens," said Cutts of the Fifth, pushing his way through the ring of juniors.

Cutts was something of a boxer, and a great deal of a black sheep. Tom Merry & Co. were on bad terms enough with Cutts, but they had no objection to seeing the Fifth Former try his powers against the boxer from Wayland.

"Right-ho!" said Tom Merry. "Not tired, Bantam?"

The Bantam chuckled.

"Not jest yet."

Cutts donned the gloves and toed the line. Cutts was a good boxer, as he soon showed, but, powerful fellow as he was, and considerably taller than Tiny Tim, he did not succeed in making any impression on the Bantam. His face gradually assumed a harsh, bitter look as he strove in vain to break through Tiny Tim's guard, and it was evident that he was putting force into his drives that would have hurt Tiny Tim if they had reached him. But they did not reach him.

Tiny Tim simply played with the big Fifth Former, keeping a smiling face, while Gerald Cutts was growing blacker and blacker.

Cutts made a savage rush at last, hitting out fiercely, and Tiny Tim had to deliver a drive, and Cutts sat down with a bump.

"Bravo, Bantam!" yelled the juniors.

"Ow!" gasped the Fifth Former.

"Go it, Cutts!" grinned Lefevre of the Fifth. "Don't be licked! That's what I say! Go it!"

Cutts rose rather painfully to his feet.

"I'm done!" he growled; and he peeled off his gloves.

"Ope I didn't 'urt you," said Tiny Tim.

Cutts laughed. He was something of a sportsman, after all, and he did not bear malice.

"Well, you did, as a matter of fact," he said. "But it doesn't matter. If



As Mr. Curil tried to help himself up, he pulled on the tablecloth. He dragged it off the table, and tea-things and eatables shot over him in a shower! "Ow!" gasped Mr. Curil. "Avaunt! Stand back!"

I ever see you in the ring, my man, I shall put my money on you."

"I 'ope you wouldn't lose it, sir."

"If you're not fed up I'd like to try you for a round or two, Mr. Bantam," said Tom Merry.

"I could keep this on for hours," said the boxer. "It's only a gentle exercise to me, you know."

"Good!"

Tom Merry stripped off his jacket and waistcoat and tied his braces round his waist, and faced the boxer with the gloves on.

Tiny Tim gave him an approving look.

"You shape very well, sonny," he said. "I bet you're goin' to give me more trouble than the others."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I'll try," he said.

The juniors gathered round with more eagerness now. They knew how fit the captain of the Shell was, and what skill he had attained in the boxer's art. And as Tom Merry led off it was clear that the boxer's judgment was correct, and that he was going to give the Bantam more trouble than the others.

Tap, tap!

It was a postman's knock on the Bantam's nose, and there was a yell from the crowd.

"Well hit, Tommy!"

Neither D'Arcy nor Cutts had succeeded in touching the Bantam. Tiny Tim's look became more earnest. He put forth more strength and skill, and Tom Merry had all his work cut out to hold his own.

But he held it.

The surprise in the Bantam's face intensified, and he exerted himself more and more. But he did not succeed in penetrating the junior's guard, and when at last he did, he hit harder than he intended, and Tom Merry went down with a bump.

"Oh!" gasped the Bantam. "I didn't mean that, kid! 'Ope you're not 'urt!"

Tom Merry was on his feet in a twinkling.

"Right as rain!" he said cheerily.

"You're hot stuff, anyway," said the Bantam, admiringly. "Kid, you were born to go into the ring. When you're my age you'll be able to knock me out of the ring, I tell you. Blessed if I don't half think you could do it now!" He paused. "You're good stuff, kid, and you can box. We'll 'ave this thing reg'lar. Will one of you young gents keep time? Two-minute rounds and one-minute rests—that's the same as my turn with the Limehouse Slogger."

"Hear, hear!"

Cutts of the Fifth took out his watch to keep time. The boxing match was going to be of more interest now. It was plain that in Tom Merry the Bantam recognised a foeman worthy of his steel.

"You don't mind a 'ard knock or two?" asked Tiny Tim, rather doubtfully.

"No; if you don't."

"I've 'ad enough to get used to 'em," said the Bantam, with a chuckle. "But I'm bound to knock you about, you know."

"Time!" said Cutts.

Tom Merry stood out the first round splendidly. He received several somewhat severe taps, now that the Bantam was boxing in real earnest, but he gave as much as he received. The boxer did not mind the knocks, and at the end of the round he expressed his admiration.

"You was born a boxer," he said. "Sure you don't mind if I 'urt you?"

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"Quite sure," said Tom Merry, laughing heartily.

"Time!"

The Bantam was fighting hard now. He was hitting out now as he was accustomed to hit out in his contests with the Slogger on the stage at the Empire.

Tom Merry received a good deal of punishment; but he had told the truth when he said that he did not mind being hurt. He stood up gamely to the boxer. Round followed round, and the professional boxer had not been able to wear down his youthful antagonist. In the fifth round came the surprise of the Bantam's life.

Bump!

There was a roar:

"Bantam's down! Hurrah!"

There was no doubt about it; the Bantam was down. He sat and blinked at Tom Merry, who smiled breathlessly.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said the Bantam in amazement.

He jumped up nimbly enough.

"You're a young scorcher!" he said.

"Do you know, you could beat the Slogger, you could! He couldn't stand agin' you."

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

"I means what I says," persisted the Bantam. "You would be a match for the Slogger, and you could take my place in the show quite easy. But I don't think you're quite a match for me. By gum, I 'ope not!"

And so it proved.

Tom Merry lived through two more rounds, and then he had to confess that he was "done."

The Bantam was breathing hard as he peeled off the gloves.

"You stood up well for seven rounds agin' me," said Tiny Tim. "You're good stuff!"

"Yaas, wathah! I couldn't have done that myself, Tom Mewwy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fact that the schoolboy had stood up to him for seven rounds did not seem to trouble the Bantam in the least; he evidently admired the Shell fellow's prowess, and his manner was more friendly than ever.

Tom Merry bathed his heated face, and donned waistcoat and jacket, and the juniors praised him as he left the gym with his friends.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus suddenly. "Where is Mr. Curil?"

"I say, Mr. Curil!" called out Monty Lowther.

"Curil, my boy!" said the Bantam.

But Mr. Curil was not within hearing. He had been at first among the crowd watching the boxing, and then he had disappeared, and the juniors realised, rather guiltily, that in the keen interest of the boxing they had forgotten their other guest's existence.

"Look for him, you chaps," said Tom Merry. "It's nearly time for tea. Like to have a look round the school, Tiny Tim, and then we'll go up to the study for tea."

"O.K. with me!" said the Bantam.

And the Bantam was shown round St. Jim's, and then he accompanied the Terrible Three to Tom Merry's study, where they found the other juniors and Mr. Curil.

CHAPTER 10.

Mr. Curil Causes Trouble!

MR. CURIL nodded to Tom Merry with a glassy smile.

Blake exchanged a hopeless look with the captain of the Shell, and nodded.

There was a strong whiff of spirits about Mr. Curil, and his glassy and fishy eyes told their own tale.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Tom Merry. The Bantam uttered an angry exclamation.

"Curil, you fathead, this ain't playin' the game!" said Tiny Tim. "You promised me, you know you did, or I wouldn't 'ave let you come. Did you 'ave a flask, you himage?"

"Certainly not!" said Mr. Curil, with dignity. "I scorn the insinuation, sir! I fling it back in your tee-heeth!" said Mr. Curil, with a gesture worthy of his best days with the defunct Karl Tulip Company.

"Then where did you get it?"

"While you were boxing with our young friend, a kind and liberal young gentleman, sir, treated me to liquid refreshment, sir, of a somewhat exhilarating nature!" said Mr. Curil. "Was it for me to decline that grateful stimulant, sir? Perish the thought! Not that I have imbibed to any great extent. I scorn the insinuation! See me walk round the room, Bantam, my boy, and you will see that I am perfectly sober—sober as a judge, sir!"

Mr. Curil jumped up in a great hurry to prove that he was as sober as a judge, and started to walk round the study. But if the straightness of Mr. Curil's walk was to prove his sobriety, he was very much "not proven." For he zig-zagged round the study in a way that made the juniors grin in spite of themselves, and finished by catching hold of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy for support.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy.

"Oh, dry those tears!" said Mr. Curil, with both arms round D'Arcy's neck, clinging to him. "Shed not those pearly drops, I thee entreat; behold me kneeling lowly at thy feet!"

"Pway, Mr. Curil—"

"Friend of my early years!" murmured Mr. Curil. "Come to these arms! Weep upon my breast!"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly, striving to rid himself of Mr. Curil's affectionate embrace. "Pway dwag him off, deah boys!"

"Ha! Thou spurnest me!" said Mr. Curil fearfully. "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child!"

The Bantam caught Mr. Curil by the shoulders, and plumped him into the chair.

"You sit there!" he said.

"Shober as a judge!" murmured Mr. Curil, closing his eyes.

"What utter beast could have given him drink?" muttered Tom Merry. "It was a rotten trick to play!"

"They gave him plenty of it, whoever it was!" grinned Figgins. "Never mind; he's going to sleep now."

"You lie!" came a very distinct voice from the armchair.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

After that explicit statement that he was not going to sleep, Mr. Curil began to snore. His voice might be tenor, but his snore was a deep base; it was not musical, but it was a relief to the juniors to hear it. If Mr. Curil had taken a fancy to wander forth from the study in his present state, it would have been very awkward for Tom Merry & Co.

"If he was sober," said the Bantam, "I'd 'ammer 'im!"

"Thank goodness he's asleep!" said Blake. "Now, tea's ready. I'm afraid our friend Curil will miss his tea. Do you like prawns, Mr. Bantam?"

"Wot to!" said Mr. Bantam.

And, in spite of Mr. Curil's persistent

snore, the juniors and their guest made an excellent tea.

The study was crowded, but the fellows did not mind standing up.

Tiny Tim was quite at ease.

He talked cheerfully and incessantly, and told stories of many fights, more in earnest than the "twice-nightly" exhibitions on the stage of the Wayland Empire.

Though that, as he said, was serious enough in its way. The Limehouse Slogger's ambition was to lick him, but, as the Bantam said, with a chuckle, he couldn't do it. But the Slogger's earnest attempts to do it gave the twice-nightly boxing contest its keen interest, which made it the great draw of the evening there. The boxers, who had booked only for a week, had extended their stay to a second week, so great was the draw. In fact, the Bantam, who had all the good opinion of his own "turn" which a music-hall artiste generally has, attributed the presence of an audience in the Empire at all to the boxing turn between himself and the Slogger.

"You lie!" said Mr. Curil, waking up suddenly and turning upon the Bantam a lack-lustre eye.

The Bantam grinned.

"Oh, go to sleep!" he said. "I ain't ready to carry you 'ome yet."

"I refuse to be carried home. I call all present to witness that the people in front come simply to hear me," said Mr. Curil. "Yesterday I heard a gentleman in the stalls say 'What a voice—what a voice!'"

"Quite right!" said the Bantam. "You could saw wood with it!"

"In my day," said Mr. Curil dreamily, "there wasn't a tenor in England to equal me." Mr. Curil rose unsteadily to his feet. "Did you ever hear me render 'Let Me Like a Sus-Soldier F-F-Fall!'"

Bump!

Mr. Curil's unsteady legs curled up under him, and he sat down on the rug.

"Well, you've fell like a soldier now," said the Bantam—"like a soldier in a pub."

Mr. Curil sat up; he caught at the tea-table to assist himself in rising and got a good grip on the tablecloth.

"Hold on!" roared Tom Merry. Mr. Curil was, unfortunately, holding on too well. He dragged himself up, and the tablecloth was dragged off the table, and tea-things and eatables shot over Mr. Curil in a terrific shower.

Crash, crash, crash! Spatter! Splash! Crash!

"Ow!" gasped Mr. Curil. "Avant! Stand back! Who lifts a weapon dies! Slay not the knight who sorely wounded lies!"

"Oh, you hawfu' hass!" gasped the Bantam.

"Bai Jove!"

Mr. Curil staggered to his feet. He looked very queer, with tea and milk flowing over him, jam and butter sticking to his hair, and jelly quivering round his neck. The juniors, dismayed as they were, could not help laughing. Mr. Curil placed one hand on his breast and bowed to them.

"Encore!" chuckled Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gentlemen, with pleasure!" said Mr. Curil. "Yes, let me like a soldier f-f-fall upon some open plain, this breast expanding for the ba-hall, to—"

"Shut up!" roared the Bantam. "You'll 'ave a crowd round!"

The study door opened.

"Any charge for admission?" asked Levison, looking in, with Mellish behind him. "I suppose we can come to the show."

Tom Merry glared at him.

JUST MY FUN

Monty Lowther Calling!



Hallo, everybody!

"You reap what you sow," says Mr. Linton. Unless, of course, the birds get there first!

"All games annoy me," says Mr. Ratcliff. Leap-frog, of course, would put his back up.

Examinations cost the country something like £50,000 a year, we hear. Well, we're all in favour of saving that!

Figgins keeps a record of every aeroplane accident. Sort of "crash" register?

Blake complains that Crooke was using a "knock-kneed argument." Then why bandy words with him?

Try this: "Whatever you have to say, I shall not believe you!" snapped Mr. Selby. "Then if I tell you I'm the culprit, you'll let me off, sir?" asked Wally D'Arcy.

"Rain Stops Skating"—headline. And falls down, we imagine!

Latin is a dead language, says a Form-master. Yes, it's "killing" to learn!

They say it was young Gibson who told Mr. Selby that navigators were workmen's leggings.

News: A sixpence was discovered in a salmon caught in the River Dee. The sale of fishing rods all over Scotland has been trebled!

Story: "My opponent keeps on

"I suppose it was you who gave Curil the spirits, you cad!" he exclaimed.

Levison chuckled. "He said he was thirsty," he remarked, "so I—Yar! Yaroch!"

A pat of butter caught Levison in the eye, and then another in the ear; he slammed the door and retreated.

But by this time quite a number of juniors had been attracted to the study—some by the upraised voice of Mr. Curil, and others by Levison's report of what was going on there. The door was opened again. The Bantam and the juniors were trying to keep Mr. Curil quiet, but Mr. Curil refused to be quiet; he persisted in giving an example of the way he had sung "On With the Motley" in the grand old days of the Karl Tulip Company.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, in great distress. "I twust this will be a warnin' to you youngstahs nevah to take to dwink."

"Ass!" said Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Laugh, Punchinello," said Mr. Curil, "for the love that is ended!"

"I'll give you larf, Punch-and-Judy!" growled the Bantam. "I'm sorry this 'as 'appened, lads. I'll get 'im away as quiet as I can."

"Well, tea's finished," grinned Figgins, with a glance at the heap of wreckage on the floor of the study.

"You youngsters will get into a row if anybody 'ears 'im," said the Bantam uneasily. "It was a beastly trick to give 'im spirits. Kim on, Curil!"

"Go it!" called out the crowd of fellows in the passage. "Pile it on!

sloshing me on the nose," complained the heavyweight. "Yes, he's making quite a feature of it," agreed his second.

"Old Selby is never satisfied—it's enough to make a chap weep," says Wally D'Arcy. A "crying" shame?

I understand potatoes are the most popular vegetable at St. Jim's. But beans are "runners"—up.

As the moth said: A muff is as good as a feast.

A furniture remover has written his biography. A "moving" story?

Crazy story: A man was staggering along with a heavy sea anchor on his back. "What ever is that for?" asked his friend. "Oh, my cat will keep jumping up at the canary!" came the reply.

Figgins complains that he went fishing, but only caught a cold. Ah, the wind was "biting"!

Late News: It appears that Good King Wenceslas went in constant fear of being murdered. No wonder he "looked out."

Short one: "Did you say you wanted these eggs turned over?" asked the waiter. "Yes—to the Museum of Natural History!" snapped the diner.

What ship is found on land? Friendship.

As the dear old lady said to the admiral: "Would you mind showing my little boy how to dance the hornpipe?"

Headline: "Two Scots Comedians Achieve Fame." "Gael's" of laughter.

Reply: "Where can I get my face lifted free?" asks a correspondent. Any boxing academy will do it for you.

Last shot: "The secret of this stunt," said the tightrope walker, as he walked off the end of the rope, "is not on any account to look down!" Chin, chin, chaps!

Give us another verse! Encore—encore!

"Young gentlemen," said Mr. Curil, "you do me proud. You behold me now on the halls, but time was when I was the star tenor of the Karl Tulip Company and crowds flocked to hear me sing."

"Do be quiet!" urged the Bantam. "Sir, I refuse to be quiet! I insist upon giving an encore—I insist, sir!"

"Give us 'The Music Goes Round and Round,'" said Mellish.

"Cave!" shouted Kerruish of the Fourth. "Here comes Knox!"

"Oh cwumps!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Now there's goin' to be a wow!"

Knox, the prefect, with a frowning brow, stopped in the doorway and stared into the study.

CHAPTER 11.

Not So Funny!

KNOX stared at Mr. Curil; and Mr. Curil bestowed a fishy, glazed look upon the prefect.

"What—what—Who on earth's this?" demanded Knox.

"Friend o' mine," said the Bantam.

"Merry, you—you have an intoxicated man in your study!"

"You see, Knox—"

"I see that you are disgracing the school, as usual," said Knox. "Hallo! Keep off! What do you mean?" roared the prefect as Mr. Curil suddenly fell upon his neck and embraced him, with tears in his eyes.

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"'Tis he—'tis he!" said Mr. Curil. "Tis he—'tis he! I know him now. I know him by his sable brow."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Leggol!" yelled Knox.

"Ah, what delight! Aha, what joy! My long-lost son—my noble boy!" wept Mr. Curil, still clinging to Knox.

"You—you—drunken—beast!" spluttered Knox. "Gerroff! Merry, I'll report this to the Head. This man shall be locked up! Take him away!"

Tom Merry & Co. surveyed each other in dismay. The fat was in the fire now, with a vengeance.

Knox hammered furiously at Mr. Curil, and that was sufficient to change Mr. Curil's affectionate humour to anger. He released the prefect and squared up to him, getting between Knox and the door.

"Ah, wouldst thou, knave!" said Mr. Curil. "Draw, dastard—draw! Have at thee!"

Biff, biff, biff!

Mr. Curil "had at" Knox with terrific effect. The prefect was driven round the study, and an uppercut sent him sprawling in the heap of broken crockery-ware.

Crash, crash!

"Ow! Oh! Help! Oh!" shrieked Knox.

"Gweat Scott, we must get him away!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Line up, you chaps, and march him out!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

The juniors closed round Mr. Curil, and rushed him out of the study. Knox was left struggling out of the broken crockery. The Bantam took an iron grasp upon Mr. Curil, and, with the juniors crowding round him to conceal him as much as possible from the general view, he was hurried out into the quadrangle.

In the quad Mr. Curil announced his intention of going to sleep in the shade of the old elm-tree; but he was rushed on to the gates.

"Sorry this 'as 'appened," said the Bantam, supporting his unfortunate friend in the road. "I wouldn't 'ave let him come if I'd known."

"It's not your fault or his," said Tom Merry. "It was one of our chaps played this trick, and we'll make him sit up for it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Kim on!" said Tiny Tim, dragging his exuberant friend down the road. "You'll be gettin' these lads into trouble."

Mr. Curil persisted in turning round to kiss his hand to the juniors; but the Bantam succeeded at last in getting him away.

Tom Merry turned back into the quadrangle with his chums, all of them looking dismayed.

"There'll be a row over this," said Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

And there was. Kildare met Tom Merry as he came back to the School House, with the announcement that the Head wanted his presence very particularly in his study. Tom Merry repaired thither, and found Knox of the Sixth in the presence of the Head. Dr. Holmes was looking very severe.

"I have heard a most extraordinary statement from Knox, Merry!" he said sternly. "You have been entertaining someone in your study?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry meekly.

"With intoxicants?" said the Head, frowning.

"No, sir."

"Knox declares that the man was intoxicated, and assaulted him."

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"Look at my face, sir!" howled Knox.

"The man was tipsy, sir," said Tom Merry reluctantly; "but it wasn't our fault. He was quite sober, and he's a good fellow; but some cad gave him spirits, and it's a weakness of his. That's all, sir. It was a rotten trick played on him by a fellow who ought to have known better."

"Ah," said the Head, his brow clearing, "you did not tell me that, Knox!"

"I don't believe it, sir!" said Knox viciously.

Dr. Holmes frowned.

"I believe it, Knox. And you have no reason to doubt Merry's statement," he said. "I am sure that Merry would not have intoxicated in his study."

"Certainly not, sir!" said Tom Merry.

"It was a trick, and it was played to get us into trouble."

"You should not be acquainted with a man who has such a weakness, Merry," said the Head mildly. "But it was very wrong of anyone to give him strong drink, knowing his weakness. Who was it?"

"I—I didn't see him do it, sir," stammered Tom.

"But you know who it was?"

"Well, I can guess, sir."

The Head laughed.

"I will not compel you to give me the name, Merry. The wicked boy should be punished. However, I presume that this—this man has now left the school?"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"You must never have him here again."

"Very well, sir."

"And you must be more careful another time," said the Head kindly. "Knox, I am afraid you did not wait to make an accurate investigation of the circumstances before you acquainted me with the matter. It is now closed. You may go."

"Thank you, sir!" said Tom gratefully.

And he left the Head's study. Knox followed him into the passage, and scowled at him savagely.

"You've lied yourself out of that!" he said between his teeth.

"I haven't lied, and you know it," said Tom Merry coolly. "You know perfectly well that there are no intoxicants in my study, just as I know that there are some in yours."

"You cheeky cub—" began Knox.

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Tom.

And he hurried away to rejoin his friends, who were waiting anxiously for his reappearance. They greeted him with a chorus of inquiries.

"It's all right," said Tom. "The Head's a brick. It was a rotten thing to happen; but it was all Levison's fault. The Head says that whoever played that trick ought to be punished. I agree with him."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hear, hear!"

All the juniors agreed with the Head on that point, as a matter of fact. And they looked for Levison.

They found the cad of the Fourth in his study with Mellish. Levison and Mellish were chuckling, but they left off chuckling as the juniors crowded in.

"Get out of my study!" exclaimed Levison fiercely.

"You rotter!" said Tom Merry. "Which of you was it gave the whisky to poor old Curil?"

"Find out!"

"We're going to! Collar them!"

"Hold on!" yelled Mellish in alarm.

"I didn't do it! I only got Taggles out of the lodge, while Levison—"

"Shut up!" hissed Levison.

"While Levison got poor old Taggy's whisky," grinned Blake, "and gave it to Curil. Collar the cad!"

Are you sorry, Levison?"

"No!" yelled Levison.

"Then we'll make you sorry!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Levison struggled furiously in the



With Wayland wanting two to win, their last batsman found off-stump was out of the ground! St. J.

grasp of the avengers. But his struggling was of no use. He was whirled off his feet, and bumped on the floor—hard!

He roared.

"You've mucked up our little tea-party!" said Tom Merry. "Give him one for that!"

Bump!

"Yaroooooh! Ow!"

"You've acted like a rotten cad! Give him another for that!"

Bump!

Levison gave a scendish yell.

"And I believe you fetched Knox on the scene! Give him one for that!"

Bump!

Levison rolled on the floor, yelling. And the juniors, satisfied with the punishment, left him there and departed. Levison sat up, white with rage.

Mellish was grinning.

"Never mind, the joke was worth it," he said consolingly.

"Ow!"

"Doesn't it seem so funny now?" asked Mellish sympathetically.

Levison gritted his teeth, and hit out straight from the shoulder. Mellish gave a roar and rolled under the table.

"Got any more funny things to say?" demanded Levison.

Mellish hadn't.

CHAPTER 12.

The Wayland Match!

"IT'S all wight, deah boys!"

This from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The School House fellows were coming out after dinner on Saturday. Saturday was a half-holiday, and the junior eleven were

"It's the last night of the boxers," said Tom Merry. "They change the programme on Monday."

"Yaas, that's what I was thinkin' of. And we have permish to go. And as I happen to be in funds just now, I was thinkin' of telephonin' and bookin' seats for the second house to-night. And we shall be able to finish up there after the cwicket match at Wayland. What do you fellows say?"

"Good egg!"

"Blessed if Gussy isn't talking real, solid horse-sense!" said Monty Lowther, in a tone of great surprise.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"I should like to see Tiny Tim again," said Tom Merry—"to say nothing of Mr. Curil."

"Poor old Curil! Ha, ha, ha!"

"We shall be in Wayland. And I'm thinkin' of bookin' seats for all the team, and all the fwiends who come with us," said D'Arcy.

"Gussy, old man, now you're talking," said Lowther enthusiastically. "Never shall it be said that we refuse to go to a theatre when the seats were paid for. I'm on!"

"Same here!"

"Jolly way to wind up the evening after the match, if we have permission to stay out after calling-over," said Manners.

"I've awwanged that with Kildare."

"Ripping!"

It was really a pleasant prospect—especially for the juniors who had not been to the local Empire already. And quite a large party of enthusiastic friends accompanied Arthur Augustus to the telephone in the prefects' room to book the seats—eighteen in all. It was going to be a large party.

"It's all wight; they've got the seats," said Arthur Augustus, as he hung up the receiver. "Part of the pwogwamme is new; but Tiny Tim and Mr. Cuwil are both there, for the last time, in the second house to-night. We'll give them a good send-off."

"Hear, hear!"

Then the junior cricketers made their preparations for the match at Wayland. Wayland C.C. were a somewhat older team than the junior eleven of St. Jim's; but Tom Merry & Co. were not in much doubt about starting off with a victory in their first cricket match of the season.

A motor-coach carried off the cricketers in a happy crowd with their bags. Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, and Redfern, of the New House, were in the eleven, with Tom Merry, Lowther, Kangaroo, Blake, D'Arcy, Reilly, and Digby, of the School House. Herries, Manners, and Clifton Dane, and Glyn, Vavasour, Lawrence and Owen made up the rest of the party.

The coach drove away down the leafy lane. As it turned into the cross-roads for Wayland, Tom Merry uttered a sharp exclamation. A man was standing by the signpost there, lighting a clay pipe. And Tom Merry recognised the ruffian Ginger, the leader of the gang of footpads who had

attacked him in the wood on the occasion when he had made the acquaintance of the Bantam.

The ruffian caught Tom Merry's eye at the same moment.

"Stop!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! What's the mattah?"

"That's the footpad—the worst of the gang!" Tom Merry leaped to the ground before the driver brought the coach to a halt.

But Ginger had already darted into the wood, leaping across the ditch that bordered the road. Tom Merry halted.

"No go," said Blake. "Jump up again, Tommy! We shouldn't have time to take him to the station, anyway. We should be late for the match."

"Yaas, wathah! I shall know him now," said Arthur Augustus. "And if I come acwoss him again, deah boy, I shall give him a fearful thwashin'."

Tom Merry grinned as he climbed into the motor-coach again. He liked the idea of the elegant swell of St. Jim's giving the powerful ruffian a fearful thwashing. But Ginger was gone now, and there was nothing to be done.

The coach drove on.

It was a bright, sunny afternoon, and the juniors were in great form for the match. The Waylanders proved to be rather a tough team to handle, and but for Fatty Wynn's bowling the St. Jim's juniors would probably have had to count a defeat as a start to the season.

St. Jim's piled up exactly a hundred in their innings, and the Waylanders had reached ninety-six with two more wickets to fall. As it was a single-innings match the hopes of the Waylanders were high.

"Bettah put me on to bowl this ovah," Arthur Augustus remarked to his captain. "We mustn't let them get anothah four."

"No fear!" said Tom Merry.

"Four to tie and five to win," said D'Arcy. "We've simply got to shift them."

"Yes, rather!"

"Then you'll put me on for this ovah?"

"Not much!" said Tom Merry tersely.

"Why not?"

"Because I want to shift them," explained Tom Merry.

"Weally, you ass—"

But without heeding Arthur Augustus' remonstrance, the St. Jim's junior skipper tossed the ball to Fatty Wynn.

"Get 'em out, Fatty!" he said.

"Go in and win!" suggested Monty Lowther, who could never refrain from a pun, good or bad, even when the fate of a cricket match was trembling in the balance.

"I'll do my best," said Fatty.

Fatty Wynn's best was very good. The first ball of the over brought down a Wayland wicket, and the Saints cheered.

"Well bowled, Fatty!"

"Yaas, wathah! Bwavo! I couldn't have beaten that, Wynn, deah boy!"

"Last man in!"

Last man came in, and took three runs off the next ball.

Tom Merry looked grave. One wanted to tie and two to win. And it was a good bat who was facing the bowling now—one of the Wayland team's best.

But Fatty Wynn was in great form. He sent down a ball that was stopped, and then another that was stopped, and then—click!

"Hurrah!"

The off stump was out of the ground, and the St. Jim's juniors roared with one voice:

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ty Wynn. Down came the ball and—click! The
beaten their opponents by one run!

booked for a match at Wayland with the local team.

It was the first cricket match of the season, and Tom Merry & Co. were talking and thinking of nothing but the game, with the exception of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The swell of St. Jim's was evidently exercising his mighty brain upon some more important matter.

"What's biting you now?" asked Blake kindly.

"Nothin's bitin' me, deah boy, and I regard the question as ridiculous," said Arthur Augustus. "You wemembah we were in a state of doubt last Wednesday about goin' to the Wayland Empire?"

"I wasn't, so far as I can remember," remarked Monty Lowther.

"You wemembah I wasn't quite sure that it would be good form. However, it is all wight now," said D'Arcy. "I have spoken to Kildare about it, and we have the Head's permish to attend the last performance there."

"How's that?"
 "Yaas, wathah! How's that, umpire?" grinned Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.
 "Out!"

Wayland were all down, and St. Jim's had won by a single run. The Saints clustered round Fatty Wynn and thumped him joyously on the back till the fat Fourth Former roared.

But Wayland took their defeat very well. And after the match there was a spread for the visitors, at which Fatty Wynn distinguished himself even more than in the bowling.

By the time tea was over it had grown dark, and, as the swell of St. Jim's had foreseen, it would have been too late for the first house at the Empire. But there was a good time to wait before the second house started, and the juniors occupied it in various ways.

Fatty Wynn made for the nearest bunshop to continue the spread ad lib., and some of the juniors accompanied him, feeling that it was up to them to fill Fatty with as many tarts as he could hold, after the noble way he had pulled the match out of the fire.

The Terrible Three strolled through the old High Street, and found a little harmless and necessary amusement in knocking the caps off several Grammar School fellows whom they met, and then strolled down the road.

Tom Merry pointed out to his comrades the spot where Tiny Tim had come to his rescue when he was attacked by Ginger & Co., and the chums of the Shell leaned upon the stile, chatting about the cricket match.

A chime from Wayland Church warned them that it was time to get back.

"Second house starts in half an hour," said Manners. "And we've got to yank Fatty away from the grub. Come on!"

They sauntered down the shadowy road towards Wayland town.

A figure loomed up in the dusk before them, going in the same direction, and Tom Merry uttered an exclamation:

"The Bantam, by Jove!"

It was a custom of Tiny Tim, as he had told Tom Merry, to take a walk in the fresh country air between the "two houses" at the Empire.

The chums of the Shell hastened their steps to overtake their old acquaintance. A sudden cry left Lowther's lips.

"Look!"

Three dark figures had suddenly leaped from the blackness of the hedge only a dozen yards in advance of the Terrible Three, and were rushing upon Tiny Tim from behind. Even in the gloom Tom Merry recognised Ginger & Co.

"Look out, Bantam!" he yelled.

The Bantam swung round.

Crack!

There was a yell of anguish from the Bantam. A sudden blow of a cudgel had been aimed at his head, and he had caught it on the arm.

"Out 'im!" yelled Ginger.

The three ruffians had evidently lain in wait for the boxer to avenge the thrashing he had given them when he rescued Tom Merry from their clutches. And but for the presence of the Terrible Three the Bantam would have been very roughly used. The cudgels were in the air ready to descend when the juniors dashed up. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther did not hesitate. They rushed right on, and flung themselves upon the ruffians without a second's hesitation.

"Back up!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Pile in!" yelled the Bantam, and his

left fist caught Ginger under the chin and hurled him bodily into the ditch.

The Bantam's right arm hung useless at his side. In a moment the footpads were flying. Two of them fled into the wood, and Ginger, dragging himself out of the ditch on the other side, ran into the darkness of the fields.

"The bounds!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Bantam, old man, are you hurt?"
 Then he sprang forward, with outstretched arms, just in time to catch the boxer as he fell.

CHAPTER 13.

One Good Turn Deserves Another!

"H'E'S hurt!" exclaimed Lowther. The boxer groaned slightly as he leaned upon Tom Merry's shoulder.

"Orlright," he murmured. "I got that stick across the arm, that's all. 'Tain't broke—no bones broke. But, crumbs, it 'urts!"

The young man's face was pale with the pain; but he clenched his teeth

WORKMANLIKE!



First Player: "Yer cheatin'!"

Second Player: "I ain't!"

First Player: "Well, 'ow did yer know I was goin' ter play that spade?"

Second Player: "I saw yer spit on yer 'and!"

A football has been awarded to E. Porter, 15, Hoten Road, Sneinton, Nottingham.

hard, and kept back any audible expression of it. It had been a savage blow; but the Bantam was as hard as nails. He straightened up, and tried to grin.

The Terrible Three regarded him anxiously.

"Thank you for wot you did, my lads!" said the Bantam. "They was goin' to lay me out, I reckon. And they'd 'ave done it, too!"

"I'm afraid it was in revenge for the way you treated them when you helped me that night," said Tom Merry, in a low voice. "This is rotten for you, Bantam."

"Let's get along to the light!"

They moved along to a road-lamp, and there the Bantam stripped off his coat and rolled up the sleeve of his right arm. There was a big black bruise there, and the arm was so sore that he could not move it. The Bantam felt over it carefully with the fingers of his left hand.

"No bone broke," he said again, in great relief.

"But you won't be able to use your

arm again yet, Bantam," said Tom Merry.

The Bantam nodded.

"Looks like it," he said. "Wouldn't be so bad if it 'ad 'appened a few hours later. I'm restin' next week; but now there's the second 'ouse at the Empire, and an extra big crowd on Saturday night. This is rotten."

"It's a beastly shame!" said Manners.

"I suppose I oughtn't to grumble," said the Bantam. "I should 'ave got it on my 'ead if you lads 'adn't come by. But it mucks up my show for the evenin'." And goodness knows wot I'm goin' to do!"

"You can't box with your arm like that," said Manners.

"No fear! But—"

"You ought to have it seen to," said Lowther.

"I dunno wot to do. You see, the boxing turn is the draw of the evening, and there is a big crowd to see the last turn," said the Bantam, in great distress. "Bowkoe will 'ave 'is 'air fair off!"

The Bantam looked very worried.

"You see, the Empire ain't doing so well as they make out, and old Bowkoe don't care to disappoint his patrons," he explained. "And there would be a fair row if 'e was to put on Curil, say, with an extra song instead of the boxing turn."

"I should say so."

"The worst of it is that I'm bound to put in a substitute if anythin' should 'appen to me," said Tiny Tim. "But 'ow am I goin' to find a man at the last minute like this—in a country town? It ain't possible. If it was in London or Manchester it would be orlright. But 'ere it's hopeless! 'Course, I ought to have somethin' fixed up in case of accidents—only I don't never 'ave no accidents—and I ain't done it. Too expensive, you see; they don't pay me a small fortune for my turn. And—and if I don't show up, I lose all the week's screw—that's in the contract!"

"Rotten!" said Lowther.

"Unless I put in a substitute wot can put up an equally good fight with the Slogger," said the Bantam despondently.

In that worry the Bantam seemed to have forgotten the pain in his injured arm, though his features twitched every now and then.

The juniors were very much concerned.

It was true that their aid had saved the Bantam from still more serious injury; but Tom Merry felt that it all lay at his door. It was the Bantam's generous rescue of him that had brought upon the boxer the enmity of the ruffians. The junior could not help feeling that—but for him this injury would not have fallen upon the Bantam; though, of course, he had not been to blame.

He would have given a great deal to help the boxer out of his difficulty. He had seen Mr. Bowkoe at the Empire, and he remembered the hawkish features and hard face of the manager. There was little doubt that if the manager was put to loss by the Bantam, he would make the Bantam pay for it to the full extent that his contract allowed.

And the loss of a week's pay to a man in Tiny Tim's position was a very serious matter indeed; as well as the harm that would be done him in his profession, if it became known that he had left his manager in the lurch on a Saturday night—accident or no accident.

An idea was floating in Tom Merry's mind; but he hesitated to utter it.

(Continued on page 18.)



**Let the Editor be your pal. Write to him to-day, addressing your letters :
The Editor, The GEM, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.**

HALLO, chums! In this number we are pleased to welcome the chums of Greyfriars. That these cheery schoolboys are no strangers to GEM readers, I am sure, and I am equally certain that their exciting and humorous adventures will be followed with great interest by all.

It is many years ago now that these characters were "born," but such was their strong appeal to boys and girls that they soon became famous wherever the English language was read, and to-day they are more popular than ever. Greyfriars and Harry Wharton have become, like Tom Merry and St. Jim's, household words.

It has always been a point of interest with readers of the Companion Papers to know how Harry Wharton, Billy Bunter, and the others first started to become the well-known characters they are to-day. So now GEM and "Magnet" readers have the unique opportunity of learning, from the pen of Frank Richards, all about Harry Wharton & Co., and their early experiences at the famous Public school, Greyfriars. This issue contains the first chapters of

"THE MAKING OF HARRY WHARTON!"

and if you have already read them—and I expect you have—then you will be eager to see what happens in subsequent chapters. What will happen to Wharton, the spoilt, obstinate, reckless new boy at Greyfriars? The way he has started he is certainly piling up trouble for himself. Next week he's in hot water up to his neck, with the result that, utterly miserable and fed-up with Greyfriars, he runs away from the school. But it is that very action which is the turning point in the career of Harry Wharton at Greyfriars.

I should advise all readers to make absolutely certain of not missing one instalment of this great story. The safest way is to place a standing order with your newsagent.

"GINGER FOR PLUCK!"

That's an old saying, and it's certainly true in the case of Arthur Rook, the new boy who comes to St. Jim's in next week's splendid yarn. Rook has such a striking ginger mop of hair that he immediately finds himself the centre of interest among his new school fellows, and the butt of endless humorous remarks. Particularly does Monty Lowther delight in pulling his leg, and that's where trouble starts. Unfortunately Rook is rather sensitive about his red hair, and he and Lowther quickly fall out. One row leads to another, and results in a rift in the lute between the Terrible Three. But eventually the new boy's pluck in a matter of life

and death heals the broken bonds of friendship, while at the same time curing him of his sensitiveness over his red hair.

Martin Clifford has treated this grand yarn in his usual masterly style, and every reader will enjoy it immensely. In addition to our two ripping school yarns, there will be another selection of illustrated jokes, which will earn for their senders match footfalls, and Monty Lowther will be his witty self again. Look out for this topping number, chums!

THE CUP FINAL.

Picture to yourself a beautiful stretch of green turf, marked out with white lines, and surrounded by vast stands and tier upon tier of terracing, and packed with 93,000 excited people. Yes,

FAULTY!

Recruit: "How do you spell fort?"

Sergeant: "Which one? The fought you fight, or the fort you live in?"

Recruit: "Neither. The fort you fink!"

A football has been awarded to J. King, 58, Woodberry Avenue, North Harrow, Middlesex.

once again all football enthusiasts are awaiting the kick-off of the Final of the Football Association Challenge Cup. It's the match of the season, and, such is its great attraction, football fans from all over England will gather in Wembley's famous arena to see the finale of a Cup competition which started in September of last year.

Next Saturday's Final sees the Arsenal and Sheffield United in opposition—a battle between London and Sheffield. It will be the third such battle for the "Blades," as they have figured in two other Finals with London clubs. Tottenham Hotspur, the first existing London team to bring the Cup to the Metropolis, beat Sheffield United 3-1 in 1901, after a draw of 2-2. But fourteen years later Sheffield had their revenge when they defeated Chelsea in 1915 by 3-0.

Both this year's Finalists are famous as Cup-fighters, the Arsenal coming more into the limelight of recent years. It will be their fourth appearance at

Wembley since 1927, and they have won the trophy once. Against that record the Blades can boast five Finals, and in four of those matches did they carry the Cup back to Sheffield. Will they succeed a fifth time?

Someone said on the wireless that the Cup has not left Sheffield yet. The truth of that remark will be proved on Saturday. If the Blades do beat the Arsenal they will take over the trophy from their near neighbours, Sheffield Wednesday, the holders. But London readers are hoping that the Cup will come South for a change.

A DISPUTED GOAL!

Whatever happens in this Final, the Arsenal will take care not to make the big mistake they did on their last appearance at Wembley in 1932. Do you remember the much-discussed goal Newcastle scored to beat the Arsenal 2-1? One of the Newcastle forwards brought the ball along the Arsenal goal-line, and centred, and it was promptly put in the net. But in the moment before that happened the Arsenal defenders eased up, thinking that the opposing forward had taken the ball out of play before passing it. The ref, however, awarded a goal, in spite of many strong protests from the Arsenal players.

When pictures of that incident were published afterwards, it was clearly seen that the ball was taken over the goal-line by the Newcastle forward. If the Arsenal had played to the whistle instead of easing up they might have prevented that goal. The ref is not always in a position to judge within a matter of an inch or so whether the ball is out of play or not. However, let's hope no such controversial goal decides the destination—London or Sheffield—of the F.A. Cup for another year.

THIRTY-SIX YEARS A CAPTIVE

Workmen were demolishing a wall recently in Keighley, Yorks, when they were astonished to see a toad suddenly hop out from a hole between two bricks. That wall had been built during the South African War, so the toad had been a captive for about thirty-six years! How it had lived so long is a mystery, but it is the opinion of naturalists that it must have slept through the whole of that time.

HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY!

Tony Calagno was a tough guy living in a tough town—Chicago—so he bought himself a gun, and started on a life of crime. He held up a restaurant, took all the money from the till, and also robbed one of the customers. He then made a clean getaway, and was congratulating himself some hours afterwards when suddenly police appeared and arrested him. Calagno was nonplussed by such rapid police tracking, but it was all very simple. The customer he had robbed was a lightning artist, and he had given the police a very good sketch of the hold-up man. Now Tony is thinking that, after all, honesty might be the best policy.

TAILPIECE.

Father: "You know, Tommy, hard work never killed anybody."
Son: "That's just it, dad. I want to do something with a spice of danger in it."

THE EDITOR.

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PEN PALS COUPON
25-4-26

"You see, though it's an exhibition boxing match, the Slogger and me put our beef into it—that's wot draws the public," said the Bantam. "I could put in a man for the Slogger to knock about—but that wouldn't be the same thing."

"It's jolly close on time, too!" said Tom Merry. "Second house opens in ten minutes now, and you're the third turn, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"And if you don't show up—"

"The turn will have to be cut," said the boxer despondently. "Old Bowkoe will 'ave to make a speech explainin', and then he'll take it outa me!"

"Unless you can have a substitute to box the Slogger."

"E'd 'ave to be a good man—and I couldn't find one in Wayland—not in the time, anyway!"

"Then you'll lose your week's money?"

"Twenty quid!" said the Bantam, with a sigh; "likewise the Slogger. And old Bowkoe will be wild, and he's bound to let the word go round that I ain't reliable to turn up. No good talkin' to 'im about haccidents. 'E only thinks of people in the front, and the takin's at the box-office!"

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"Could I help you, Tiny Tim?" he asked.

The Bantam stared.

"You, Merry?"

"I would if I could," said the Shell fellow. "I stood up to you in the school gym for seven rounds, didn't I? You said you thought I could stand up to the Slogger."

"So you could, lad," said the Bantam, a new light gleaming in his eyes. "But you don't mean to say that—that you would—"

"Yes, I do—if it would help you," said Tom Merry steadily. "One good turn deserves another. You've got this through helping me, and I should be a rotter if I wouldn't do anything I could to back you up. Do you think I'm good enough to stand up against the Slogger in your place?"

The Bantam gasped.

"Good enough! I reckon you are, Merry! You stood up agin me for seven rounds, and you could stand up agin the Slogger for six, cert! But you can't do it. You'd get into a row at your school."

"I'll risk that. Besides, nobody will know. I shan't go on in Etons," said Tom, laughing. "I shall borrow your things. I'm nearly your size."

"You're a good sort, kid," said the Bantam, with emotion in his voice. "But—but the Slogger will slog you, you know. He tries 'ard every time to get the better of me, and 'e won't let a schoolboy wallop him. 'E'll 'it 'ard!"

"Let him!"

"You may be 'urt!"

"I'm not afraid of being hurt. We're not spooneys at St. Jim's," said Tom Merry. "I've been hurt before, and never howled about it."

"It's a good idea, if you're really willin'! It will save my bacon!"

"You think Mr. Bowkoe won't object?"

The Bantam chuckled.

"Old Bowkoe will welcome you with open arms, if you save 'im from cuttin' the turn. Besides, 'e ain't no right to object to my man, so long as 'e gives a good show."

"I'll do my best to do that," said Tom modestly.

"You can do it orlright. You've thought it over, lad—you really mean it?" the boxer asked eagerly.

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It was evident that the Bantam was jumping at the idea, very much like a man walking at a straw.

"I mean it, rather!"

"Then it's a go! Come with me to the Empire now, and I'll see you through."

And they walked at a quick pace into Wayland.

"You go and tell the chaps I'm not joining them, Manners," said Tom Merry. "You can explain to them, will you?"

"Right-ho!" said Manners, and he hurried away to the bunshop.

The Bantam, Tom Merry, and Monty Lowther entered the Empire by the stage door, and were soon in the dressing-room.

CHAPTER 14.

The Schoolboy Boxer!

TOM MERRY was very much in earnest.

He knew what he was undertaking. He had observed the Slogger, and he had observed that he was by no means a good-natured fellow like the Bantam. It was very probable that the St. Jim's junior would receive some severe punishment in those six rounds with the Slogger; but he was prepared to face it.

If the news reached St. Jim's, too, that Tom Merry of the Shell had appeared upon the stage at a music hall, it was very likely to cause trouble for him there. The Head could not be expected to look at the matter as the juniors did.

And it was very probable that the news would be taken there. Besides the St. Jim's eleven and their companions there were probably other St. Jim's fellows in the audience—perhaps some of the prefects.

But it was a risk that had to be run. Tom Merry felt that it was up to him to stand by the man who had stood by him, and he meant to do it. If there was punishment to follow, he would grin and bear it.

But he dismissed that part of the matter from his mind, and bent all his thoughts upon the business immediately in hand.

In the dressing-room the Bantam provided him with the boxer's scanty attire to change into before he presented him to Mr. Bowkoe. It was better for the manager to see him thus than in Etons. And Tom Merry stripped so well that the Bantam looked at his sturdy limbs, and firm muscles, and clear, white skin with great admiration.

"You'll do, by gum!" he said.

"Do!" growled the Slogger, who was watching them with a far from pleasant countenance. "How long do you think that kid will stand agin me, Tim?"

"Six rounds," said the Bantam calmly.

The Slogger snorted.

"Six seconds, more likely!" he said. "Look 'ere, Tim, I ain't going to pull my punches. Boxin' is boxin', and I got my livin' to consider!"

"You pile in your 'ardest," said the Bantam. "You won't knock my young pal out in such a 'urry, I tell you!"

"I ain't going to be soft with 'im," said the Slogger.

"I don't want you to be," said Tom Merry, with spirit. "If I were afraid of a rap or two, I shouldn't have offered."

"It may be more'n a rap or two!" said the Slogger, with a grin.

"Well, I don't mind."

"That's understood, then."

"Ere's Mr. Bowkoe," said the Bantam, and he began explaining to the manager.

Mr. Bowkoe was inclined to be exasperated.

But a sight of the Bantam's stiff, bruised arm showed even the annoyed manager that he could not possibly box that evening.

"Who's the kid?" asked Mr. Bowkoe. "Gentleman boxer, sir," said the Bantam. "He's stood up to me for seven rounds, and 'e'll stand up to the Slogger for six."

"No spoof, you know!" said Mr. Bowkoe suspiciously. "The public won't 'ave it. If there's any wangling there will be trouble in front."

"There won't be any spoof, sir!"

"Well, I leave it to you, Tim, so long as the turn goes well," was Mr. Bowkoe's verdict.

"I'll answer for that," said the Bantam.

The second house was started now, and the first turn was on. The Bantam hung about Tom Merry, helping him prepare, and giving him whispered counsels. To suggestions that he should have his injured arm attended to the Bantam turned a deaf ear.

"My fin will do arterwards," he said.

"Then send for a doctor, so that he can attend to it as soon as I go on," urged Tom Merry. And the boxer agreed to that.

"So you're doing a turn, young Merry," said Mr. Curil, as he dabbed grease-paint upon his florid features. "You've come on the halls, like the rest of us—ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, Mr. Curil," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Wish you success," said Mr. Curil.

"Your young friend Lowther appeared on the stage with me once, when I was in musical comedy. Do you remember 'The Counter Girl,' Lowther?"

"Yes, rather," grinned Monty Lowther.

"You remember how I got the hands—hey?" said Mr. Curil.

"You did, sir," said Lowther solemnly. "Simply brought the house down."

Mr. Curil swallowed that whole, and nodded with satisfaction.

Mr. Curil's call came, and he drifted upon the stage, and the loud laughter from the crowded house told that his turn was as popular as ever with the good folk of Wayland.

After Mr. Curil's song and dance came the boxing turn.

Mr. Bowkoe appeared before the footlights, and explained in a little speech that owing to an accident the celebrated Bantam was unable to appear, but that his place was taken by a celebrated gentleman boxer, who would give an exhibition of the noble art as striking as that of the famous bantam.

The information was received good-humouredly by the people "in front," though it was quite plain that their good humour would not last unless the "turn" was really up to Mr. Bowkoe's description of it.

Especially was Mr. Bowkoe's announcement received with enthusiasm by sixteen young gentlemen in a body in the stalls. Manners had informed the juniors of Tom Merry's intentions, and the St. Jim's juniors were very keen about it.

"It's simply wippin' of Tom Mewwy!" Arthur Augustus declared.

"Pewwaps it would have been bettah to send for me, but I twust Tom Mewwy will give a good show."

"And we'll give him a jolly good reception!" said Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Manners looked round the crowded house rather anxiously.

"Good many St. Jim's fellows here," he remarked.

"All the better!" said Kangaroo. "They'll give Tommy plenty of hands."

"Yes; but I don't know what the Head would think about it," said Manners. "And there's Knox yonder in the box with Cutts of the Fifth."

"Bai Jove! He's sure to spot Tom Mewwy at once, and he'll weport him to the Head," said Arthur Augustus.

"That means a row," remarked Blake.

"But the Head can't object to Tommy standin' by a pal in distwess," said D'Arcy thoughtfully. "If Knox weports him, I will undahtake to explain to the Head, and put it to him as an old sport."

"Good! And then he may lick you instead of Tommy," agreed Manners. "Weally, Mannahs—"

"Here they come!" exclaimed Kerr.

"Hurrah!"

"Bwavo!"

The boxers had appeared on the stage. The Bantam, with his right arm in a sling, came on with them, and Monty Lowther could be seen lurking in the wings. Tom Merry looked very fit and handsome, and he smiled to his chums in the stalls as they cheered him.

There was an exclamation of amazement from the box occupied by Knox and Cutts.

"Look at him!" ejaculated Cutts. "That's the giddy gentleman boxer, Knox!"

"Tom Merry?" exclaimed Knox.

"Blessed if this doesn't take the cake—a St. Jim's junior putting up as a boxer on the stage!" said Cutts. "He'll carry it through, too!"

"Will he?" said Knox grimly. "This is where I come in. It's my duty as a prefect to stop anything of the sort."

Cutts grinned.

"I fancy you wouldn't be allowed to," he said. "They wouldn't let you in behind the scenes to make trouble. Besides, it's going to be a good scrap. Let him alone."

Knox hesitated.

"You can report him, if you like," said Cutts, "but don't interfere. Let's have the scrap."

"He'd have to come off if I ordered him," said Knox. "I'm a prefect, aren't I?"

"He wouldn't; and you'd only make yourself look an ass."

"Then I'll report his conduct to the Head."

"No harm in that, but let's have the show," said Cutts.

And Knox sat down again.

Tom Merry caught sight of the prefect looking down at him, and Knox's expression told him plainly enough that the prefect meant mischief. But Tom Merry's mind was made up, and he had no time to waste on the bully of the Sixth now.

After one glance at Knox he took no further notice of the prefect.

"Feel fit, kid?" whispered the Bantam.

Tom Merry nodded with a bright smile.

"Fit as a fiddle," he said.

"I shan't forget this," said the Bantam. "It's very good of you to

stand by a pal. And I 'ope the Slogger won't 'urt you too much."

"Never mind, if he does," said Tom cheerfully.

All was ready now. Mr. Bowkoe had taken out his watch to keep time for the rounds, and the two boxers faced one another in the ring, surly grimness in the face of the Slogger, and steady determination in Tom Merry's.

CHAPTER 15.

Tom Merry's Turn!

"TIME!"

The first round started.

There was a call from the stalls:

"Go it, Tommy!"

"Play up for St. Jim's, deah boy!"

"That blessed Slogger means business," murmured Blake uneasily.

younger, slighter, and less muscular, had quite as much science as the professional boxer, if not a little more.

The Slogger started back and almost staggered as the hard glove came with a biff upon his chin.

An extremely ugly look came over his face, and he rushed in, hitting out with all his force.

But Tom Merry countered neatly, and the boxer wasted his strength and his breath in slogging at an adversary who was never there.

"Time!" said Mr. Bowkoe.

And there was a minute rest.

The Bantam clapped Tom Merry on the shoulder. His rugged, honest face was full of delight, and he seemed quite to have forgotten the pain in his arm.

"You'll do," he said. "The six rounds are safe!"

In the second round the Slogger was more cautious, putting in more science



"Look!" exclaimed Lowther. Three dark figures had leaped from the hedge, and Tom Merry recognised them as Ginger & Co. "Look out, Bantam!" he yelled. The Bantam swung round, threw up his arm to protect his head from a cudgel, and the blow crashed on his arm.

"Look at the way he's got his teeth jammed together. Tommy's in for it."

There was little doubt about that. Although it would have been wiser on the Slogger's part to give his youthful adversary a run, in order to make the fight last the stipulated six rounds, he evidently meant to finish it if he could. No consideration would induce him to allow a junior schoolboy to stand up against him for six rounds, if he could help it.

And the Slogger started as if it were a prize-fight, rather than an exhibition boxing match.

His age, weight, and size, of course, gave him a great advantage, and Tom Merry was driven round the ring to begin with.

But Tom was taking his opponent's measure, and he did not falter in the least. And the Slogger was suddenly stopped by a straight drive, which showed that Tom Merry, though

and less bull-rushing, and Tom Merry received some punishment, but not more than he gave.

There was a cheer now from the crowded house. All the people in front realised that there was something more than a mere exhibition of boxing before them, and the match had something of the excitement of a prize-fight. And, as was natural, sympathy was on the side of the boy who was bravely facing the man.

"Go it, youngster!"

"Bravo!"

"Yaas, bwavo, wathah!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "Play up, deah boy!"

The rounds succeeded one another. It was so evident that the Slogger was striving to knock his adversary out that interest was at the keenest pitch.

In the professional ring the Slogger could hardly have put more "beef"

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into his attack. But Tom Merry stood it well. His eye was steady, and he was never caught napping, and not for an instant did he falter before the heavy drives of the Slogger.

Three rounds were fought through, and the junior of St. Jim's came up smiling and cool for the fourth.

The Slogger was neither smiling nor cool now.

He attacked the junior boxer with a force that made Mr. Bowkoe whisper in alarm: "Go easy—go easy!" But the Slogger declined to go easy. He was thinking only of proving that a school-boy could not stand against him for six rounds.

Tom Merry was panting as he dropped on to the Bantam's knee to rest after time was called.

Tiny Tim fanned him and whispered encouragement.

"You'll do!" he said. "You're all right. Look at the people in front! You're simply thrilling 'em! Blessed if they don't take to this more'n a reg'lar show! You're doin' me the best turn that ever was done for me, kid!"

And that was quite sufficient to encourage Tom Merry, if he had thought of slacking. But he had not. He had taken the Slogger's measure, and he felt that he could stand up to him, so long as he kept cool and collected.

There was no doubt about the enthusiasm of the audience. Most of them were keyed up with excitement, and in the gallery there was an almost continual roar.

"Time!" said Mr. Bowkoe, smiling in great good-humour. Anything that pleased the "house" was certain to please Mr. Bowkoe.

Tom Merry stepped up cheerfully for the fifth round.

The Slogger attacked him fiercely. Tom Merry had to give ground before the weight of his assailant, and he had no choice but to hit hard.

A sweeping upper-cut caught the Slogger on the point of the chin, and but for the "mittens," the Slogger would have been hors de combat there and then.

As it was, he went down heavily, and lay gasping.

There was a roar of cheering.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!"

Mr. Bowkoe counted. But the Slogger was up before he had counted half ten, and springing at the schoolboy boxer.

Then they were at it, hammer and tongs. The Slogger was wild with rage, and he was hitting furiously.

He succeeded in getting home with one or two fierce drives, and Tom Merry received more punishment than he had experienced, so far. All eyes were anxiously upon him. He acted wholly upon the defensive now, but many heavy blows came home, the Slogger keeping at close quarters and hitting hard. But Tom Merry was not beaten. The Slogger, growing reckless, swung his right for a finishing drive. Tom Merry ducked under the whirling glove and dealt in return a crashing body blow that made the Slogger grunt as it landed.

Bump!

The Slogger was down again.

"Bravo!"



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R. C. Billimoria, Parsi High School, Panchgani, India; age 14-18; poetry, plays, films.

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"Huwah!"

Tom Merry staggered to the Bantam's knee at the call of time.

"Well done, kid!" muttered the Bantam. "Only one more round."

Tom Merry's eyes were gleaming. The savageness of the Slogger had put his back up, and he meant business, too.

"I'm going to make it a finish, if I can," he muttered.

"Good luck to you!" said Tiny Tim.

It was the last round, and Tom Merry kept his word. He avoided in-fighting, keeping his adversary at arm's length for some time, and then, when the Slogger was far from looking for it, he made a sudden attack. The Slogger's guard was swept aside, and a right-hander came crashing on his chin, and he staggered; and then came left and right in quick succession upon the red, angry face, and the Slogger crashed down.

Mr. Bowkoe began to count.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight—"

The Slogger made a desperate effort to rise. But his head was swimming, and he sank back again with a gasp.

"Nine—out!"

There was a roar.

"Bravo, youngster!"

"Tom Mewwy wins! Huwah!"

"Hip-pip!"

And there was a storm of hand-clapping.

"Licked to the wide!" chuckled the Bantam. "Slogger, old man, you've got it in the neck!"

The Slogger growled painfully. The junior had not only stood up to him for the agreed six rounds, but he had knocked him out, too.

The house rang with applause.

Tom Merry went off, leaning a little on the Bantam's uninjured arm; but he had to return four or five times to take his call.

In the dressing-room the Bantam sponged his blazing face and fanned him. Tom Merry was feeling the reaction now. It had been a hard fight, and he was limp enough after it. The Slogger was grunting.

Tom Merry changed into his own clothes, with the assistance of Lowther and the delighted Bantam. Then he came up to the Slogger and held out his hand.

"It was a jolly good fight!" he said. "Give us your fist!"

And the Slogger, in spite of himself, grinned a rather crooked grin, and shook hands with the schoolboy boxer.

At the stage door Tom Merry's friends were waiting for him. They cheered him as he came out with Lowther, and clapped him on the back.

"It was simply wippin', deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I assure you that I could not have stood up to him like that!"

"You don't say so!" murmured Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah; it's a fact, deah boy!"

"Now for home—and trouble!" said Manners. "Knox was watching you with all his eyes, Tommy, and he'll have things ready for you when you get in, worse luck!"

"The uttah wottah!"

Tom Merry nodded.

"I don't care. I owed it to the Bantam, and I've done right. And I'm ready to face the music."

"It's all wight, deah boy. Leave me to explain to the Head, and I'll put it to him, as an old sport—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the juniors walked home to St. Jim's.

Knox had arrived there before him, and he had made his report. As soon as the juniors arrived, Tom Merry was informed that the Head wished to see him in his study. And, declining D'Arcy's kind offer to accompany him and do all the talking, the hero of the Shell made his way to the presence of the Head.

CHAPTER 16.

No Luck for Knox!

DR. HOLMES was looking decidedly stern when Tom Merry entered.

Knox was there, and Knox had evidently made his report in as unfavourable a way as possible for the junior.

Tom Merry faced his headmaster calmly but respectfully. He had done what he had thought it right to do, and if there was punishment to follow, he was ready to face it.



Judge: "Erasmus Jackson, you say you have an alibi. Do you know what an alibi is?"

Prisoner: "Yass, judge. All I'se got to do is prove I was at de pictures where I wasn't, instead of bein' at de other place where I was!"

A football has been awarded to T. Mallin, 55, Cherrywood Road, Bordesley Green, Birmingham.

"Knox informs me that, while witnessing the performance at the Wayland Empire, Merry, he recognised you in a prize-fight on the stage!" said the Head sternly.

"That isn't true, sir," said Tom directly.

"What?"

"It wasn't a prize-fight, sir; it was an exhibition boxing match."

"You admit that you have appeared upon the stage in a music-hall, giving a performance in a glove-fight!" exclaimed the scandalised Head.

"If you will let me explain, sir—"

"The fact speaks for itself!" said the Head severely. "You know that this kind of thing cannot be permitted, Merry. The money you have received will be returned—"

"Money!" said Tom Merry.

"Yes; I understand that you were paid—"

"Nothing of the sort, sir!"

"Indeed! Then you acted in this way for nothing?"

"Certainly, sir!"

"You cannot expect Dr. Holmes to believe that," said Knox, with a sneer.

"I do expect him to believe it," said Tom Merry; "and all my friends who were with me know it is the case. Will you allow me to explain, sir?"

"Go on," said the Head.

"I was set on by a gang of footpads, sir, the other day, and I should have been robbed and roughly handled if Tiny Tim hadn't come and helped me. Tiny Tim is the boxer. Well, this evening the same ruffians set on him, because he had helped me, and they injured him so that he couldn't do his boxing turn on the stage. I went on in his place. I felt that it was up to me, as he had been injured because he had helped me."

"Ah!" said the Head. "You did not tell me that, Knox."

"Knox didn't know, sir," said Tom Merry. "He only saw me from the box."

"You should have ascertained all the facts before making your report to me, Knox!" said the Head, somewhat sharply. "This lets in an altogether new light upon the matter."

Knox bit his lip.

"Do you believe his statement, sir?" he asked.

"Certainly I do!" said the Head sharply. "Merry, I understand now your motives for acting as you did. It was very—ahem!—irregular, and I cannot approve of it; but, considering the circumstances, I fully understand that you felt bound to help the man who had generously helped you."

"I felt I couldn't do anything else, sir," said Tom.

"Quite so, quite so. You must not do anything of the kind again, but in the circumstances I shall excuse you."

Tom Merry's face lighted up. Knox gritted his teeth, but he did not speak. If he had said the things he would have liked to say, the cad of the Sixth would have drawn Dr. Holmes' wrath upon his own head.

"Thank you, sir!" said Tom Merry gratefully.

Dr. Holmes waved his hand.

"You may go, Merry."

And Tom Merry gladly departed.

He joined his chums in the study, and his sunny face at once relieved their uneasiness.

"All wight?" asked D'Arcy.

"Wight as wain!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The Head is an old sport!" said Arthur Augustus. "Didn't I tell you fellows that it would be all wight?"

"No, you didn't, as a matter of fact," said Monty Lowther. "Poor old Knox! He's always putting his hoof in it!"

"He's done me a good turn," grinned Tom Merry. "It's all out and over now, and it might have come out afterwards by accident and caused trouble. I suggest a vote of thanks to Knox!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"All's well that ends well!" said Fatty Wynn. "I've got a suggestion to make, too. We ought to have a feed to celebrate this."

"One for 'this,' and two for Fatty!" chuckled Figgins. "Still, it's a good idea. Who says tuckshop?"

And with one voice the Co. replied:

"Tuckshop!"

And thus happily ended Tom Merry's first and last big fight upon "the halls"!

THE END.

(Next week: "GINGER FOR PLUCK!" Meet Arthur Rook, the new boy at St. Jim's. His ginger hair got him into a lot of trouble, but his pluck got him out of it again. Don't miss this yarn, chums!)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,471.



In a laughing crowd, carrying the outstretched form of Harry Wharton by his arms and legs, the Remove made for the Form-room. Wharton was "for it" on his second day at Greyfriars!

Sent to School!

"SEND Master Harry to me." Colonel Wharton filled his glass from the decanter, held it up to the light, and then slowly sipped the contents, a dark shade of thought upon his bronzed face the while.

The colonel had dined, and he was alone now in the old oak-panelled dining-room at Wharton Lodge. A bronzed, grim-visaged old soldier was the colonel, but under the rugged exterior a kindly heart beat.

The door of the dining-room opened, and the colonel set down his glass, only half emptied, and compressed his lips slightly as he looked at the boy who came into the room.

He was a well-built lad, finely developed, strong and active. Handsome indeed was the face, with its well-marked features and large, dark eyes. But there was a cloud upon it, and in the dark eyes was a glint of suspicion and defiance. The whole manner of the boy was one of suppressed hostility, and the colonel realised it keenly enough without words being spoken.

"You sent for me, uncle."

"Yes, Harry." Colonel Wharton's voice was very mild. "Sit down, my boy. I want to speak to you."

"I suppose you are not going to keep me long," said the boy doggedly. "I want to go out on my pony before dark—"

The colonel half-rose from his seat, a flush of anger darkening his cheeks.

"Sit down!" he thundered.

For a moment it looked as if the order would be disobeyed, but there was something in the colonel's face that impelled obedience. Harry Wharton slowly moved to a chair and sat down, but the sullen cloud was darkening his brow.

"Now, Harry," said the colonel, in a more kindly voice, "I want to speak to you seriously. I hope you will take all I'm going to say in a friendly spirit. I am your uncle; you are the only son of my only brother, and you should understand that I have your truest interests at heart."

The boy's lips slightly curled, but he did not speak.

"I have come home from India,"

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The MAKING of HARRY WHARTON!

By Frank Richards.

resumed the colonel, slightly raising his tone, "to find that you have run completely wild under the charge of my sister, and I should not be doing my duty to my dead brother if I did not take you in hand, and make at least an attempt to put you on a better road. You have grown up wilful and headstrong; you have grown into the habit of dictating to Miss Wharton, and of overruling your tutor. Your education has been neglected—"

"Mr. Pysant says I am quite as advanced as most boys of my age," said Harry, with a sulky look.

"Possibly, because you are naturally a quick and intelligent lad; otherwise you would be a perfect ignoramus by this time. You have done exactly as you liked, and you have not the least idea of discipline. During the month that I have been home I have tried to improve you—"

"Perhaps I don't want improving."

"You probably think so," said the colonel patiently. "But I think otherwise. You are obstinate and wilful, and inclined to be insolent to your elders. All that must cease. You have run wild too long. That must come to an end. But I cannot bring myself to exercise the severity necessary for the purpose, and my feeble attempts in that direction have made the house almost in a pandemonium. You are determined

to have your own way, and I am determined that you are not to have it."

Harry Wharton smiled slightly. He knew perfectly well that the veteran from India had undertaken his reform, and, without thinking much about the matter, he had set himself against it. He flattered himself that the colonel would find it a thankless task, but he had not quite been prepared for this confession of failure.

The smile on the boy's face irritated the colonel, and he had to make an effort to speak calmly as he went on:

"I have, therefore, come to a new decision, Harry, which is what I want to tell you about now. I am going to send you to school."

Harry Wharton's face fell.

"To school?"

"Yes, to school! I have written to Dr. Locke, the headmaster of Greyfriars—the school where I was educated—and he is ready to receive you. You will go to Greyfriars to-morrow morning!"

Harry Wharton sat dumb.

"I should like you to believe," said the colonel quietly, "that I have taken this step entirely for your own sake, and for your happiness in the long run. You will probably find life at a Public school a little rough at first, especially until you change some of your ways; but I have no doubt that, after you have roughed it a little, you will fall into the way of it, and—"

"I won't go!"

The words burst out passionately from the boy. Colonel Wharton frowned darkly.

"Harry!"

"I won't go! I won't be sent away!"

"You will go, Harry! I shall give your aunt instructions to see your box packed to-night, and you will go by the nine o'clock train in the morning."

Harry was silent. He was quivering with anger and indignation and utter dismay. He had never thought of a blow like this falling upon him. And he knew, in spite of his passionate words, that he could not resist.

"I will, if you wish, come to the school with you, and—"

"I don't want you to—"

"It would make it better for you—"

"I don't want you!"

The colonel compressed his lips hard.

"I am sorry you should take my guardianship in this spirit, Harry. It

—GREAT YARN FEATURING HIS EARLY ADVENTURES AT GREYFRIARS.

only shows how necessary it is for us to part for a time, and for you to have the benefits of a strong discipline. You can go alone, if you choose, but you must give me your word of honour to go directly to Greyfriars and report yourself to Dr. Locke."

The boy did not speak.

"With all your faults," the colonel resumed, in a kinder tone, "I have observed one quality which outweighs them all—truthfulness and a strong sense of honour. If you give me your word, I know that you will keep it. Will you give me your word, Harry?"

"No!"

"Then I shall take you to the school to-morrow morning. You may go!"

Harry Wharton rose from his seat. His lips were white with the passion which was surging in his breast.

"You have me at your mercy!" he said thickly. "The law makes you able to play the tyrant if you choose. I will go; you need not come with me! I will go, but I won't stay there! If there's no other way, I'll soon make them glad to get rid of me!"

"My dear lad—"

But Harry Wharton was gone. The door of the dining-room closed with a slam, and the colonel was alone.

"And that is Henry's son!" he muttered. "But the boy has the makings of a man in him, I am sure of that! Greyfriars is just the place."

And with that comforting thought the colonel finished his wine.

A Fight in the Train!

"CHANGE 'ere for Greyfriars!"

Harry Wharton started out of a moody reverie. For hours the express had been speeding through the countryside without a stop. Harry Wharton sat in a corner of the carriage, his eyes turned unseeingly upon the fleeting landscape.

His lunch-basket was unopened, his book lay on the seat. He had left home in a sullen passion against his guardian, against the school he was going to—against everything. He was not in the humour to eat or read.

"Melthorpe! Change for Greyfriars!"

The boy rose to his feet. He picked up the book and left the carriage. The lunch-basket lay on the seat. The colonel had thoughtfully provided it, and Harry Wharton left it where it lay.

The local train which was to take the passengers on the little country line to the station for Greyfriars was waiting on the other side of the platform. Harry Wharton glanced towards it to ascertain if it was his train. A boy in Etons was sauntering down the platform, evidently having just alighted from the express as Harry had done.

Harry looked at him with some interest. He guessed that he was a youngster going to Greyfriars, and, as a denizen of the school he hated the mere thought of, Harry felt an instinctive dislike for him. Yet there was certainly nothing in the boy's looks to inspire dislike in any but a prejudiced mind. His age was about the same as Harry's; he was well built, and he had a frank, open face, and honest blue eyes. His hair was thick and curly, and there was a school cap stuck on the back of his head.

He glanced at Harry and met his eyes, and gave a nod and a grin.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed, coming up.

"Are you for Greyfriars?"

"Yes," said Harry shortly.

"New kid, of course?"

"I am going there for the first time," said Harry, not much liking the familiarity of the stranger's manner.

The other boy chuckled.

"I can see that. I'm going back late in the term—had an extra holiday, you know. I'm Nugent of the Remove—the Lower Fourth Form. What's your name?"

"I don't see how that concerns you," said Harry.

Nugent of the Remove stared at him. "Eh? Where were you brought up, kid? Can't you answer a civil question?"

Harry Wharton coloured.

"What's your name, if you're not ashamed of it?" said Nugent.

"My name's Harry Wharton!" said Harry angrily.

"Well, that's all right, and there's no reason why you couldn't say so at first. But if you don't want to speak, I don't, and be hanged to you!" said Nugent.

And he stepped into the local train. It was time for the latter to depart, and the guard was waving his flag. Harry Wharton hastily followed Nugent into the carriage, and the door was slammed.

Harry sat down in a corner seat, and the train glided out of the station. Nugent was sitting opposite him, and

THE STORY YOU HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR!

Harry Wharton, headstrong, reckless and utterly spoiled, is sent to Greyfriars to make a man of him. But Wharton, openly defiant of discipline, goes with the intention of making Greyfriars glad to get rid of him!

he kept his eyes studiously fixed on the countryside.

Harry sat with a moody brow. He was feeling hungry now, and beginning to regret the sulky abandoning of the lunch-basket. Nugent turned his eyes and stole a look at him. Harry, as it happened, was glancing at him at the same moment, and their eyes met. Harry coloured.

Nugent burst into a laugh.

"I say, Wharton," he exclaimed, "what's the good of being sulky?"

Harry Wharton did not reply.

"What Form are you going into at Greyfriars?" went on Nugent, not to be rebuffed.

Again Harry was silent.

"If you come into the Lower Fourth, we'll soon knock the sullenness out of you," his new acquaintance said confidentially. "We wouldn't stand it, you know."

"Wouldn't you?" said Harry, with a gleam in his eyes.

"Not a bit of it! Been to school before?"

"No."

"Brought up at home by a maiden aunt, I suppose, and spoiled," grinned Nugent.

Harry turned very red.

Carelessly spoken as the words were Nugent had hit upon the exact truth, and it came as a sort of painful shock to Harry to realise how he was looked upon by a disinterested outsider.

"Ah, he blushes!" said Nugent,

"My dear chap, Greyfriars is the last place in the world for a mammy's own boy to come to! We shan't coddle you there—I can promise you. What are you coming for?"

"My guardian sends me. I don't want to go to the rotten place at all!"

"Hallo! What's that?" asked Nugent, looking warlike at once.

"What are you calling a rotten place?"

"The beastly school I am going to!"

Nugent rose to his feet.

"I don't want to be hard on a mammy's darling," he said, "but anybody who calls Greyfriars a rotten place and a beastly school stands in need of correction. I shall take it kindly if you will apologise for those rude remarks."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Harry.

"Look here!" said Nugent.

"I don't know what sort of lunatic asylum you were brought up in, but this won't do, you know. I've wiped up the ground with bigger fellows than you, for far less cheek than you've given me!"

"Don't talk rot!"

"Are you hunting for a thick ear? Because, if you are, I'm the very individual to give you one. My special thick ears for beastly bounders are just what you want, and there's for a start!"

And Nugent gave the new boy a flick—more in jest than in earnest—but it was enough for Harry Wharton.

In a flash he was on his feet, hitting out straight from the shoulder. All the passionate exasperation of the morning seemed to be thrown into that angry blow. It took Nugent by surprise, and he hit the floor of the carriage with a bump.

Harry stood over him, his eyes blazing, his fists clenched.

Nugent lay on his back on the carriage floor, staring up at him with an expression of almost idiotic bewilderment.

It took him a full minute to realise that he, Nugent, the great fighting man of the Remove at Greyfriars, had been floored with a single blow by a new boy. But when he did realise it he jumped up.

"Take off your coat, Wharton!" he said.

"Shan't!"

"Very well, fight with it on, then," said Nugent. "Are you ready?"

Harry did not reply. Nugent was squaring up to him in a businesslike way. Harry knew little about the manly art of self-defence, but he put up his fists readily enough.

"Ready?" asked Nugent considerably.

"Yes; hang you!"

Nugent came on sharply. His left swept Harry's feeble guard away with ease, and his right crashed on the new boy's nose.

Harry went down as if he had been shot. Nugent stared at him.

"My hat! Don't you know how to box?"

"No; hang you!"

Harry Wharton scrambled to his feet. His nose was bleeding and already swelling. He sprang at Nugent. The Greyfriars lad guarded himself well, and retreated until the carriage door prevented his retreating farther.

"I say, chuck it!" he exclaimed. "I don't want to hurt you. I thought you could fight. You gave me a one, and I gave you one, so we're even."

Harry Wharton did not reply. He

closed in on his enemy, as he deemed him, and hit out right and left. Nugent had no choice in the matter left him, and his own temper was rising now. He struck out in return, and the new boy was soon decidedly getting the worst of it. At armslength Harry realised that he was a child in the hands of his adversary, and he made desperate attempts to close.

Harry succeeded in grappling with Nugent, who stumbled against the seat, and was, for a moment, powerless. In that moment Harry got his head into chancery, and began to punish him.

Nugent roared and struggled, but it was a full minute before he could get his head free, and those sixty seconds were painful ones to him, for Harry was lashing out with all the passionate force of his arm.

Then Nugent's turn came. He tore himself loose and grasped the new boy round his neck, and the "chancery" was reversed.

Harry Wharton struggled and gasped as a pummelling fist rained on his face, but he could not get loose, and he had to take his punishment until Nugent chose to let him go. Then, with a twist of the arm, the Greyfriars boy flung him upon the seat, where he sprawled, dazed.

"There, you bounder!" panted Nugent. "Have you had enough, or do—"

Harry Wharton made an effort to get to his feet. He was game to the backbone, but he sank back on the seat, gasping.

The angry face of the Remove boy cleared.

"I say, I'm sorry I've hurt you," he said. "You came for me like a giddy

wild-cat, you know, and I had to hit out."

Harry Wharton scowled savagely. "I'll give it all back to you some time," he gasped faintly.

The Remove boy's lip curled.

"Oh, shut up about that! Don't bear malice; it's a rotter's game. You've given me pretty nearly as much as I've given you. Don't be a cad."

Harry did not reply. He was sick and furious, and miserable. This was the beginning of his Greyfriars career! What was it to be like later?

He sat in his corner, silent, breathing hard, with a black brow, while the train rushed on. He had been hurt, but his pride had been hurt more than his body. It was the first time Harry Wharton had been licked. It was a new experience, and a painful one.

Nugent went to the other side of the carriage and looked out of the window for the remainder of the journey. The train slackened down at last, and stopped in the little local station of Friardale, the station for Greyfriars.

Real Pluck!

NUGENT of the Remove jumped out of the train, and Harry Wharton followed more slowly. The one and only porter of Friardale grinned at Nugent as he touched his cap. The Remove boy seemed a popular character in the neighbourhood of Greyfriars. He passed the barrier and left the little station, and the driver of the one and only hack touched his cap.

"Stick my box on the top," said Nugent. "I've come back, you see."

Aren't you glad to see my bonnie face again?"

"Haw, haw!" grinned the driver. "You're a funny one, Master Nugent." "Rats!" grinned Nugent. "I'm not the funny one. I've brought the funny one with me. Look at him! Isn't he a prize packet?"

And he nodded in the direction of Harry Wharton, who had just followed him out of the station.

Harry looked daggers at the Remove boy. The driver, seeing the bruised faces of the two youngsters, chuckled and drew his own conclusions.

"Is this the only hack here?" asked Harry abruptly.

"Yes, rather!" grinned Nugent.

"I wasn't speaking to you, but to this man!"

"I beg your lordship's pardon!"

"If it is the only one, I suppose I must take it," said Harry, with a disparaging glance at the ancient hack, and almost equally ancient horse. "I want to—"

"This young gentleman has just engaged me," said the driver, none too civilly, for Harry's manner could not be called prepossessing.

"That's so," said Nugent coolly. "The one-and-only is my property for the time being, Wharton, but if you're a good boy you shall come in with me. I say, porter, put both boxes on top! Come in, Wharton!"

"I'd rather walk than ride with you!" said Wharton savagely.

"Oh, do just as you like, ass!" said Nugent, losing patience; and he jumped into the hack.

The ancient vehicle drove off. Harry scowled after it and set out to walk. He did not know the way, but so long as he kept the hack in sight he would not go astray.

The vehicle moved at a very moderate pace. Harry Wharton was a good walker, and he kept pace without much difficulty by putting his best foot foremost.

He had covered about a mile and a half when, beyond the thick trees, a grey tower rose to view against the sky. Harry looked at it and knew that his destination was near. He was growing tired, and he was not sorry to see the tower of Greyfriars.

Before him lay the rippling Sark, the stream which flowed past Greyfriars. Near the school it was a pleasant stream, but here, where the road crossed it by the bridge, it was deep and swift.

Under the bridge were shallows, but a dozen yards lower down were unknown depths and dangerous currents, which even the most experienced swimmers of the Upper Forms at Greyfriars avoided.

Harry was close behind the hack as it rumbled on to the old stone bridge, with its low parapets hardly a couple of feet high. Suddenly the driver was seen to draw in the horse, and make frantic efforts to pull into the side of the bridge.

Harry Wharton stared. Something, evidently, was the matter. A sharp roar on the air soon enlightened him.

A big motor-car was speeding down narrow country road at full tilt, and, instead of slackening down, the driver—evidently of the "road hog" type—was sounding his horn loudly for others to get out of the way.

It seemed to be dashing down directly upon the hack, which the driver was desperately endeavouring to pull to the side. At the best of times, there was scant room for two vehicles to pass on the bridge.

The car driver saw the danger too late to be able to apply his brakes with effect. It all passed in a flash. A

THE EYE of the DRAGON

by G.H. Teed



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second after the car was sighted it had flashed past, crashing against the rear wheel of the old hack and sending the vehicle flying.

The hack crashed over the low parapet, on its side, and the horse, tugging desperately at the traces, broke them, and went careering down the road. The driver was flung into the dust, and lay gasping.

From below the bridge sounded a deep splash, which told where the passenger had gone. Nugent had flung open the door, in frantic haste, to spring out, and he had been hurled straight into the river, like a stone from a catapult.

The car swept on, and disappeared down the road in a cloud of dust. Whether or not the driver knew the harm he had done, he certainly did not intend to stop.

Harry Wharton ran swiftly on to the bridge. The half-stunned driver of the hack staggered to his feet.

"Master Nugent!" he gasped.

The wrecked hack was lying dangerously over the low parapet, and a touch seemed sufficient to send it hurtling into the water below. Harry Wharton sprang to the parapet and gazed down anxiously.

Colonel Wharton had said that Harry, with all his faults, had the makings of a man in him. So, indeed, it seemed now, for in that moment of peril he forgot all the sulkiness of his previous mood, all the wrongs he had received or imagined, all his animosity against the boy who had licked him in the railway carriage.

He was only conscious that a fellow-being was in danger. He gazed down upon the stream. A white, half-conscious face looked up from the rushing waters as it was swept away. A hand was flung up in dumb appeal for aid.

Harry Wharton's mind was made up without thinking. He flung off his cap and tore off his jacket in haste. The hack-driver gripped him by the shoulder. "Don't!" he panted. "The cross-currents are dangerous."

Harry Wharton shook off the detaining hand and sprang upon the parapet.

At Wharton Lodge he had passed much of his time afloat on the river, or in swimming there, and there was little he had to learn of the swimmer's art. His skill stood him in good stead now.

He threw his hands together, and was gone from the bridge like a flash. He struck the water like an arrow and disappeared. He was on the surface the next moment, swimming with powerful strokes down the stream; the rushing water whirled him round and sang in his ears.

"Help!"

A faint cry, but it was guide enough. Harry's splendid strokes bore him along rapidly, and in a few moments he was level with Nugent. The Remove boy had been twice under, and his senses were almost gone now. Harry's hand came in contact with his hair and he clutched hold; his clutch brought a white, deathly face above the water.

Nugent grasped wildly at Harry, and the boy had to fight him off, or both would have gone to the bottom together.

"Steady!" panted Harry. "Don't—don't grip me! I've got you safe!"

But Nugent was not himself. Harry struggled with him, and it was fortunate that the Remove boy's strength was almost spent. Harry succeeded in twisting him round and getting a grip on his collar. Nugent was still struggling, but he no longer incommoded his rescuer.

Harry was gasping now. Gripping Nugent's collar with one hand, he swam with the other, and tried to look about



In a moment Harry Wharton had Nugent's head in chancery and began to punish him. Nugent roared and struggled, but it was a full minute before he got his head free, and those sixty seconds were painful ones to him!

him. He had felt the force of the current and expected to be far out of sight of the bridge, but, to his amazement, he saw that it was only a stone's throw away, with the anxious face of the hack-driver looking down upon his struggles.

He quickly understood the cause. There was a whirl of currents in this spot, and he had been swept round and round. Now the current was sweeping him towards the shore, but he was yet a dozen feet from the steep bank when he was whirled out into midstream again.

A chill went to the heart of Harry Wharton. He could not fight against the force of the current, and he allowed it to bear him away; but at that rate he would certainly never reach the shore.

And there was no boat to be seen along the lonely bank, and the only human being in sight was the old hack-driver.

The swirl of the water dazed and sickened Harry Wharton, and he was already fatigued when the fight for life in the whirling currents commenced. The waters seemed to whirl round him with a deafening roar, and strange lights were dancing before his eyes.

He knew what that meant, and he put forth all his strength in a final effort. He struggled to fight his way down-stream, where, once out of reach of the sucking currents, he might be able to steer to the bank with his burden. But his struggles seemed of no avail, and he felt as powerless in the waters as a wisp of straw afloat upon the surface.

Suddenly the whirling ceased. The water swirled about him, but he was no longer swept to and fro. His eyes now had a gleam of hope in them. Somehow—by chance, as it seemed—he was out of the whirl and floating down the river.

He struck out shoreward, and, fatigued as he was, he supported his burden to the banks of green.

A farm labourer was running along the bank now, shouting and waving his hand. Harry clutched at the grass with his free hand and held to a tough root.

The man on the bank bent down, and he was gripped and drawn ashore, still with his hand fastened tight on Nugent's collar.

Then darkness swept down upon him like sudden night, and he knew no more.

The First Day at Greyfriars!

HARRY WHARTON stirred and awoke. Where was he? That was the first question that flashed through his mind.

His eyes dwelt upon a whitewashed ceiling, and as he moved his head he saw white walls with windows set high up.

He was lying in bed, and on either side of him beds with white coverlets seemed to stretch away in endless rows.

"He is awake."

Harry turned his head. A kindly face, with white whiskers and a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles, looked down upon him.

"Are you better, my brave lad?"

"Where am I?"

"At Greyfriars School."

The words brought back Harry Wharton's recollections with a rush. A dark shade came over his brow, and he turned aside from the kindly face.

"He is not quite himself yet," said another voice—the voice of the doctor, who had been called in the moment Harry had been brought into the school infirmary.

"I suppose not," said Dr. Locke, the Head of Greyfriars. "He has been through a trying time."

Harry did not turn his head again. The recovery of his consciousness had been followed by bitter thoughts. He was at Greyfriars now, the school which was a prison to him—the place of his banishment.

If he had at that moment determined to make the best of things and to look the future squarely in the face and accept the inevitable, it would have saved him much suffering, but he did not; he hardened his heart and turned his face from those who would willingly have been his friends.

The whispering voices died away. He was left alone to sleep; his head was throbbing, and he was miserable. He raised his head and saw that the dormitory was empty.

He cast a bitter look up and down the room. In the failing light of day the dormitory was a dreary-looking place, and the dimness and loneliness of it struck him like a chill.

"And this is my home now!" he murmured.

The door opened, and a boyish figure came in. Harry recognised his companion in the train—Nugent of the Remove, whose life he had saved at the risk of his own. Nugent was looking somewhat pale, otherwise none the worse for his adventure. The brunt of that terrible fight for life had fallen upon the rescuer.

He saw Harry sitting up in bed and came towards him hastily, his face glowing with friendship and gratitude.

"I—I looked in to see if you were awake," he said eagerly. "If you want to go to sleep, old chap, I'll clear."

"I don't want to go to sleep."

The reply was ungracious enough, but Nugent hardly noticed it.

"I—I say, old fellow," he said, "I'm sorry about that row in the train. I know what you've done for me—only what a real plucky chap would have done. You saved my life and came near throwing your own away. It was grand!"

"Rot!" said the new boy.

"You may call it rot, but I know better. I—I say, Wharton, if you want a friend at Greyfriars you won't have to look farther than me."

"I don't want a friend—you least of all!"

Even Nugent's warmth was damped by that answer. He stared blankly at Harry, for the moment quite at a loss for words.

"I hate the place!" said Harry. "And I hate the people! I shan't stay here longer than I can help."

Nugent was still silent.

"As for what I did for you," said Harry, "I don't want any nonsense about that. I don't know why I did it; because I was a fool, I suppose. I hadn't much reason to help you after the way you treated me."

"I am sorry I licked you."

It was an unlucky word. Harry Wharton flushed red.

"You wouldn't have licked me, only—well, you won't do it again, that's all!"

"I shall never try."

"You will try," said Wharton grimly. "As soon as I am able I am going to tackle you again, and we'll see who comes off best."

"I'm sorry you should bear malice," said Nugent shortly, "especially after what you've done for me. I'm sorry we came to blows, but I cannot see that it was any more my fault than it was yours. If you won't be friends I can't help it. I'd better go. I'm sorry I came."

He walked to the door. For a moment Harry Wharton's heart softened. But it was only for a moment. His face was grim and sullen as he watched the door close behind the boy who would have been his friend.

The new boy at Greyfriars slowly drew himself from the bed and looked for his clothes. The wet clothing had been taken away, but his box was there, and it did not take him long to get out a fresh suit and don it. His head was dizzy and his face very white. He staggered a little in his walk as he moved towards the door of the dormitory.

He opened the door and went out into the passage. At the end of the passage was a broad staircase, and lights glimmered below. He could hear the sound of voices, and now and then a laugh.

As he went downstairs a big, broad-shouldered fellow passed him on the next landing, and stopped to look at him.

"Hallo, youngster! What's the matter?"

"Nothing."

"There must be something the matter!" exclaimed Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars. "You look as white as a sheet. Oh, I think I understand! You are the new junior—Wharton—who went into the Sark for Nugent?"

"I am Harry Wharton."

"You ought not to be up. Have you received permission to get up?"

"I suppose I can do as I like?"

The captain of Greyfriars stared at him.

"If you've come to Greyfriars with that notion in your head, Wharton, the sooner you get it out the better," he said. "You can't do as you like here. You'd better go back to bed at once!"

"Shan't!"

"You don't know who I am? I am the captain of the school."

"I don't care who you are!"

Wingate's eyes blazed. Harry would have paid dearly for his words but for the captain's knowledge that he was in no condition to stand a licking.

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"You must go back to bed, Wharton."

"I won't!"

The captain's hand dropped lightly on Wharton's shoulder.

"Better come," he said quietly.

Harry Wharton looked at him. The captain's manner was very quiet, but firm. It was useless to struggle and be taken away by main force. Harry, with a heart too full of bitterness for words, turned, and slowly made his way up the stairs again.

A Study Row!

THE new boy at Greyfriars did not rise again until the next morning, when he came down with the rest of the juniors and breakfasted with them in the Hall. He had been put into a vacant bed in the Lower Fourth dormitory for the first night, but he did not yet know whether he was to remain there.

After breakfast he was called into the Head's study. Dr. Locke spoke a few kindly words to him in recognition of the gallant deed of the day before, but there was a curious expression on the Head's kindly face.

He had received some hints from Colonel Wharton as to the character of the boy, and he knew more about Harry Wharton than the boy guessed.

Then the new boy went through a brief examination, and was informed that he would be placed in the Remove, or the Lower Fourth Form, and would study in No. 1 with three others—Nugent, Bulstrode, and Bunter.

Harry Wharton left the Head's study, and at a quarter-past nine took his place in the Remove Form Room, and came under the eye of Mr. Quelch.

To the new boy, unaccustomed to regular schoolwork, the morning was like a nightmare. The Remove master was easy with him, and let him off lightly. But Harry's head ached as he left the class-room at last, and his hatred of school was confirmed by this first experience of it.

As he went out of the Form-room Nugent came quickly after him, and tapped him on the shoulder.

"I say, Wharton!"

Harry looked at him without speaking.

"You found it a bit rough in class, I expect?" said Nugent. "Would you like me to go over the books with you a little? I will, if you like."

"I'll ask for your help when I want it!"

Nugent bit his lip as Harry went on. Bulstrode, his study-mate, gave him a thump on the shoulder, with a loud laugh.

"What are you sucking up to the new kid for, Nugent?" he demanded. "Why don't you let the sulky little brute alone?"

"He saved my life," said Nugent.

Bulstrode laughed.

"Suppose he did? Any fellow would have jumped in—"

"Oh, rats, Bulstrode; you wouldn't!"

Bulstrode turned red.

"If that young hound had spoken to me as he did to you I'd wipe up the floor with him!"

"Well, I'm not going to do anything of the kind. There's something wrong with the kid—bad training, I suppose. I'm going to see if I can't help him on."

"Oh, rats! Why don't you take on a job as nurse and have done with it?"

By the way, I hear that that object is coming into our study."

"So Mr. Quelch said."

"Well, if he puts on any airs and graces in our study," said Bulstrode, who was a good deal of a bully, "he'll

get slung out of the window, and sharp!"

Nugent walked away without replying. He was a kind-natured boy, but if he could be forbearing himself under provocation he could not expect others to be so. Wharton had saved his life, but Bulstrode was under no obligation to the new boy.

After dinner Nugent went up to Study No. 1, and found the new boy there. Wharton was poring over his books on the study table, evidently trying to make himself more familiar with them for the next lessons.

Nugent glanced at him, but he did not offer to help him again. Wharton did not look up. Bulstrode came into the study a few minutes later, with his camera in one hand and a developing tank in the other. Bulstrode went in for photography, and as a dark-room was not to be had by a junior he had laid in a daylight-developing outfit, which he used in the study.

"Hallo! Give us some room," he said, seeing the table pretty well covered with Wharton's books and papers. "Do you want the whole room?"

With a sweep of the hand he sent half Wharton's books to the floor.

The new boy jumped up, his eyes glinting.

"Leave my books alone!"

"Who are you talking to?" asked Bulstrode, staring at him. "Are you looking for a thick ear?"

Harry Wharton's anger rose. It did not take much to rouse his temper in his present mood. Bulstrode, who was half a head taller than the new boy, grinned at the look of fury in his face, and, reaching out, deliberately sent the rest of Harry's books sweeping off the table, and the inkpot and a heap of foolscap with them.

A shout of rage broke from the new boy. He sprang straight at the bully, only to reel back from a sharp left-hander that caught him on the point of the chin.

Harry Wharton sat down with a jar to every bone in his body.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bulstrode. "How's that? Will you have some more?"

Harry did not reply or rise from the carpet. He was too dazed by the shock. As he sat there another junior belonging to the Lower Fourth came hurriedly into the study and ran right into him. The newcomer was a somewhat stout junior with a broad face and a large pair of spectacles.

"Ker-woosh!" ejaculated the junior, as he sprawled on the floor over Harry's legs. "What's that in the way? What do you mean by having a dog in the study, you silly bounders?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bulstrode.

Billy Bunter looked round as he rose, and peered closely at Harry through his big glasses. It was pretty clear that, big as his spectacles were, they did not assist his vision very much.

"My hat, it's the new kid! Well, what does he mean by sprawling on the floor? I say, you new fellow—"

What Billy Bunter was going to say remained a mystery, for the new boy shoved him violently aside and sprang to his feet.

Bunter collapsed in a chair, and Harry Wharton jumped towards Bulstrode with clenched fists and flashing eyes.

The bully of the Remove faced him with a mocking laugh. He dashed the enraged junior's blow aside, and drove his fist into Harry's right eye with a force that made the new boy stagger,

He was about to follow it up with his left when Nugent grasped his arm.

"Hang it, Bulstrode, that's enough!"

"Let me alone!" roared Bulstrode, and his elbow came against Nugent's chest and he was hurled back. But at the same moment Harry Wharton sprang to the attack again. He had caught up the nearest weapon, and it happened to be Bulstrode's camera.

"Put my camera down!" yelled Bulstrode.

Harry Wharton brought it down with a crash on the bully. Bulstrode put up his hand to save his head, and the camera crashed on his arm and fell to the floor. White with rage, the bully sprang at Harry Wharton, and they closed in a savage grip. It was about the unwise thing Bulstrode could have done, for as they struggled to and fro, Wharton's foot came with a crash upon the camera, and smashed it.

"You young hound!" howled Bulstrode. He twisted Harry Wharton back till the new boy was bending backwards over the table. The edge of the table hurt Wharton's back, but not a sound of pain came from his lips. "You young beast! I'll teach you to break my camera!" hissed the bully of the Remove. "I'll make you pay for it, and give you the hiding of your life in addition!"

Nugent sprang to Bulstrode to pull him back.

"You fool, you are hurting him!" "Well, ass, I mean to hurt him! Do you think I'm doing this for fun?" howled Bulstrode.

"Let him go, or I shall start on you. Now then, let him go!"

He dragged Bulstrode back. At the same moment Wingate looked in at the open door of the study.

"What's all this thundering row about?"

"He's broken my camera!" shouted Bulstrode, releasing Wharton.

"Did you break his camera, Wharton?"

"Yes, I did, and I'd do it again!" cried Wharton. "I'll break him, too, as soon as I get a chance! Oh, I hate this place and everybody in it!"

The captain of the school looked at him grimly.

"There's never any getting at the rights of a Fourth Form quarrel," he remarked. "You can settle it yourselves, only don't make any more row, or you'll get into trouble."

"What about my camera?"

"If you want it paid for, take your claim to the Head and tell him the whole story, unless Wharton chooses to do the proper thing."

"He won't get anything out of me!"

"Very well, you know what to do, Bulstrode. Now, no more rows, mind, in this study, or I'll come up and warm you with a cane."

And with that dire threat the captain of Greyfriars withdrew.

The Meeting of the Form!

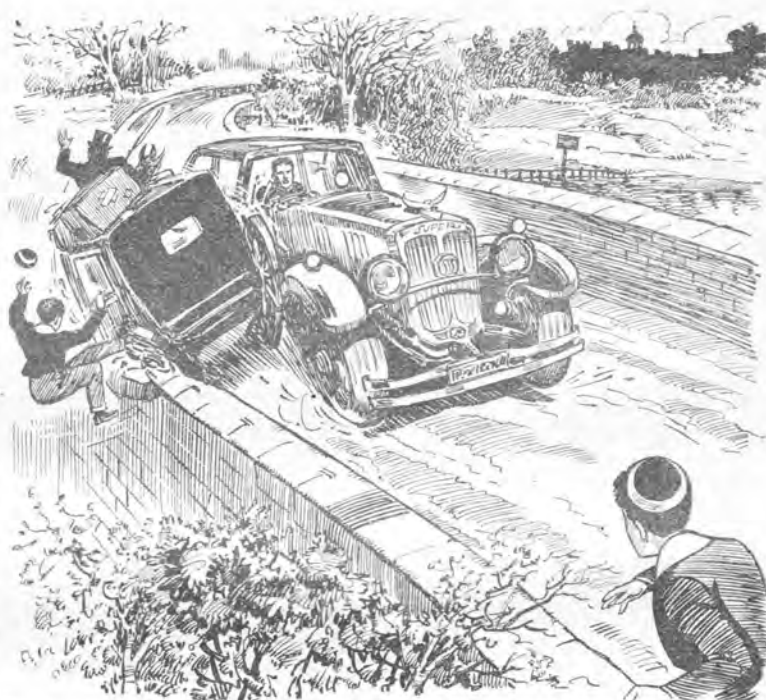
BULSTRODE glared at Harry Wharton as the captain's foot-steps died away down the passage. But he did not venture to renew the conflict. He turned to his broken camera and picked it up.

Harry Wharton stood breathing hard. He hesitated whether to speak to Nugent. He had received a favour at Nugent's hands, and it galled him to feel under an obligation. Finally he turned towards Nugent.

"Thank you for pulling that brute off," he said awkwardly.

Nugent gave him a cold look.

"You can save your breath," he



The big car flashed past, crashing against the rear wheel of the hack, and sending the vehicle against the low parapet of the bridge. Nugent had flung open the door to spring out, and he was hurled down into the river like a stone from a catapult.

replied. "I pulled him off because I was afraid he would injure you. If he had given you a sound thrashing I should not have interfered."

Wharton's brow darkened. "You had no right to use his camera like that!" went on Nugent indignantly. "He acted like a pig, I know; but that camera cost two guineas."

"I don't care—" "You ought to care. If you don't pay for it—"

"I certainly shan't do anything of the kind!"

"Then you're a— But enough said. No good us rowing, too."

And Nugent turned away sharply.

The colour came into Wharton's cheeks. His nature was headstrong and passionate, but not ungenerous. He was quick to feel anything like contempt, and it came to him now with a painful shock that Nugent despised him.

He had an impulse to follow Nugent to say—he hardly knew what. But before he could decide on anything, his attention was taken by Bulstrode. The bully of the Remove had picked up the wreck of his camera, and seen that it was hopeless of repair.

"You rotten outsider!" said Bulstrode in tones of concentrated rage. "You're not fit to be at a decent school! But I'll make you sit up for that!"

"I am not afraid of you!"

"No; because Wingate's got his eye on this study," said Bulstrode scornfully. "But never mind that. Are you going to pay for this camera?"

"Certainly not!"

"Very well, we'll see what the Form has to say about it!" said Bulstrode, with a black scowl. "You'll be wanted in the Remove-room after school to-day."

"I shan't come!"

"Won't you?" said Bulstrode grimly. "Then you'll be fetched!"

As he strode from the study, Billy Bunter blinked round the room.

"I say, Bulstrode, don't be too hard on the new fellow. He didn't mean to break your camera, I'm sure."

There was naturally no reply, as the bully of the Remove was no longer in the study. But the Owl—as the short-sighted fellow was politely nicknamed by his Form-fellows—did not see that he was gone.

"You hear, Bulstrode? I tell you the new chap's a silly ass, but he doesn't mean any harm, I believe. Let him down lightly."

Bunter was blinking at Wharton as he spoke.

"Still," he went on, with an air of consideration, "it would be a good idea to give him a Form ragging to take some of the nonsense out of him. Don't you think he's a sulky beast?"

"No, I don't," said Harry, smiling in spite of himself.

Bunter gave a jump. Short as his sight was, there was nothing the matter with his hearing, and he knew as soon as Harry spoke that he had been addressing the wrong person.

"My hat!" he murmured. "I'm sorry, Wharton. I thought I was speaking to Bulstrode, or I should not have called you a sulky beast."

"Oh, get out!" said Harry Wharton.

He did not feel much in a humour for further study. He went out into the quadrangle to get a little fresh air before afternoon school. He saw a number of Remove boys, all of whom looked at him curiously.

Harry Wharton was certainly the most-talked-of person in the Form at that time, and the looks he received seemed to indicate that some surprise was being prepared for him—a surprise, undoubtedly, of a far from pleasant nature.

Afternoon school was a little less painful than in the morning. Harry Wharton was naturally a boy of quick intelligence, and the knowledge that he had to go through with his lessons made him bring all his mental powers to bear on the task, and it was easier than he expected.

Mr. Quelch, too, who had had a chat with the Head about the new boy, was very lenient with him, and helped him in many quiet ways; and Wharton, sullen as he was still, could not help feeling the beginning of a respect and liking for the Remove-master.

Afternoon school finished at last. Harry Wharton drifted out into the quad. He was feeling the effects of his struggle with Bulstrode. His nose was red and swollen, and there was a dark shade about one of his eyes. None of the masters, however, had made any inquiries as to how he came by the tell-tale signs, preserving a judicious ignorance of the matter.

Harry felt refreshed by the cool air blowing in his face, and he went down to the football ground to look on at the game.

The Sixth Form boys were at practice, and Harry watched the game with interest. He had played football in his time, and naturally he liked the game, and it dawned on him that life at Greyfriars might have its attractions after all.

Wingate saw the youngster looking on eagerly, and when he came off the field for a rest, the Greyfriars captain tapped Harry on the shoulder. Harry looked up at him: his face a little less dark than usual.

"You play footer, I suppose?" asked Wingate.

"I have played it."

"You will have to play in the Form practice here. No boy is let off from the sports without a doctor's certificate. You had better report yourself to your Form captain."

"Who is that?"

"Oh, you know him—Bulstrode of your study."

"I should not play with Bulstrode,"

Wingate staid.

"You will do as you are told," he replied. "Don't let me miss you from the Fourth Form practice to-morrow, that's all, or you will be warned!"

And the Greyfriars captain walked on. Wharton stood looking after him

in anger. He felt a sense of being assailed on every side. He could not even be allowed to keep to himself now, but must join the other fellows in their practice. He inwardly determined that he would not do it, come what might.

As Harry walked away from the football ground in the growing dusk, several Remove fellows followed him, and others dropped into line, and in a few minutes Wharton noticed that he had an escort of something like a dozen boys as he walked towards the house.

He turned away from the doorway, as if to go to the gym, and then the Remove fellows disclosed their intentions openly enough. They closed round him in a ring, and he was cut off from all sides.

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He glared round at the circle of grinning faces like a stag at bay.

"Let me pass!" he said savagely. Bulstrode and several others burst into a laugh.

"You're wanted in the Form-room," said the bully.

"I'm not coming!"

"Don't be an ass!" said Russell. "You must come. It's a Form meeting, and you're wanted."

"I don't care a rap whether I'm wanted or not—I'm not coming!"

"He, he!" chuckled Billy Bunter. "He says he's not coming. Collar

him and carry him in—this side up with care!"

The Remove fellows closed round the new boy. Harry clenched his fists, his eyes gleaming. He looked round the closing ring, doubtful where to break through. Before he could decide, they had seized him.

"Got him!" said Bulstrode, with a laugh. "Come on!"

Harry Wharton struggled furiously. "Hold the brute tight!"

"I've got him!" shouted Bunter, who had his fingers firmly fixed into a collar.

"He can't get away. I've got him!"

"You ass!" roared a voice. "You haven't got him—you've got me!"

"My hat! Is that you, Skinner?"

"Yes, it is, you howling blitherer!"

"I'm sorry. I thought it was the new kid's collar I had hold of. It is so hard to see in the dusk."

"Yes, for a blind owl like you!"

"I can't help being short-sighted, Skinner. You ought not to throw that in my face."

"I'll throw my fist in your face if you get hold of my collar again! If you want to grab something, grab the new kid!"

"All right, I've got him now—"

"That's my hair!" yelled Russell. "Pull him off! He's scalping me! Kill him, somebody! Kick him out! He's dangerous."

"Oh, really, Russell! I'm sorry—"

But before he could finish, Billy Bunter was hustled out of the way.

Many hands were now gripping the new boy, and he struggled desperately to get away, but the odds were too many for him.

In spite of his struggles, Wharton was torn off his feet and carried away. In a laughing crowd, the Remove went through the passage to the Form-room, empty now save for the Fourth Formers who were waiting for them there.

But the news of the capture of the "outsider," as Wharton was generally called, soon spread, and the Remove came pouring into the Form-room from all quarters.

(Harry Wharton is in for the ragging of his life—and he's not the fellow to submit to the ordeal quietly, either! Don't miss next week's long instalment of this amazingly interesting story of Harry Wharton's early experiences of Greyfriars.)

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