THE GREYFRIARS

HOLIDAY

1927 ANNUAL 1927

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

Frontispiece

AT THE CROSS-ROADS!

THE GREYFRIARS HOLIDAY ANNUAL

This Book Belongs to.....

The Editor to His Friends

In the work of producing the new volume of the GREYFRIARS HOLIDAY ANNUAL I have been guided throughout by the experience gained from the editing of each of its seven predecessors. During the last seven years, too, large numbers of very welcome letters have been received from readers of all ages living in every part of the world, and these have, naturally, been very helpful to me.

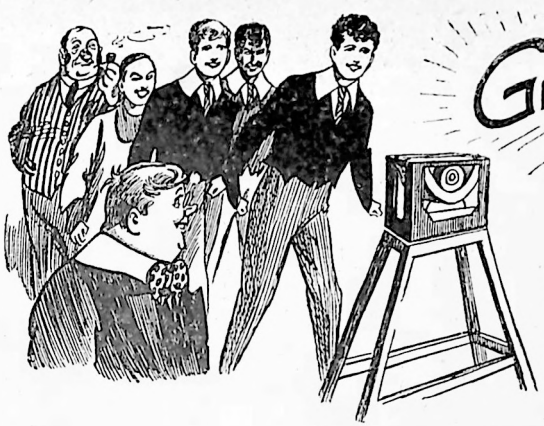
All the well-known schoolboy characters, therefore, and the unique features which have made the "HOLIDAY" the most popular Annual in the world, will again greet you from the pages of this volume. The famous chums of the Remove Form at Greyfriars—Harry Wharton & Co.—are here, and, of course, William George Bunter looms large as ever! Tom Merry & Co., of that famous school, St. Jim's, join with the one and only Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in entertaining you with fresh pranks and adventures; while Jimmy Silver and his chums of Rookwood, whose motto is always "Keep smiling," keep the ball rolling merrily.

The judicious admixture of some first-class adventure stories gives the necessary spice of variety to the programme. "Billy Bunter's Annual" again provides a highly diverting feature, while an extra-long school story from the pen of famous P. G. Wodehouse will, I know, make a special appeal.

In short, no effort has been spared to make the HOLIDAY ANNUAL for 1927 a volume in which schoolboy fun and wholesome adventure are happily combined. The result is a book of irresistible charm to all who count themselves young in years or in spirit.

THE EDITOR.

THE FLEETWAY HOUSE,
FARRINGDON STREET,
LONDON, E.C.4.



Greyfriars Calling!

The Chums of Greyfriars School broadcast cheery messages to readers of The Holiday Annual

HALLO, everybody!

Harry Wharton speaking, from the Greyfriars Broadcasting Centre.

What's that? You had no idea we were on the wireless? Of course we are! Greyfriars isn't nearly such a "sleepy, antiquated, old show" as Fisher Tarleton Fish, the hustler from New York, would have you believe. We were one of the very first schools in the country to have wireless installed; in fact, Billy Bunter, the famous fat fellow, declares it was he who invented wireless! You must take that with a grain of salt, if not a whole salt-mine! Wireless was *not* invented by Signor William Marconi Bunter, any more than jam tarts were invented by Edison!

Well, and how do you like the look of this new HOLIDAY ANNUAL? A bumper affair, is it not? There are enough stories and articles and poems and pictures to keep you interested for many a happy hour. I was permitted, as a special favour by the Editor, to read some of the yarns before they went to Press—and they are simply toppers! I enjoyed them no end, and I'm sure you will all do likewise. The jolly old ANNUAL seems to grow better and brighter as the years roll by. As old Shakespeare says: "Age cannot wither it, nor Custom stale its infinite variety." There you have the secret of the ANNUAL's popularity—its variety! Whatever your tastes—whether you like school yarns or sport yarns or adventure yarns, short yarns or long yarns or happy-medium yarns—you find your tastes catered for in THE boys' book of the year—the good old HOLIDAY ANNUAL.

And now I must make way for that plump descendant of Falstaff, Billy Bunter. He is bound to talk a lot of nonsense; and, as it's impossible to give a fellow a bumping by wireless, you will have to grin and bear it!

Billy Bunter Broadcasts!

I say, you fellows! This is ME speaking—the one-and-only BILLY BUNTER, copyright throughout the civilised world, and registered at the Ministry of Food as a mighty feeder whom no one can imitate! I have been fined heaps of times at the Greyfriars Police Court for exceeding the feed limit; but the real truth of the matter is, I never seem to get enough to eat in this place. I have strongly advocated an eight-meal day for British schoolboys—did I hear a thunderous chorus of "Hear, hear"?—but the Head is one of those old stick-in-the-muds who hates reforms, so we've got to carry on under the present regiment. (Bob Cherry says the word ought to be "Reggie Me," and not regiment, but of course, he's talking out of his hat, as usual!)

Wouldn't an eight-meal day be a boon and a blessing? There would be First Brekker

and Second Brekker; Lunch "A" and Lunch "B"; Tea Major and Tea Minor; and Supper I and Supper II! Some of the fellows would never be able to get through such an orgy of feeding; and it would be a case of the survival of the fattest!

There are some more fellows waiting to chat to you on the wireless, but don't take any notice of what they say. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings cometh forth tommy-rot! What I want you to do, you fellows, is to turn to Page 191, where BILLY BUNTER'S ANNUAL begins, and I guarantee you won't stop laughing till you come to the last page. Even the masters at this school agree that nothing quite like my ANNUAL has ever been publicated. I let my Form-master, Mr. Quelch, read it before it went to Press, and he laughed so much that he nearly went into revulsions!

(It's all right, Dick Penfold! You needn't keep jogging and jostling me. You shall have your turn at broadcasting in a minute!) Well, you fellows, I've nothing more to say except—(Be patient, Penfold!)—except that I hope you will all enjoy this volume of the ANNUAL, and also my own ANNUAL which nestles inside it; and when you come to the last page, I hope your verdict will be—(Leggo, Penfold, you rotter!) As I was about to remark, I hope you will lay this volume aside with a sigh, and say—(Ow! Yow! Yaroooo! I'm being dragged away by brute force, by that beast Penfold!)

Good-bye, you fellows—Yooop!—Good-bye!

"Mr. Quelch laughed so much that he nearly went into revulsions."

Penfold the Poetical!

HALLO! Dick Penfold here, you fellows! You're tired, no doubt, of Bunter's bellows. He gets tuned up, just like a fiddle; I cut his speech short in the middle, for if I'd left the owl alone, he'd keep on like a gramophone!

In case you've never heard of me, I'll introduce myself with glee. I am the bard of the Remove—a statement no one can disprove; for I have written reams of rhymes, which have appeared at various times. I thought I really might do worse than give my wireless talk in verse. I fancy you'll survive all right. My little "jaw" won't last all night!

When Shakespeare wrote his topping plays, 'twas long before the wireless craze. They didn't "listen-in" to hear the Bard of Avon spout "King Lear"; nor could they hear the clever fellow broadcast selections from "Othello." The vaunted days of Good Queen Bess were really rather tame, I guess. They had no trains, or trams, or airways; no motor cars or moving stairways; no telephones, or dictaphones, or "Baby Grands," or gramophones. Greyfriars existed, it is true, for schoolboys just like me and you; but there were no first-rate boys' papers, or stories packed with pranks and capers. The good old ANNUAL wasn't known, when Good Queen Bess sat on the throne! Therefore, the chaps who live to-day can count themselves in luck and say: "Thank goodness we were not on earth before the ANNUAL sprung to birth!—before the "Magnet," "Gem," and "Pop," were sold on bookstall and in shop!"

And now I'll send to sleep my Muse, and leave you fellows to peruse this bumper book for British Boys—a wholesome feast of fiction joys!

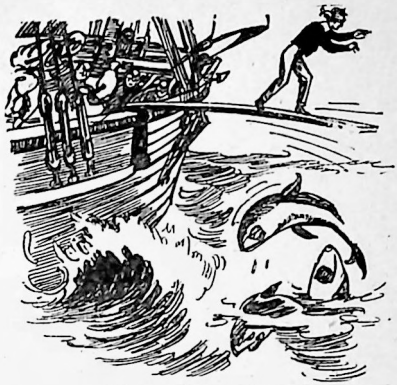
But stay! Before I end my "patter," the dusky Nabob wants to chatter. The worthy Hurree Singh, so tanned, who hails from India's coral strand.

Weird and Wonderful English!

HOW do you do dofully, my worthy and esteemed chums? I trust you are all in the pinkfulness, as it leaves me at present with a cold on the chestfulness, due to the treacherous English climate.

I felt I should like to convey to you, broadcastfully, my compliments and good wishes. I need not introducefully make myself known to you, for most of you know me already as a member of the esteemed and Famous Five of the Greyfriars Remove. I am from India, and I like your England very much, except for the climate and the food! The rain it raineth every day, and the snow comes down flakefully. As for the food, they do not serve the nice hot dishes to which I have been usefully accustomed in my native land. Curry and chutney please my palate, but the roastful beef and the stewful mutton delight me not. But what's the use of grousefully grumbling? All these troubles are sent to try us, and,

"Hear the Bard of Avon . . . broadcast selections from 'Othello'!"



". . . . Chinese pirates who make people walkee plankee!"

as your English proverb so aptly says, it's an ill wind that blows nobody down a long lane that has no silver lining!

Well, my worthy and esteemed chums I must give you good-bye, because there are other fellows who wishfully desire to waft their good wishes over the wireless. Listen with all your earfulness, and you will hear Wun Lung, the Chinese, speakfully holding forth. But I doubt if you will understandfully cotton on to what he says, because, unlike myself, he has not yet thoroughly mastered the esteemed and ludicrous English language; and his errors of speechfulness are terrific!

Farewell good-byefully!

Wun Lung Chimes in!

ME velly pleased to be able to talkee-talkee over the wireless to all the thousands of HOLIDAY ANNUAL readers. You savvy? What you tinkee of this latest ANNUAL? Me tinkee it is velly, velly good, but it would be velly muchee better if the Editor had allowed little Wun Lung to write a story in it about Chinese pirates who make people walkee plankee, and chopee off headee and feed to the sharkee. You savvy? But the Editor say he has no use for stories

of that sort. Never mind! Perhaps he will let little Wun Lung write bloodthirsty yarnee for the next ANNUAL. What you tinkee?

I must hoppee off now, because Gosling, the porter, wishee to talkee-talkee.

Good-bye-ee!

Gosling's Merry Message!

AXIN' yer pardon, young gents, but might I be allowed to get a word in edgeways, so to speak?

I'm William Gosling, that's who I am—Keeper of the Keys an' Guardian of the Gate for nigh on 'alf a century, as ever was! I gets worrited out of me life by the young rips at Greyfriars, an' I 'as so many dooties an' cares that sometimes I 'ardly knows whether I'm on me 'ead or me 'eels, as the sayin' goes. But I'm feelin' very merry an' bright at the moment, because the Editor of the 'OLIDAY ANNUAL 'as jest wrote me a letter

"Dear Gosling," says 'e, "this is to hinform you that I 'ave decided to send you a copy of the ANNUAL, free, gratis, an' for nothin'. I am aware," says 'e, "that an over-worked an' hunder-paid porter ain't in a position to put 'is 'and in 'is pocket an' perjuice six shillin's. I am aware, also," says 'e, "that you wouldn't miss the ANNUAL for worlds, because you figgers in some of the stories yerself. So I am sendin' you a free copy, with the condiments of the season."

Now, that's wot I calls a real gent! Fancy a busy Editor, in the midst of all 'is multifarious dooties—I 'unted up "multifarious" in the dictionary!—sparin' a thought for a pore old porter wot's a-toilin' an' a-moilin' in this 'ere benighted place. Wot I says is this 'ere: it's real good of the Editor, an' I can assure 'im that I shall spend many an 'appy hour in my cosy parlour with the 'OLIDAY ANNUAL for company.

An' now, dooty calls, so I must be hoff. My best respecks to you all, young gents.

What I says is this 'ere—— Good-bye!

THE END

Greyfriars Champions

BOB CHERRY

(Junior Sports Champion)

The genial Bob takes pride of place
In this, our Champion's Corner;
He's first in many a thrilling race,
At cricket, he's a Warner.
Upon the football field, his fame
Compares with that of Buchan;
Who can excel him at the game?
I'll warrant, very few can!

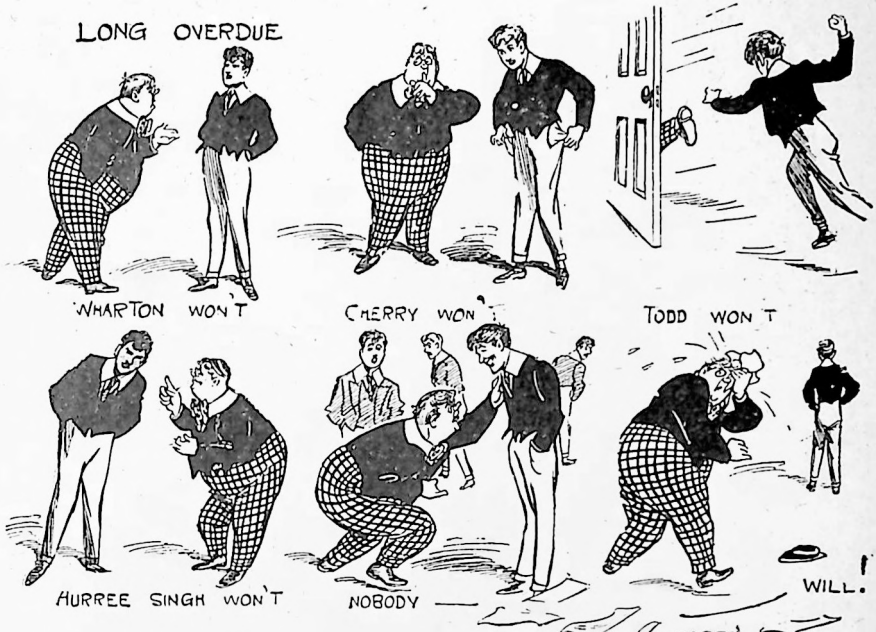
The energy that Bob displays
Is wonderful—cyclonic!
It acts on those with whom he plays
Just like a bracing tonic.
He never wavers in the field,
Or wearies of the tussle;
But plays up well for cup or shield,
Exerting every muscle!

He has no patience with the chaps
Who spend their days in dozing,
Upon their sofas taking naps,
In blissful ease reposing.
Mauleverer, the lazy lord,
The Greyfriars "Weary Willie,"
Is seized by Bob, when feeling bored,
And dragged forth willy-nilly!

All honour to our valiant Bob,
A fine and manly figure!
However irksome be his job
He tackles it with vigour.
The record of his sporting feats
Would fill a good-sized manual;
His prowess gives delightful treats
To readers of THE ANNUAL!

THE OLD, OLD STORY!

FOR A LONG TIME BILLY BUNTER HAS BEEN TRYING TO RAISE MONEY ON POSTAL ORDERS THAT HAVE BEEN LONG OVERDUE



MY DAY AT THE ZOO

By BILLY BUNTER

We were convayed in a couple of taxicabs —there was no room for both of us in one vehikle.

MY pater had often prommist me that, when he had a stroke of luck on the Stock Exchange, and the fambly coughers were filled to overflowing, he would get permission from the Head for a day off, and treat me to a trip to the Zoo.

Well, one fine morning my pater did a jolly good deal in "bulls" and "bears," and other animals on the Stock Exchange; and he kept his prommis by tellyfoning to the Head and asking if I could come up to town for the day.

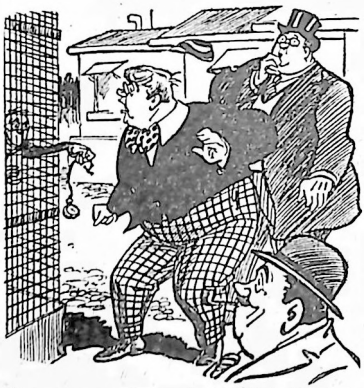
"Sertainly, Mr. Bunter!" said the Head. "I can always spare your son William. He is so forward with his lessons that there is nothing more we can teach him here. He is welcome to have as much time off as he likes."

So off I went to London, and joined the pater in the refreshment buffy at Charing Cross. An ideal meating-place! After a sixteen-course lunch, we were convayed in a cupple of taxi-cabs (there was no room for both of us in one vehickle) to the Zoo.

I have always been fond of wild beests, ever since my miner Sammy was born. And it gave me keen delight to roll around and inspect the lions, tigers, ellyfants, and other household pets. I also enjoyed watching the seals and porpusses. I've a fellow feeling for porpusses, being a yewman specimen of that tribe.

When we came to the monkey-house, there was a rather unforchunitt insident. One of the monkeys thrust his paw through the bars and relieved me of my gold watch —chain and all! That gold watch was a birthday gift from my pater. He had bought it specially for me, straight from the brass foundery. I begged the monkey to give it back, but he just grinned and gibbered at me. However, a keeper came along soon afterwards and recovered my property for me. The watch hadn't been improved by the monkey opening it and tampering with the works.

I only wish I had space to describe in detale my wunderful day at the Zoo. It was trooly a wunderful day, and by way of a diversion, my pater took me along to the British Museum, where the mummies and things are. I had never seen any mummies before, and I noticed one thing directly. Looking at mummies made me feel awfully peckish; I began to feel as hungry as a hunter! Perhaps my pater did too, because we soon went off to finish up the day in style with a tip-top dinner at the Writs Hotel.



There was a rather unforchunitt insident at the monkey-house.

Bunter, The Cricketer!

An Amusing Story of Greyfriars School

Narrated by Tom Brown

BILLY BUNTER, the plump Falstaff of the Greyfriars Remove, was wearing, in addition to his Etons, a worried look.

Bunter was not given to worrying overmuch about anything as a rule; but he certainly looked worried now.

It was a sunny morning in July, and most of the Greyfriars fellows were looking very merry and bright. Their faces matched the morning. But the fat countenance of William George Bunter was sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought.

The fat junior rolled disconsolately up to the notice board in the hall. He had a hope—a very remote hope, it is true—that his name would be down to play for the Remove against the Fifth that afternoon. And he blinked through his big spectacles at the list of names which Harry Wharton had posted up.

But if Billy Bunter imagined that his illustrious name would figure on the list, he imagined a vain thing.

Harry Wharton's name headed the list, as a matter of course; then followed the names of the other members of the Famous Five. Vernon Smith's name was down, and Peter Todd's, and Mark Linley's; and Penfold and Field and Russell completed the eleven. There was no mention of William George Bunter, not even as first reserve, or umpire, or scorer, or roller of the pitch!

"Rotten!" grunted the fat junior. And he began to look, more worried than ever.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came the dulcet voice of Bob Cherry, who appeared on the scene with his chums. "Wherefore that worried look, old fat man?"

Bunter pointed to the list of names with a fat forefinger.

"I'm left out!" he said, more in sorrow than in anger.

"Why, of course you are," said Johnny Bull. "Wharton's still got a glimmering of sanity left. He'd need to be clean off his rocker before selecting a fat duffer like you!"

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"If we were playing a kindergarten, instead of the Fifth, I might give you a show, Bunter," said the captain of the Remove. "But in the circs., I'm afraid you must take a back seat."

Billy Bunter blinked at the speaker. He was still looking worried—desperately so.

"Look here, Wharton," he said, "you've simply got to play me this afternoon!"

"What?"

"You've got to!" said Bunter. "I must insist!"

Harry Wharton burst into a laugh.

"You silly cuckoo! Do you imagine I'm going to take my orders from you?"

Billy Bunter plunged his hand into his breast-pocket, and produced a letter.

"I say, you fellows! This is from my Uncle Peter," he said. "He's coming to Greyfriars this afternoon for the express purpose of seeing me play cricket."

With Billy Bunter—strutting along in flannels—on one side and smiling Sammy on the other, Uncle Peter was escorted to Little Side.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Uncle Peter's been abroad for years—gold prospecting, or something." Bunter went on. "He naturally wants to look me up. He's heard what a ripping cricketer I am——"

"Who told him that?" asked Nugent.

"Ahem! I mentioned the fact in my last letter to him," said Bunter. "I told him I was the best cricketer in the Remove, and he'll naturally expect to see me play. If he comes here this afternoon and finds I'm not playing, he might think I'm not good enough for the eleven and that I've been exaggerating my abilities."

"Ha, ha! That's just what the old boy will think!" said Bob Cherry. "You shouldn't have told him such whoppers."

Billy Bunter turned appealingly to Harry Wharton.

"You can see how I'm fixed," he said. "Uncle Peter will be awfully ratty if he comes all the way from London to see me play and finds I'm not even in the eleven. Try and squeeze me in, Wharton, there's a good fellow! You could stand down and let me take your place——"

"What?" shouted Harry.

"Or Bob Cherry could stand down. He's a very feeble sort of player."

Bob gave a roar which the celebrated Bull of Bashan could not have equalled.

"You—you cheeky fat toad! If you dare to call me feeble, I—I'll burst you!"

"Ha, ha ha!"

"Perhaps Johnny Bull would give me his place?" suggested Bunter.

"Br-r-r!" growled Johnny.

"Or perhaps Inky will do the decent thing and stand down?"

"Nothing doing, my esteemed and ludicrous Bunter," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, in his weird English. "I have no intention of surrenderfully giving up my place in the eleven."

Billy Bunter blinked at his schoolfellows in despair. There was such a woebegone look on his face that Harry Wharton & Co. were moved to compassion.

Bunter was certainly in a tight fix. He had represented to his uncle Peter that he was a splendid cricketer—a sort of schoolboy edition of Jack Hobbs—and Uncle Peter was coming down from London for the special purpose of seeing his plump nephew perform. If he found that Bunter was not even in the eleven, he would undoubtedly be angry. He would consider that he had been fooled.

Harry Wharton looked thoughtful. He was pondering the advisability of giving Bunter a game. After all, the match was not an important one; and the Fifth, though a higher form, had a very mediocre team, which was considerably weakened by the inclusion of Horace Coker, the comedian of the form.

"Why not play Bunter?" said Wharton, at length. "The Fifth are playing Coker. That will be one clown on each side."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But Uncle Peter will have several sorts of a fit when he sees the sort of cricket that Bunter serves up," said Nugent.

"That will be Bunter's funeral," said Wharton. "Are you really keen to play, Bunter?"

"Of course!" said the fat junior, his eyes glistening. "I'm certain I shall hit up a century; I feel it in my bones. And when Uncle Peter sees me take a hundred off the Fifth's bowling, he'll be tremendously bucked. He'll tip me a fiver, most likely."

The Famous Five grinned. They did not anticipate a century from the bat of William George Bunter. Bunter's contribution to the Remove total would probably be a "big round nought."

However, it was arranged that Bunter should play; and Dick Penfold sportingly agreed to stand down, and make way for the fat junior.

Bunter was so grateful to Penfold that he would have hugged him, had not Pen backed away in the nick of time.

There would be no disappointment for Uncle Peter, now. He would come, and see, and marvel. He would gaze on his plump nephew with admiring eyes, while Billy Bunter flogged the Fifth Form bowling to all parts of the field. And he would have the satisfaction of seeing Bunter make a century and also the winning hit!

In his mind's eye, Bunter saw all these things coming to pass. He was not likely to see them with any other eye but his mind's eye; but in his mind's eye he saw them with crystal clearness.

Uncle Peter arrived at Greyfriars shortly after dinner. He was a stout, amiable-looking gentleman, and he seemed to ooze prosperity. He turned up in a magnificent car, and his suit was the last word in smartness. It seemed that Uncle Peter's ventures in gold-prospecting had not been altogether barren of result.

He greeted his plump nephew, who was in flannels, very cordially. And he had an avuncular embrace for young Sammy Bunter, of the Second.

"I am delighted to see you, my dear boys!" said Uncle Peter warmly. "Am I in time for the cricket match, William?"

"Yes, rather, uncle! We're just going to start. I'll take you along to the ground."

Flanked by his two nephews Uncle Peter was escorted to Little Side. He was piloted to a deck-chair, beneath one of the old elms, and he settled down to enjoy the cricket.

It was to be a single innings match. Blundell of the Fifth won the toss, and elected to bat first.

There was a cheer as Harry Wharton led his men out to field.

"Where would you like me to field, Wharton?" asked Billy Bunter. "I'm rather good at silly point, you know.

"And better still at stupid mid-off!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton turned to the fat junior.

"You'd better get as far away as possible," he said. "Somewhere where there's no

Bob Cherry was standing behind Bunter, when the fat junior started to bowl, and Bob Cherry thought he was safe. He wasn't! The ball flew in precisely the opposite direction to that in which Bunter intended it to go, and it caught Bob Cherry full in the chest.

chance of a catch being sent for you to muff!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

Billy Bunter rolled away into the deep field, and Blundell and Bland, padded and gloved, and looking capable of doughty deeds, came in to open the Fifth's innings.

Uncle Peter, comfortably ensconced in his deck-chair, gazed out over the green playing-fields, dotted with flannelled figures; and he sighed contentedly.

Blundell opened against the bowling of Hurree Singh. The captain of the Fifth found his form at once, and started to open his shoulders.

"Look out, Bunter!"

A mighty hit sent the ball soaring away into the "deep." Billy Bunter saw it coming—saw the ball hang in the air for a brief second, and then dive suddenly towards him. But Billy Bunter didn't shape to catch it. He gave a yelp of alarm, and ran away from the swiftly descending sphere. Bunter had been hit on the head by a cricket-ball before, and he didn't want an encore! He dodged away, and the ball thudded harmlessly into the grass.

A yell of laughter and derision rang out.

"Yah!"

"Funk!"

"Why didn't you catch it?"

Billy Bunter felt very foolish as he gathered up the ball. What would Uncle Peter think of that deplorable exhibition of funk? He was certain to be disgusted with his plump nephew.

"I shall have to make amends for that," murmured Bunter. "I'll ask Wharton to let me bowl presently. And when Uncle Peter sees the Fifth Form wickets falling like ninepins, he'll forget all about that muffed catch."

Bunter's request to be allowed to bowl was not granted until the tail-end of the Fifth's innings.

Horace Coker was the last man in, and Bunter was permitted to bowl to him. It was, as Bob Cherry said, a sight for gods and men and little fishes. Coker was probably the worst batsman at Greyfriars; Bunter was certainly the worst bowler! It was not a case of Greek meeting Greek; it was a case of freak meeting freak!

Whizz!

Billy Bunter spun himself round like a catherine-wheel, and the ball fairly flew from his hand. There was a fiendish yell from Johnny Bull, who was fielding at silly point. The ball flew straight for Johnny, catching him a terrific crack under the chin.

"Yaroooo! You—you fat villain! You've nearly fractured my jaw!" hooted Johnny.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The rest of the fieldsmen seemed to find it a matter for merriment. But Johnny Bull didn't. The glare he bestowed upon William George Bunter was almost homicidal.

"Sorry, old chap," said Bunter cheerfully. "Ball slipped, you know."

"Bowl up!" said Coker.

Bunter tried again. This time, the fieldsmen jumped well back out of the danger zone. When Bunter was bowling there was really no knowing in which direction the ball would travel. It was safe to wager that the batsman would see nothing of it!

Bob Cherry was standing behind Bunter, and Bob fondly imagined that he was safe. But nobody was safe, when Billy Bunter was let loose with the ball. The leather flew from the fat junior's hand—flew in precisely the opposite direction to that in which it was intended to go. Bob Cherry received it full in the chest, and it bowled him over like a skittle.

"Yowp!" gasped Bob, as he collapsed in the grass. "Chain that fat madman up, somebody! He's out to kill!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Exactly what Uncle Peter thought of his nephew's bowling feats was not known. Perhaps it would be made clear later!

Even Bunter, with all his inflated conceit, realised that he had not exactly covered himself with glory. But he consoled himself with the reflection that he would make ample amends, when it came to his turn to bat.

The Fifth were all out at last, through Coker sitting on his own wicket. They had scored 98, and the Remove would have to be at their best to win.

"Let me come in first with you, Wharton,"

said Bunter. "We'll knock off the runs between us."

"Ass! You'll go in last," grunted the captain of the Remove. "While you're waiting your turn, I should advise you to go and make peace with your uncle."

From the pavilion, Billy Bunter could see Uncle Peter taking his ease in the deck-chair. But he hadn't the pluck to approach him. That muffed catch, and that wildly erratic bowling, must have annoyed Uncle Peter intensely. Certainly it did not bear out what Bunter had so often said in his letters—that he was the finest cricketer in the Remove.

Bunter deemed it prudent to give Uncle Peter a wide berth, until he had made a century, and won the match for his side, thereby wiping out his previous failures.

The Remove batted strongly and well, against some indifferent bowling. Harry Wharton hit up a useful 24 before being taken at the wicket; and Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent carried on the good work. Hurree Singh, who was last but one on the batting list, made the winning hit amid shouts of applause; so that the game was already won when William George Bunter waddled forth to the wicket.

"A splendid win, my dear boy!" said Uncle Peter, gripping Bunter's hand. "Your batting was excellent; only equalled, in fact, by your remarkable bowling!"

There was a very grim expression on the fat junior's face. If he wished to redeem himself in the eyes of Uncle Peter—and he did wish to, most fervently—here was his opportunity. He would help himself to a century from the tired bowling, and then retire, bearing his blushing honours thick upon him.

That was Bunter's fixed intention. But the way back to the pavilion is paved with good intentions. Every batsman fondly hopes to make a century; but only a very few find their hopes brought to fruition.

Billy Bunter patted the turf very carefully, as he had sometimes seen County players do; and he kept the field waiting for quite two minutes before he was ready.

Blundell was bowling, and he contemptuously tossed up a lob. It was a soft, simple ball, that pleaded to be hit out of the ground. Bunter would willingly have granted its plea, but he could not. He shut his eyes and smote blindly, mistiming the ball hopelessly.

Crash!

As falls the giant oak, so fell Billy Bunter's wicket. The stumps were spread-eagled, and the batsman, losing his balance, crashed heavily to earth, sitting amongst the wreckage.

"Yaroooo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How's that, umpire?" grinned Blundell. "I've a faint shadow of a suspicion that it's 'out'!"

Certainly it was "out." Of that—as the gentleman in the "Gondoliers" observed—there was no shadow of doubt, no possible probable shadow of doubt, no possible doubt whatever!

Billy Bunter's cup of humiliation was now full. It was brimming over, in fact. The fat junior quaked at the knees, at the prospect of the coming interview with Uncle Peter. It seemed only too probable that the vials of that gentleman's wrath would be poured over the head of his plump nephew.

Bunter had boasted that he was the

Remove's champion cricketer—the juvenile Jessop of Greyfriars. But, instead of living up to the part, he had failed, utterly and ignominiously!

What excuse could he offer to Uncle Peter? It would be no use saying that this was his "off" day. It would be equally futile to pretend that he had been the victim of bad luck. He had had his chances, and he had bungled them. And now he must face the music!

To Billy Bunter's great astonishment, however, there was no music to face.

As the players were coming off, Uncle Peter rose up from his deck-chair, and came across the greensward to his nephew. The air rang with cheering for the Remove's victory.

"A splendid win, my dear boy!" said Uncle Peter, gripping the astonished Bunter by the hand. "You batted magnificently, by Jove!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter, crimson with confusion.

Uncle Peter smiled.

"Don't be so modest about it, William," he said. "Why, you are blushing like a girl! Your batting was excellent, my dear boy, only equalled, in fact, by your remarkable bowling."

Billy Bunter blinked at his uncle in wonder. Was the old gentleman being sarcastic at his nephew's expense? Apparently not, for he seemed genuinely delighted.

"I expect you are feeling hungry, William, after your strenuous innings?" said Uncle Peter.

"Yes, rather!"

Bunter was certainly hungry. Some fellows experience a sudden loss of appetite after making a "duck's-egg." But the only effect of such a calamity on Bunter's appetite was to make it keener. He trotted gleefully away to the tuckshop with Uncle Peter, scarcely able to credit his good fortune.

Bunter had expected scowls and reproaches, after his inglorious exhibition on the cricket field. Instead of which, he got smiles and congratulations—and an excellent feed into the bargain!

The truth of the matter was that Uncle Peter had not seen a single ball bowled!

It had been so cosy and restful in the deck-chair that the old gentleman had dropped into a doze, from which he had not been awakened until the salvo of cheers from the pavilion had announced the Remove's victory.

Uncle Peter simply dared not confess to his nephew that he had seen nothing of the game. He would not have wounded Bunter's feelings for words. He had come down to Greyfriars for the special purpose of seeing his nephew perform prodigies of valour. Actually, he had seen nothing; but he took it for granted that those prodigies of valour *had* been performed. He assumed that his nephew had bowled well, and batted well, and won the match for his side. And, as Bunter did not attempt to deny it, Uncle Peter felt that he was on safe ground.

What the old gentleman's feelings would have been had he taken a peep at the score-book, may be left to the imagination. For the score-book contained the following dismal entry:

"W. G. Bunter, b. Blundell. 0."

Before leaving Greyfriars in his car, Uncle Peter bestowed quite a lavish "tip" upon Billy Bunter; and he left the school under the impression that his nephew was a wonderful cricketer, who would one day assist his country to fight Australia for the "Ashes."

Uncle Peter never learned how Bunter had really disported himself in the match with the Fifth. And Bunter, for his part, never learned that Uncle Peter had slept solidly through the match. Which was just as well for the peace of mind of both!

THE END

In the Days of the Old-time Frontiersmen

THE BALLAD OF THE--

This is the boy who jumps for joy.

This is the boy
Who jumps for joy,
And leaps and dances
And gaily prances,
And calls to his brothers,
His chums, and others:
"Remember, remember,
The first of September!
It brings the *Holiday Annual!*"

This is the shop in the busy street.

This is the shop in the busy street
To which he flies with nimble feet,
And his chums and brothers
And all the others
Come running and racing,
Careering and chasing
And bounding along
In an eager throng
To buy the *Holiday Annual!*

This is the man who keeps the shop,
And sells the "Magnet," the "Gem,"
and "Pop,"
And he beams and smiles
At the piles and piles
Of volumes trim
Surrounding him.
And the precious piles
At which he smiles
Are piles of the *Holiday Annual!*

—"HOLIDAY ANNUAL"

This is the Editor, slogging away
With pen and ink, in the lamplight's ray,
From set of sun till the peep o' day,
With never a wink of sleep, they say.
Scribbling and scrawling
With speed appalling,
And keenly delighting
In writing and fighting
To fashion the *Holiday Annual !*

This is the Editor, slogging away.

This is the author, in his lair,
Running his fingers through his hair,
Turning and twisting in his chair,
And wishing he had more time to spare !
Pink and perspiring,
Unkempt but untiring,
With a clash and a clatter
He types the matter
That makes up the *Holiday Annual !*

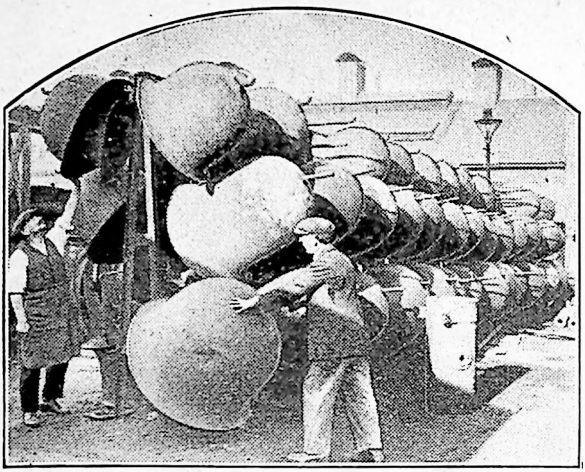
This is the author, in his chair.

This is the reader, merry and bright,
Who sits in his cosy den at night,
Dreamily, happily taking his ease,
With the precious volume on his knees.
He's the very boy
Who jumped for joy,
And leaped and danced
And gaily pranced
And called to his brothers,
His chums, and others :
" Remember, remember
The first of September !
It brings the *Holiday Annual !*"

This is the reader, merry and bright.

Before the Driver Comes

All about what happens before a railway engine leaves its "stable"



This looks like a giant hat-rack; actually the "hats" are engine domes in the depot at Swindon. They are stored here after being taken from old engines that have been scrapped.

IN every locomotive shed of a great railway hangs a big blackboard, upon which is chalked the name of each driver and fireman coming on duty. Against each pair of names is recorded the number of the engine they are to drive, the place where it is to be found, and the trips it is to make.

In addition to all this, there are mysterious chalk marks against many of the engine-numbers, indicating to various gangs of workmen that certain tasks must be performed upon the selected locomotives, before the driver and fireman come on duty.

Perhaps some minor repair needs to be executed; or, more probable still, the monster needs to be cleaned.

Passenger engines are, as a rule, thoroughly "bathed" every day, whilst haulage or goods engines have to be content with a "weekly." But whether the engine is "passenger" or "goods," the procedure of the cleaners varies little. First of all, they fix up a huge board marked "Not to Go," in order to protect themselves while at work. Until that board is taken down the locomotive will remain stationary, for neither driver, fireman, nor anyone else has authority to interfer. Nor must any other locomotive or vehicle be brought near enough to cause movement by contact.

Operating in gangs of five, the cleaners start their gigantic task systematically, as is very necessary. Two of them tackle the boiler brasses, buffer-plant, and driving wheel. Another takes the motion wheels, whilst the remaining two set about the sides, framing, coupling-rods, and running wheels.

After rubbing all dirt from the paint-work with a dry cloth, vaseline is applied by means of a sponge-cloth. Sometimes mineral oil is substituted for the vaseline, but its constant use blackens the paintwork, and on this account is not generally favoured.

Burnt and hardened dirt is removed by a judicious mixture of bathbrick and elbow-grease, and all steel parts are polished with emery paper and coated with vaseline.

On an average, each gang of five men will clean three engines per day, and the cost is, at the present time, slightly over three pounds, or one pound per engine. This, of course, includes the provision of the necessary materials, and it is interesting to note that upon each engine three to four pounds of mineral oil, four pounds of sponge cloth, one pound of vaseline, and a pound of emery paper is expended. The sponge cloths, however, are afterwards put through a process that compels them to restore some of the oil and vaseline!

Having thoroughly completed their task, the cleaners carefully rub from the engine-board that particular sign applicable to them, and proceed to tackle their next victim.

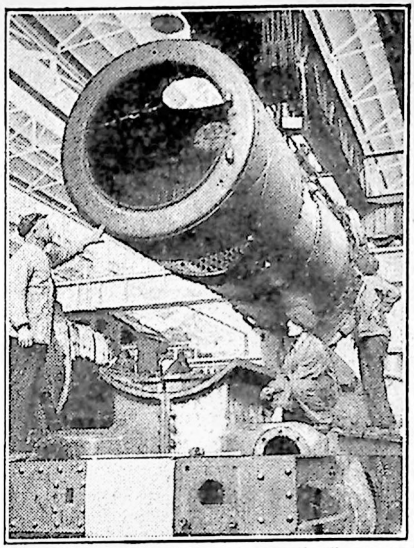
Whilst they are so employed, the boiler-foreman notices the existence of another cryptic sign which orders the scouring of the boiler.

In some districts special men are employed on this job, the water being so full of impurities as to demand a "scour" after every long-distance run. Thick layers of rust and lime form on the inside, making the raising of steam more and more difficult, so that unless the residue is constantly scraped away, the task of the fireman becomes impossible.

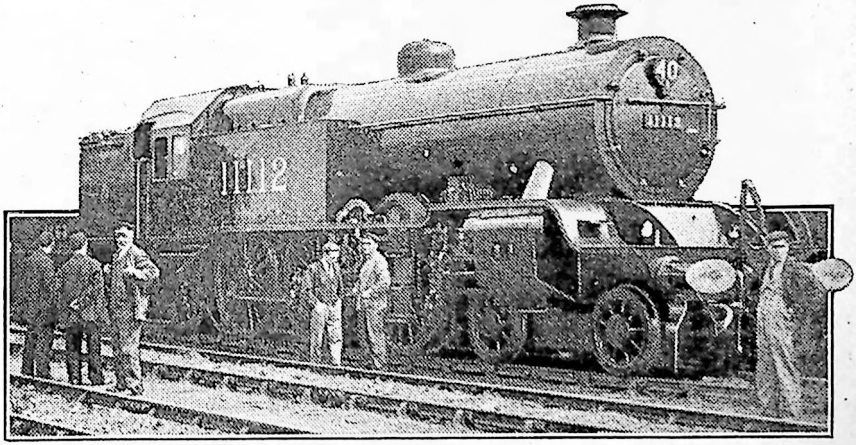
Once the job is completed, another secret chalk-sign on the engine-board is deleted, and by the time the driver arrives there is nothing at all left opposite his name except the engine number, its hiding-place, and its work.

Whilst the fire is being lit for him, and the boiler filled with water, our driver collects a supply of lubricating oil, a quantity of waste-cloths and dusters, one or two lamps, quite a number of tools, and, lastly, the key of the engine-locker.

He oils and trims the lamps, makes a careful examination of every detail of the locomotive mechanism, testing all the brakes and outlets. Then, by the time he has "coaled," the first trip will be about due.

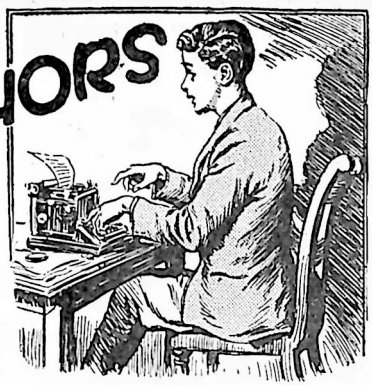


Here is shown a "surgical operation" on a G.W.R. express engine. The boiler has been lifted bodily from its bed.



This magnificent L.M.S. tank engine took part in the Railway Centenary at Darlington last year.

RIVAL AUTHORS



By MARTIN CLIFFORD

A Christmas Story of the Chums of Cedar Creek, the Backwoods School

THE FIRST CHAPTER

Interrupted Throes !

"My dear chap——"

"You must come !"

"Can't be done !" said Frank Richards decidedly.

"Now, look here, old chap——" began Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc together.

"Can't be done, really !"

Cedar Creek School had broken up for Christmas. Frank Richards was in his room at the Lawless Ranch, seated at the table before the ancient and somewhat battered typewriter lent him by Mr. Penrose, of the "Thompson Press."

Frank had been leaning over that typewriter, with a wrinkle in his brow and a far-away look in his eyes, when his two chums came in.

He was, as a matter of fact, in the throes of composition, and the interruption was untimely. But he smiled and nodded cheerfully to Bob and Beauclerc as they came in. The lamp on the table glimmered on the typewriter keys and on a blank sheet of paper in the machine. So far Frank had written one line, "Bullivant's Christmas," which was evidently the title of the story hatching in the youthful author's brain. But the story was still incubating, so to speak, and the sheet of paper remained a beautiful blank so far.

"Shove that machine away !" continued Bob Lawless. "You've simply got to come ! Chunky Todgers is waiting downstairs——"

"Bother Chunky Todgers !"

"Oh, I say, Richards——" came a voice at the doorway.

The fat and cheerful Chunky, muffled from head to foot against the weather, blinked in.

Frank Richards groaned inwardly.

Attached as he was to his friends, he wished them anywhere else at the present moment.

"Molly Lawrence will be there," remarked Beauclerc casually.

Frank Richards did not say "Bother !" this time.

"Can't be helped," he said.

"Molly will expect you," said Bob severely. "She says you're the only good dancer at Cedar Creek."

Frank laughed.

"No time for dancing now," he said. "Look here, you chaps ! You buzz off ! There'll be no end of a crowd at the Mission dance, and I shan't be missed. I've simply got to get this done."

"What rot !" said Bob. "Can't you do it to-morrow ?"

"Or the next day ?" suggested Beauclerc.

"There's only one dance at the Mission before Christmas," said Bob Lawless reproachfully. "It's awfully kind of old Smiley to get it up, too. Can't give it a miss."

"But——"

"Better come, Richards," said Chunky Todgers. "Not that it matters about Molly. I'll dance with Molly——"

"You must come, if only to save Molly from that!" said Bob

Chunky Todgers snorted at that remark.

"You see," said Frank, "this is for the Christmas number. You know Mr. Penrose is getting out a Christmas number of the 'Thompson Press.' I've got to do a Christmas story. And I ought to take it along to-morrow morning at the latest. In fact, it ought to be in Mr. Penrose's office this evening."

"Then why haven't you done it before?" demanded Bob. "Never put off till to-morrow——"

"Why, that's what you're asking me to do!"

"I—I mean, never put off till to-day what you ought to do yesterday," said Bob.

"But I hadn't an idea yesterday——"

"Oh gum!" said Bob. "Do you have to wait till you get an idea before you write a story?"

"Well, you see——"

"Have you got the idea now?"

"I was just getting it nicely when you fellows burst in," said Frank Richards ruefully.

"Keep it till to-morrow, then, and it will very likely improve with age," suggested Bob. "Like wine, you know!"

"Ass!"

"Perhaps I can help," said Chunky Todgers.

"Eh? How?"

"Well, you know I can write a better story than you, old chap."

"Fathead!"

"Old Penrose doesn't think so, I know," said Chunky. "Penrose is rather a jay. But the fact remains. Now, if you like, Richards, I'll turn out the Christmas story, and you can go to the dance."

Chunky Todgers had quite a generous air as he made that offer. Frank Richards laughed.

Generous as the offer was, the schoolboy author did not seem especially grateful for it.

"What do you think of the stunt?" asked Todgers. "I mean it!"

"You're too kind!" said Frank.

"The fact is, old chap, I mean to be kind—this is the season for kindness," said Chunky cheerily. "I can knock off a story in an hour or so; I don't have to stick at the typer for hours to do a story, as you do. I've got the gift, you know—a sort of facility. I should think you'd be pleased——"

"I'm afraid Mr. Penrose wouldn't be——"

"Never mind Penrose; he can't help being an ignorant jay. You needn't mention it to him at all. He can think it's your stuff."

"You don't think he'd notice any difference?" asked Frank, with a touch of gentle sarcasm.

"He might. But if he thought it was better than usual, and sent you some extra dollars, you could keep the money," said Chunky Todgers, still generous. "I'm not after the

"Come on!" Bob exclaimed, as he and Vere Beauclerc yanked the hapless Frank away from his typewriter. (*See page* 22.)

cash. I want to oblige you. Besides, I'd rather like to have a story in Penrose's Christmas number. Probably there would be a rush, and he'd have to print a second edition. Then we'd tell him I did the story. No end of a joke on him, you know, after he's been ass enough to refuse all the stuff I've sent him. See ? "

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

" I don't see where the cackle comes in ! Now, is it a go ? "

Chunky Todgers meant to be generous, but he was very eager. As a matter of fact, the fat Chunky yearned to see his literary efforts in print. So far, Mr. Penrose had been willing to admit his contributions to the " Thompson Press " only if they were paid for at advertisement rates. On those lines Mr. Penrose would have published anybody's literary output, even if he had had to increase the size of his paper for it. But such an offer was no use to Chunky Todgers.

" Fathead ! " said Frank Richards. " Now if you fellows will buzz off to the Mission—— "

" Not without you ! " said Bob. " You've got to come ! "

" But Mr. Penrose is expecting his copy—— "

" Let him expect ! "

" But—— "

" You'll feel no end bucked by a dance," said Bob. " To-morrow morning the literary bizney will roll off the typer like—like boiled tallow. Come on ! "

" Oh dear ! "

Frank Richards had always found it difficult to say " No " to anybody. And certainly he wanted to go to the Mission dance; dances were rare enough in the Thompson Valley of British Columbia. Bob saw the signs of yielding in the hapless author's face, and jerked him from his chair.

" Kim on ! " he said.

" If the copy's late for the paper, I—— "

" Better than the author being late for the dance ! Come on ! "

And Frank Richards gave in.

THE SECOND CHAPTER
Chunky's Little Game

" OH dear ! "

The buggy which was to carry the Cedar Creek chums to the Mission had been brought round. That evening traps and buggies and wagonettes and carts were converging on the Mission from all directions through the falling flakes of snow. The dance given by Mr. and Mrs. Smiley to the inhabitants of the Thompson Valley was well attended. Frank Richards, having made up his mind—or having had it made up for him—prepared to mount into the buggy with his chums, when a strange and lamentable howl came from Chunky Todgers.

Chunky sat down on the pinewood bench in the porch of the ranch-house, and his fat features were contorted.

" Hallo ! What's the matter, boy ? " exclaimed Rancher Lawless. The rancher and his wife were going in the buggy.

" A—a sudden pain."

" Too much maple-sugar ? " asked Bob.

" Yow-ow ! "

" Can I do anything for you, Todgers ? " asked Mrs. Lawless, with concern.

" Ow ! No, thanks, ma'am ! " gasped Chunky. " I—I don't feel well enough to—to go to the dance, that's all ! "

" Dear me ! "

" That's bad ! " said the rancher, looking at Chunky rather curiously.

The fat youth's pains had come on very suddenly.

" Oh, buck up, Chunky ! " said Bob Lawless. " We can't wait, you know. Bring your pains along with you ! "

" Room in the buggy," said Frank, smiling.

" My dear boys ! " murmured Mrs. Lawless.

" Chunky's such a blessed malingerer," said Bob, with a grunt. " Now, look here, Chunky. What's the game ? Have you got any pains ? "

" I—I'm suffering fearfully ! " said Chunky Todgers. " But don't you fellows worry. I'll sit here by the fire till I feel well enough to come on on my pony. You get off."

" Well, if you will be all right—— " said Mr. Lawless.

" Quite all right, thanks ! " said Chunky eagerly. " I—I wouldn't spoil your pleasure for worlds, you fellows. Buzz off ! "

" Oh, all right ! " said Bob.

As a matter of absolute fact, the journey in the buggy was likely to be more comfortable

"O-oh!" Chunky Todgers groaned as he dropped heavily on to the pine-wood bench, his fat features contorted. "Oh dear! I've got a—a pain! I don't feel well enough to go to the dance!" he gasped. Frank and the others eyed him curiously; Chunky's pain had come on with suspicious suddenness.

(*See page* 28.)

without Joseph Todgers' ample proportions being stowed in it. Chunky had ridden over from the Todgers' homestead to get a lift in the ranch buggy, when he might just as well have ridden on to the Mission, only a couple of miles further.

There were plenty of passengers in the buggy already, and certainly it was quite a good idea for Chunky to follow on his fat pony as soon as he felt well enough.

In a few minutes Mr. and Mrs. Lawless, their son and nephew, and Vere Beauclerc, were in the buggy, driving away through the falling flakes.

Chunky sat by the blazing log fire in the attitude of a suffering invalid till they were gone.

As soon as the cracking of the whip had died away in the distance, however, Chunky ceased to be an invalid.

He rose to his feet and grinned.

"Silly jays!" he murmured, apparently referring to the Lawless family and Frank Richards.

Chunky Todgers mounted the stairs to Frank Richards' room and lighted the lamp.

He seated himself cheerfully at the table before the typewriter.

Frank Richards was safely disposed of for the evening; certainly the party were not likely to return to the ranch before midnight. Indeed, if the snow continued to fall, the return might be later than that. So Joe Todgers had plenty of time before him.

Having invented an attack of internal pain as an excuse for remaining behind, Chunky had the evening before him at the ranch, with no one to interrupt. There were only two Chinese servants left in the house, and they were not interested in Todgers' proceedings.

Click, click, click!

Chunky's fat fingers were soon busily at work on the typewriter keys.

He did not need to pause and reflect and cogitate, like Frank Richards.

Far from that.

Chunky worked with the greatest facility. Literary composition fairly flowed from his fat fingertips.

As a literary producer, the quantity of his productions was limited only by the amount of paper in stock. The quality, perhaps, was another matter.

Chunky was satisfied about the quality, however.

Doubts on that point never entered his mind. His fat fingers clicked away on the keys almost without a pause.

Frank Richards had been prepared to spend the whole evening on a short story. Not so Joseph Todgers.

He covered sheet after sheet at a terrific rate.

In an hour his work was done.

He grinned with satisfaction as he drew the last sheet from the roller.

With great care he pinned the sheets together at the corner.

Then he sat down to read them over, and make any little corrections that were necessary; not that many corrections were necessary in literary work turned out by Chunky Todgers.

His fat face beamed over the manuscript.

He had thought it good while he was clicking it off, but read over it seemed better than ever.

"Splendid!" murmured Chunky. "Ripping! Top-notch! Never been anything like this in the 'Thompson Press' before, you bet your life! It's a shame to let that old ass Penrose have it for nothing."

Chunky paused to reflect.

That was his little scheme—to get his valuable productions into print, as if they belonged to Frank Richards. Mr. Penrose, he considered, would not notice any difference; he would receive the typed copy, and suppose that it was Frank's. If he noticed any difference it would be a difference for the better—Chunky did not doubt that.

Once the story was in print, everything would go swimmingly.

The encomiums it would receive from Mr. Penrose's readers would open his eyes to Chunky's quality as an author—as soon as Chunky revealed the secret.

Of course, it was rather rotten to have to sneak into print, as it were, under the name of an inferior author. Chunky felt that. But he did not see what else was to be done, Mr. Penrose being so utterly asinine as to decline even to look at Chunky's own manuscripts. He had looked at the first, and that had seemed enough. Evidently he had a foolish prejudice on the subject, which was only to be overcome by a pardonable device like the present one. Chunky had no doubt that it was pardonable.

But now he paused.

It seemed really a sin and a shame to let that splendid story go for nothing, after all.

It occurred to Chunky that it would be wiser to send it to one of the well-known Canadian magazines, and rope in a handsome cheque for it.

But he couldn't help remembering that he had spent a considerable amount of pocket-money on postage to the Canadian magazines,

and that the prejudice against his literary work seemed very widespread.

No editor had been intelligent enough to charm and dazzle his readers by publishing it.

Possibly the same thing would happen again. Indeed, Chunky had a sort of feeling that it would.

"No; I'll let Penrose have it," decided Chunky, with a shake of the head. "The old ass will shove it right in without noticing, and after it's scored a big success I'll tell him. And then I'll charge him pesky high for regular contributions. I guess he deserves that."

So Chunky carefully wrapped up the manuscript, and typed the address of the "Thompson Press" on the wrapper.

He descended, and called up one of the Chinese servants. He held out the addressed packet to Hon Han.

"This ought to be taken into Thompson tonight," he said

The Chinaman blinked at it.

"Richards ought to have taken it, but he's gone to the dance," went on Chunky mendaciously. "I suppose you can ride over with it?"

"No thinkee," said the Chinee.

Hon Han had no desire for a long ride through the snow that bitter December night.

"I'll stand you a dollar," said Chunky generously.

Hon Han's almond eyes glistened.

That made a difference.

"Me takee!" he said

"Good! Get off at once!"

Chunky sat down in an armchair, and grinned at the fire when the Chinaman rode away, muffled to the ears, and with the valuable packet stowed away under his coat.

"I guess that's O.K.," murmured Chunky. "I—I wonder if Richards will mind? Can't help it if he does. He's had a long run in the 'Thompson Press' with his rubbish, and it's time they printed something good. I guess I'll stay here over night, and see that he doesn't send along any rubbish to-morrow—I'll offer to take it along to Thompson for him, and see that it's kept back a few days." Chunky chuckled. "Sorry for poor old Richards—but he can't really write, so it doesn't make any difference. I can't afford to lose a chance like this."

And, still chuckling, Chunky Todgers fell asleep before the fire, and dreamed golden dreams of the days to come, when he was to be famous as Canada's greatest author, and

"You take this into Thompson," said Chunky, "and I'll stand you a dollar!" Hon Han's almond eyes glistened. "Me takee!" he said. (*See this page.*)

editors were to fall over one another in crowding round him to beg for contributions, all of which was to date from the appearance of his masterpiece in the columns of the "Thompson Press."

THE THIRD CHAPTER

Better Late Than Never!

THE mission-hall was crowded.

Sweet strains of music echoed out into the snowy night.

In the glare of the swinging lamps, dozens of couples glided merrily over the pinewood floor to the strains of a piano, a fiddle, and a 'cello.

It was a great gathering!

Nearly all the young people of the section were there for Mr. Smiley's Christmas dance, as well as a crowd of their elders.

Frank Richards & Co. enjoyed themselves. Dances were few and far between in the Thompson Valley. Frank was rather in request, being a good dancer. He danced with pretty Molly Lawrence, and several other of the Cedar Creek girls. But Frank was not thinking wholly of the dancing.

The Christmas number of the "Thompson Press" haunted his thoughts.

He felt guilty.

Mr. Penrose relied upon him for the copy, and the copy was due at the office. And the idea for his story having come to him, it was rather like a burden on his mind until the story was written and done with.

He was feeling more like scribbling than dancing that evening, and although his face was cheerful and bright, he would have given a great deal to be sitting at the typewriter in his room at the ranch.

Early in the evening, Frank Richards vanished from the sight of his chums.

There were several inquiries after him; but he did not reappear.

After the first half-dozen dances Frank felt that he had done his duty, and he had quietly slipped away.

He spoke a few words to Mr. Smiley, who nodded and smiled, and then made his way into the reverend gentleman's house, which adjoined the pinewood mission-hall.

In Mr. Smiley's study was a typewriter, which Frank had sometimes used, doing typing for the reverend gentleman occasionally.

Frank turned up the lamp and sat down to the machine.

While his chums were wondering what had become of him, Frank Richards was busy.

The strains of the music came to his ears from the distance, but he did not heed them; in fact, he hardly heard them.

Neither did he hear nor heed the sounds of the dancers as they "tripped the light, fantastic toe."

Time and space had vanished for him, as he sat at the machine clicking cheerily away on the keys.

Nothing short of an earthquake would have brought him back just then from the realms of imagination, where his fertile fancy was wandering.

He was no longer Frank Richards of the Backwoods School; he was living what he wrote; his spirit was in the typewriter, weaving sentence after sentence, page after page—more real to him then than his actual surroundings.

He rose and sighed as he finished the last page.

He pinned the sheets together, wrote a little note to Mr. Penrose to put inside, and wrapped up the manuscript.

Little did he dream that, at the same moment, Joseph Todgers was similarly engaged in his room at the Lawless Ranch.

With the package in his pocket, Frank Richards quitted Mr. Smiley's study.

The dance was nearly over when he re-entered the mission-hall.

"Where on earth have you been?" demanded Bob Lawless, coming along with Molly Lawrence on one arm and Kate Dawson on the other. Bob was taking the young ladies in to supper.

"Can't you give me one more dance, Molly?" asked Frank, parrying his Canadian cousin's question.

Molly found that she could.

After supper, when the guests were departing, Frank Richards stopped beside the

The mission-hall was crowded ; in the glow from the swinging lamps dozens of couples glided merrily over the smooth floor—but Frank Richards slipped quietly away from the lights and gaiety, to the old typewriter in Mr. Smiley's study. (*See page* 26).

Lawrences' wagonette. He had to say good-bye to Molly, and he had also to speak to her brother Tom.

"You drive home through Thompson ?" Frank asked.

"Right through Main Street !" answered Tom Lawrence.

"Will you drop this packet for me at Mr. Penrose's office ?"

"Sure !"

"I'll see that he does, Frank !" said Molly, with a bright smile.

And they parted.

"Now for home !" said Bob Lawless, as

Frank Richards rejoined his friends. "I suppose we shall find Chunky there. He never turned up at the dance, after all!"

"I hope he is not really ill," said Mrs. Lawless.

"Only an overdose of maple sugar, if he is!" answered Bob. "I expect we shall find him fast asleep!"

Bob's prediction was verified.

When Frank Richards & Co. arrived home, Chunky Todgers was still deep in the arms of Morpheus, and snoring with a resonant snore. Bob Lawless awakened him cheerily with a dig in the ribs.

"Ow!" Chunky woke, and blinked at the returned party. "I can't let you have it under ten thousand dollars!"

"What?" yelled Bob.

"Ten thousand—oh!—ah!—I—I've been dreaming!" gasped Chunky, rubbing his eyes. "I—I thought I was speaking to the editor of the 'Montreal Magazine.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What wouldn't you let him have under ten thousand dollars?" grinned Bob.

"Never mind!" said Chunky mysteriously. "You wait a bit, Bob, and you'll see. Perhaps the greatest author Canada has ever produced belongs to this section."

"You flatter me," said Frank Richards demurely.

Chunky snorted.

"I don't mean that, ass! I mean—never mind what I mean!"

Chunky was quite mysterious.

"Never mind," agreed Bob. "Do you know how late it is, Chunky? Why didn't you come to the dance?"

"I—I forgot."

"You must have forgotten what a tip-top supper Mr. Smiley stands, or you'd have come!" said Bob, with a chuckle. "You off, Cherub?"

"Yes; good-night!"

Beauclerc rode away for his home through the falling flakes.

But Chunky Todgers did not follow his example.

"You chaps don't mind if I stop the night?" he asked.

"Not at all!" said Mr. Lawless. "But your parents——"

"Oh, they know I'm here!" said Chunky. "That's all right!"

"Stay by all means, then!"

Chunky Todgers snored that night in the extra bed in the room belonging to Frank and Bob. Hospitality in the Canadian West is unbounded, and Chunky was quite welcome to take up his quarters at the ranch if he liked.

It proved that he did like.

At home there was wood-chopping and snow-sweeping and errand-running, and other occupations beneath the dignity of a fellow of Chunky's literary abilities. But it was not only for the sake of slacking that he stayed on at the ranch.

Hon Han had delivered his precious manuscript at Mr. Penrose's office. That day would see it in type. But evidently something would be suspected if Frank Richards sent in his usual copy as well. That was what Chunky had to prevent, somehow.

It did not occur to the fat and fatuous youth that he was acting in a decidedly unscrupulous manner. That reflection never crossed his mind at all. Conceit had blinded Joseph Todgers to the moral aspect of his conduct.

In the morning he fully expected Frank Richards to set to work on the typewriter; not having the slightest suspicion that Frank's work had been done at the Mission overnight.

To his relief, Frank let the typewriter quite alone.

There was work to be done on the snowy range, and Frank and Bob joined the cattlemen. Chunky Todgers did not care for work on the range, and he remained hanging about the fire most of the day. If Frank was letting his literary work slide, that suited Chunky quite well, and saved him trouble. But he remained at the ranch—on the watch, with his little, round eyes very much on the alert.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

A Little Surprise!

"YOUNG Richards!"

"Hallo, Billy!"

Frank and Bob were returning to the ranch-

house in the early dusk of the winter evening, when Billy Cook rode up. The ranch foreman looked like a pillar of snow as he loomed up in the dusk—he had ridden up from Thompson Town.

"Something for you," said Billy Cook, fumbling under his fur coat. "I was jest ambling up Main Street when Mr. Penrose called me. He told me to ask you if you was drinking yesterday."

"What?" exclaimed Frank and Bob in unison.

"That's what he said, and he give me this," said Billy Cook, and, passing a packet to the schoolboy author, he rode on.

Frank took the packet and stared at it.

He knew by the feel of it that it contained typed sheets.

Bob Lawless grinned.

"This is what comes of scribbling when you ought to be dancing, old scout," said Bob. "You've made a muck of it this time, and Penrose declines it with thanks."

"Rot!" said Frank warmly. "It's one of the best things I ever did."

"Penrose doesn't seem to think so."

"Penrose is an ass!" growled Frank.

Bob chuckled.

"That sounds like Chunky!" he remarked. "Open it, anyhow, and see what the galoot has to say."

He led the way into a cattle-shelter close at hand, and lighted a lantern.

Frank gave a howl as he stared at the letter accompanying the manuscript. "What on earth does this mean?" he cried. (*See this page*).

Frank opened the packet with slow fingers, an extraordinary expression on his face.

Frank Richards had taken to "scribbling" at a very early age, almost as naturally as he took to walking or breathing. He had not gone through the painful experience of most young authors—he had never had a rejected manuscript. Was this to be the first of his painful experiences in that line? If so, he could not help feeling that Chunky Todgers was right in describing Mr. Penrose as an ass.

Frank was a healthy and cheery youth, but he had the sensitiveness of the literary nature. His first thought was that if this was a rejected manuscript he would never write another line.

Folded typewritten pages turned out as he opened the packet.

Bob Lawless ceased to grin; the expression on Frank's face showed him that it was not a time for grinning. There was a letter enclosed with the manuscript, and Frank glanced at it.

Then he gave a howl.

"What on earth does the man mean? Has he been at the Red Dog——?"

"What does he say?" asked Bob.

"Look!"

Bob Lawless read the letter, and whistled in astonishment.

"Dear Richards,—I received your manuscript 'Bullivant's Christmas,' which you sent by young Lawrence. Many thanks for the same, and thanks for sending it in good time.

"But what the thunder do you mean by sending another story with the same title by the Chinaman last night? And what the thunder do you mean by scribbling such idiotic rot?

"If you're taking to drink at your age, I guess I'd better speak to your uncle about it. If you're not, what the thunder do you mean?

"I enclose the stuff the Chinaman brought; no use to me. Put it in the fire. Yours,

"H. PENROSE."

"Is he potty?" gasped Bob. "Or are you potty, or what?"

"Blessed if I know," said Frank.

"Look at the stuff——"

Frank unfolded the manuscript.

He blinked at it.

There was the title of "Bullivant's Christmas," which he had written just before Bob and Beauclerc dragged him away to the Mission dance. But the rest of the story—he blinked at it, and stared at it. It began:

"'Twas night! Not a sound broke the stillness save the roar of the feerful wind as it raiged throo the treeze, and the crash of falling timber, and the deffening boom of the raiging torrent."

That sample was enough for Frank Richards. He recognised the masterly literary style.

"Chunky Todgers!"

"Ha, ha, ha! That's why he stayed back from the Mission dance," yelled Bob. "He did this on the typer——"

"The fat fraud!"

"And sent the Chinee with it——"

"Why, I'll—I'll—I'll——"

Words failed Frank Richards.

"No wonder Penrose thought you'd been at the fire-water!" shrieked Bob. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's not a laughing matter," roared Frank Richards wrathfully. "I'll scalp him—I'll—I'll—I'll lynch him—I'll——"

Bob Lawless shrieked.

"Don't say a word," he gasped.

"I'll say a good many words—I'll—I'll——"

"Not a word!" gasped Bob. "Don't you see, the fat idiot thinks Penrose will take this for your stuff and print it. He doesn't know you did the story at the Mission last night and sent it by young Lawrence. He thinks this stuff will come out in the Christmas number under your name. Let him go on thinking so. Penrose is jolly late with his Christmas number. We don't get it till Christmas morning here. Let Chunky go on dreaming till it comes; and give him this stuff for a Christmas present——"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Wrap it up again and give it to him on Christmas morning as a present," chuckled Bob. "And—and watch his face!"

Frank Richards broke into a chuckle.

"Good egg!"

"Mind, not a word to the fat jay!" said Bob, as they left the cattle-shelter. "Not a pesky syllable! Let him run on!"

And Frank Richards assented.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

Chunky Todgers' Christmas Present!

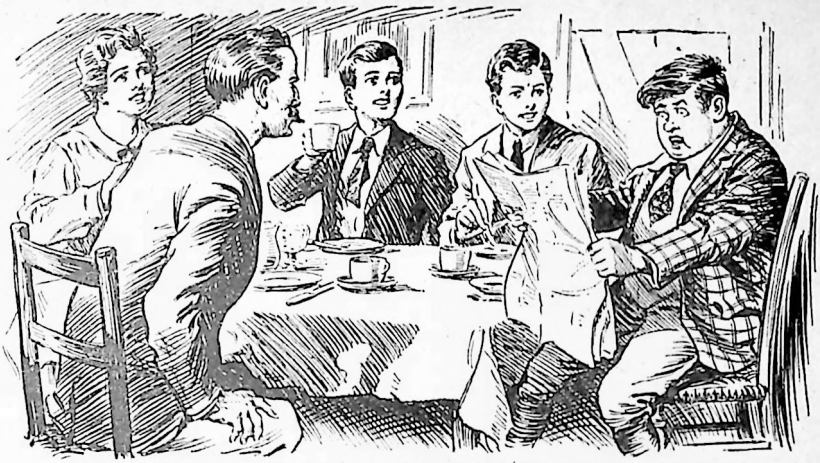
CHUNKY TODGERS wore a fat and cheerful smile on Christmas Eve at the Lawless Ranch.

That evening he felt more than satisfied.

Owing to Mr. Penrose's frequent visits to the Red Dog and the Occidental, he was often late with the "Thompson Press," and the Christmas number was late. But Chunky knew that it must be printed on Christmas Eve at the very latest. And—so far as Chunky knew—Frank had not sent in his copy. Chunky had remained on guard at the ranch to intercept it; but it did not need intercepting. The schoolboy author apparently was neglecting his editor in the most culpable manner.

Chunky came down bright and cheery on Christmas morning. Breakfast was rather later than usual that morning, and on the table lay a copy of the "Thompson Press"—the Christmas number, which Mr. Penrose had produced to dazzle the section. Frank Richards opened it and glanced at the page devoted to the Christmas story. He nodded and smiled over it, much to Chunky's astonishment.

"Is—is—is the story there, Richards?" stammered Chunky at last, unable to control his impatience any longer.



Chunky blinked at the page as though he could scarcely believe his eyes: his fat face took on an expression of amazement and disappointment. "I—I say, this—this isn't m-my story!" he stuttered. (*See this page.*)

"Oh, yes!"

"Does it—does it read better than usual?"

"I think so."

"Lemme see it."

Chunky was amazed. Surely Frank must have recognised by this time that the Christmas story was not his own work! He grabbed the paper from Frank, and blinked at it. Frank and Bob watched him with grinning glances.

Chunky blinked at the page, and his fat face fell. He could scarcely believe his eyes for a minute or two.

"I—I say, this—this isn't my story," he stuttered.

"Your story?" said Frank.

"There—there's some mistake—— What the thunder—— You—you wrote this?"

"Of course I did!" said Frank in mild surprise.

"But—you—but—you—you never wrote it! I—I was watching——" babbled Chunky, utterly confounded. "I—I—I——"

"I wrote it at the Mission, on the night of the dance," said Frank cheerily. "Tom Lawrence took it along to the office for me."

Chunky gasped.

"Then—then—where—where's my story?"

"Your story! What story?"

"Oh—ah—n-n-nothing!" babbled Chunky.

Chunky Todgers finished his breakfast in a dazed state. He was still dazed when, after breakfast, he mounted his fat pony to ride home. Frank and Bob came out to see him off, and Frank Richards pressed a packet into his hand.

"A little Christmas present for you, Chunky," he said. "Don't open it till you get home. Take care of it, though, it's worth thousands of dollars."

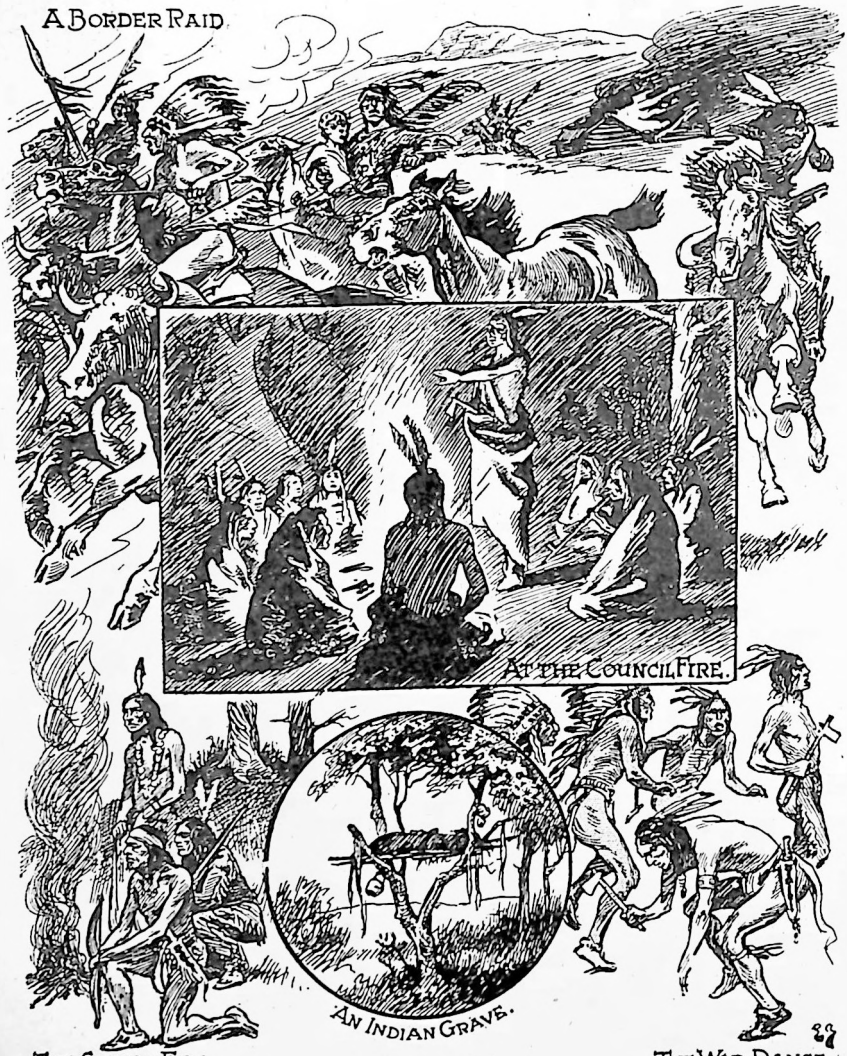
"Ten thousand, at least," said Bob Lawless.

Chunky Todgers rode away, still in a dazed state. Before he was a hundred yards away he had opened that valuable packet. His little round eyes almost started from his head at the sight of his own valuable manuscript. He looked round. Two cheery youths were looking after him from the distance, grinning.

"Merry Christmas!" shouted Frank after him. And Bob Lawless bawled:

"And don't forget to read Frank Richards' Christmas story!"

When the Red Man Roamed the Far West!



Some Famous Atlantic Liners

By G. G. JACKSON

□ □ □

Interesting details of the biggest and most wonderful vessels ever built.

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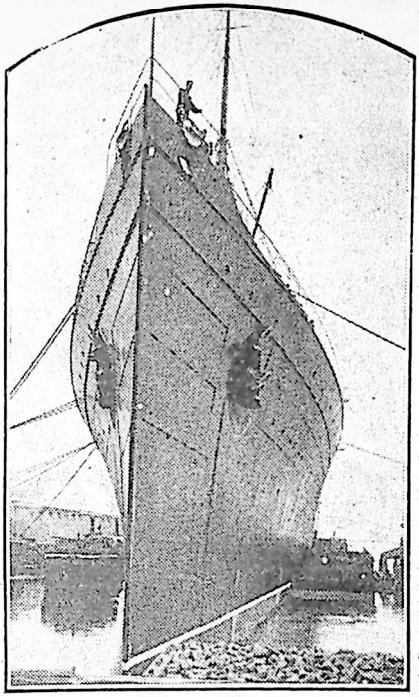


The bows of the "Lusitania." This photograph was taken immediately after the vessel was launched.

ONE of the most famous Atlantic liners of her day, especially at the outset of her service, was the Inman liner, City of Rome. She was unique in two senses; she was the first vessel (always excepting that well-known monster, the Great Eastern) to have more than two funnels, and she was the first ship of any importance to be returned to her builders as not coming up to the speed required. This really fine ship was not long in finding a purchaser, and the rejected of the Inman became the most popular ship of the Anchor fleet.

There is a very curious and interesting story told of the City of Rome. The Anchor line was so proud in the possession of a ship with three raking funnels, combined with a good tonnage and splendidly designed hull, that a picture of the City of Rome was used for their note-paper heading, and also for their passenger tickets. Now the Anchor line has always held a high reputation for emigrant accommodation, and many of the poor people from all parts of Europe seeking a new home across the seas travel via Hull and Glasgow. At the latter port they board the big steamer of the Anchor line which is listed for sailing.

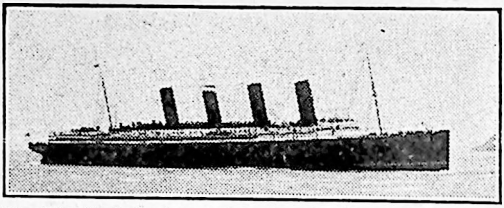
A great crowd of emigrants from the Continent arrived at Glasgow to embark upon an Anchor liner, but when they saw the vessel in mid-stream they refused point-blank to sail upon her. For quite a long time nothing could be done, because the foreigners could not make the steamship people understand what was wrong. Then they pointed to their tickets, and then to the ship. The mystery was made clear.

The poor folk thought they were being imposed upon, because upon their tickets there was a big three-funnelled steamer, whilst the one waiting for them had only one smoke-stack!

It was difficult to explain, but when they really understood that the question of funnels had nothing to do with the steamer's size and safety, they went aboard—still nursing, however, the thought that the wily Scotsmen had been one too many for them!

The Cunard Company did not like the White Star and the Inman playing ducks

and drakes with existing Atlantic records, so they answered the challenge with the equally famous—and bigger and faster—Lucania and Campania. These sisters swept all records by the board, but their reign as "queens of the Atlantic" was comparatively short.



The "Lusitania"; she was torpedoed by a German submarine during the Great War.

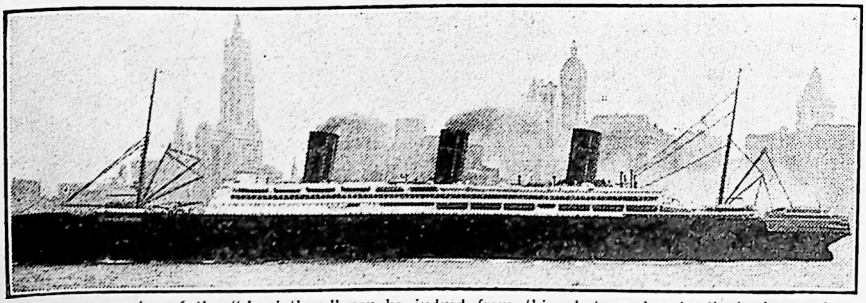
In 1897 the Germans had learned their lesson in shipbuilding, and, to prove it, they brought out the famous Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse, a big four-funnelled boat (the funnels arranged in pairs), and with her the "blue riband of the Atlantic" went to the Fatherland.

Three years later, a rival German company annexed the coveted trophy with the Deutschland, another four-funneller. Then it was rumoured that the White Star was building a second Oceanic which would bring back the title to Britain. The White Star people shook their heads when asked about speed, disclaiming any intention of entering the lists. But the rumour, once started, could not be overtaken, and there were consequently loud expressions of disappointment when it was found that, although the second Oceanic was bigger than the crack German boats, she had nothing like their speed.

What the White Star did, and have done ever since, was to secure a steady-going, splendidly-equipped boat, rather than a racer. Every extra knot is paid for at a big price in the fuel bill, and it is indeed true that many a fine ship has been converted from a paying to a losing proposition by the addition of a knot's speed, the difference in the coal or oil bill converting profit to loss.

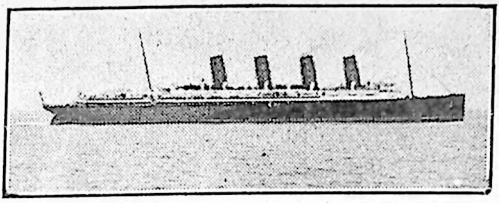
The Cunard were not content to lie low under the German challenge, and the splendid Mauretania and Lusitania, built by money advanced by the Government, brought back the blue riband to Britain; and the Mauretania —"Mary," as she is called for short—has kept that record ever since. True, there have been times when rivals have apparently wrested her record from her, but those who know will tell you it has been achieved by taking the time from different points. In other words, it may have been that another vessel held the record between New York and Cherbourg, but *not* for the fastest trip across the Atlantic from land to land.

After the "Mary" came the sisters Titanic and Olympic of the White Star, the former lost in such tragic circumstances



The enormous size of the "Leviathan" can be judged from this photograph; in the background are the towering skyscrapers and mighty buildings of New York.

on her maiden voyage. Though bigger, these ships were slower than the Cunarders, and the latter company have since built the Aquitania, in size and speed similar to the Olympic.



The "Mauretania"; this wonderful vessel holds the "blue riband" of the Atlantic.

The Aquitania is the largest ship built in Great Britain. The White Star replied with the Britannic, even larger; but she was, unfortunately, a war victim and never sailed as a liner.

The two biggest liners now flying the British flag are German built, the Berengaria, once the Imperator—and, incidentally, the first ship to exceed 50,000 tons—and the Majestic, even bigger, which was known as the Bismarck whilst on the stocks.

The Americans have the third of these monster ex-German ships in the Leviathan, which claims to be the biggest vessel afloat.

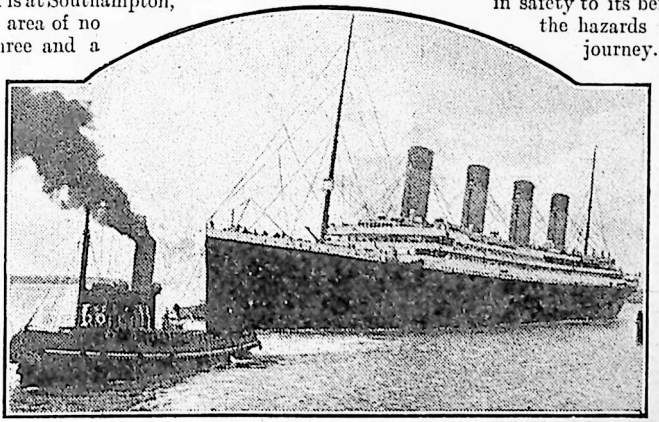
Nowadays the tendency is to build smaller liners of from 15,000 to 25,000 tons, as being more economical in every way.

A point of interest in connection with our biggest liners is the fact that a special floating dock has been built to accommodate them when their giant hulls are in need of repair.

This dock is at Southampton, and has an area of no less than three and a quarter acres. It is the biggest floating dock in the world, and about its first job was to lift the Olympic. If the dock had been completed in time, it might have had the honour of first housing the Majestic, when that magnificent liner was found to have a crack amidships. As it happened, however, the Majestic had to be treated in dry dock at New York.

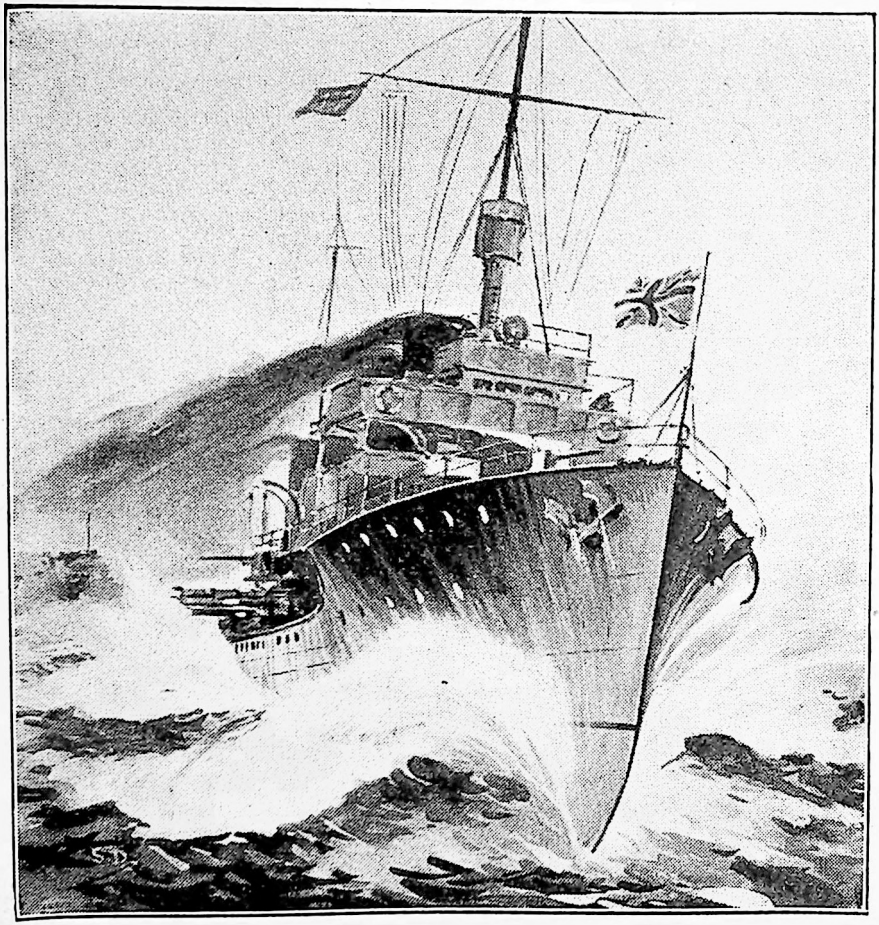
But no dry dock can give the facility of handling that the new floating dock affords. Referring back to its enormous size, there are no less than thirty miles of electric cables employed; about 3,250,000 rivets were used in its construction, involving the drilling of some 7,500,000 holes.

The building of this dock was a wonderful engineering feat, matched only by the marvellous size of the giant liners it is destined to serve. The dock was actually constructed at one of the northern shipyards, and it had to be towed around the coast to Southampton. This, as may be imagined, was no light task, and it roused a great deal of public interest at the time; but the dock was finally brought in safety to its berth, despite the hazards of its long journey.



Here is seen the ill-fated "Titanic"; this magnificent liner struck an iceberg and was sunk on her maiden voyage.

BRITANNIA'S GREYHOUNDS



This striking picture shows a destroyer flotilla-leader at the head of the line, steaming at full speed. These fine vessels are the fastest warships of their kind afloat, and are the pride of the Royal Navy.

The Twins' Twin Twins

A Thrilling Yarn of Motor-Cycle Racing at Brooklands

By ELMER K. ARTER

THE FIRST CHAPTER
On Brooklands Track

SATURDAY morning on the Portsmouth Road. It was too early yet for the famous highway to be crowded with motoring week-enders or those who speed along its polished surface to Brooklands Track. There were a few motor cyclists wending their way to the great racing rendezvous, competitors in the big 200-mile race which was to be held that day, and among these roadfarers were two seventeen-year-old riders on small twin-cylinder machines which were identical in appearance—twin twins in fact, and owned by twins, so it is not difficult to understand why they had come to be known as the "Twins' Twin Twins."

Donald and Ronald Harvey aspired to become famous racing men; their friends knew this and could not understand why they had chosen Exelda machines, which had done nothing worth while in the world of speed. They did not know the twins had invented a supercharging device that would considerably increase the speed of any motor cycle, and that the Exelda happened to be one most suitable for their experiments.

Their father was a motor-cycle agent in the south of London; of late the business had suffered several setbacks, due to an accident to the head of the firm, and to the fact that the twins were not sufficiently experienced in financial matters to carry on during his absence. Due to this the Harveys had lost their most important concession—the Moonstone Agency, which had passed to their greatest rivals. This meant that all orders in the district for the popular machine were lost to them, and few would look at the Exelda which Harvey senior was endeavouring to push.

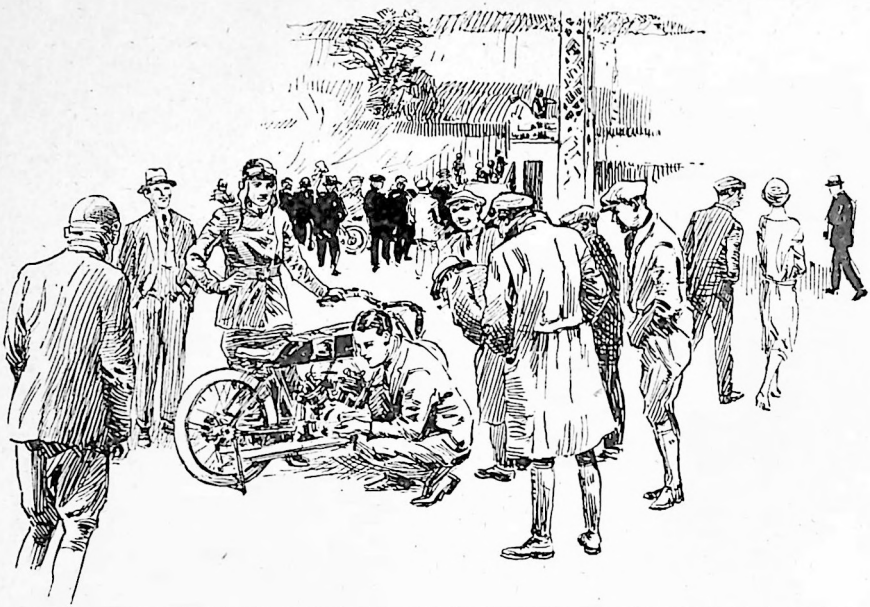
Only that week Mr. Harvey had told his sons that the 200-mile race would about "put the lid on everything." "The Moonstone is bound to win," he had said. "For all your optimism I can't see an Exelda doing anything."

"But if it did, father?" Donald had asked.

"If it won, this business would be saved," replied Mr. Harvey. "If the Moonstone gets it, I reckon we may as well put up the shutters. If you can only get a place, it won't be so bad. But, my dear lads, it is expecting too much; the Exelda is not a racing machine. It's reliable enough, but no one living will make it faster than a Moonstone."

Ronald and Donald exchanged glances. They had not yet told their father about the results they had obtained with their supercharger.

"I should like to see the Moonstone beaten," Mr. Harvey went on, "if only



When the twins arrived in the paddock at Brooklands, other racing men gathered round and examined Magog with interest. (*See this page*)

because of the shabby way they treated me when I was laid up, but if the Success gets it we shall be no better off. A.J.A.S. win might help us a little; we can still get them, and the people over the way can't."

So as the twins sped down to Brooklands they had plenty to occupy their minds. They had only made one supercharger and this was fitted to Donald's machine, which he had re-named Magog. It was Donald who was to ride in the race and, as they cleared Esher, he signalled to his brother to open out—for the satisfaction of proving that his machine was the faster. Except for the supercharger, the twins' twin twins were identical in every respect; in fact Gog, Ronald's mount, had been slightly the faster in normal time. It was when Magog had increased its speed by at least ten miles an hour on an early morning trial run that they realised that their experiments were leading to a useful end.

When the Harveys arrived at Brooklands more than one mechanic smiled. Some of the men, aimlessly wandering about the paddock, were unkind enough to pass disparaging remarks, but the crack racing men knew from experience that there was always a possible winner in an unknown machine. So they examined Magog with interest.

One by one, other entrants for the great race arrived in the paddock, and then with their mechanics wheeled their racing machines down to the depots near the starting line. The majority passed by the twins without a glance, but some just smiled or nudged their companions. It was such a joke for two practically unknown boys to enter a machine like the Exelda, which, it was known, was too slow to win an important race.

Slowly the minutes passed towards the hour of starting. Magog was all ready for the fray, and its rider sat by its side. Members

of the public, press representatives and officials were now taking up their positions in the grandstand, Press box and elevated timekeepers' box, according to the parts they were to play.

"Come along," said Ronald presently, "let's get on the line."

So the twins moved down the track to the starting line, where several of the twenty-six competitors had already taken their places.

"Hallo!" called someone in the grandstand. "There's one of the twins' twin twins. It's Magog! Say, that's the Exelda that won the acceleration test in the Lupton Cup Trial. She's got some pep has that 'bus—the first Exelda to ever have any!" Then, turning to his friend: "There are two of 'em, you know—Gog and Magog, owned by twins named Harvey, those two boys with her. Donald is going to ride."

"Are you nervous?" Ronald was asking anxiously, scanning his brother as he sat motionless on his silent machine.

"I shall be all right when once we start," answered Don. "It's this beastly waiting that upsets one."

A big man, in plus-fours and with a perspiration-flecked face, pushed his way to their side.

"Mr. Harvey?" he asked. "We've never met, but I believe you wrote us—I am Leeson, of the Exelda Company. I am not sure that I like your entering an Exelda in a race like this. It's a bad advertisement for us when—— Well, the Exelda is not a racing machine, and——"

"As I bought my machine in the usual way, I don't see that you have any say in the matter," replied Donald, resenting the tone adopted by the manufacturer of his machine.

"Of course not, but——"

"Besides, I've not entered the Exelda—if you glance at the programme you will see that it is entered as the Magog, so if I make an ass of myself your good name will not suffer."

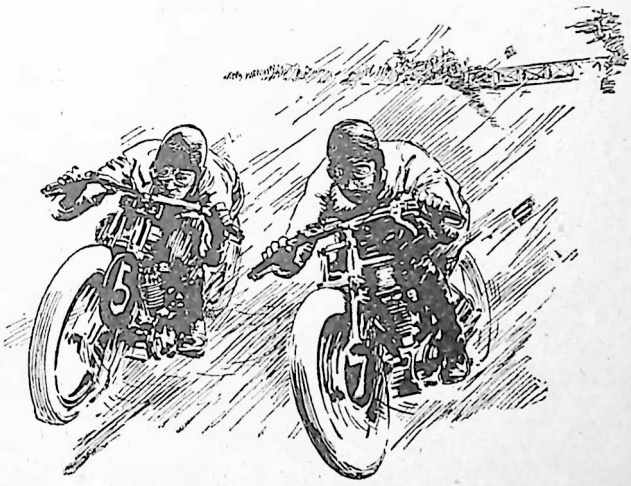
"Ah! That's good——"

"And if I should win—we will discuss that little patent of ours—the thing I wrote you about."

"Stand back, please, Mr. Leeson; you are in the way!" an official shouted.

As the Exelda director went back to his seat in the grandstand, the rest of the competitors were hurrying to the starting-post, and presently twenty-six keen-faced riders had placed the front wheels of twenty-six sleek-looking racing machines on the white line painted across the track.

Donald glanced along the line, and just for a moment suffered a fit of depression. It seemed so hopeless to expect to win against such an array of experienced riders on proved machines. There were sixteen riders on his left and nine on his right; the width of the track at the starting-point did not permit more than a few inches clearance between his elbows and those of his fellow competitors.



Suddenly Don's machine wobbled madly and it took all his strength to regain control. The front tyre had burst!

It seemed suicidal for so many racers to start together, and Donald, for one, decided that in a race which meant encircling the great track seventy-three times, he could afford to allow his immediate neighbours to get away before him, rather than risk a mix-up and a crash on the starting-line.

"Get ready!" roared an official through a megaphone; and instead of gripping the handlebars tighter, as did many of his contemporaries, Donald seemed more interested in the line of checkers in the open-fronted shed, opposite the timekeeper's box. They seemed to remind him of an Aunt Sally shy at a fair. Each checker stood behind a little square box which, later on, would announce the number of laps covered by the competitor for whom he was scoring.

Donald did not hear the timekeeper counting out the seconds to zero, nor see the uplifted flag which was to signal the start. During those last few seconds the mind of Magog's rider went wandering back to the home, where his mother was no doubt wondering why her twin sons had gone off so early.

"Five—four—three—two—go!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER

Donald Shows His Skill

IT was the word "Go!" that brought Donald back to his surroundings. He felt Ronald give Magog a vigorous push from behind. He saw the man on each side of him shoot away, and he wobbled a little in the rear of one of them. He noticed that one man on the extreme left slipped while pushing off, and was wrestling with his machine, which, with engine roaring, was scraping along the concrete on its foot-rest. Then, over on the right, another competitor was running alongside his mount, with an engine which refused to fire.

Donald's engine started at once, but several of the more experienced riders were sweeping up the banked curve under the footbridge—two hundred yards ahead—before he dropped into a racing position and threw open the gas lever.

Immediately Magog responded; in a few seconds the machine was under the bridge, and sweeping round the curve in the wake of the leaders. At last Donald had started on the long trek of 200 miles—seventy-three times round that glaring white track of two-and three-quarter miles circumference.

So speedy were the crack men that they continued to draw away from the rest of the field, and Donald was falling to the rear. Nevertheless, he did not lose his head; he knew that it would be fatal to force Magog beyond its present speed until the engine was properly warmed up.

In a short time he was flashing between the replenishment pits and the checkers' shed at the end of his first circuit. He did not see his brother's white face and straining body at the barrier of his depot; Ronald was wondering what on earth was happening to the fleet little Magog to allow over twenty numbers to get ahead of it.

"Gee! Harvey," exclaimed the mechanic in the next pen, "that Exelda of your brother's can shift some. Where did you get the speed from?"

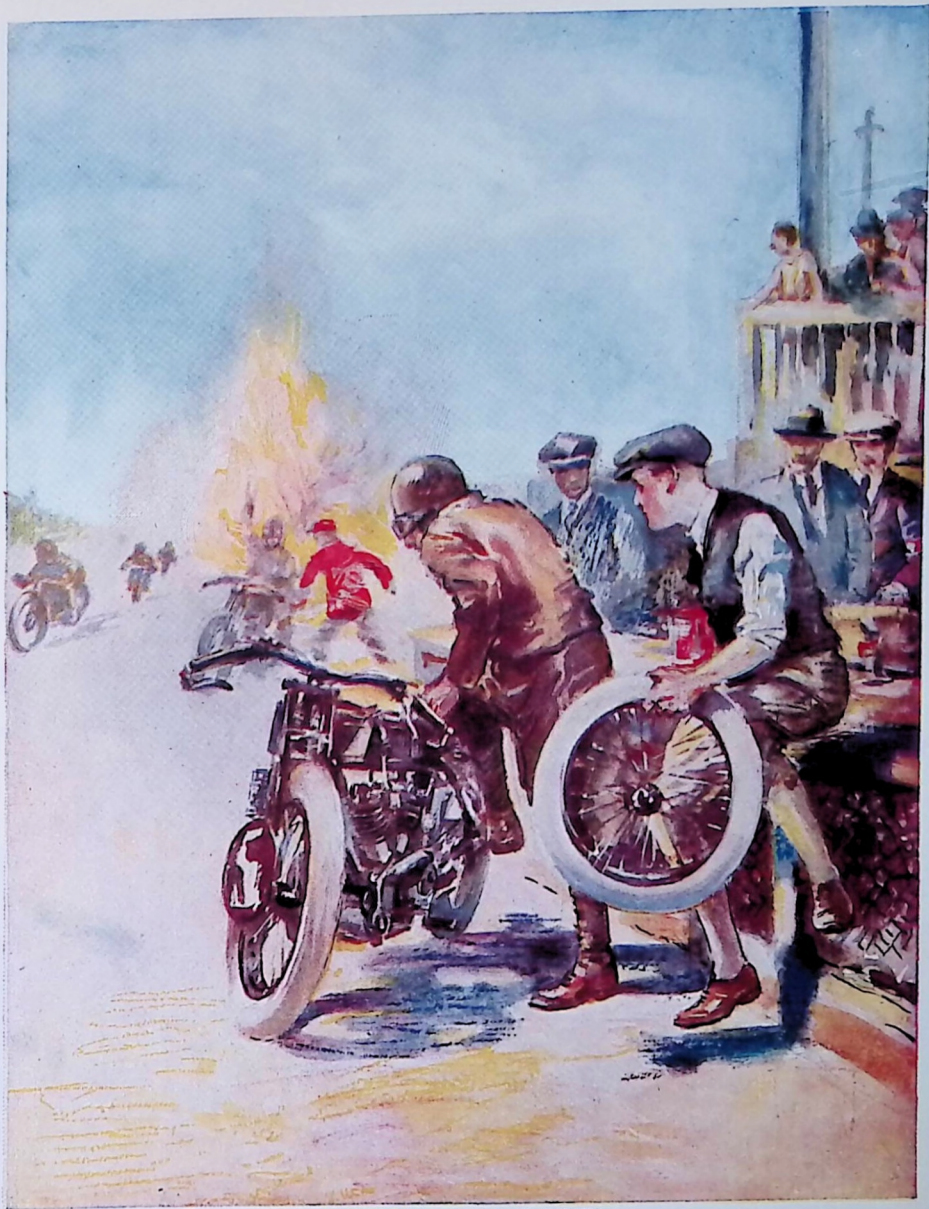
"Our little energiser," replied Ronald, pleased at this tardy acknowledgment.

"That Exelda won't hold up at that speed," said someone behind the pen. "What dope is he using? Dynamite?"

Ronald glanced across at the checkers and numbers, just as two of the leaders flashed by at the end of their second lap. Of course, it was too early to take any notice of the scoring, but Ron knew that it was not uncommon for a number to be slipped, so he meant to keep his eyes open, to see that his brother was credited with his full score.

By means of the indicators, those in the grandstand and pits could see that no fewer than three of the twenty-six riders had failed to complete the first circuit. The early stages of a long-distance race always weeds out the inferior machines, if their riders endeavour to emulate the pace set by the leaders.

By the time the competitors had covered half a dozen laps, four were out with mechanical troubles, and their machines, with wrecked engines and gear-boxes, had been wheeled back to the workshops in the paddock; a fifth bike was at its pit, with its rider and mechanic frantically changing a buckled wheel, and a sixth man was on the far side of the track with a burst tank.



To face page 40

FIGHTING AGAINST TIME!

Quick work at the repair pits in the great 200-miles race at Brooklands

The first six laps had taken a heavy toll: what would seventy-three laps do for the twenty-one who remained?

At the end of ten laps, two more had dropped out, and Donald Harvey was lying eighth—two full laps behind the leader. At fifteen laps he was ninth, and the leader—Lee Clinton on a Moonstone—was still increasing his advantage.

Competitors now began to pull up at their depots for fuel, and Ronald expected his brother to do the same, but he dashed by on the far side of the track and hung on to the rear wheel of Lee Clinton's Moonstone, now three laps to the good.

"Your brother can't last at that pace," panted a rider at the next pit to the white-faced Ronald.

"Lee Clinton is not out to win," ventured a mechanic. "He's just setting the pace to crack up those silly enough to try to keep up with him. One of the other two Moonstones will win this race. Where are they lying now?"

"Fifth and sixth," someone answered.

"Not a twin will finish," prophesied another mechanic. "Three are out. The Exelda leads the rest at the ninth place. Say, Harvey! I should like to bet your brother doesn't reach half distance."

"Don will not only finish," replied Ron quietly, "but he'll finish well up. He hasn't let her out yet. Wait a bit, and you'll see what Magog will do."

Donald did not intend to stop for fuel until the twentieth lap, but at the eighteenth, to Ronald's consternation, he toured in with a flat tyre, shooting past a machine that was in flames just by the grandstand.

Before the Magog had stopped at its pen, Ronald had Gog's rear wheel outside and had leaped over the barrier, tools in hand.

"It will be Gog and Magog, after all," grinned the amateur mechanic, as his brother swung himself off his machine and yanked it on to its stand, while track officials rushed by to extinguish the burning machine a score of yards away.

The time had come for the twins to put into practice the results of their rehearsals at wheel changing, and with clock-like precision Ronald passed the proper tools and lent his aid, with the result that three minutes sufficed to change the wheel.

"I'll fill up now," said Donald, as he tightened the last nut. Ronald vaulted into the pen and handed out the petrol tin, as Don opened his patent filler cap. Up-ending the can, he took from his brother a special tool like a dagger, with which he stabbed the bottom of the can, to admit air to replace the petrol. Almost instantly the fuel was transferred to the tank, and the patent cap was locked with one hand, as Donald slung the empty can into the pen with the other.

To fill up and change a wheel, Donald had taken less than five minutes, but it had cost him more than five miles. He was off again with a roar, just as Lee Clinton ran in for petrol, five laps ahead of him.

To anyone who had not witnessed a 200-mile race, such a disadvantage would have been decidedly discouraging, but Donald had noted that, the last time Lee Clinton passed, his engine had lost some of its sharp bark, denoting that its tune was deteriorating.

A glance at the scoring-board revealed many blanks, showing that the terrific pace was beginning to tell. Although five laps behind the leader, through retirements, Donald was now in the sixth position. One of the Moonstones had come in for good. It was not Lee Clinton he feared—he had guessed that the Moonstone star was out to break the others up and let in one of his team. Probably the crack rider had not reckoned on the possibility of one of his two colleagues going out, too.

Round and round the giant track the sixteen survivors raced, few knowing their positions, but Donald had the satisfaction of passing Lee Clinton, and later lapping him. He now knew for certain that the Moonstone crack had completed his task. The leader at the fortieth lap was an unknown rider, named Smith, mounted on a Success. The second man was the record-breaker Shortman, on a J.A.S., then came Cortland, on Moonstone III., and Hepwood on a Sioux, with Harvey less than half a lap behind. But Donald was thinking of those immediately behind him—two more J.A.S. riders and a well-known long-distance racer on an Azana.

Magog was going better than ever, with a good reserve of power for the concluding stages. At the fiftieth lap he was third, with only Moonstone III. and the J.A.S. ahead of him. But the Fates had decided not to let him have a straight run. On the fifty-second lap he got into a wobble, which nearly unseated him: a rider whom he had just overtaken had to make a wide swerve to avoid him. Donald knew that the tyre of his front wheel had burst, and he pottered round the rest of the track and pulled in to his depot.

So Gog's front wheel quickly took the place of Magog's, and the machine was, in truth, half-and-half—the twins' twin twins embodied in one sleek racer, fit to win the great race, in spite of the fact that there were twenty-one more laps still to be covered, and that there were several good machines in front.

The spectators now began to get excited, and the bookmakers were revising the odds they were offering.

The positions of the leading machines at the fifty-sixth lap were:

1. Smith (Success).
2. Shortman (J.A.S.).
3. Cortland (Moonstone).
4. Hepwood (Sioux).
5. Elton (J.A.S.).
6. Maze (Azana).
7. Phillip (J.A.S.).
8. Harvey (Magog).
9. Little (Great Auk).
10. Winton (Fallow).

THE THIRD CHAPTER
All Out!

SEVENTEEN laps to go!

Ronald was almost in tears at the delay caused by the burst tyre, but his brother was off again with a roar.

"By Jove!" exclaimed the mechanic in the pen next to Ronald, "that Exelda can shift. It's improving every lap."

In two minutes Donald was round again, hot on the heels of the Azana, which was a lap ahead; before they were out of sight, those in the grandstand saw the Exelda catch and pass the other.

"Harvey's going ahead," someone shouted excitedly, and stop-watch experts began to "clock" him.

The next time round he passed the J.A.S., and was visibly reducing the gap between him and the Sioux.

"He's lapping at eighty!" cried the man with the stop-watch, and the mechanics were leaning out of the pits like figures in a Punch-and-Judy show.

All eyes were now on the Exelda and the crouching brown figure that seemed to be part of it.

"He'll never catch Cortland," prophesied an expert. "He's got the speed, but he's left it too late."

Out on the glaring track Donald rode his hardest—yet with restraint. He was riding with his head; he knew the limits of his engine, and went the limit, but not a fraction beyond. Lapping at over eighty miles an hour, he exceeded this speed as he swept off the banking, his engine screaming, so that the reports of his exhaust—nearly four thousand a minute—became a continuous note.

One by one he caught the men ahead of him and passed them until, with six laps to go, only Smith on the Success and Cortland remained in front. The Moonstone manager at the pits hastily rigged his signalling board to show the leader his position. He thought Cortland was not aware that the Exelda was creeping up, but the crack's expression, when he again passed the pits, told the pit mechanics that his engine was losing tune. He was all out past the grand stand when Harvey hurtled by and got ahead.

Donald was still a lap behind, with four laps to go. To win he had to cover eleven miles in better time than Cortland and Smith could do in a little over eight.

It was all out now! He could not longer spare Magog's engine or his invention. So far he had not had the supercharger in full operation. His only chance to win was to turn it on and leave it on, and trust in Providence that it held up for four laps.

As he mounted the banking under the members' bridge, he pressed the supercharger lever along its quadrant, and the Magog leapt forward with startling increase of speed,

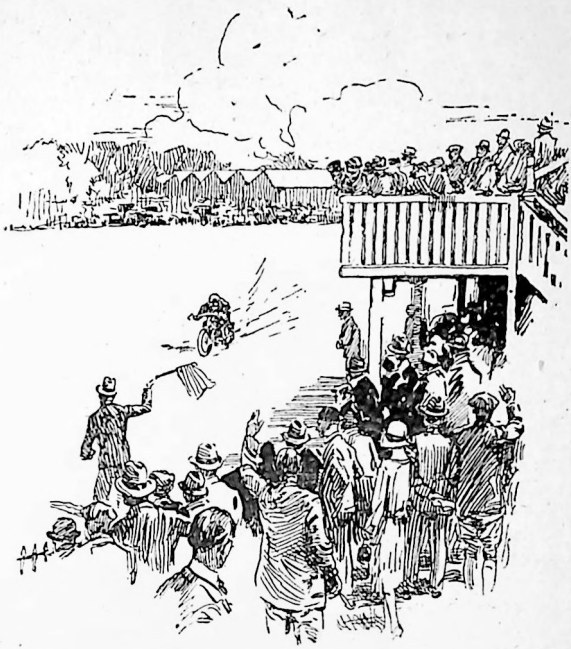
so that Harvey found himself riding perilously near the top of the banking.

He swept on to the railway straight like a bullet from a gun. Smith, streaking along at the top of the Success's speed, and thinking that the race was as good as won, saw the Exelda shoot ahead as if the race had just begun, and they had not yet got into their stride.

Harvey's heart seemed to stand still. He had never had the Magog all out before, and inside twenty seconds he discovered that steering was far from ideal at speeds over ninety miles an hour. For seventy laps Magog had steered without effort, but now it required all his strength to control the screaming machine, and he found it necessary to hold on like grim death, lest the machine got out of hand.

A long-drawn-out "Oh!" escaped the crowd as Harvey swept by at nearly a hundred miles an hour.

"Gee!" was all Ronald's contemporaries could say.



An official slipped out on to the concrete, and the winners' flag slashed the air as Don swept over the line. (*See page* 44.)

"Did you ever see an Exelda go like that!" hoarsely whispered someone near the Exelda's manager, to his discomfort.

"Harvey's done miracles," said another. "He's made an Exelda go—the one I had used to break at the steering head—as rotten as a carrot! The Exelda people can't make a motor-bike; they ought to employ Harvey as designer——"

"Cortland's finished," yelled a marshal, whose duty it was to patrol the track in case of accidents. "He's over by the aeroplane sheds with a crocked engine!"

Smith swept by, now only half a lap ahead of the Exelda, but still going well.

By this time all the spectators were on their feet, craning their necks to peer along the broad white track. Harvey went past faster than ever, and someone started to cheer.

It seemed less than a minute before a roar went up, when it was seen that the Exelda was only a few yards behind the Success.

If the two men had staged the race for a spectacular finish, they could not have done better.

Right opposite the grandstand the two hurtled by side by side, and then Harvey slowly but surely crept ahead on his last lap.

The crowd could scarcely contain itself. No one troubled to ascertain the position of the other riders, who continued to pass at more or less regular intervals. They saw—and Ronald saw—an official step out on to the

concrete, unrolling the winner's flag. And he did not have long to wait for Harvey to be sighted, well ahead of the Success.

The cheer that went up as the Magog and its rider swept over the line was such as had never before been heard at Brooklands, and the gatekeepers had difficulty in keeping the crowd on the right side of the fence.

Harvey went on. He had passed the pits too fast to pull up, and it is against the rules to ride on the track in the reverse direction, so he slowed down to fifty and toured round, a little bewildered by his success; unable to think clearly, or to realise that the race was over; and that Gog and Magog, embodied in one machine, had won the great race.

Renewed cheering greeted him as he toured past the grandstand, and pulled up at his pit. He looked around in a dazed manner when a dozen or so enthusiasts pulled him off his machine, and hoisted him shoulder high for the benefit of the press photographers.

"Where's my brother?" he asked huskily. "He's won this race as much as I have, and——"

The rest of his sentence was lost in the cries of the excited crowd.

. . . . .

Half an hour later, a tumbler in one hand, and a sandwich in the other, Donald sat behind the pits, Ronald standing at his side.

"Those are my terms, Mr. Leeson," said Donald. "We want twenty shillings royalty on each machine fitted with the supercharger—and a hundred pounds, to-day, for the option. If you have not your cheque-book with you, it will do on Monday."

"Fortunately I have my cheque-book, Harvey," replied the delighted Exelda manager. "You shall have the hundred for the option!"

And with Donald's broad back as a support, Mr. Leeson wrote out the cheque, while twenty miles away, on the strength of a telephone message from the track, Mr. Harvey was already booking an order for an Exelda, the turn of the tide in his affairs and the real foundation stone of the present success of the big business the Harveys are building up as a result of the Twins' Twin Twins.

THE END

A SPEED CHAMPION

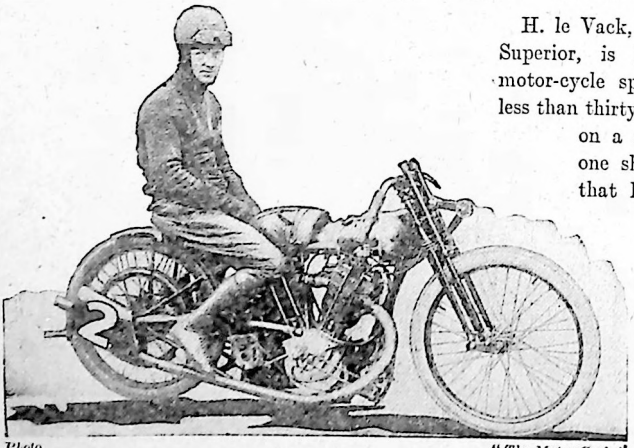


Photo "The Motor Cycle."

H. le Vack, here seen on a Brough Superior, is Britain's most famous motor-cycle speedman; he holds no less than thirty world's records. It was on a machine similar to the one shown in the photograph that he covered a measured mile on the Arpajon Course, in France, at 118·93 miles an hour; this was on 6th July, 1924, and constituted a world's record for motor-cycle speed.

The Song of the Birch!

By Dick Penfold

(With apologies to Tom Hood)

With a quivering, shivering frame,
With an apprehensive frown,
A schoolboy swung on the porter's back
While the dreaded birch came down.
Swish! Swish! Swish!
He swayed on his painful perch.
And still, in a wild and wailing voice,
He sang the Song of the Birch!

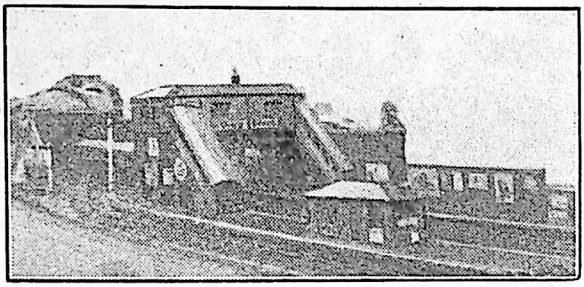
Big Hall was packed with boys,
And they winced at every whack;
Whilst the yells re-echoed round,
And the rafters flung them back.
Swish! Swish! Swish!
And the porter gave a lurch;
While the victim's voice rang loud and shrill—
He sang the Song of the Birch!

The Head was on his throne,
On the platform of his power;
And the strokes fell thick and fast
Like the first of a thunder-shower.
Swish! Swish! Swish!
(For the tender spots he'll search).
And the victim showed that the spots were found!
He sang the Song of the Birch!

"Your punishment," panted the Head,
"Shall be ample and severe!
In future, my boy, I trust
That a straighter course you'll steer!"
Swish! Swish! Swish!
"Your name you should never besmirch!"
And the victim's song grew shriller still—
He sang the Song of the Birch!

The scene was over at last,
And the birch was laid aside;
"The school will now dismiss!"
The Head, quite breathless, cried.
"Ow! Yow! Groo!"
Yelled the victim, quitting his perch.
And still, in a voice like an Indian's yell,
He sang the Song of the Birch!

PLANNING A MODEL RAILWAY



This photograph shows a station, passenger foot-bridge and tunnel on a model line.

THERE is probably no more fascinating and all-absorbing hobby than that of building and running a model railway; when an ordinary amount of intelligence is brought to bear on the subject, it also becomes really instructive and it is surprising how much very useful knowledge one accumulates regarding the various things which go to the making up of a complete system.

Generally speaking, there are two ways of becoming possessed of a model railway; one is by purchasing the various items from the model shops, the other is by making the greater part of them oneself.

Anyone with a long purse can buy the necessary accessories and pay for the whole thing to be fitted up and set to work for them, but there is a great deal more pleasure to be derived—and it is considerably more instructive—to make everything oneself. Of course, it requires a very much smaller outlay, an important consideration to many.

The would-be model railway engineer should set to work with the determination to make everything with his own fingers—as far as possible. What he can compass in this direction, apart from personal skill, will depend to a certain extent on what is available in the way of a workshop and tools. For instance, it would not be possible to make the wheels for the wagons and coaches without the use of a lathe, neither could one make all the parts and build a locomotive without one.

There are, however, a great many things that can be made quite well with very few tools indeed—bridges, buildings, wagons, signals, and so forth, not to mention the all-important part of laying down the track with its various accessories.

There are two distinct kinds of model railways: the portable one, which is usually laid on the floor of a room or on the ground when in use, and taken up and packed away again when finished with, and the permanently fixed one, which is undoubtedly the better of the two.

The subject of permanently fixed model railways is a very big one indeed, and can only be lightly touched upon here. There is, for instance, a considerable difference between the indoor and outdoor ones. The outdoor system entails a good deal more work, and requires special treatment and care to protect it from the weather. Unless the model is built on a fairly large scale—say, three-quarters of an inch to the foot, certainly nothing less—it is necessary to have it raised above the level of the ground, on a shelf or platform supported on posts, or some similar arrangement; experience having proved that it is perfectly hopeless to lay a small scale one on the ground. The difficulty lies not in actually laying it down and fixing the various

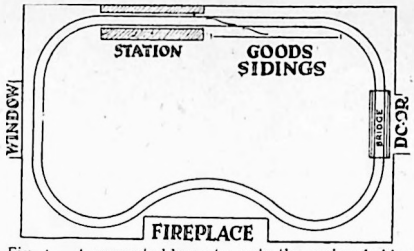


Fig. 1. A suggested layout; note the swing bridge in front of the door.

parts—although this is quite bad enough—but in keeping the whole thing in order afterwards; repairs and adjustments are continuous, and the line depreciates at a most alarming pace.

There is a good deal to be said in favour of the indoor railway. The weather has no effect, one can work on it at any time, and it is usually during the long winter evenings that one puts in most time on it. But the indoor railway engineer is in most instances up against one overwhelming difficulty—want of space. When this is the case, it is necessary to adopt a small-gauge system. The smallest standard size—as most readers are probably aware—is known as 0 gauge, and is one and a quarter inches between the rails, the scale being seven millimetres to the foot.

We will suppose you have your room or other accommodation in which to set up the model. And now a word of advice: Don't be too ambitious. In other words, be content to start with quite a simple plan, say a double track of rails round the room, fitted with one station.

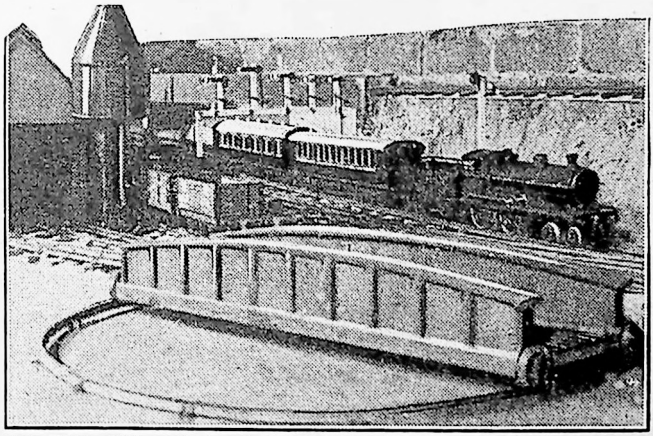
Even this very simple arrangement, if carried out properly, will take many months of spare time to complete.

The amount of detail there is in connection with one small railway station is astonishing, and will give the average enthusiast plenty of pleasant occupation.

Obviously, one cannot suggest any plan which would be suitable for all shapes of rooms or to comply with everyone's ideal of what a model railway layout should be, but that shown in Fig. 1 is recommended as a start. It is simple, but can be added to at any time, and elaborated to almost any extent, provided there is sufficient space.

A shelf, or platform, all round the room will be necessary. The height of this above the floor must be left to individual taste, but about three feet will probably be most convenient. This structure should be made of boards not less than three-quarters of an inch thick, anything thinner not being sufficiently rigid.

The boards are nailed on to a light framework, the whole being partly supported on legs and partly fixed to the walls, or entirely supported on legs; the latter is perhaps the best system to adopt if there is any likelihood of the whole arrangement having to be moved at any time.


A turntable will be noticed in the foreground of this photograph, which is a part of a model of Euston terminus.

Perfectly dry wood should be chosen, otherwise it will warp and gape badly at all the joints, as well as upsetting the rail levels and causing the points and other working parts to get out of order. The wood for the legs and cross supports, upon which the boards are to be nailed down, should be about two inches square.

In order to give access to the room it will be necessary to leave a gap in this structure at the doorway, and here is an opportunity for putting up a portable bridge.

Don't forget to provide a bolt inside the door, which must always be kept fastened when the bridge is in position. Otherwise, it is pretty certain that, sooner or later, someone will suddenly open the door from outside, with most disastrous results—your bridge will be sent flying across the room, quite possibly at the very moment your pet Pullman express is crossing.

When this shelf—which is really the ground upon which the railway is to be laid—has been fixed up, it will be advisable to examine it carefully in order to make sure that the whole top is properly fixed down, and that there are no springy places anywhere. Should any be discovered, the particular spot must be strengthened up by screwing one or more pieces of wood on to the underside.

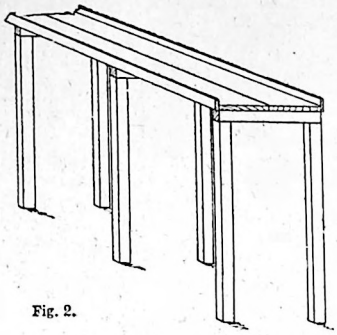


Fig. 2.

This sketch shows a section of the shelf upon which it is suggested the model railway should be laid.

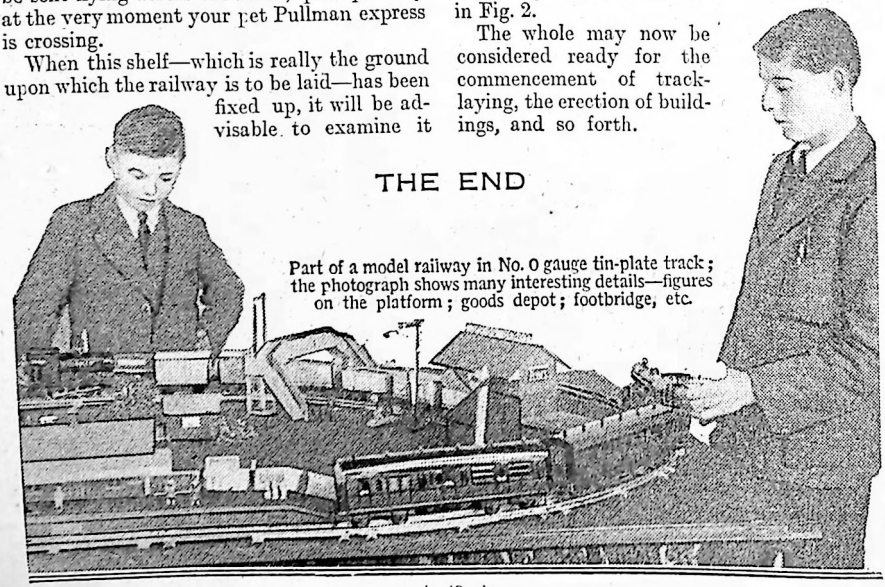
While on the subject of rigidity, it may be as well to say that the cross-bearers should be spaced about twelve to fifteen inches apart, not more, and every alternate one should be supported by a leg.

A light lath, about one and a half to two inches deep and three-eighths of an inch thick should be nailed all round the edge of the shelf, so that it stands up about one inch above the surface. This is in order to prevent the ballast from falling off.

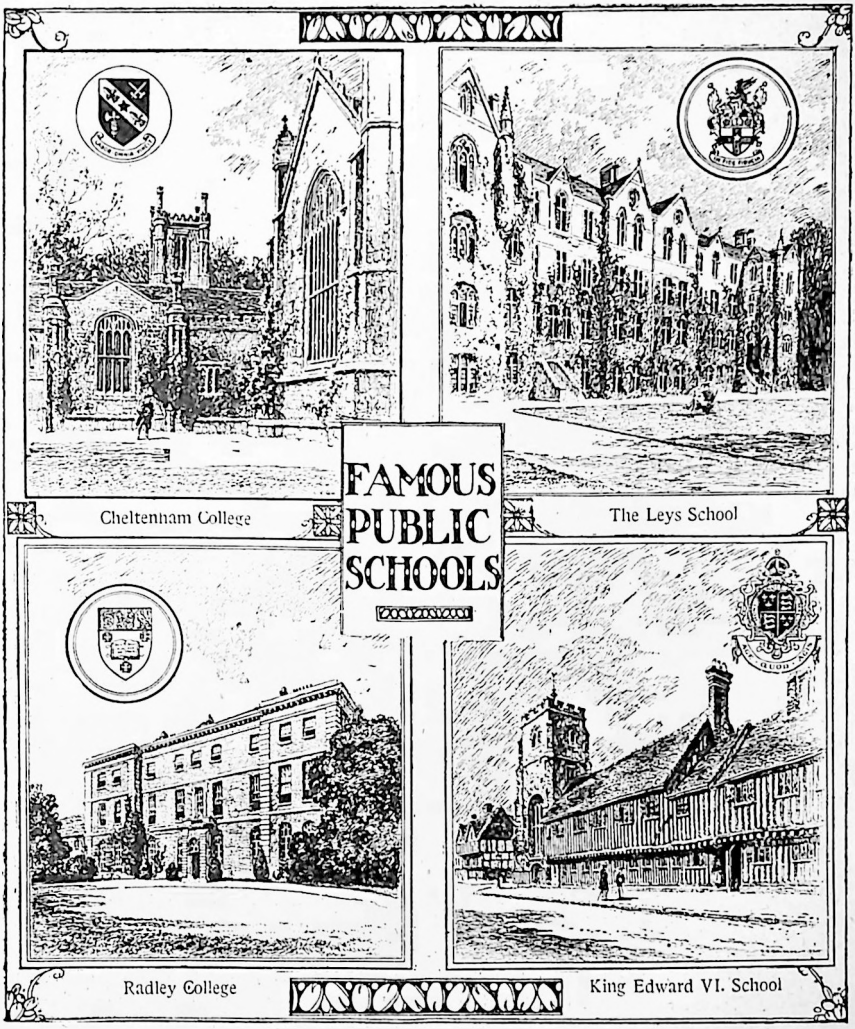
A rough idea of this structure is shown in Fig. 2.

The whole may now be considered ready for the commencement of track-laying, the erection of buildings, and so forth.

THE END



Part of a model railway in No. 0 gauge tin-plate track; the photograph shows many interesting details—figures on the platform; goods depot; footbridge, etc.


FAMOUS
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS
Cheltenham College
The Leys School
Radley College
King Edward VI. School

A Splendid School Story by a World-Famous Author

Out of Bounds!

By P. G. WODEHOUSE

Charteris is a born schemer, and he manages to surprise quite a number of people

THE FIRST CHAPTER
Charteris is Warned

"MIGHT I observe, sir——"

"You may observe," said the referee kindly, "whatever you like. Twenty-five."

"The rules say——"

"I have given my decision. Twenty-*five!*"

A spot of red appeared on the official cheek. The referee, who had been heckled steadily since the kick-off, was beginning to be annoyed.

"The ball went be'ind without bouncing, and the rules say——"

"Twenty-*five!*" shouted the referee. "I know what the rules say quite well."

And he blew his whistle with an air of finality. The secretary of the Bargees' F.C. subsided reluctantly, and the game was restarted.

The Bargees' match was a curious institution. Their real name was the Old Crockfordians. When, a few years before, the St. Austin's secretary had received a challenge from them—dated from Stapleton, where their secretary happened to reside—he had argued within himself as follows:

"This sounds all right. Old Crockfordians? Never heard of Crockford. Probably some large private school somewhere. Anyhow, they're certain to be decent fellows."

And he arranged the fixture. It then transpired that Old Crockford was a village, and, to judge from their appearance on the day of battle, their football team seemed to have been recruited exclusively from the riff-raff of the same. They wore green shirts with a bright yellow leopard over the heart, and O.C.F.C. woven in large letters about the chest. One or two of the outsides played in caps, and the team to a man criticised the referee's decisions with point and pungency.

Unluckily, the first year of the fixture saw a weak team of Austinians rather badly beaten, with the result that it became a point of honour to wipe this off the slate before the match could be cut out of the card. The next year was also unlucky. The Bargees managed to score a penalty goal in the first half, and won on that. In the following season the match resulted in a draw, and by that time the thing had become an annual event.

Now, however, the school was getting some of its own back. The Bargees had brought down a centre-threequarter of some reputation from the North, who happened to be staying in the village at the time of the match, and were as strong in the scrum as ever. But St. Austin's had a great team, and were carrying all before them. Charteris and Graham, at half, had the ball out of their

centres in a way that made Merevale, who looked after the football of the school, feel that life was worth living; and when once it was out things happened rapidly.

MacArthur, the captain of the school fifteen, with Thomson as his fellow-centre, and Welch and Bannister on the wings, did what they liked with the Bargees' three-quarters. All the school outsides had scored; even the back, who dropped a goal from near the half-way line. The player from the North had scarcely touched the ball during the whole game, and altogether the Bargees were becoming restless and excited. The kick-off from the twenty-five line, which followed upon the small discussion alluded to above, reached Graham. Under ordinary circumstances he would have kicked, but in a winning game original methods often pay. He dodged a furious sportsman in green and yellow, and went away down the touch-line. He was almost through, when he stumbled. He recovered himself, but too late. Before he could pass, someone was on him. Graham was not particularly heavy, and his opponent was muscular. He was swung off his feet, and the next moment the two came down together, Graham underneath. A sharp pain shot through his shoulder. A doctor emerged from the crowd—there is always a doctor in every crowd—and made an examination.

"Anything bad?" inquired the referee.

"Collar-bone," said the doctor. "Rather badly smashed. Be all right in a month or two. Stop his playing. Rather a pity. Much longer before half-time?"

"I was just going to blow the whistle when this happened."

Graham was carried off, and the referee blew his whistle for half-time.

"I say, Charteris," said MacArthur, "who on earth am I to put half instead of Tony?"

"Swift used to play half in his childhood, I believe. I should try him. But, I say, did you ever see such a scrag? Can't you protest, or something?"

"My dear chap, how can I? It's on our own ground. These people are visitors, if you come to think of it. I'd like to wring the chap's neck, though, who did it. I didn't spot who it was. Did you see?"

"Yes; it was their secretary. That man with the moustache. I'll get Prescott to mark him this half."

Prescott was the hardest tackler in the school, with the single exception of MacArthur. He accepted the commission cheerfully, and promised to do his best by the moustached one. Charteris certainly gave him every opportunity. When he threw the ball out of touch, he threw it to the criminal with the moustache, and Prescott, who stuck to him like glue, had generally tackled him before he knew what had happened. After a time he began to grow thoughtful, and whenever there was a line-out went and stood among the threequarters. In this way much of Charteris' righteous retribution miscarried, but once or twice he had the pleasure and privilege of putting in a piece of tackling on his own account. The match ended with the enemy still intact, but considerably shaken. He was also much annoyed. He spoke to

"Might I observe, sir——" "You may observe," said the referee kindly, "whatever you like. I have given my decision. Twenty-*five*!" (*See page* 50.)

Charteris on the subject as they were leaving the field.

"I was watching you," he said.

"That must have been nice for you," said Charteris.

"You wait!"

"Certainly. Any time you're passing, I'm sure——"

"You ain't 'eard the last of me yet!"

"That's something of a blow," said Charteris cheerfully, and they parted.

Charteris, having got into his blazer, ran after Welch and MacArthur, and walked back with them to the house. They were all three at Merevale's.

"Poor old Tony!" said MacArthur. "Where have they taken him to—the house?"

"Yes," said Welch. "I say, Babe, you ought to scratch this match next year. Tell them the card's full up, or something."

"Oh, I don't know! Do you think so? One expects pretty rough play in this sort of game. After all, we tackle pretty hard ourselves. I know I always go my hardest. If the man happens to be brittle, that's his look-out," concluded the bloodthirsty Babe.

"My dear man," said Charteris impatiently, "there's all the difference between an ordinary hard tackle and a beastly scrag like the one that doubled Tony up. You can't break a chap's collar-bone without jolly well trying to."

"Well, when you come to think of it, the man had some excuse for being rather sick. You can't expect a fellow to be in an angelic temper when his side's being beaten by about forty points."

The Babe was one of those thoroughly excellent individuals who always try, when possible, to make allowances for everybody.

"Well, dash it," said Charteris indignantly, "if he had lost his hair, he might have drawn the line at falling on Tony like that. It wasn't the actual tackling that crocked him. The brute simply jumped on him like a hooligan. Anyhow, I made him sit up a bit before I finished. I gave Prescott the tip to mark him out of touch. Have you ever been collared by Prescott? It's a liberal education. Now, there you are, you see. Prescott weighs thirteen-ten, and he's all

Graham was swung off his feet by his muscular opponent and both fell heavily—Graham underneath. A sharp pain shot through his shoulder as his collar-bone broke under the impact.

(*See page* 51)

muscle, and he goes like a battering-ram. You'll own that. He goes as hard as he jolly well knows how, and yet the worst that he ever does to a man is to lay him out for a couple of minutes while he gets his wind back. He's never crocked a man seriously in his life. Well, compare him with this Bargee man. The Bargee isn't nearly so strong, and he weighs about a stone less, I should say, and yet he smashes Tony's collar-bone. It's all very well, Babe, but you can't get away from it. Prescott tackles fairly, and the Bargee scrags."

"Yes," said MacArthur, "I suppose you're right."

"Rather," said Charteris, "I wish I'd slain him."

"By the way," said Welch, "you were talking to him after the match. What was he saying?"

Charteris laughed.

"By Jove, I'd forgotten. He said I hadn't heard the last of him, and that I was to wait."

"What did you say?"

"Oh, I behaved beautifully. I asked him to be sure and look in any time that he was passing, and after a few chatty remarks we parted."

"I wonder if he meant anything."

"I believe he means to waylay me with a buckled belt. I shan't stir out except with the Old Man or some other competent body-guard. 'Orrible outrage. Shocking death of a Sint Orsting's schoolboy!' It would look rather well on the posters."

Welch stuck strenuously to his point.

"No, but look here, Charteris," he said seriously, "I'm not joking. You see, the man lives in Stapleton, and if he knows anything of school rules——"

"Which he probably doesn't. Why should he?"

"If he knows anything of school rules, he'll know that Stapleton is out of bounds, and he may book you there, and report you."

"Yes," said MacArthur; "I tell you what, Alderman, you'd better knock off a few of your Stapleton expeditions. You know you wouldn't go there once a month if it wasn't out of bounds. You'll be a prefect next term. I should wait till then, if I were you."

"You ain't 'eard the last of me yet!" threatened the Bargee, and Charteris grinned cheerfully as he walked on. (*See page* 52.)

"My dear chap, what does it matter? The worst that can happen to you for breaking bounds is a couple of hundred lines, and I've got a capital of four hundred already in stock. Besides, things would be so slow if you always kept in bounds. I always feel like a cross between Dick Turpin and Machiavelli when I go to Stapleton. It's an awfully jolly feeling. Like warm treacle running down your back. It's cheap at two hundred lines."

"You're an awful fool," said Welch, rudely but correctly.

Welch was a youth who treated the affairs of other people rather too seriously. He worried over them. This is not a particularly common trait in either boy or man, but Welch had it highly developed. He could not probably have explained exactly why he was worried, but he undoubtedly was. Welch had a very grave and serious mind. He shared a study with Charteris—for Charteris, though not yet a school prefect, was part-owner of a study—and close observation had convinced him that the latter was not responsible for his actions, and that he wanted somebody to look after

him. He had, therefore, elected himself to the post of a species of modified and unofficial guardian angel to him. The duties were heavy, and the remuneration particularly light.

"Really, you know," said MacArthur, "I don't see what the point of all your lunacy is. I don't know if you're aware of it, but the Old Man's getting jolly sick with you."

"I didn't know," said Charteris, "but I'm very glad to hear it. For hist! I have a ger-rudge against the person. He sat upon me—publicly, and the resulting blot on my escutcheon can only be wiped out with gore—or broken rules."

To listen to Charteris on the subject, one might have thought that he considered the matter rather amusing than otherwise. This, however, was simply due to the fact that he treated everything flippantly in conversation. But, like the parrot, he thought the more. The actual *casus belli* had been trivial. At least, the mere spectator would have considered it trivial. But Charteris, though he would have considered it an insult if anybody had told him so, was sensitive. The affair had happened after this fashion. Charteris was a member of the school corps. The orderly-room of the school corps was in the junior part of the school buildings. Charteris had been to replace his rifle in that shrine of Mars after a midday drill, and on coming out into the passage had found himself in the middle of a junior school rag of the conventional type. Somebody's cap had fallen off, and two hastily picked teams were playing football with it (Association Rules). Now, Charteris was not a prefect. (That, by the way, was another source of bitterness in him towards the Powers, for he was well up in the Sixth, and the others of his set, Welch, Thomson, the Babe, and Tony Graham, who were also in the Sixth—the two last below him in form order—had already received their prefect's caps.) Not being a prefect, it would have been officious in him to have stopped the game. So he was passing on with what Mr. Hurry Bungsho Jabberjee, B.A., would have termed a beaming simper of indescribable suavity, when a member of one of the opposing teams, in effecting a G. O. Smithian dribble, cannoned into him. To preserve his balance, he grabbed at the disciple of Smith amidst applause, and at the precise moment that he did so, a new actor appeared upon the scene—the headmaster. Now, of all things that lay in his province, the headmaster most disliked to see a senior "ragging" with a junior. He had a great idea of the dignity of the senior school, and did all that in him lay to see that it was kept up. The greater the number of the juniors with whom the senior was discovered ragging, the more heinous the offence. Circumstantial evidence was dead against Charteris. To all outward appearances he was one of the players in the impromptu football match. The soft and fascinating beams of the simper, to quote Mr. Jabberjee once more, had not yet faded from his face. In fact, there he was—caught in the act.

A well-chosen word or two in the headmagisterial bass put a premature end to the football match, and Charteris was proceeding on his way, when the headmaster called him. He stopped. The headmaster was angry. So angry, indeed, that he did what, in a more lucid interval, he would not have done. He hauled a senior over the coals in the hearing of a number of juniors, one of whom (unidentified) giggled feebly. As Charteris had on previous occasions observed, the Old Man, when he did start to talk to anyone, didn't leave out much. The address was not long, but it covered a good deal of ground. The section of it which chiefly rankled in Charteris' mind, and which had continued to rankle ever since, was that in which the use of the word "buffoon" had occurred. Everybody who has a gift of humour and who (very naturally) enjoys exercising it, hates to be called a "buffoon." It was Charteris' one weak spot. Every other abusive epithet in the language slid off without penetrating or causing him the least discomfort. The word "buffoon" went home, right up to the hilt. And, to borrow from Mr. Jabberjee for positively the last time, he had said to himself: "Henceforward I will perpetrate heaps of the lowest dregs of vice." He had, in fact, started upon a perfect bout of breaking rules simply because they were rules.

The injustice of the thing rankled. No one so dislikes being punished unjustly as the person who might have been punished justly on scores of previous occasions, if he had only been found out. To a certain extent Charteris ran amok. He broke bounds and did little work, and—he was beginning to find this out gradually—got thoroughly tired of it all. Offended dignity, however, still kept him at it, and, much as he would have preferred to have resumed a less feverish type of existence, he did not do so.

"I have a gerrudge against the man," he said.

"You *are* an idiot, really," said Welch.

"Welch," said Charteris, by way of explanation to the Babe, "is a lad of coarse fibre. He doesn't understand the finer feelings a bit. He can't see that I'm doing this simply for the Old Man's good. Spare the rod, spile the choild. Let's go and have a look at Tony, when we've changed. He'll be in the sick-room if he's anywhere."

In the midst of the scrimmage the Head appeared. He stood glowering angrily at Charteris. (*See page* 54.)

"All right," said the Babe, as he went into his study. "Buck up. I'll toss you for first bath. Heads! Heads it is. Good."

Charteris walked on with Welch to their sanctum.

"You know," said Welch seriously, stooping to unlace his boots, "rotting apart, you really are a most awful ass. I wish I could get you to see it."

"Never you mind," replied Charteris. "I'm all right. I'll look after myself."

THE SECOND CHAPTER

Charteris Scores

It was about a week after the Bargees' match that the rules respecting bounds were made stricter, much to the popular indignation. The penalty for visiting Stapleton without leave was increased from two hundred lines to two extra lessons. The venomous characteristic of extra lesson was that it cut into one's football, for the criminal was turned into a form-room from two till four on half-holidays, and so had to scratch all athletic engagements for those days, unless he chose to go for a run afterwards, which he generally did not. In the cricket term the effect was not so deadly. It was just possible that you might get an innings somewhere after four o'clock, even if only at the nets. But during the football season—it was now February—to be in extra lesson meant a total loss of everything that makes life endurable, and the school protested (to one another in undertones) with no uncertain voice against this barbarous innovation.

The reason for the change had been simple. At the corner of Stapleton High Street was a tobacconist's shop, and Mr. Prater, strolling in one evening to renew his stock of Pioneer, was interested to observe P. St. H. Harrison, of Merevale's, busy buying a consignment of "Girl of My Heart" cigarettes. Now, Mr. Prater, was one of the most sportsman-like of

masters. If he had merely met Harrison out of bounds, and it had been possible to have overlooked him, he would have done so. But such a proceeding in the interior of a small shop was impossible. There was nothing to palliate the crime. The tobacconist also kept the wolf from the door and lured the juvenile population of the neighbourhood to it by selling various brands of sweets, but it was perfectly obvious that Harrison was not after these. Guilt was in his eye, and the packet of cigarettes in his hand. Also, Harrison's house cap was fixed firmly at the back of his head. Mr. Prater finished buying his Pioneer, and went out without a word. That night it was announced to Harrison that the headmaster wished to see him. The headmaster saw him; the interview was short and not sweet; and on the following day Stapleton was placed doubly out of bounds.

Tony, who was still in bed, had not heard the news when Charteris came to see him on the evening of the day on which the edict had gone forth.

"How are you getting on?" asked Charteris.

"Oh, fairly well. It's rather slow."

"The grub seems all right," said Charteris, absently reaching out for a slice of cake.

"Not bad."

"And you don't have to do any work."

"No."

"Well, then, it seems to me that you're having a jolly good time. What don't you like about it?"

"It's so slow, being alone all day."

"Makes you appreciate intellectual conversation all the more when you get it. Mine, for instance."

"I want something to read."

"Bring you a Sidgwick's Greek Prose Composition, if you like. Full of racy stories."

"I've read 'em, thanks."

"How about Jebb's Homer? You'd like that. Awfully interesting. Proves that there never was such a man as Homer, you know, and that the Iliad and the Odyssey were produced by evolution. General style, quietly funny. Make you roar."

"Don't be an idiot. I'm simply starving for something to read. Haven't you got anything?"

"You've read all mine."

"Hasn't Welch got any books?"

"Not one. He bags mine when he wants to read. I'll tell you what I will do, if you like"

"What's that?"

"I'll go into Stapleton, and borrow something from Adamson."

Adamson was the College doctor. Residence: Number Three, High Street, Stapleton. Disposition, mild and obliging.

"By Jove, that's not a bad idea!"

"It's a dashed good idea, which wouldn't have occurred to anyone except a genius. I've been quite a pal of Adamson's ever since I had the 'flu. I go to tea with him occasionally, and we talk medical shop. Have you ever tried talking medical shop during tea? Gives you an appetite!"

"All right," said Tony; "but," he added, "Stapleton's out of bounds. I suppose Merevale will give you leave to go in?"

"I shan't ask him. On principle. So long."

On the following afternoon Charteris went into Stapleton. The distance by road was exactly a mile. If you went by the fields it was longer, because you probably lost your way.

Charteris arrived at the High Street, and knocked at Dr. Adamson's door. The servant was sorry, but the doctor was out. Her tone seemed to suggest that, if she had had any say in the matter, he would have remained in. Would Charteris come in and wait? Charteris rather thought he would. He waited half an hour, and then, as the absent medico did not appear to be coming, took two books from the shelf, wrote a succinct note explaining what he had done and why he had done it, and hoping the doctor did not object, and went out with his literary spoil into the High Street again.

The time was now close on five o'clock. Lock-up was not till a quarter past six—six o'clock nominally, but the doors were always left open till a quarter past. It would take him about fifteen minutes to get back—less if he trotted.

Obviously the thing to do here was to spend a thoughtful quarter of an hour or so inspecting the sights of the town. These were ordinarily not numerous, but this particular

day happened to be market-day, and there was a good deal going on. The High Street was full of farmers and animals, the majority of the former being well on the road to intoxication. It is, of course, extremely painful to see a man in such a condition, but when such a person is endeavouring to count a perpetually shifting drove of pigs, the onlooker's pain is sensibly diminished.

Charteris strolled along the High Street observing these and other phenomena with an attentive eye. Opposite the Town Hall he was buttonholed by a perfect stranger, whom by his conversation he soon recognised as the Stapleton "character." There is a "character" in every small country town. He is not a bad character; still less is he a good character. He is just a "character," pure and simple. This particular man—though, strictly speaking, he was anything but particular—apparently took a great fancy to Charteris at first sight. He backed him gently against a wall, and insisted on telling him an interminable anecdote of his shady past, when, it appeared, he had been a "super" in a travelling company. The plot of the story, as far as Charteris could follow it, dealt with the company's visit to Dublin, where some person or persons unknown had with malice prepense scattered several pounds of snuff on the stage previous to a performance of *Hamlet*. And, according to the "character," when the ghost sneezed steadily throughout his great scene, there was not a dry eye in the house. The "character" had concluded that anecdote, and was half-way through another, when looking at his watch Charteris found that it was almost six o'clock. So he interrupted one of his friend's periods by diving past him and moving rapidly down the street. The historian did not seem to object. Charteris looked round and saw that he had buttonholed a fresh victim. Charteris was still looking in one direction and walking in another when he collided with somebody.

"Sorry," he said hastily. "Hallo!"

It was the secretary of the Old Crockfordians, and, as that gentleman's face wore a scowl, the recognition appeared to be mutual.

"It's you, is it?" said the secretary in his polished way.

"I believe so," said Charteris.

"Out of bounds," said the man.

Charteris was surprised. This grasp of technical lore on the part of a total outsider was as unexpected as it was gratifying.

"What do you know about bounds?" he said.

"I know you ain't allowed to come 'ere, and you'll get it 'ot from your master for coming."

"Ah, but he won't know. I shan't tell him, and I'm sure you will respect my secret." And Charteris smiled in an ensnaring manner.

"Ho!" said the man. "Ho, indeed!"

"Well," said Charteris affably, "don't let me keep you. I must be going on."

"Ho," observed the man once more, "ho, indeed!"

"That's a wonderfully shrewd remark," said Charteris, "but I'd like to know exactly what it means."

"You're out of bounds."

"Your mind seems to run in a groove. You can't get off that bounds idea. How do you know Stapleton's out of bounds?"

"I have made inquiries," said the man darkly.

"By Jove," said Charteris, delightedly, "this is splendid! You're a regular sleuth-hound. I daresay you've found out my name and house?"

"I may 'ave," said the man, "or I may not 'ave."

"Well, now you mention it, I suppose one of the two is probable. Well, I'm awfully glad to have met you. Good-bye. I must be going."

"You are going with me."

"Arm in arm?"

"I don't want to *'ave* to take you."

"No," said Charteris. "I should jolly well advise you not to try. This is my way."

He walked on till he came to the road that led to St. Austin's. The secretary of the Old Crockfordians stalked beside him with determined stride.

"Now," said Charteris, when they were on the road, "you mustn't mind if I walk rather fast. I'm in a hurry."

Charteris' idea of walking rather fast was to dash off down the road at quarter-mile pace. The move took the man by surprise,

but after a moment he followed with much panting. It was evident that he was not in training. Charteris began to feel that the walk home might be amusing in its way. After he had raced some three hundred yards he slowed down to a walk again. It was at this point that his companion evinced a desire to do the rest of the journey with a hand on the collar of his coat.

"If you touch me," said Charteris, with a surprising knowledge of *legal minutiæ*, "it'll be a technical assault, and you'll get beans, anyway, if you try it on."

The man reconsidered the matter and elected not to try it on. Half a mile from the college Charteris began to walk rather fast again. He was a good half-miler, and his companion was bad at any distance. After a game struggle he dropped to the rear, and finished a hundred yards behind in considerable straits. Charteris shot in at Merevale's door with five minutes to spare, and went up to his study to worry Welch by telling him about it.

"Welch, you remember the Bargee who scragged Tony? Well, there have been all sorts of fresh developments. He's just been pacing me all the way from Stapleton."

"Stapleton! You haven't been to Stapleton?"

"Yes. I went to get some books for Tony."

"Did Merevale give you leave?"

"No. I didn't ask him."

"You *are* an idiot. And now this Bargee man will go straight to the Old Man, and run you in. I wonder you didn't think of that."

"It is curious, now you mention it."

"I suppose he saw you come in here?"

"Rather. He couldn't have had a better view if he'd paid for a seat. Half a second. I must just run up to Tony with these."

When he came back he found Welch more serious than ever.

"I told you so," said Welch; "you're to go to the Old Man at once. He's just sent over for you. I say, look here, if it's only lines, I don't mind doing some if you like."

Charteris was quite touched by this sporting offer.

"It's awfully good of you," he said, "but it doesn't matter, really. I shall be all right."

Ten minutes later he returned, beaming.

"Well," said Welch, "what has he given you?"

"Only his love, to give to you. It was this way. He first asked if I didn't know perfectly well that Stapleton was out of bounds.

"'Sir,' says I, 'I have known it from childhood's earliest hour.' 'Ah,' says he to me, 'did Mr. Merevale give you leave to go in this afternoon?' 'No,' says I, 'I never consulted the gent you mention.'"

"Well?"

"Then he ragged me for ten minutes, and finally told me I must go into extra the next two Saturdays."

"I thought so."

"Ah, but mark the sequel. When he had finished, I said I was sorry I had mistaken the rules, but I had thought that a chap was allowed to go into Stapleton if he got leave from a master. 'But you said that Mr. Merevale did not give you leave,' said he. 'Friend of my youth,' I replied courteously, 'you are perfectly correct—as always. Mr. Merevale did not give me leave. But,' I added suavely, 'Mr. Dacre did.' And came away, chanting hymns of triumph in a mellow baritone, and leaving him in a dead faint on the sofa. And the Bargee, who was present during the conflict, swiftly and silently vanished away, his morale considerably shattered. And that, my gentle Welch," concluded Charteris cheerfully, "puts me one up. So pass the biscuits, and let us rejoice to-day if we never rejoice again."

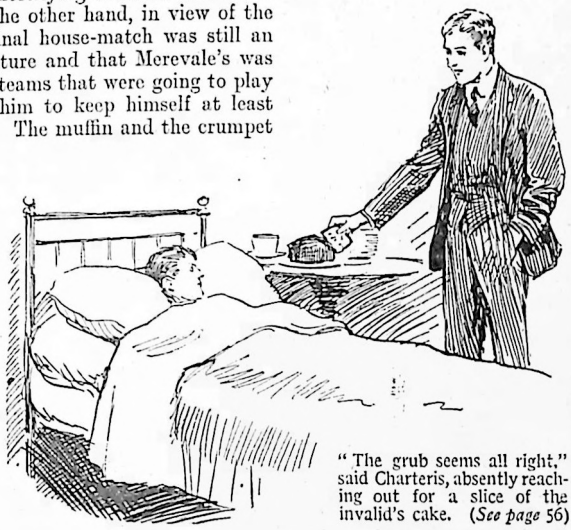
THE THIRD CHAPTER

The Strangers' Mile

The Easter term was nearing its end. Football, with the exception of the final house-match, which had still to be played, was over, and life was in consequence a trifle less exhilarating, than it might have been. In some ways the last few weeks of the Easter term are not unpleasant. You can put on running shorts and a blazer and potter about the grounds, feeling strong and athletic, and delude your-

self into a notion that you are training for the sports. Ten minutes at the broad jump, five with the weight, a few sprints on the track—it is amusing in its way, but it is apt to become monotonous. And if the weather is at all inclined to be chilly, such an occupation becomes impossible.

Charteris found things particularly dull. He was a fair average runner, but there were others far better at every distance, so that he saw no use in mortifying the flesh with strict training. On the other hand, in view of the fact that the final house-match was still an event of the future and that Merevale's was one of the two teams that were going to play it, it behoved him to keep himself at least moderately fit. The muffin and the crumpet were still things to be reluctantly avoided. He thus found himself in a position where, apparently, the few things which it was possible for him to do were barred, and the net result was that he felt slightly dull.



"The grub seems all right," said Charteris, absently reaching out for a slice of the invalid's cake. (*See page* 56)

To make matters worse, all the rest of his set were working full time at their various employments, and had no leisure for amusing him. Welch practised hundred-yard sprints daily, and imagined that it would be quite a treat for Charteris to be allowed to time him. So he gave him the stop-watch, saw him safely to the end of the track, and at a given signal dashed off in the approved American style. By the time he reached the tape, dutifully held by two sporting Merevalian juniors, Charteris' attention had generally been attracted elsewhere. "What time?" Welch would pant. "By Jove," Charteris would reply blandly, "I forgot to look. About a minute and a quarter, I fancy." At which Welch, who always had a notion that he had done it in ten and a fifth *that* time, at any rate, would dissemble his joy, and mildly suggest that somebody else should hold the watch. Then there was Jim Thomson, generally a perfect mine of elevating conversation. He was in for the mile and also the half-mile, and refused to talk about anything except those distances, and the best methods for running them in the minimum of time. Charteris began to feel a blue melancholy stealing over him. The Babe, again. He might have helped to while away the long hours, but unfortunately he had been taken very bad with a notion that he was going to win the cross-country race, and when in addition to this he was seized with a panic with regard to the prospects of Merevale's house team in the final, and began to throw out hints concerning strict training, Charteris regarded him as a person to be avoided. If he fled for sympathy to the Babe just now, the Babe would, as likely as not, suggest that he should come for a ten-mile spin with him, to get him into condition for the final houser. The very thought of a ten-mile spin gave Charteris that tired feeling.

Lastly, there was Tony. But Tony's company was worse than none at all. He went about with his arm in a sling, and declined to be comforted. But for his injury he would by now have been training hard for the Aldershot Boxing Competition, and the fact

that he was now definitely out of it had a very depressing effect upon him. He lounged moodily about the gymnasium, watching Menzies, who was to take his place in the ring, sparring with the instructor, and refused consolation. Altogether, Charteris was finding life a bore.

He was in such straits for amusement, that one Wednesday afternoon, finding himself with nothing else to do, he set to work on a burlesque and remarkably scurrilous article on "The Staff, by one who has suffered," which he was going to insert in the *Glowworm*, an unofficial periodical which he had just started for the amusement of the school and his own and his contributors' profit. He was just warming to his work, and beginning to enjoy himself, when the door opened without a preliminary knock. Charteris deftly slid a piece of blotting-paper over his MS., for Merevale occasionally entered a study in this manner. And though there was nothing about Merevale himself in the article, it would be better perhaps, thought Charteris, if he did not see it.

But it was not Merevale. It was somebody far worse—the Babe. The Babe was clothed as to his body in football clothes, and as to his face in a look of holy enthusiasm. Charteris knew what that look meant. It meant that the Babe was going to try and drag him out for a run.

"Go away, Babe," he said. "I'm busy."

"Why on earth are you slacking in here on this ripping afternoon?"

"Slacking!" said Charteris, "I like that. I'm doing ber-rain work, Babe. I'm writing an article on masters and their customs, which will cause a profound sensation in the Common Room. At least, it would, if they ever read it, but they won't. Or I hope they won't, for their sakes and mine. So run away, my precious Babe, and don't disturb your uncle when he's busy."

"Rot," said the Babe, firmly; "you haven't taken any exercise for a week. Look here, Alderman," he added, sitting down on the table, and gazing sternly at his victim, "it's all very well, you know, but the final comes on in a few days, and you know you aren't in any too good training."

"I am," said Charteris. "I'm as fit as anything. Simply full of beans. Feel my ribs."

The Babe declined the offer.

"No, but I say," he said, plaintively, "I wish you'd treat the thing seriously. It's getting jolly serious, really. If Dacre's win that cup again this year, that'll make four years running."

"Not so," replied Charteris, like the mariner of infinite-resource-and-sagacity, "not so, but far otherwise. It'll only make three."

"Well, three's bad enough."

"True, O king! Three is quite bad enough."

"Well, then, there you are. Now you see."

Charteris looked puzzled.

"Would you mind explaining that remark?" he said slowly. "Your brain works too rapidly for me."

But the Babe had jumped down from the table, and was prowling round the room opening Charteris' boxes.

"What are you playing at?" inquired Charteris.

"Where do you keep your footer things?"

"What do you want with my footer things? Excuse my asking."

"I'm going to watch you put them on, and then you're coming for a run."

"Oh," said Charteris.

"Yes, just a gentle spin to keep you in condition. Hallo, this looks like them."

He plunged both hands into a box, and flung out a mass of football clothes. It reminded Charteris of a terrier digging at a rabbit-hole. He protested.

"Don't, Babe. Treat 'em tenderly. You'll be spoiling the crease in those bags if you heave them about like that. I'm very particular about how I look on the footer field. *I* was always taught to look like a little gentleman. Well, now you've seen them, put 'em away."

"Put 'em on," said the Babe firmly.

"You are a beast, Babe. I don't want to go for a run. I'm getting too old for violent exercise."

"Buck up. We mustn't chuck any chances away. Now that Tony's crocked, we shall have to do all we know to win that match."

"I don't see what need there is to get

excited about it. Considering we've got three of the first threequarters and the second fifteen back, we ought to do pretty well."

"But, man, look at Dacre's scrum. There's Prescott to start with. He's worth any two of our men put together. Then they've got Carter, Smith, and Hennesey out of the first, and Reeve-Jones out of the second. And their outsides aren't so very bad, if you come to think of it. Bannister's in the first, and the other threequarters are all good. And they've got both the second halves. You'll have practically to look after both of them now that Tony can't play. And Baddeley has come on a lot since last term."

"You're out of bounds!" observed the Bargee darkly. "By Jove!" exclaimed Charteris delightedly. "How wonderfully observant you are!" (*See page 57*).

"Babe," said Charteris, "you have reason. I will turn over a new leaf. I *will* be good. Give me my things and I'll come for a run. Only please don't let it be more than twenty miles."

"Good man," said the gratified Babe; "we won't go far and we'll take it quite easy."

"I tell you what," said Charteris, "do you know a place called Worbury? I thought you wouldn't. It's only a sort of hamlet. Two cottages, four public-houses, and a duck-pond, and that sort of thing. Welch and I ran out there one time last year. It's in the Badgwick direction, about three miles by road, mostly along the level. I vote we muffle up fairly well, blazers and sweaters, and so on, run to Worbury, tea at one of the cottages, and be back in time for lock-up. How does that strike you?"

"It sounds all right. How about tea, though? Are you certain you can get it?"

"Rather! The oldest inhabitant is quite a pal of mine."

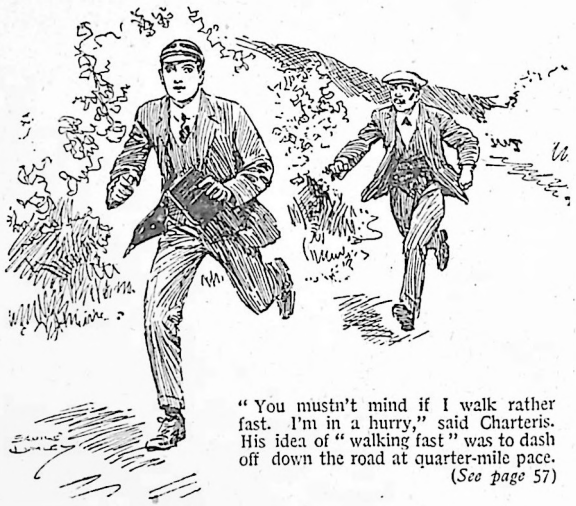
Charteris' circle of acquaintances was a standing wonder to the Babe and other Merevalians. He seemed to know everybody in the county.

When once he was fairly started on any business, Charteris generally shaped well. It was the starting that he found the difficulty. Now that he was actually in motion, he was enjoying himself thoroughly. He wondered why on earth he had been so reluctant to come for this run. The knowledge that there were three miles to go, and that he was equal to them, made him feel a new man. He felt fit. And there is nothing like feeling fit for dispelling boredom. He swung along with the Babe at a steady pace.

"There's the cottage," he said, as they turned a bend of the road, and Worbury appeared a couple of hundred yards away. "Let's sprint."

They arrived at the door with scarcely a yard between them, much to the admiration of the Oldest Inhabitant, who was smoking a thoughtful pipe in his front garden. Mrs. Oldest Inhabitant came out of the cottage at the sound of voices, and Charteris broached the subject of tea. The menu was varied and indigestible, but even the Babe, in spite of his devotion to strict training, could scarcely forbear smiling happily at the mention of hot cakes.

During the wait before the meal, Charteris kept up an animated flow of conversation with the Oldest Inhabitant, the Babe joining in from time to time when he could think of something to say. Charteris appeared to be quite a friend of the family. He inquired after the Oldest Inhabitant's rheumatics, and was gratified to find that they were distinctly better. How was Mrs. O. I.? Prarper hearty? Excellent. How was the O. I.'s nevvy?



"You mustn't mind if I walk rather fast. I'm in a hurry," said Charteris. His idea of "walking fast" was to dash off down the road at quarter-mile pace.
(*See page* 57)

At the mention of his nevvy, the Oldest Inhabitant became discursive. He told the audience everything that had happened in connection with the said nevvy for years back. After which he started to describe what he would probably do in the future. Amongst other things, there were going to be some sports at Rutton that day week, and his nevvy intended to try and win the cup for what the Oldest Inhabitant vaguely described as "a race!" He had won it last year. Yes, prarper good runner, his nevvy. Where was Rutton, the Babe wanted to know. About eight miles out of Stapleton, said Charteris, who was well up in the local geography. You got there by train. It was the next station.

Mrs. O. I. came out to say that tea was ready, and being drawn into the conversation on the subject of the Rutton Sports, produced a programme of the same, which the nevvy had sent her. From this it appeared that the nevvy's "spot" event was the egg and spoon race. An asterisk against his name pointed him out as last year's winner.

"Hallo," said Charteris. "I see there's a Strangers' Mile. I think I shall go in for that. I'm a demon at the mile, when roused."

As they were going back that evening, he reverted to the subject.

"You know, Babe," he said, "I really think I shall go in for that race. It would be a most awful rag. And it's the day before the house-match, so it would just keep me fit."

"Don't be a fool," said the Babe; "there would be a fearful row about it, if you were found out. You'd get extras for the rest of the term."

"Well, the houser comes off on a Thursday, so it won't affect that."

"Yes, but still——"

"I shall ponder on the subject. You needn't go telling anyone."

"If you'll take my advice, you will drop it."

"Your suggestion has been noted, and will receive due attention," said Charteris. "Put the pace on a bit."

They lengthened their stride, and conversation ceased.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER
At Rutton Sports

"I SHALL go, Babe," said Charteris, on the following night.

The Sixth Form had a slack day before them on the morrow, there being that temporary lull in the form-work which occurred about once a week, when there was no composition of any kind to be done. The Sixth did four compositions a week, two Greek and two Latin, and except for these did not bother itself much about overnight preparation. The Latin authors which the Form was doing this term were Virgil and Livy, and when either of these was on the next day's programme, most of the Sixth considered that they were justified in taking a night off. They relied on their ability to translate either of the authors at sight and without previous acquaintance. The popular notion that Virgil is hard rarely appeals to a member of a Public school. There are two ways of translating Virgil, the conscientious and the other. He chooses the other.

On this particular night, therefore, work was "off." Merevale was over at the Great Hall, taking preparation, and the Sixth Form Merevalians had assembled in Welch's study to talk about things in general. It was after a pause of some moments that had followed upon a lively discussion of the house's prospects in the forthcoming final, that Charteris had spoken.

"I shall go," he said.

"Go where?" asked Tony from inside a deck chair.

"Babe knows."

The Babe turned to the company and explained.

"The lunatic says he's going in for the Strangers' Mile or some other equally futile race at some sports at Rutton next week. He'll get booked for a cert. He can't see that. I never saw such a man."

"Rally round," said Charteris, "and reason with me. I'll listen. Tony, what do you think about it?"

Tony expressed his opinion tersely, and Charteris thanked him. Welch, who had been reading a book, now awoke to the fact that a discussion was in progress, and asked for details. The Babe explained once more, and Welch heartily corroborated Tony's remarks. Charteris thanked him, too.

"You aren't really going, are you?" asked Welch.

"Rather!"

"The Old Man won't give you leave."

"I shan't worry the Old Man about it."

"But it's miles out of bounds. Stapleton Station is out of bounds, to begin with. It's against rules to go in a train, and Rutton is even more out of bounds than Stapleton."

"And as there are sports there," said Tony, "the Old Man is certain to put Rutton specially out of bounds for that day. He always bars a St. Austin's chap going to a place when there's anything of that sort on there."

"Don't care. What have I to do with the Old Man's petty prejudices? Now, let me get at my time-table. Here we are. Now then."

"Don't be a fool!" said Tony.

"As if I should. Look here, there is a train that starts from Stapleton at three. I can catch that all right. Gets to Rutton at three-twenty. Sports begin at three-fifteen. At least, they are supposed to. Over before five, I should think. At any rate, my race ought to be. Though—I was forgetting—I must stop to see the Oldest Inhabitant's nevvy win the egg and spoon canter. But that ought to come on before the Strangers' race. Train back at a quarter past five. Arrives at a quarter to six. Lock up six fifteen. That gives me half an hour to get here from Stapleton. What more do you want? Consider the thing done. And I should think the odds against me being booked are twenty-five to one, at which price, if any gent present cares to deposit his money, I am willing to take him."

"You won't go," said Welch. "I'll bet you anything you like you won't go."

That settled Charteris. The visit to Rutton, hitherto looked upon as more or less of a pleasure, became now a solemn duty. One of Charteris' mottoes for everyday use was

"Let not thyself be scored off by Welch."

"That's all right," he said, "of course I shall go."

The day of the sports arrived, and the Babe, meeting Charteris at Merevale's gate, made a last attempt to head him off from his purpose.

"How are you going to take your things?" he asked. "You can't carry a bag. The first beak you met would ask questions."

Charteris patted a bloated coat pocket.

"Bags," he said laconically. "Vest," he added, doing the same to the other pocket. "Shoes," he concluded, "you will observe I am carrying in a handy brown paper parcel, and if anybody wants to know what's in it, I shall tell him it's acid drops. Sure you won't come, too?"

"I'm not such an ass," quoth the Babe.

"All right. So-long, then. Be good while I'm gone."

And he took the road toward Stapleton.

. . . . .

The Rutton New Recreation Grounds presented, as the "Stapleton Herald" justly remarked in its next week's issue, "a gay and animated appearance." There was a larger crowd than Charteris had expected. He made his way through them, resisting with difficulty the entreaties of a hoarse gentleman in a check suit to have three to two on 'Enery Something for the hundred yards, and came at last to the dressing tent.

At this point it occurred to him that it would be judicious to find out when his race was to start. It was rather a chilly day, and the less of it that he spent in the undress uniform of shorts the better. He bought a correct card for twopence, and scanned it. The Strangers' Mile was down for four-fifty. There was no need to change for an hour yet. He wished the authorities could have managed to date the event earlier. Four-fifty was running it rather fine. The race would be over, allowing for unpunctuality, by about five to five, and it was a walk of some ten minutes to the station, less if he hurried. That would give him ten minutes for recovering from the effects of the race and changing back into his ordinary clothes again. It would be quick work. But the trains on that line were always late—it was one of the metropolitan improvements which had recently been introduced into Arcadia—and, having come so far, he was not inclined to go back without running in the race. He would never be able to hold up his head again if he did that. He left the dressing-tent, and started on a tour of the field.

The scene was quite different from anything he had ever witnessed before in the way of sports. The sports at St. Austin's were decorous to a degree. These leaned more to the rollicking degree. It was like an ordinary country race-meeting, except that men were running instead of horses. Rutton was a quiet little place for the majority of the year, but on this day it woke up, and was evidently out to enjoy itself. The Rural Hooligan was a good deal in evidence, and though he was comparatively quiet just at present, the frequency with which he visited the various refreshment stalls that dotted the ground gave promise of livelier times in the future. Charteris felt that the afternoon would not be too dull. The hour soon passed, and Charteris, having first seen the Oldest Inhabitant's nevvy romp home in the egg and spoon event, took himself off to the dressing-tent, and began to get into his running clothes. The bell for the race was just ringing when he left the tent. He trotted over to the starting-place. Apparently there was not a very large "field." Two weedy youths of Charteris' age had put in an appearance, and a very tall, thin man, dressed in blushing pink, came up immediately afterwards. Charteris had just removed his coat, and was about to get to his place on the line, when another competitor arrived, and to judge by the applause that greeted his advent he was evidently a favourite in the locality. It was with a shock that Charteris recognised his old acquaintance, the Bargees' secretary.

He was clad in running clothes of a bright orange, and a smile of conscious superiority, and when somebody in the crowd called out "Go it, Jarge!" he accepted the tribute as his due, and waved a condescending hand in the speaker's direction.

Some moments elapsed before he caught sight of Charteris, and the latter had time to decide on his line of action. If he attempted

concealment in any way, the man would recognise that on this occasion, at any rate, he had, to use an adequate if unclassical expression, got the bulge, and then there would be trouble. By brazening things out, however, there was just a chance that he might make him imagine that there was more in the matter than met the eye, and that in some way he had actually obtained leave to visit Rutton that day. After all, the man didn't know very much about school rules, and the recollection of the recent fiasco in which he had taken part would make him think twice about playing the amateur policeman again, especially in connection with Charteris.

So he smiled genially, and expressed a hope that the man enjoyed robust health.

The man replied by glaring in a simple and unaffected manner.

"Looked up the headmaster lately?" asked Charteris.

"What are you doing here?"

"I'm going to run. Hope you don't mind."

"You're out of bounds."

"That's what you said before. You'd better inquire a bit before you make rash statements. Otherwise there's no knowing what may not happen. Perhaps Mr. Dacre has given me leave."

The man said something objurgatory under his breath, but forbore to continue the discussion. He was wondering, as Charteris had expected he would, whether the latter had really got leave or not. It was a difficult problem. Whether such a result was due to his mental struggles or whether it was simply to be attributed to his poor running is open to question, but the fact remains that the secretary of the Old Crockfordians did not shine in the Strangers' Mile. He came in last but one, vanquishing the pink sportsman by a foot. Charteris, after a hot finish, was beaten on the tape by one of the weedy youths, who exhibited astonishing powers of sprinting in the last hundred and fifty yards, overhauling Charteris, who had led all the time, in fine style, and scoring what the "Stapleton Herald" described as a "highly popular victory."

As soon as he had recovered his normal stock of wind—which was not immediately—it was borne in upon Charteris that if he wanted to catch the five-fifteen back to Stapleton, he had better begin to change. He went to the dressing-tent, and on examining his watch was horrified to find that he had just ten minutes in which to do everything. And the walk to the station, he reflected, was a long five minutes. He hurled himself into his clothes, and, disregarding the Bargee, who had entered the tent and seemed to wish to continue the conversation at the point at which they had left off, shot away towards the nearest gate. He had exactly four minutes and twenty-five seconds for the journey, and he had just run a mile.

"I see there's a Strangers' Mile," Charteris commented, scanning the paper. "I think I shall go in for that!" (*See page 62*).

THE FIFTH CHAPTER
Charteris uses his Fists

FORTUNATELY the road was mainly level. On the other hand, he was handicapped by an overcoat. After the first hundred yards he took this off, and carried it in an unwieldy parcel. This, he found, was an improvement, and running became easier. He had worked the stiffness out of his legs by this time, and was going well. Three hundred yards from the station it was anybody's race.

The exact position of the other competitor, the train, could not be defined. It was, at any rate, not within earshot, which meant that it had still a quarter of a mile to go. Charteris considered that he had earned a rest. He slowed down to a walk, but after proceeding at this pace for a few yards thought that he heard a distant whistle, and dashed on again. Suddenly a raucous bellow of laughter greeted his ears from a spot in front of him, hidden from his sight by a bend in the road.

"Somebody slightly tight," thought he, rapidly diagnosing the case. "By Jove, if he comes rotting about with me, I'll kill him and jump on his body." Having to do anything in a desperate hurry always upset Charteris' temper. He turned the corner at a sharp trot, and came upon two youths who seemed to be engaged in the harmless occupation of trying to ride a bicycle. They were of the type which he held in especial aversion, the Rural Hooligan type, and one at least of the two had evidently been present at a recent circulation of the festive bowl. He was wheeling the bicycle about the road in an aimless way, and looked as if he wondered what was the matter with it, in that it would not keep still for two consecutive seconds. The other youth was apparently of the "Charles his-friend" variety, content to look on and applaud, and generally to play chorus to his companion's "lead." He was standing at the side of the road smiling broadly in a way that argued feebleness of mind. Charteris was not sure which of the two he hated most at sight. He was inclined to call it a tie. However, there seemed to be nothing particularly lawless in what they were doing now. If they were content to let him pass without hindrance, he for his part was prepared generously to overlook the insult they offered to him by existing at all, and to maintain a state of truce.

But, as he drew nearer, he saw that there was more in the business than the casual spectator might at first have supposed. A second and keener inspection of the reptiles revealed fresh phenomena. In the first place, the bicycle which hooligan number one was playing with was a lady's bicycle, and a small one at that. Now, up to the age of fourteen and the weight of ten stone, a beginner at cycling often finds it more convenient to learn to ride on a lady's machine than on a gentleman's. The former offers greater facilities for dismounting, a quality not to be despised in the earlier stages of initiation. But, though this was undoubtedly the case, and though Charteris knew that it was so, yet he felt instinctively that there was something wrong here. Hooligans of eighteen years and twelve stone do not learn to ride on small ladies' machines. Or, if they do, it is probably without the permission and approval of the small ladies who own the same. Valuable as his time was, Charteris felt that it behoved him to devote a thoughtful minute or two to the examining of this affair. He slowed down once again to a walk, and as he did so his eye fell upon the one character in the drama whose absence had puzzled him—the owner of the bicycle. And he came to the conclusion that life would be a hollow mockery if he failed to fall upon those revellers, and slay them. She stood by the hedge on the right, a forlorn little figure in grey, and she gazed sadly and hopelessly at the manœuvres that were going on in the middle of the road. Her age Charteris estimated at a venture at twelve—a correct guess. Her state of mind he also conjectured. She was letting "I dare not" wait upon "I would," like the late M'Beth, the cat i' the adage, and other celebrities. She evidently had plenty of remarks to make on the subject in hand, but refrained from motives of prudence.

Charteris had no such scruples. The feeling of fatigue that had been upon him had vanished, and his temper, which had been growing more and more villainous for some twenty minutes, now boiled over enthusiastically at the sight of something tangible to work itself off upon. Even without a cause he detested the Rural Hooligan. Now that a real, registered motive for this antipathy had been supplied, he felt capable of dealing with a whole regiment of the breed. He would have liked to have committed a murder, but assault and battery would do at a pinch.

The being with the bicycle had just let it fall with a crash to the ground, when Charteris went for him low, in the style which the Babe always insisted on seeing in members of the

Charteris led until the last hundred and fifty yards, when a weedy youth exhibited astonishing powers of sprinting and beat him on the tape. (*See page* 65)

first fifteen on the football field, and hove him without comment into a damp ditch. "Charles-his-friend" uttered a shout of disapproval, and rushed into the fray. Charteris gave him the straight left, of the type to which the great John Jackson is said to have owed so much in the days of the old Prize Ring, and Charles, taking it between the eyes, stopped in a discontented and discouraged manner, and began to rub the place. Whereupon Charteris dashed in, and, to use an expression suitable to the deed, "swung his right to the mark." The "mark," it may be explained for the benefit of the non-pugilistic, is that portion of the human form divine which lies hid behind the third button of the waistcoat. It covers—in a most inadequate way—the wind, and even a gentle tap in the locality is apt to produce a fleeting sense of discomfort. A genuine flush hit on the spot, shrewdly administered by a muscular arm with the weight of the body behind it, causes the passive agent in the transaction to wish fervently, as far as he is at the moment physically capable of wishing anything, that he had never been born. Charles collapsed like an empty sack, and Charteris, getting a grip of the outlying portions of his costume, rolled him into the ditch on top of his companion, who had just recovered sufficiently to be thinking of getting out again.

Charteris picked up the bicycle, and gave it a cursory examination. The enamel was a good deal scratched, but no material damage had been done. He wheeled it across to its owner. He would have felt more like a St.

George after an interview with the Dragon if he had not, in tackling hooligan number one, contrived to cover his face with rich mud from the ditch. He could not help feeling that it detracted from the general romance of the thing.

"It isn't much hurt," he said, as they walked on together down the road; "bit scratched, that's all."

"Thanks, *awfully*," said the small lady.

"Oh, not all," said Charteris, "I enjoyed it." (He felt that he had said the correct thing here.) "I'm sorry those chaps frightened you."

"They did rather. But"—triumphantly—"I didn't cry."

"Rather not," said Charteris, "you were awfully plucky. I noticed at the time. But hadn't you better ride on? Which way were you going?"

"I wanted to get to Stapleton."

"Oh. That's simple enough. You've merely got to go straight on down this road. As straight as ever you can go. But, look here, you know, you shouldn't be out alone like this. It isn't safe. Why did they let you?"

The lady avoided his eye. She bent down and inspected the left pedal.

"They shouldn't have sent you out alone," said Charteris; "why did they?"

"They didn't. I came."

There was a world of meaning in the phrase. Charteris was in the same case. They had not let him. He had come. Here was a kindred spirit, another revolutionary soul, scorning the fetters of convention and the so-called authority of self-constituted rulers, aha! Bureaucrats!

"Shake hands," he said, "I'm in just the same way."

They shook hands gravely.

"You know," said the lady, "I'm awfully sorry I did it now. It was very naughty."

"I'm not sorry yet," said Charteris, "but I expect I shall be soon."

"Will you be sent to bed?"

"I don't think so."

"Will you have to learn beastly poetry?"

"I hope not."

She would probably have gone on to investigate things further, but at that moment there came the faint sound of a whistle. Then another, closer this time. Then a faint rumbling, which increased in volume steadily.

Charteris looked back. The line ran by the side of the road. He could see the smoke of a train through the trees. It was quite close now. And he was still nearly two hundred yards from the station gates.

"I say," he said, "Great Scott, here comes my train. I must rush. Good-bye. You keep straight on."

His legs had had time to grow stiff again. For the first few strides running was painful. But his joints soon adapted themselves to the strain, and in ten seconds he was running as fast as he had ever run off the track. When he had travelled a quarter of the distance, the small cyclist overtook him.

"Be quick," she said. "It's just in sight."

Charteris quickened his stride, and, paced by the bicycle, spun along in fine style. Forty yards from the station the train passed him. He saw it roll into the station. There were still twenty yards to go, exclusive of the station steps, and he was already running as fast as he knew how. Now there were only ten. Now five. And at last, with a hurried farewell to his companion, he bounded up the steps and on to the platform. At the end of the platform the line took a sharp curve to the right. Round that curve the tail-end of the guard's van was just disappearing.

"Missed it, sir," said the solitary porter who managed things at Rutton cheerfully. He spoke as if he were congratulating Charteris on having done something remarkably clever.

"What's the next?"

"Eight-thirty," was the porter's appalling reply.

For a moment Charteris felt quite ill. No train till eight-thirty! Then was he, indeed, lost. But it couldn't be true. There must be some sort of a train between now and then.

"Are you certain?" he said; "surely there's a train before that."

"Why, yes, sir," said the porter, gleefully, "but they be all expresses. Eight-thirty be the only 'un what starps at Rooton."

"Thanks," said Charteris, with marked gloom, "I don't think that will be much

good to me. My aunt, what a hole I'm in."

The porter made a sympathetic and interrogative noise at the back of his throat, as if inviting him to confess all. But Charteris felt unequal to the intellectual pressure of conversations with porters. There are moments when one wants to be alone.

He went down the steps again When he got into the road, his small cycling friend had vanished. He envied her. She was doing the journey comfortably on a bicycle. He would have to walk it. Walk it! He didn't believe he could. The Strangers' Mile, followed by the Homeric combat with the Hooligans, and the ghastly sprint to wind up with, had left him unfit for further feats of pedestrianism. And it was eight miles to Stapleton, if it was a yard, and another mile from Stapleton to St. Austin's. Charteris, having once more invoked the name of his aunt, pulled himself together with an effort and limped gallantly in the direction of Stapleton.

But Fate, so long hostile, at last relented. A car approached him from behind. A thrill of hope shot through him at the sound of the engine; here was a prospect of a lift. He stopped, and waited for the car—it was a two seater—to arrive. Then he uttered a yell of triumph, and began to wave his arms like a semaphore. The man in the car was Adamson.

"Hallo, Charteris," said the doctor, pulling up, "what are you doing here? What's happened to your face? It's in a shocking state."

"Only mud," said Charteris; "good, honest English mud, borrowed from a local ditch. It's a long yarn. Can you give me a lift?"

"Come along. Plenty of room."

Charteris climbed up, and sank on to the cushioned seat with a sigh of pleasure. What glorious comfort. He had seldom enjoyed anything so much in his life.

"I'm nearly dead," he said, as the car went on again. "This is how it all happened. You see, it was this way——"

And he began forthwith upon a brief synopsis of his adventures.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER
An Interview With the Head

By special request the doctor dropped Charteris within a hundred yards of Merevale's door.

"Good-night," he said. "I don't suppose you value my advice at all, but you may have it for what it is worth. I recommend you to stop this sort of game. Next time something will happen."

"By Jove, yes," said Charteris, climbing painfully from his seat. "I'll take that advice. I'm a reformed character from now onwards. It isn't good enough. Hallo, there's the bell for lock-up. Good-night, doctor, and thanks most awfully for the lift. It was awfully kind of you."

"Don't mention it," said Dr. Adamson. "It is always a privilege to be in your company. When are you coming to tea with me again?"

"Whenever you'll have me. I shall get leave this time. It will be quite a novel experience."

"Yes. By the way, how's Graham? It is Graham, isn't it? The youth who broke his collar-bone."

"Oh, he's getting on splendidly. But I must be off. Good-night."

"Good-night. Come next Monday, if you can."

"Right. Thanks awfully."

He hobbled in at Merevale's gate, and went up to his study. The Babe was in there talking to Welch. You could generally reckon on finding the Babe talking to someone. He was of a sociable disposition.

"Hallo," he said. "Here's Charteris."

"What's left of him," said Charteris.

"How did it go off?"

"Don't talk about it."

"Did you win?" asked Welch.

"No. Second. By a yard. Jove! I'm dead."

"Hot race?"

"Rather. It wasn't that, though. I had to sprint all the way to the station, and missed my train by a couple of seconds at the end of it all."

"Then how did you get here?"

"That was my one stroke of luck. I started

to walk back, and after I'd gone about a quarter of a mile, Adamson caught me up in his two-seater. I suggested that it would be a Christian act on his part to give me a lift, and he did. I shall remember Adamson in my will."

"How did you lose?" inquired the Babe.

"The other man beat me. But for that I should have won hands down. Oh, I say, guess who I met at Rutton?"

"Not a master?"

"Almost as bad. The Bargee man who paced me from Stapleton. (Have I ever told you about that affair?) Man who crocked Tony, you know."

"Great Scott," said the Babe, "did he recognise you?"

"Rather. We had a long and very pleasant conversation."

"If he reports you——" began the Babe.

"Who's that?"

Tony had entered the study.

"Hullo, Tony. Adamson told me to remember him to you."

"So you've got back?"

Charteris confirmed the hasty guess.

"But what are you talking about, Babe?" said Tony. "Who's going to be reported, and who's going to report?"

The Babe briefly explained the situation.

"If the man," he said, "reports Charteris, he may get run in to-morrow, and then we shall have both our halves away against Dacre's. Charteris, you are an ass to go rotting about out of bounds like this."

"Nay, dry the starting tear," said Charteris cheerfully. "In the first place I shouldn't get kept in on a Thursday, were it ever so. I should get shoved into extra on Saturday. Also I shrewdly conveyed to the Bargee the impression that I was at Rutton by special permission."

"He's bound to know that can't be true," said Tony.

"Well, I told him to think it over. You see, he got so badly left last time he tried to drop on me—have I told you about that business, by the way?—that I shouldn't be a bit surprised if he let me alone this trip?"

"Let's hope so," said the Babe, with gloom.

"That's right, Babby," remarked Charteris encouragingly, "you buck up and keep looking on the bright side. It'll be all right, you see if it won't. If there's any running in to be done, I shall do it. I shall be frightfully fit to-morrow, after all this dashing about to-day. I haven't an ounce of adipose deposit on me. Upon my word, it seems to me unpardonable vanity, and worse than that, to call one's fat an adipose deposit. I'm a fine, strapping specimen of sturdy young English manhood. And I'm going to play a *very* selfish game to-morrow, Babe."

"Oh, my dear chap, you mustn't."

The Babe's face wore an expression of pain and horror. The success of the house team in the final was very near to his heart. He could not understand anyone jesting on the subject. Charteris respected his anguish, and relieved it speedily.

"I was only ragging," he said; "considering that we've got no chance of winning except through our three-quarters, I'm not likely to keep the ball from them, if I get a chance of getting it out. Make your mind easy, Babe."

The final house match was always a warmish game. The rivalry between the various houses was great, and the football cup especially was fought for with immense keenness. Also, the match was the last fixture of the season, and there was a certain feeling in the teams that if they *did* happen to injure a man or two it would not much matter. The disabled sportsmen would not be needed for school match purposes for another six months. As a result of which philosophical reflection the tackling ruled slightly energetic, and the handing-off was done with vigour.

This year, to add a sort of finishing touch, there was just a little ill-feeling between Dacre's and Merevale's. The cause of it was the Babe. Until the beginning of the term he had been a day-boy. Then the news began to circulate that he was going to become a boarder, either at Dacre's or at Merevale's. He chose the latter, and Dacre's felt aggrieved. Some of the less sportsman-like members of the house had proposed that a protest should be made against his being allowed to play, but, fortunately for the credit of the house, Prescott, the captain of Dacre's fifteen, had put his

A straight left between the eyes staggered Charles, then Charteris let him have a beautiful right to the "mark." The hooligan gasped and then collapsed like an empty sack—after which Charteris rolled him into the ditch out of the way. (*See page 67.*)

foot down with an emphatic bang at the suggestion. As he had sagely pointed out, there were some things which were bad form, and this was one of them. If the team wanted to express their disapproval, said he, let them do it on the field by tackling their very hardest. He personally was going to do his best in that direction, and he advised them to do the same.

The rumour of this bad blood had got about the school, and when Swift, Merevale's only first fifteen forward, kicked off up hill, a large crowd was lining the ropes. It was evident from the first that it would be a good game. Dacre's were the better side as a team. They had no really weak spot. But Merevale's extraordinarily strong three-quarter line made up for an inferior scrum. And the fact that the Babe was in the centre was worth much.

Dacre's pressed at first. Their pack was unusually heavy for a house team, and they made full use of it. They took the ball down the field in short rushes till they were in Merevale's twenty-five. Then they began to heel, and if things had been more or less exciting for the Merevalians before, they became doubly so now. The ground was dry, and so was the ball, and the game consequently waxed fast. Time after time the ball went along Dacre's three-quarter line, only to end by finding itself hurled, with the wing who was carrying it, into touch. Occasionally the centres, instead of feeding their wings, would try to get through themselves. And that was where the Babe came in. He was admittedly the best tackler in the school, but on this occasion he excelled himself. His normally placid temper had been ruffled early in the game by his being brought down by Prescott, and this had added a finish to his methods. His man never had a chance of getting past.

At last a lofty kick into touch over the heads of the spectators gave the teams a few seconds rest.

The Babe went up to Charteris.

"Look here," he said, "it's risky, but I think we'll try having the ball out a bit."

"In our own twenty-five?"

"Wherever we are. I believe it will come off all right. Anyway, we'll try it. Tell the forwards."

So Charteris informed the forwards that they were to let it out, an operation which, for forwards playing against a pack much heavier than themselves, it is easier to talk about than perform. The first half-dozen times that Merevale's scrum tried to heel, they were shoved off their feet, and it was on the enemy's side that the ball came out. But the seventh attempt succeeded. Out it came, cleanly and speedily. Daintree, who was playing half instead of Tony, switched it across to Charteris. Charteris dodged the half who was marking him, and ran. Heeling and passing in one's own twenty-five is an excellent habit if indulged in in moderation. On this occasion it answered perfectly. Charteris ran to the half-way line, and handed the ball on to the Babe. The Babe was tackled from behind, and passed to Thomson. Thomson dodged his man, and passed to Welch. Welch was the fastest sprinter in the school. It was a pleasure—if you did not happen to be on the opposing side—to see him race down the touchline. He was off like an arrow. Dacre's back made a futile attempt to get at him. Welch could have given him twelve yards in a hundred. He ran round him in a large semi-circle, and, amidst howls of rapture from the Merevalians in the audience, scored between the posts. The Babe took the kick, and converted without difficulty. Five minutes afterwards the whistle blew for half-time.

The remainder of the game was fought out on the same lines. Dacre's pressed nearly all the time, and scored an unconverted try, but twice the ball came out on Merevale's side and went down their line. Once it was the Babe, who scored with a run from his own goal-line, and once Charteris, who got it from halfway, dodging through the whole team. The last ten minutes of the match was marked by a slight excess of energy on both sides. Dacre's forwards were in a murderous frame of mind, and fought like demons to get through, and Merevale's played up to them with spirit. The Babe seemed continually to be precipitating himself at the feet of rushing forwards, and Charteris felt as if at least a dozen bones were broken in various parts of his body. The game ended on Merevale's line, but they had won the match and the cup by two goals and a try to a try.

Charteris limped off the field, cheerful but damaged. He ached all over, and there was a large bruise on his left cheek-bone, a souvenir of a forward rush in the first half. Also he was very certain that he was not going to do a stroke of work that night.

He and the Babe were going to the house, when they were aware that the headmaster was beckoning to them.

"Well, MacArthur, and what was the result of the match?"

"We won, sir," beamed the Babe. "Two goals and a try to a try."

"You have hurt your cheek, Charteris."

"Yes, sir."

"How did you do that?"

"I got a kick, sir, in one of the rushes."

"Ah. I should bathe it, Charteris. Bathe it well. I hope it will not be painful. Bathe it well in warm water."

He walked on.

"You know," said Charteris to the Babe, as they went into the house, "the Old Man isn't such a bad sort, after all. He has his points, don't you think so?"

The Babe said that he did.

"I'm going to reform, you know," said Charteris confidentially.

"It's about time. You can have the first bath, if you like. Only buck up."

Charteris boiled himself for ten minutes, and then dragged his weary limbs to his study. It was while he was sitting in a deck-chair, eating mixed biscuits, that Master Crowinshaw, his fag, appeared.

"Well?" said Charteris.

"The Head told me to tell you that he wanted to see you at the School House as soon as you can go."

"All right," said Charteris; "thanks."

"Now what," he continued to himself, "does the Old Man want to see me for? Perhaps he wants to make certain that I've bathed my cheek in warm water. Anyhow, I suppose I must go."

A few minutes later he presented himself at the head-magisterial door. The sedate Parker, the Head's butler, who always filled Charteris with a desire to dig him hard in the ribs just to see what would happen, ushered him to the study.

The headmaster was reading by the light of a lamp when Charteris came in. He laid down his book, and motioned him to a seat. After which there was an awkward pause.

"I have just received," began the Head at last, "a most unpleasant communication. Most unpleasant. From whom it comes I do not know. It is, in fact—er—anonymous. I am sorry that I ever read it."

He was in time to see the tail end of the train disappearing round the curve. "You've missed it!" said the porter cheerfully. (*See page* 68.)

He paused. Charteris made no comment. He guessed what was coming. He, too, was sorry that the Head had ever read the letter.

"The writer says that he saw you, that he actually spoke to you, at the athletic sports at Rutton, yesterday. I have called you in to tell me if that's true."

He fastened an accusing eye on his companion.

"It is quite true, sir," said Charteris steadily.

"What," said the Head sharply, "you were at Rutton?"

"Yes, sir."

"You were perfectly aware, I suppose, that you were breaking the school rules by going there, Charteris?"

"Yes, sir."

There was another pause.

"This is very serious," said the headmaster. "I cannot overlook this. I——"

There was a slight scuffle of feet outside in the passage, and a noise as if somebody were groping for the handle. The door flew open vigorously, and a young lady entered. Charteris recognised her in an instant as his acquaintance of the previous afternoon.

"Uncle," she said, "have you seen my book anywhere? *Hallo!*" she broke off as she caught sight of Charteris.

"Hallo," said Charteris affably, not to be outdone in the courtesies.

"Did you catch your train?"

"No. Missed it."

"Hallo, what's the matter with your cheek?"

"I got a kick on it."

"Oh, does it hurt?"

"Not much, thanks."

Here the headmaster, feeling perhaps a little out of it, put in his oar.

"Dorothy, you must not come here now. I am busy. But how, may I ask, do you and Charteris come to be acquainted?"

"Why, he's him," said Dorothy lucidly.

The Head looked puzzled.

"Him—the man, you know."

It is greatly to the credit of the Head's intelligence that he grasped the meaning of these words.

"Do you mean to tell me, Dorothy, that it was Charteris who came to your assistance yesterday?"

Dorothy nodded energetically. Charteris began to feel exactly like a side-show.

"Dorothy," said her uncle, "run away."

Dorothy retired in good order. The Head was silent for a few minutes after she had gone. Then he turned to Charteris again. "You must understand, Charteris, that you have committed a serious breach of school rules, and I must punish you for it. You will, therefore, write me out —er—ten lines of Virgil by to-morrow evening, Charteris."

"Yes, sir!"

"It is very serious," said the Head sternly, as he gazed at Charteris. "I cannot overlook——" He broke off; both turned to the door as it opened and a young lady entered. (*See this page*).

"Latin *and* English," continued the Head.

"Yes, sir."

"And, Charteris—I am speaking now—er—unofficially: not as a headmaster, you understand—if in future you would cease to break school rules simply as a matter of principle—I—er—well, I think we should get on better together, Charteris. Good-night, Charteris."

"Good-night, sir."

The Head extended a hand. Charteris took it, and his departure. The headmaster, opening his book again, turned over a new leaf.

So did Charteris.

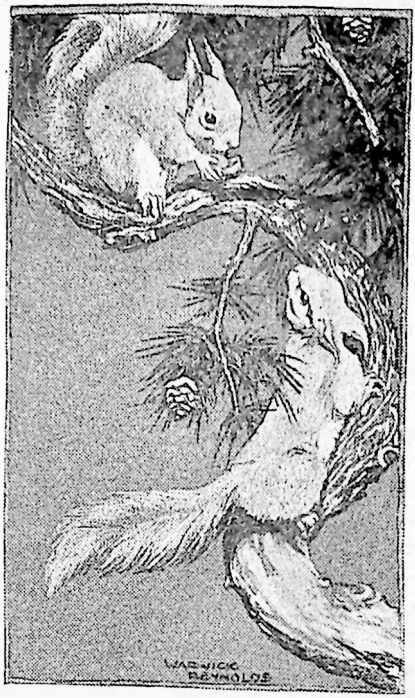
THE END

AMONG THE TREE-TOPS

A Charming Nature Story

By

CLIVE R. FENN



For weeks the two squirrels worked to get their larder into a fit and proper state of preparedness for the winter.

WHITE EYE, the squirrel, always said it would be far wiser to trek south for the winter. He flicked his red bushy tail as he advanced this opinion. Flash, his companion, who was of a lighter shade of brown, but just as firm in his views of what was right and proper, declared it was all nonsense.

"It is really warmer up here," he urged, "and there are plenty of nuts. You see if I am not right! We can collect quite a respectable store for the bad times."

White Eye blinked a few times, and moved his tail very fast, but he knew he would have to give way. He knew, too, that there was more food in the woods further down towards the sun, with bigger woods, and a rare lot more cover. But there are very few things in this world worth arguing about; White Eye realised it, and gave way.

For weeks the two close comrades worked hammer and tongs to get their larder in a fit and proper state of preparedness. They had the freehold of a very old hut which had long since been abandoned. The hut had been forgotten. It was situated in the depths of a wood, on a little shelf which overlooked a stream that went brawling its way over the rocks, to join a larger river miles distant.

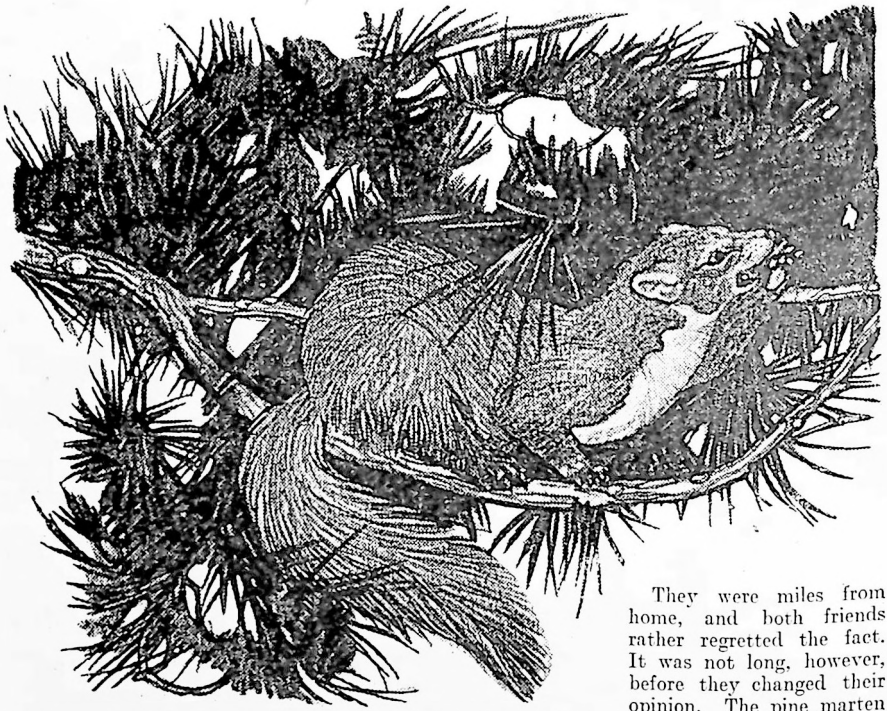
"We haven't got half enough yet, you know," said Flash, as they inspected their supplies one day, when there was the first chill of autumn in the air. "You know how peckish I am on the cold days."

White Eye said nothing. He generally fell with in the views of his friend. So the two squirrels went scouting all over the country for further provender in readiness for the bad weather. They skipped across the glades where, here and there, a blue flower still carried on, though the season was at an end. They were happy days in the wilds. Sometimes the sun shone from early morning till the white mist curled over the blue lochs as evening came.

"We've got enough," said White Eye, one day as dusk fell. "I think——" He stopped speaking and sniffed.

"I say, Flash, did you notice anything?" he asked.

The other squirrel swung himself from the



bough on which he was perched, and stared at his chum, who was several stages further down.

"Yes," he replied, in a frightened voice; "and between you and me and that fir tree, I don't like it at all. It reminds me of weasels and polecats. I know! It's a marten! It's a nasty, vicious brute. We'd better clear at once."

What they had detected was the presence of Melkin, the marten, sure as eggs are eggs. In another minute the nut-hunting comrades made out their enemy. The stranger was peering at them from the shady depths of an ash, his eyes glittering in the gloom. He was a fairly dark chocolate-brown colour, with a distinctly handsome orange shirt-front.

"He thinks we live here," murmured Flash.

"He would! Just what a marten always does!" replied White Eye scornfully.

They were miles from home, and both friends rather regretted the fact. It was not long, however, before they changed their opinion. The pine marten scampered along a branch, making straight for the squirrels, whisking his tail.

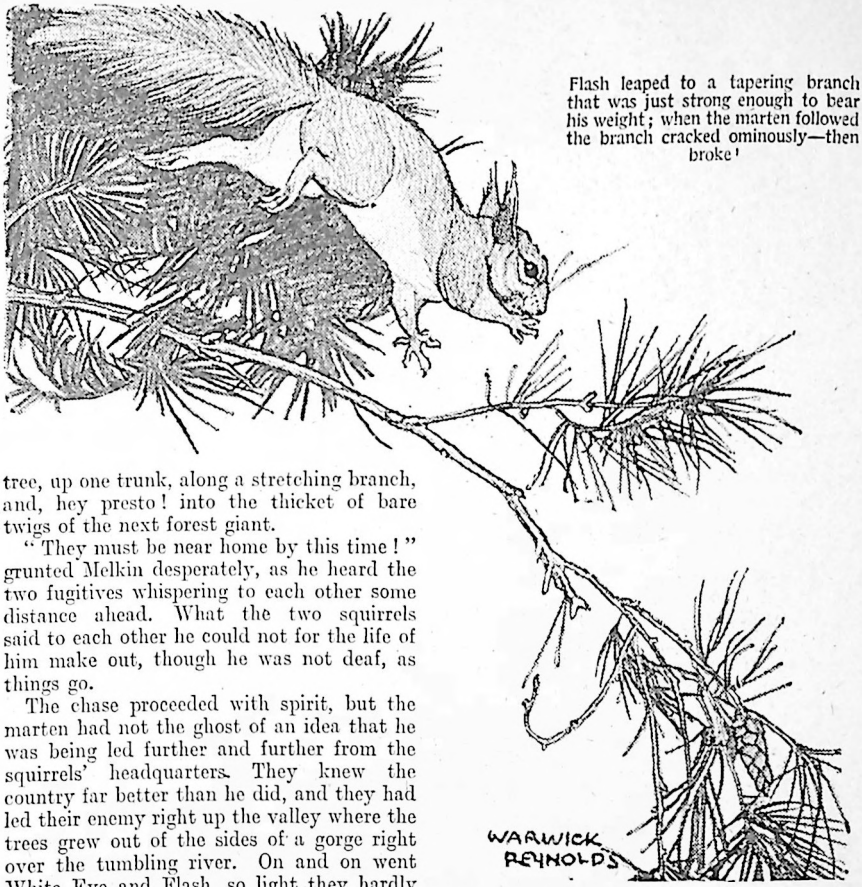
"A squirrel for supper with nut sauce—they are bound to live close at hand—will suit me at a pinch," he said to himself, as he twitched his tawny whiskers. "Here's for it!"

But planning the menu was one thing. To supply the goods was quite another thing.

"They'll have got their store in one of these trees," he said to himself.

It was in his mind that it would be a case of two birds—or rather, a pair of squirrels—with one stone, but he had counted without his host. White Eye and Flash had been up and down in the world of trees all their merry young lives, and it is trees that count, as they knew well.

Away they danced, springing from tree to



Flash leaped to a tapering branch that was just strong enough to bear his weight; when the marten followed the branch cracked ominously—then broke!

tree, up one trunk, along a stretching branch, and, hey presto! into the thicket of bare twigs of the next forest giant.

"They must be near home by this time!" grunted Melkin desperately, as he heard the two fugitives whispering to each other some distance ahead. What the two squirrels said to each other he could not for the life of him make out, though he was not deaf, as things go.

The chase proceeded with spirit, but the marten had not the ghost of an idea that he was being led further and further from the squirrels' headquarters. They knew the country far better than he did, and they had led their enemy right up the valley where the trees grew out of the sides of a gorge right over the tumbling river. On and on went White Eye and Flash, so light they hardly seemed to touch the boughs.

Suddenly the marten saw the foremost squirrel give a spring, and, forgetting prudence, he followed. But the tapering branch, which was just strong enough to bear Flash, snapped beneath the marten's weight, and the next second, so far as he was able to estimate anything, he was whirling down and down, plosh, into the waters far below. His head struck a stone, and he was terribly dizzy until the rush of the river brought him round. He had such a job to get to the bank, although he was quite a respectable swimmer, for the current was strong!

He thought he heard a laugh floating along the foaming water towards him, as, at last, he was seated on a mossy stone removing bits of rubbish from his fur. It is just possible, though it may have been his vivid imagination. But, anyhow, the squirrels did laugh as they raced for home.

THE END

FAMOUS SCHOOLBOY FIGHTS!

By GEORGE WINGATE

Captain of Greyfriars

The great fight was interrupted by the arrival of the Head in the fourteenth round.

ON the historic battleground behind the school chapel, many fierce and famous fights have been fought throughout the generations. Some I have witnessed myself; some I have actually taken part in; but the most famous fights of all took place long before I came to Greyfriars. I am indebted to various Old Boys for details of these stirring encounters.

* * *

IN 1875, there was a terrific "scrap" between Tom Power, the captain of Greyfriars, and Fowkes of the Fifth—a big, blustering fellow who had earned for himself the nickname of "The Terror." Bullying was rampant in those days, and Fowkes was the arch-bully of Greyfriars. He was feared and hated on every side, and none of his Form-fellows had the courage to tackle him. Few of the Sixth cared to face him, for that matter. Such a domineering tyrant did Fowkes become that Tom Power realised that his prestige was being undermined, and that he would have to put Fowkes in his place if he wished to retain his authority. So he challenged the burly Fifth-former to a fight.

* * *

AND what a fight it was! I am informed, by an eye-witness, that it lasted fifteen rounds, and was waged with a sternness which amounted almost to ferocity. Tom Power was a muscular giant, and the idol of the fags, who gathered round in a ring and cheered him to the echo; but he had all his work cut out to cope with the savage rushes of Fowkes. Indeed, the captain of Greyfriars was several times in danger of defeat; but in the fifteenth round, when all seemed lost, he rallied magnificently, and piled heavy punishment upon his powerful opponent. Fowkes was down at last, with all the fight knocked out of him; and from that time onwards he ceased to terrorise the smaller fry, and wisely dropped his bullying ways.

* * *

THE great fight of 1899 is still discussed, when two or three Old Boys are gathered together. This was a tremendous slogging-match between Harcourt and Hawkes, of the Sixth. There had been no feud or quarrel; the fight was to decide who was the champion fighting-man of Greyfriars. So evenly matched were the participants that neither could claim the advantage, though both received terrible punishment. It was a case of Greek meeting Greek, with a vengeance! The fighters were in such a deplorable state after ten rounds of mutual hammering, that their friends called upon them to stop, and call it a draw. But neither Harcourt nor Hawkes would consent to this arrangement, and the fight went on. It was interrupted by the arrival of the Head in the fourteenth round; and no decision was arrived at. Subsequently, however, the two seniors met again, in the seclusion of Friardale Wood; and after a gruelling fight the verdict went to Harcourt.

HOW TO BE HAPPY THOUGH HARRIED

A Cheery Interview with Gosling, the Greyfriars Porter

By A
"Holiday Annual" Representative

"I'm a little ray of sunshine, that's wot I am!" said Gosling, as he took the half-crown.

"AM I 'appy?" said William Gosling, in reply to my query. "Of course I'm 'appy! I'm a-brimmin' an' a-bubblin' over with 'appiness, as ever was! My name ought never to 'ave been William Gosling. It oughter 'ave been Mark Tapley!"

I smiled.

"Well, you've changed since I last saw you, Gossy," I said. "When I interviewed you on a previous occasion, you were as grumpy and surly as a bear with a sore head."

"Ah! I was a pessimist in them days," said Gosling. "But now I've blossomed into a cheery hoptimist. I halways looks on the sunny side o' things, an' views life through rose-coloured spectacles. I sings to meself, sings I:

"What's the use of worritin'?
It never was worth while;
So pack all your troubles in your old kitbag
And smile, smile, smile!"

And Gosling smiled—the broad, elastic smile of a ventriloquist's doll.

"Mind you," said Gosling, "I don't 'ave an easy time of it in this 'ere seat o' learnin'. My dooties are wot you might call——"

"Multifarious?" I suggested.

"That's a good word; I'll back it both ways. I never gets a minute's peace, from the risin' hup of the sun unto the goin' down of the same. I'm hup with the lark to ring the risin' bell. Then I gets my broom an' sweeps away the autumn leaves, or the winter snow, or the summer dust; also the litter wot all the young rascals 'ave made in the Close. You'd be surprised at the things they strews about—paper bags from the tuckshop, an' 'orse-chestnuts, an' tops, an' marbles, an' all manner of hodds an' hends. One mornin' I swep' hup a five-pun note!"

"Great Scott! Did you discover the owner of it?"

"Yus; it belonged to young Lord Mauleverer. 'E throws bank-notes about as if they was waste paper. Nice to be rollin' in riches, ain't it? But I'm jest as 'appy as 'is lordship, for all 'is wealth! Money don't make 'appiness. I'm 'appier than the 'Ead, too. I ain't got all 'is worry an' responsibility. 'Uneasy lies the 'Ead wot wears a gown,' as the sayin' goes. My dooties are never done. I'm a-racin' an' a-chasin' about all day long, at everybody's beck an' call. It's 'Gosling-this' an' it's 'Gosling-that,' an' it's 'Gosling-the-other,' till I sometimes wonders whether I'm on me 'ead or me 'eels. But I'm quite 'appy through it all, bless yer 'eart! I'm wot they calls a phil—phil——"

"Philosopher?" I hazarded.

"That's it! Wot I says is this 'ere: a merry 'eart goes all the day, an' all the year, for that matter. I'm finished with growlin' an' scowlin' an' snappin' an' yappin'. I'm a little ray of sunshine now, that's wot I am!"

I slipped a half-crown into Gosling's horny palm and strolled away, leaving the "little ray of sunshine" beaming all over his dial.

THE END

Greyfriars Champions

WILLIAM WIBLEY

(Champion Impersonator)

The praise of Wibley I proclaim,
An actor most deserving,
Who later on will win the fame
Of Tree or Henry Irving.
No matter what his chosen part,
King Richard or Othello,
He is a genius at the art—
A really clever fellow!

He sets the table in a roar
With all his pranks and prattling;
We rock with laughter more and more
Until the china's rattling!
He gives us extracts from the plays,
Both gleefully and glibly,
Until we gape in sheer amaze,
And stammer: "Bravo, Wibley!"

Impersonating is a task
At which he has no equal;
Though when he chooses to unmask
There's oft a painful sequel.
He is a master of disguise,
He shows delightful daring;
It needs a pair of eagle eyes
To pierce what he is wearing!

The school would be a duller place,
If Wibley wasn't in it;
We love to see his cheery face,
And wonder, every minute,
What "stunt" he's planning in his mind
To make us laugh in chorus;
When Wib's in form, we always find
A feast of fun before us!

Aircraft at Sea

ALTHOUGH the Atlantic Ocean has been flown by an aeroplane, it is an accepted fact that the heavier-than-air craft are suitable only for comparatively short-distance flights. Because the Navy needs aircraft, and because our war vessels traverse thousands of miles of ocean, it has been necessary to design special ships which are, in effect, floating hangers.

The top part of the plate opposite gives a side view and some particulars of an aircraft carrier. From such a vessel, aeroplanes can rise, do whatever work is required, and return to the mother-craft without even sighting land.

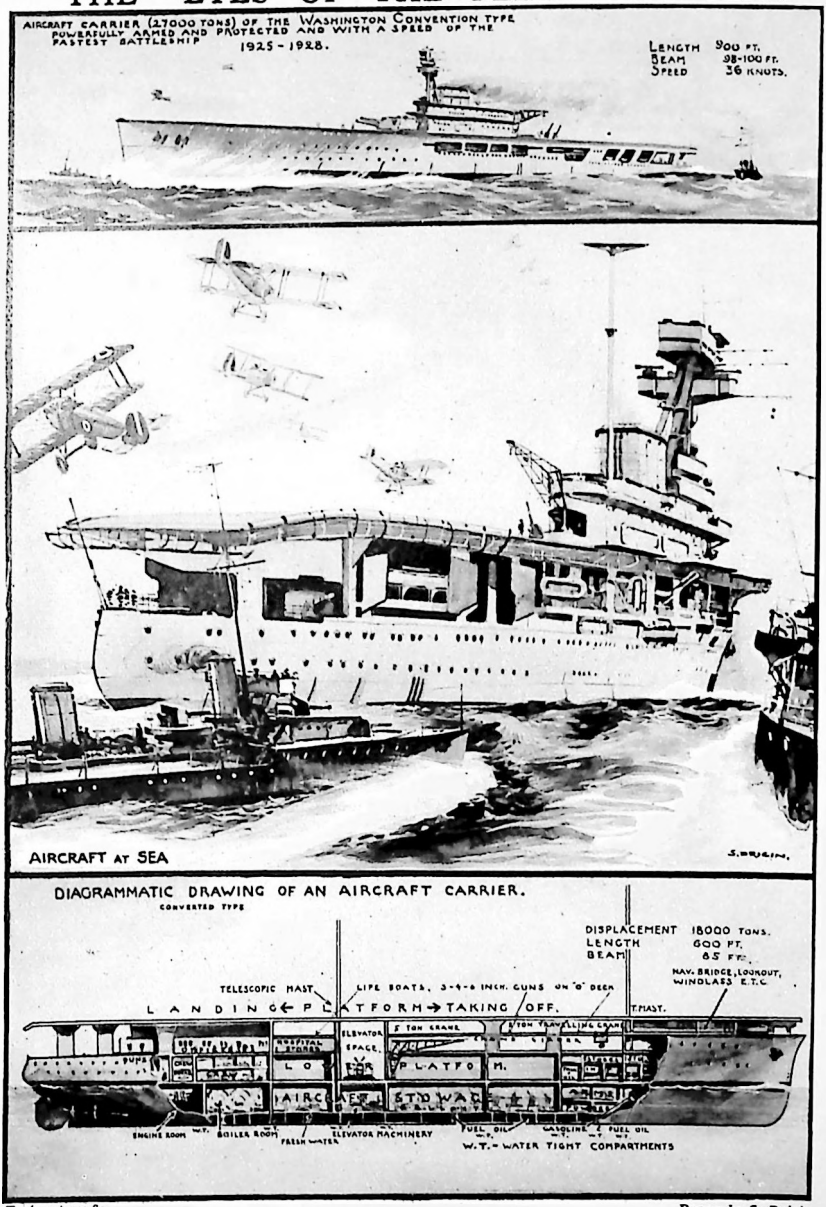
On the carrier, 'planes are re-fuelled, overhauled and repaired just as effectively as they might be at an aerodrome. Naturally, of course, the pilots need great skill, because of the restricted space available for landing or taking off. There have been many inventions and suggestions for making certain that a machine shall land safely, but hardly any have proved practicable.

An aeroplane has to attain a certain minimum speed before it will rise into the air; in some small fighting machines, this speed is very high indeed—seventy or eighty miles an hour, or even more. Naturally, when the machine is landing, it will touch the deck of the aircraft carrier at the same speed at which it takes off, with only a run of under three hundred yards in which to come to a dead stop.

Safe landing depends very much upon the skill of the pilot. It is possible to "stall" a 'plane in such a way that the air itself acts as a brake, and so checks the speed before the machine actually touches the deck.

The central part of the photogravure plate shows a typical scene on an aircraft carrier, and the picture below gives a very clear idea of how the vessel is planned. The aeroplanes, it will be seen, are stored away in the heart of the vessel, being brought by an elevator to the landing and taking-off platform on deck.

THE "EYES OF THE FLEET" AT SEA!



To face page 80

Drawn by S. Drigin

An Important Unit in the British Navy—The Aircraft Carrier

SPORTING RECORDS OF 1926

By GEORGE WINGATE

(*Captain of Greyfriars*)

CRICKET

WE are now at the tail-end of the cricket season, which has been a keenly exciting one at Greyfriars. Once again the old school has covered itself with glory; for the First Eleven has won twenty matches out of twenty-six. Two games were lost, and the remainder drawn, chiefly owing to inclement weather.

* * *

A SCHOOL record, which had remained unbroken for 28 years, has been beaten at last. Prior to this season, the highest score ever made by the Greyfriars senior eleven was 640 for 5 wickets (declared). This was against Friardale Village in 1899. It would seem well-nigh impossible to eclipse this gigantic score, but the impossible has been achieved. Playing against the very same club—Friardale Village—the School ran up a total of 672!

* * *

PATRICK GWYNNE, the tall Irish senior, carried off the chief honours in this remarkable match. Batting in dashing, fearless style, Gwynne obtained 226 not out, which is nearly—but not quite—a school record. The record for the highest individual score in Greyfriars cricket is held by H. V. Clifton who, many years ago, scored 244. Clifton's great record is not likely to be disturbed for many years.

* * *

THE chief bowling honours this season have fallen to Tom North, who in one match clean bowled six men for no runs. Remarkable as is such a feat, it has been excelled; for on delving into my Wisden I find that on July 31, 1891, playing for South Hants v. Ventnor, Mr. V. E. Archer Burton clean bowled 9 wickets for no runs.

* * *

WE have very few big hitters in Greyfriars cricket to-day; and the feat of R. B. Standish, who in 1906 hit a ball clean over the roof of the gymnasium, still remains unequalled. Here is a chance for one of our budding Jessops to show what he can do in the smiting line.

The feat of R. B. Standish still remains unequalled; he hit a ball clean over the roof of the gymnasium.

* * *

FOOTBALL

GREYFRIARS can boast splendid traditions as a footballing school; and we may look back upon last season's performances with pride. Both senior and junior elevens acquitted themselves well; and, curiously enough, their records are identical. Played, 40. Won, 27; drawn, 8; lost, 5.

THERE were many outstanding performances. The seniors trounced Courtfield Athletic by 10 goals to nil—on the Courtfielders' ground, too. The Remove eleven, in their last match of the season, fairly ran riot against Burchester Grammar School, and won by the amazing score of 14 goals to 1. The latter score is not a record, however, the highest score ever obtained being 17—1, against Wapshot Juniors.

* * *

GEORGE BULSTRODE, the Remove goalkeeper, conceded only 10 goals in 40 matches. His skill between the posts is remarkable, and he already has the makings of a famous custodian.

* * *

THE Public Schools' Challenge Cup has been won by the Greyfriars Remove on five occasions—in 1895, 1896, 1904, 1924, and 1925. Now for the "hat-trick"!

* * *

GENERAL NOTICES

AMMERSLEY, of the Sixth, won the Senior Boxing Championship this year, whilst the junior honours fell to Bob Cherry.

* * *

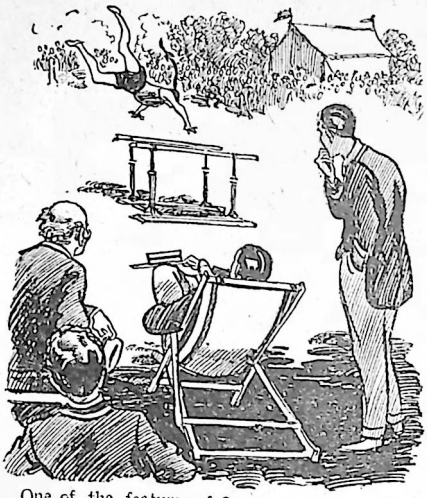
HARRY WHARTON again proved himself the champion swimmer of the Remove.

* * *

A DISPLAY of acrobatic feats by little Wun Lung, the Chinese junior, was one of the features of Sports Day.

* * *

TOM BROWN won the junior cycling championship of Greyfriars; and the annual Marathon Race was won in heroic style by Mark Linley.



One of the features of Sports Day was a display of acrobatics by Wun Lung, the Chinese junior.

HORACE COKER, of the Fifth Form, was to have given an exhibition of trick riding on his motor-bike. Unfortunately, however, the jigger absolutely refused to start at the critical moment. Coker, panting and puffing, pushed the machine at a smart trot the best part of half a mile without result, whereupon he retired amidst much laughter and cheers.

* * *

MR. PAUL PROUT'S offer to entertain the visitors by an exhibition of marksmanship with the identical rifle which—according to Mr. Prout—did so much execution amongst the grizzly bears of the Rocky Mountains in the 'eighties, was not accepted by the Head.

* * *

COKER of the Fifth scored in the tug-of-war, the team which he skippered beating Blundell's team after a stout tussle in the final heat. As Blundell was heard to remark, it was a case of brawn beating brain.

* * *

THE Masters' Race (220 yds.) was won by Mr. Lascelles from scratch. Monsieur Charpentier, with 50 yards start, made a great race of it, and was only beaten on the post by a yard.

* * *

HOSKINS of the Shell scored a great personal triumph on Speech Day. He was allowed to play "a little thing of his own" on the piano before the assembled guests. So weird and wonderful were the sounds that resulted, that everyone agreed that Hoskins must be awfully clever!

There's only one Billy Bunter—here's the story of his latest exploit!

What Happened To Bunter!

A New and Amusing Extra-long story of the famous fat boy of Greyfriars School—specially written

By FRANK RICHARDS

THE FIRST CHAPTER
A Pressing Problem!

"WHO'S paying my fare?"

Billy Bunter asked the question.

He paused, like Brutus of old, for a reply.

Like Brutus, he paused in vain.

There was no reply.

"Don't all speak at once!" went on Bunter.

Harry Wharton & Co. did not all speak at once. They did not speak at all.

Billy Bunter blinked at them through his big spectacles. He seemed perplexed.

"Deaf?" he asked.

No answer.

"Dumb?" snorted Bunter.

The five juniors in No. 1 Study, in the Greyfriars Remove, really seemed to be either deaf or dumb. If they heard Bunter, they heeded not.

"I say, you fellows! I asked you a question!" hooted Bunter. "You're going over to St. Jim's this afternoon for the football match. I'm coming."

Silence.

"I'm coming along with you," explained Bunter. "I knew you fellows would like me to come, so I've fixed it. See?"

A burst of enthusiasm on the part of the Famous Five would have been appropriate at this point. The prospective pleasure of Bunter's company on a long train journey was sufficient to evoke enthusiasm—from Bunter's point of view, at least.

Still Harry Wharton & Co. did not play up. Enthusiasm would have been appropriate, but—as Fisher T. Fish, of the Remove, would have expressed it in the American language—they did not enthuse worth a cent! There was not a general brightening of faces, as Bunter seemed to expect. On the other hand, a sort of glumness became visible on five youthful countenances.

"I've arranged to come," continued Bunter. "I'm giving up my half-holiday to come over to St. Jim's and see you fellows play footer. Mauleverer wanted me to go out with him in a car, but I've turned him down."

Then Bob Cherry found his voice.

"Turn him up again, old bean!" he suggested.

"Eh?"

"Mauly's a more patient chap than we are," said Bob. "He can stand you better than we can. Stick to him; he's much less likely to kick you than we are!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I say, you fellows, you'd like me to come, I suppose? The fact is, Walker of the Sixth is looking for me——"

"What?"

"You know what a suspicious brute Walker is. I never had the cake——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a bit thick, the way a fellow always comes inquiring after me if he misses a cake. I don't want to see Walker. It's rather beneath my dgnity to enter into a sordid argument about a measly cake that had hardly any plums in it. I'd rather not see Walker at present. Besides, I want to go over to St. Jim's; I've got some old pals there. The only difficulty is the fare. If you had sense enough to put me in the eleven, Wharton, it would be all right; it would come out of the club funds. But you always were an ass!"

"Thanks," said the captain of the Remove.

"It's not too late, if you like to make a change in the team. You can leave out some dud to make room for me. Johnny Bull, f'rinstance."

"What?" growled Johnny Bull.

"Or Nugent. Nugent can't play footer for toffee. You don't mind my mentioning it, do you, Franky?"

"Not at all," said Frank Nugent politely.

"Or Inky," said Bunter thoughtfully. "You can leave Inky out, Wharton. He's no good, you know. Inky wouldn't mind standing out to make room for a better man, would you, Inky? Me, you know."

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh grinned.

"The betterfulness is not terrific, my esteemed, fat-headed Bunter," he remarked.

"Oh, really, Inky——"

"Shut the door after you, old fat man!" said Bob Cherry.

This was a broad hint.

But William George Bunter was impervious to hints.

"I'm not going yet," he said. "What do you say, Wharton?"

"Rats!" said Harry Wharton.

"The fact is, I think it's about time I played for Greyfriars," said the Owl of the Remove seriously. "I quite understand that you fellows don't like being put in the shade by a better man, and all that. Still, that's not the game. Play the game, you know."

"Fathead!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! Look here, suppose you put me down as a reserve?" suggested Bunter brightly. "You're taking some reserves, I suppose?"

"Yes—Ogilvy and Russell."

"They're not much good. Take me as a reserve, in case you want a really good man."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Then the club will have to pay my fare, see?" explained Bunter.

Harry Wharton & Co. chuckled.

Billy Bunter, apparently, was to be taken to St. Jim's for the football match, either as a player or as a reserve, to keep him out of the way of Walker of the Sixth, who was inquiring after a missing cake. Really, Remove footballers were not selected on those lines.

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at!" said Bunter peevishly. "I'm trying to save you fellows money by making these suggestions. My fare's got to be paid, I suppose?"

"Suppose again!" suggested Johnny Bull.

"I happen to be short of money—not a usual thing with me——"

"Oh!"

"I've been disappointed about a postal-order——"

"Ye gods!"

"Well, then, to come to the point, who's paying my fare?"

The Famous Five grinned, but they made no answer. No one, apparently, was anxious to capture the honour of paying William George Bunter's fare to St. Jim's.

"I don't mind going third!" added Bunter, with the air of a fellow making a large concession. "There!"

Still there were no takers. William George Bunter blinked at five smiling faces, one after another, anxiously; but his anxiety was not relieved. Even third-class fare did not seem to be forthcoming.

"Well, of all the rotters!" said Bunter, at last. "Of all the——"

"Bunter here?" asked Herbert Vernon-Smith, of the Remove, looking into No. 1 Study.

The Owl of the Remove blinked round at him.

"Yes, old chap—here I am. I say, Smithy, these mean beasts refuse to pay my fare to St. Jim's. But I know you're not so jolly mean as they are, Smithy, old chap."

The Bounder grinned.

"More!" he answered. "Much more! Stingy, in fact!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Smithy——"

"Walker's coming upstairs," said the Bounder. "I looked in to give you the tip. He seems rather excited."

"Oh, dear!"

Billy Bunter forgot, for the moment, his ambitions as a footballer, and the pressing problem of his fare to St. Jim's. Walker of the Sixth, coming up to the Remove passage with his ashplant, was a more pressing problem for the moment.

There was a heavy tread on the stairs.

Bunter lost no time as Walker of the Sixth crashed to the floor, one hand clasped to his damaged nose. Bunter shot through the open doorway with lightning speed, and fled down the corridor. (*See Chapter* 1.)

"I—I say, you fellows, d-d-don't say anything!" gasped Bunter, and he backed behind the study door.

The heavy tread of the Sixth-former came along the Remove passage.

Bunter wedged himself in between the open door and the wall.

So long as the door remained open he was hidden from sight, unless Walker of the Sixth came right into the study.

From his hiding-place, he turned an imploring blink on the chums of the Remove.

The heavy footsteps stopped at the open doorway of No. 1 Study.

James Walker, of the Sixth Form, looked in, with an ashplant in his hand and a grim expression on his face.

"Where's Bunter?" he demanded.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked as unconscious as they could.

From where they stood, near the window, they had a full view of the fat junior, squeezed behind the door that hid him from Walker. But they tried to look as if they hadn't.

"Bunter?" repeated Wharton.

"Yes, Bunter! The fat villain is about here somewhere," said Walker savagely. "He's been raiding my study—he's got my cake. Where is he?"

"This isn't Bunter's study," said Nugent.

"I know that! I'm beginning here, and I'm going to look in every study in the passage," growled Walker. "I'll teach the fat young scoundrel to raid a Sixth-form study! Why, three or four fellows saw him bolting with the cake—my cake—a ten-bob cake, too! I'll skin him. Where is he?"

"Gentle shepherd, tell me where!" sang Bob Cherry.

"Echo answers where!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"The wherefulness is terrific, my esteemed Walker."

"I don't want any Remove cheek!" roared Walker. "I want Bunter! Is he in this study?"

Walker of the Sixth strode in, to glance round the room, giving the door a shove as he came, to throw it wider open.

But there was no room for the door to open wider.

Billy Bunter's circumference was against it.

"Oooooooh!"

It was an agonised gasp from Billy Bunter, as he was squeezed hard between door and wall.

"Why—what—who——!"

Walker of the Sixth understood.

He grasped the door-handle, to drag it away from the wall.

Bunter was not famous for presence of mind. His fat intellect did not, as a rule, work quickly. But fear is said to lend wings, and on the present occasion, terror of Walker's ashplant lent wings to Bunter's slow wits. With wonderful and surprising promptness Bunter hurled the door at Walker, as the senior pulled it; and the hard oak edge crashed fairly on Walker's nose.

"Oh!" roared Walker.

It was a painful shock. An oaken door, crashing on a fellow's nose with Bunter's weight behind it, is no joke.

Walker staggered back, and sat down suddenly, roaring.

Bunter lost no time. Only too well was he aware that there was no time to lose. He dodged round Walker, as Walker sat and roared, and fled out of No. 1 Study with lightning speed.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry.

Walker staggered up. He clasped his nose, which streamed red.

"Ow! My nose! Wow! I'll—I'll skin him—I—I—I——" Walker became incoherent. He gripped his ashplant with an infuriated grip, and rushed out of the study after Bunter.

Billy Bunter was already on the staircase, going strong. Walker of the Sixth raced in pursuit.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Bob Cherry. "It looks to me as if Bunter will be too busy for football this afternoon."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors rushed out of the study. They had a view of Walker, going down the Remove staircase three at a time. But Bunter, on the lower stairs, was well ahead, and still going strong. Bunter was not famous as a sprinter, but he looked like winning that race. Pursued and pursuer vanished from the sight of the Removites.

Really, it looked as if William George Bunter would be too busy, for some time, to think about football matches; and Harry Wharton & Co. did not expect to see any more of him before they started for St. Jim's.

But it was the unexpected that was to happen.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

Merely a Mistake!

"OH, dear!"

Billy Bunter groaned under his breath.

Really it seemed as if the troubles of the Owl of the Remove would never cease.

Trouble often occurred to William George Bunter, in his career as a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles. But the purloining of that cake from Walker's study seemed to be bringing in its train more than its due amount of trouble.

The fat junior had succeeded in dodging the Sixth-former, and escaping—for the time. By devious ways, Bunter had reached the Remove box-room, where now he was lying low.

In those very moments, he knew, Harry Wharton & Co. would be starting for Friardale Station, en route for St. Jim's. Bunter's little scheme of escaping Walker of the Sixth, by joining the football party, was knocked on the head—he dared not venture forth.

It was hard cheese—he felt that it was so. By the time the party returned from St. Jim's, Walker's wrath would have cooled down—he might even have dismissed the whole incident from his mind. But those unfeeling fellows had left Bunter in the lurch, and now they would be going off without him, just as if he did not matter. And Bunter mattered very much—very much indeed.

Still, it was something to be out of Walker's reach, and Bunter sat on a big trunk belonging to Lord Mauleverer, and rested, and recovered his breath. And then, to his dismay, he heard the sound of footsteps on the little staircase that led up from the Remove passage to the box-room.

"Oh, dear! Oh, crikey!" murmured the fat junior.

He rose from the trunk, and listened.

He had a faint hope that the footsteps might be those of Skinner and his friends, who sometimes came up to the box-room to smoke on a half-holiday. But that hope was faint, for he knew that Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, had lately discovered a lingering smell of tobacco-smoke in that remote apart-

Bunter flung the heavy bag with all his strength—but it wasn't Walker who had come through the doorway, it was Mr. Quelch! It sent the master of the Remove staggering across the box-room. "Oh—it's Quelchy!" gasped Bunter. (*See Chapter* 2.)

ment, and had become suspicious. Once or twice of late the Remove master had been seen in that quarter, and Skinner & Co. had taken the alarm.

He listened intently, and his last hope vanished. The footsteps were those of only one person: and they were too heavy for a junior.

"The awful beast!" groaned Bunter.

He was run-down in his last refuge.

And there was no escape now! He was fairly cornered in the box-room; and as soon as Walker of the Sixth appeared in the doorway, he was doomed! Then the ashplant would begin its operations!

Bunter breathed hard.

He had a strong objection to being licked—an insurmountable objection to the lightest flick of a cane. And he knew only too well that this would not be a case of flicking. The damage to Walker's nose had to be paid for—the licking was likely to be a record one.

Bunter was desperate.

Even the worm will turn: and it was agreed by all the Lower School of Greyfriars that Bunter was a good deal of a worm!

He resolved to turn!

After all, as he was booked for as severe a licking as Walker could give him, he might as well take it resisting, he considered, as lying down. It was no worse to be hung for a sheep than for a lamb.

Bunter's eyes gleamed behind his big spectacles.

There was a chance—a faint chance, if he took his courage in both hands, as it were, and made the most of it. Walker was apparently coming up to search the box-room for him, and if he could upset Walker the moment he entered, and flee before the prefect could scramble up, there was a chance of getting clear. What had happened in No. 1 Study might happen again—history might repeat itself.

Bunter looked round desperately for a weapon.

There was a large and heavy portmanteau—one of Lord Mauleverer's many possessions—lying near at hand. Bunter clutched it up.

Then he took up his position behind the door.

The big portmanteau, grasped in his fat hands, was raised above his head, all ready to crash upon the prefect as soon as he stepped in.

If the shot went home, there was no doubt that Walker would be sent sprawling across the box-room; and then Bunter's cue was to dodge out of the doorway and vanish.

Really, it seemed quite a hopeful plan if the fat junior's nerve did not fail him.

And his courage was screwed up to the sticking point now—anything was better than taking the tremendous licking Walker designed for him.

He waited, breathing in jerks, his eyes gleaming through his spectacles, the heavy bag poised ready to hurl.

The footsteps came up to the little landing outside the box-room, and stopped.

The door-handle was grasped outside, and turned.

The door opened.

Whiz!

Crash!

"Oh!"

Bump!

And Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, went sprawling across the box-room.

Bunter was a short-sighted fellow; but the quickest sight could not have saved him from that mistake.

Being absolutely convinced, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that it was Walker of the Sixth who was coming up to the box-room in search of him, Bunter had acted with a swift decision and promptness that would have been admirable—had the newcomer been Walker.

But it happened to be Mr. Quelch.

Walker, in those moments, was rooting somewhere around the form-rooms in search of the Owl of the Remove. Mr. Quelch was paying a quiet visit to the Remove box-room on the trail of the unknown delinquents who had once left a smell of tobacco-smoke there.

Of course, Bunter could not know that.

A fellow could not think of everything.

But it was very unfortunate.

As Mr. Quelch crashed and sprawled, Bunter gave a breathless giggle, and darted for the doorway.

Then he saw what he had done.

His flight was suddenly arrested in mid-career. He stopped in the doorway, and stared at the sprawling Formmaster, his little round eyes almost bulging through his spectacles in horror.

"Oh!" he gasped.

"Ow!" spluttered Mr. Quelch.

"Quelchy!" stuttered Bunter.

"Groogh! Bless my soul! Bunter!"

Mr. Quelch sat up.

He had had a startling shock for an elderly gentleman quite unaccustomed to horseplay.

He gasped and spluttered in a dazed and dizzy condition, and his eyes fairly glinted at Bunter.

"Bunter! You young rascal——"

"Oh, dear!"

"You young ruffian——"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"You shall be flogged for this!" roared Mr. Quelch. "You shall be expelled from Greyfriars Bunter."

Great beads of perspiration rolled down Bunter's fat face as he lumbered up to the compartment in which Harry Wharton & Co. were seated. "I—I say, you fellows, something's happened at Greyfriars—I simply must come with you!" (*See Chapter* 3.)

Mr. Quelch grasped at Mauleverer's trunk to help himself up. He was quite shaken.

Bunter backed through the doorway.

Walker would have been bad enough! But this was worse; this was awful; this was irreparable! Billy Bunter could not see that he was to blame in any way; but there was no doubt that his last state was worse than his first.

"Bunter! Stop!"

Bunter did not stop.

"Stop, I tell you!" gasped Mr. Quelch, dragging himself painfully up. "Stop! Do not go, Bunter! You will come with me to the Head. I shall demand your instant flogging and expulsion from the school. I shall take you immediately to Dr. Locke, Bunter!"

But Bunter was gone.

THE THIRD CHAPTER
Bunter Joins Up!

"I say, you fellows!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Bunter!"

"The esteemed and ludicrous Bunter."

Harry Wharton & Co. were taking their places in the train at Friardale Station. A fat figure came bolting along the platform, excitedly waving a fat hand.

It was William George Bunter, and he was in hot haste. The day was cold: but W. G. Bunter looked very warm.

He panted as he ran, and great drops of perspiration rolled down his forehead and his fat cheeks.

"I say!" he gasped. "I say, you fellows."

"Good-bye, Bunter."

"I'm coming!" panted Bunter.

"Your mistake," said Bob Cherry, cheerily.

"The mistakefulness is terrific."

"Ta-ta, old fat man."

Bunter made a dive at a carriage from which the grinning faces of Peter Todd and Herbert Vernon-Smith were looking. Peter being his study-mate at Greyfriars, doubtless Bunter expected Peter to stand by him in this emergency.

But perhaps Peter Todd had enough of Bunter's entertaining company in the study, and did not want any in the railway carriage. At all events, he closed the door, and grinned at Bunter from the window.

"Peter, you beast——"

"Roll off, old man."

"Peter, old chap——"

"Good-bye."

"Let me in, old fellow——"

"Bow-wow."

"Beast!"

Bunter gave Peter Todd up, and rolled along hurriedly to the next carriage, which was occupied by the Famous Five. Harry Wharton was closing the door, but Bunter grabbed it.

"Wharton, old fellow——"

"Stand back, Bunter, the train's going," said the captain of the Remove.

"I'm going in the train."

"Fathead!"

"I say, you fellows, something's happened at Greyfriars," gasped Bunter. "I must go. I simply must."

"Something will happen here, if you don't bunk," growled Johnny Bull. "It will hurt you when it happens."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"Back-pedal, old fat man," said Bob. "Do you want to be jerked under the train. Back off."

"I'm coming."

Slam, slam, slam, came along the train. The last doors were closing.

"Stand clear there!" shouted the Friardale porter.

"I say, you fellows——"

"You fat duffer," exclaimed Harry Wharton impatiently, "you can't travel without a ticket, Bunter! Don't play the giddy ox."

"I—I've got a ticket."

"You crass ass, why couldn't you say so before? Hop in!"

"There's no room for Bunter here," said Squiff, who was in the carriage with the Famous Five.

"I say, old chap——"

"Oh, let him wedge in, if he likes to stand," said Bob. "No time for the fat chump to get along to another carriage now."

Bunter plunged headlong in as the juniors made way for him.

Slam!

The carriage door closed after him, and the train moved. Bunter sprawled among innumerable feet at the bottom of the carriage.

"Off!" said Frank Nugent, taking his seat. "Get off my feet, Bunter, will you? You're not a light weight, you know."

"Ow, wow!"

Billy Bunter scrambled up breathlessly.

He blinked out of the window, and seemed greatly relieved to see the platform vanishing.

"Thank goodness we're off!" he gasped. "I—I was afraid Quelchy would be after me before I got clear."

"Quelchy!" said Bob. "I thought the giddy enemy was Walter of the Sixth. Have you been bagging a cake from Quelchy, too?"

"Ha, ha, ha?"

"It isn't a laughing matter," gasped Bunter. "I've knocked Quelchy down——"

"WHAT?" roared the six juniors in chorus.

"Knocked him down——"

"Gammon!"

"I thought it was Walker butting into the box-room after me, and I knocked him over with a bag, and then I saw that it was Quelchy——"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Phew!"

"Well, you've done it now!" said Bob Cherry, staring at the Owl of the Remove. "Knocked a Form-master over with a bag! Oh, my hat!"

"The donefulness is terrific," grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The esteemed Quelchy will be infuriated."

"Infuriated isn't the word for it," groaned Bunter. "He was as mad as a hatter. I'm to be flogged and expelled. I don't mind being expelled so much, but fancy being flogged! Me, you know."

"Well, you seem to have put your whole hoof in it this time," remarked Squiff. "But what's the good of bunking? You will have to face the music sooner or later."

"Oh, really, Field ——"

"The best thing you can do, Bunter, is to go straight back to Greyfriars when we change at Lantham," said Harry Wharton gravely. "You will only make matters worse by clearing off like this. I daresay it will only be a flogging—and you can stand that."

"Can I?" hooted Bunter.

"Well, you will have to, you know."

"I jolly well shan't," said Bunter. A flogging wouldn't matter if it was you—but I'm delicate. I can't stand it. I'm jolly well not going to, anyhow. I'm not going back to Greyfriars till that matter's settled. See?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Let 'em expel me if they like," said Bunter. "They can settle that with my pater. I've never had justice at Greyfriars. But I fancy that when they realise what they're doing they'll think twice before they lose me."

"Lose you?" repeated Bob.

"Yes. After all, I do the school credit,

"I—I've lost my ticket," stammered Bunter, as the collector barred his path. "Better go and find it, then," answered the official grimly, and Bunter stared helplessly as the grinning crowd of Removites passed on to the platform, leaving him on the wrong side of the barrier. (*See Chapter* 3.)

which is more than you fellows do. It gives a school a tone to have a fellow like me."

"Great pip!"

"I'm not afraid of being sacked," went on Bunter. "That's a minor matter. But I'm not going to be flogged. That's important.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. I say, you fellows, isn't there room for me?"

"It doesn't look like it," said Bob Cherry. "There are six places and six fellows sitting in them. You can have the floor."

"Beast! Who's giving me a seat?"

"Echo answers who!" grinned Squiff.

"I suppose I can sit on your knees, Bob."

"My knees won't stand more than half a ton, old bean. You're beyond the limit."

"Beast!"

Bunter had to stand. As he had plunged into a carriage that was already full up, he really might have expected to stand. But he seemed to feel it as a great injury, all the same.

"Better go back at Lantham, Bunter," advised Nugent. "Quelchy will only be rattier with you if you keep him waiting for his giddy vengeance."

"Rats!"

The train rattled on, and the Removites, much to Bunter's disgust, began to discuss the forthcoming game at St. Jim's. That was a matter of the very slightest importance in Bunter's estimation, compared with the disastrous position in which he now found himself. But the Remove fellows seemed to think that it still mattered, somehow. In Bunter's opinion, it was like Nero fiddling while Rome was burning—only worse.

Lantham Junction appeared in sight down the line.

"I say, you fellows, there's Lantham," said Bunter. "Which of you is taking my ticket?"

"What!" exclaimed Hary Wharton, "You told me that you had a ticket."

"That was only a platform ticket."

"Wha-a-t?"

"A platform ticket. They wouldn't let me on the platform at Friardale unless I took it."

"You—you—you've got into the train, with only a penny platform ticket?" ejaculated the captain of the Remove.

"Yes. I knew my old pals would stand my fare to St. Jim's, in these awfully serious circumstances."

"Oh, that's all right, then: better look for your old pals, when we get into Lantham. I hope they'll see you through."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Are you're old pals waiting for you at Lantham, or are they on the train, and who are they, anyhow?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

The train stopped, and the Remove crowd poured out of the carriages. In a cherry crowd they marched across the bridge to the other line, to take the express for Wayland in Sussex.

Billy Bunter rolled with them.

Apparently, Harry Wharton & Co. were the old pals upon whom he was relying, though they declined to recognise the fact.

"I say, you fellows, keep round me, and we may get through all right." whispered Bunter. "I don't want to waste money on a ticket if it can be helped, of course. I hope I'm considerate."

"Oh, my hat! Are we to help you bilk the railway company?" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Buzz off, Bunter."

"The buzzfulness is the proper caper, my esteemed and ludicrous Bunter."

"Tickets, please!" said the collector at the barrier.

Harry Wharton & Co. showed their tickets and passed. An arm was extended as the Owl of the Remove strove to dodge through.

"Tickets, please."

"I've lost it——!" stammered Bunter.

"Better go and find it, then," said the collector grimly.

"I—I mean, my friend has got it—that chap who's passed——"

"He'd better come back and show it, then, or you don't go on the platform."

"I say, you fellows!" yelled Bunter.

The crowd of grinning footballers walked on.

"Wharton, old chap——!"

No reply.

"Wharton, you rotter——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!"

Harry Wharton & Co. disappeared along the platform, and William George Bunter was left at the impassable barrier, blinking after them—like a very fat Peri at the gate of Paradise.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

Bunter Too!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Here's the giddy train."

It was twenty minutes later; there had been a wait at Lantham for the Wayland express.

It came into the station from a siding at last, and stopped by the platform. The Greyfriars crowd came out of the waiting-rooms and buffet, and gathered to take their places.

Bob Cherry glanced along the platform and grinned.

"No Bunter!" he remarked.

"The fat duffer," said Harry Wharton, "I hope he's gone back to Greyfriars. It's the wisest thing he can do."

"Then Bunter isn't very likely to do it," remarked Nugent, "I half-expected to see him here somehow."

"Thank goodness he's not."

The Famous Five got into a carriage, and Peter Todd followed them in, the rest of the party dispersing along the train.

Bob Cherry kept an eye on the platform till the train started. William George Bunter was a sticker, and Bob would not have been surprised to see him at the last moment, bolting for the train.

But nothing was seen of Bunter; and the Remove crowd rolled out of Lantham Junction in the express, convinced that they were done with the Owl of the Remove at last.

"Poor old Bunter!" remarked Bob Cherry, as he settled down in a corner seat for the long run to Wayland, "I'd have stood my whack in his ticket, if it would have done him any good to dodge Quelchy for the afternoon. But of course, it would only have made matters worse for him when he did get back."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

Bob jumped.

"Great pip! Is that Bunter's ghost!"

It was not Bunter's ghost: it was Bunter in the flesh. Every eye in the carriage turned upon a fat face and a large pair of spectacles which blinked out from underneath a seat.

"Bunter!"

"Bunter! Oh, my hat!"

Bunter grinned up at the astonished Removites.

"I say, you fellows, have I surprised you? Fancy you fellows getting into the same carriage! I was jolly glad when I heard your voices—I should have had to keep under the seat all the way to Wayland if it hadn't been you. Real luck, what?"

Bunter crawled out from under the seat.

He was considerably dusty, but he seemed in a cheery mood. The chums of the Remove stared at him blankly.

"How on earth did you get here?" exclaimed Bob.

Bunter chuckled.

"That rotter—that low beast—wouldn't let me come on the platform," he explained, "but I knew that it was the Wayland train on the siding, as it happened. I dodged into it all right."

"Without a ticket?"

"If I'd had a ticket I shouldn't have needed to dodge into the train on the siding. Don't be an ass."

"And what are you going to do when we have to show up tickets at Wayland?" demanded Johnny Bull.

Bunter blinked at him.

"I expect my old pals to stand by me," he answered. "After all I've done for you fellows——"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"I shall settle up, of course," said Bunter, with dignity, "I shall pay you out of my very next postal order. Did I mention to you fellows that I was expecting a postal-order?"

"I think you did!" gasped Bob Cherry. "I think you've mentioned it—once or twice."

"That's all right, then. You were saying you'd be willing to stand your whack in my ticket, Bob, old chap. The other fellows can

"Great pip! Is that Bunter's ghost!" Every eye in the carriage was turned to Bunter as he crawled ponderously from beneath the seat, grinning up at the astonished Removites. (*See Chapter* 4.)

help you out. Arrange it among yourselves. I don't mind."

Bunter blinked round the carriage.

"I suppose you're not going to let me stand all the way to Wayland," he said, "I know you're selfish, but there's a limit."

"Isn't he a beauty?" said Peter Todd. "Isn't he a card? Isn't he a corker? I suppose there would be a row if we dropped him out of the train."

"Oh, really, Toddy——"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"We've got to stand his ticket, or else let him be taken up as a bilk," he said. "I suppose we can't let a Greyfriars man be charged with bilking the railway company. We'd better see him clear at Wayland, when we get there."

"I knew you wouldn't be a mean beast, old chap. After all, it's little enough, considering all I've done for you," said Bunter. "Now, what about giving me a seat?"

"Go and eat coke!"

"You can take it in turns to stand, you know," urged Bunter. "I don't mind taking my turn with the rest."

"Sit down!" grunted Johnny Bull.

He hooked Bunter's leg, and the Owl of the Remove sat down very suddenly, on the floor of the carriage.

"Ow!"

"Now sit there!" said Peter Todd. "You've diddled us into paying for your ticket, you fat bounder, and that's the limit. The floor for you till we get to Wayland."

"Beast!"

Bunter sat on the floor. Otherwise there was "standing room only," and Bunter did not want to stand.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Dry up!"

"Look here, Toddy——"

"Cheese it!"

"Is that what you call sympathetic?" hooted Bunter. "Can't you understand that I'm in a frightful position——"

"Rot! The floor's all right."

"I don't mean that, ass! I mean, in the circumstances I can't go back to Greyfriars."

"Oh, you'll be able to stick somebody for your return fare, just as you've stuck us," said Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"We'll pay your fare back, somehow, Bunter," said Harry Wharton.

"I don't want you to. I'm not thinking of the fare, you ass! I can't go back to Greyfriars until Quelchy comes to terms."

"Eh?"

"You see, I can't be flogged."

"Oh!"

"Quelchy said distinctly that I was to be flogged. He's got to chuck that before I consent to return to the school."

"Consent! Oh, my hat!"

"If he doesn't, and until he does, I shall not return. That's fixed and settled, like the laws of the—the Swedes and Russians!" said Bunter.

Possibly Bunter meant the laws of the Medes and Persians.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's not a laughing matter. I can't go back; that's definite. Not until Quelchy comes down off his high horse, you see. Of course, he will come down when he realises that he may lose me for good. I know my value to Greyfriars, if you fellows don't. See? But it may take time, and, in the meantime, I have to keep clear of Greyfriars. Well, my pals at St. Jim's may put me up for a time——"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Tom Merry is a decent sort—quite decent——"

"The more decent he is, the less likely he will be to stand you, old fat man," said Peter Todd.

"Beast! And there's D'Arcy—my old pal, Gussy! You know, Gussy came to stay with me once at Bunter Court on a summer vacation, and, of course, he's bound to stand by me now. Besides, he likes me."

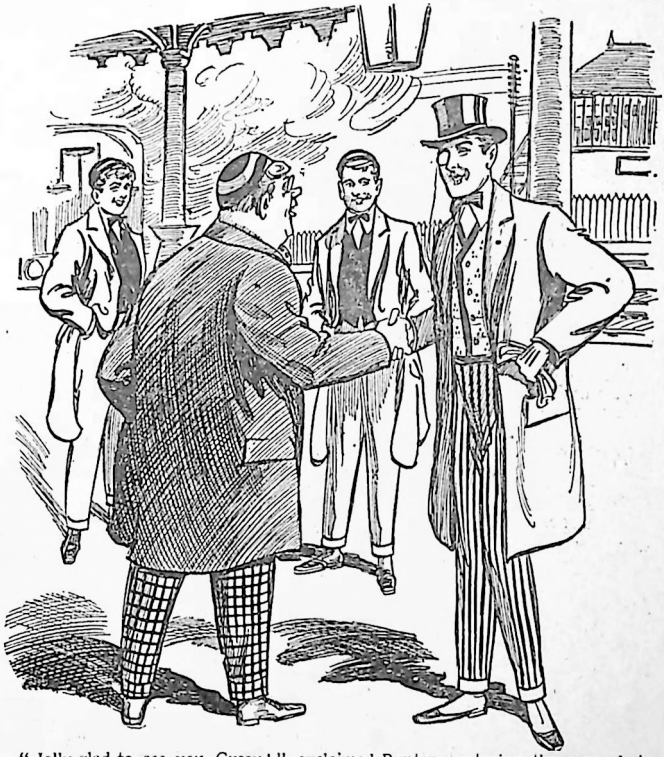
"No accounting for tastes—if he does."

"If!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"The if-fulness is terrific!"

"But the point is," went on Bunter, "I shall need some money."

"Quite a new need with you, what?" asked Johnny Bull sarcastically.



"Jolly glad to see you, Gussy!" exclaimed Bunter, capturing the somewhat reluctant hand of Arthur Augustus and shaking it with great vigour. "Ripping to see one another again, what?" "Oh, yaas!" answered Gussy, a little doubtfully. "Oh, yaas, wathah!" (*See Chapter* 5.)

"Oh, quite! I've no doubt that D'Arcy can arrange to put me up for a time, but I can't very well borrow money of the chap. You see that?"

"Let me catch you trying to borrow money of any St. Jim's man!" exclaimed Wharton wrathfully. "I'll jolly well scalp you!"

"I shall have to have some money. I'd much rather not borrow anything at St. Jim's; I've got a sense of dignity, and what is due to a Greyfriars man, if you fellows haven't. So the question is, what are you fellows going to lend me?"

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at Bunter. Really, they did not quite know what to answer.

"Well," said Bob Cherry, at last, "I can lend you something, Bunter."

"What's that?"

"A boot."

"Yaroooooooh!"

Bunter did not seem grateful for the loan. He squirmed along the carriage to get out of range of Bob Cherry's feet. Bob took a large size in boots.

"Look here, you fellows——"

"Shut up!" roared Peter Todd.

"But I say——"

"Another word and we'll jolly well roll you under the seat, and keep you there till we get to Wayland."

Billy Bunter snorted angrily, but he did not utter the other word.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

Bunter's Old Pal.

"Bai Jove! Heah they are!"

It was the well-known voice and remarkable accent of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the ornament of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus was standing on the platform at Wayland Junction when the express came in.

In his natty overcoat and shining hat, Arthur Augustus was, as usual, a thing of beauty and a joy for ever.

He raised his shining topper gracefully to the cheery faces that looked out of the carriage windows as the express stopped.

Two other St. Jim's fellows were with D'Arcy—Blake of the Fourth and Tom Merry of the Shell.

The train stopped, and the Greyfriars crowd swarmed out. There was a cheery and genial greeting.

"Gussy, old man——"

"Bai Jove! Is that Buntah?"

"Yes, old chap! Jolly glad to see you, Gussy," said Bunter, capturing the somewhat reluctant hand of Arthur Augustus and shaking it with great vigour. "Ripping to see one another again, what?"

"Oh, yaas!"

"I knew you hadn't forgotten me, old fellow."

"Eh? Oh, no!"

"Friends like us don't forget one another in a hurry, do they?" said Bunter brightly.

"Oh, yaas, wathah!"

"What?"

"I—I mean——"

"This way," said Tom Merry cheerily Tom's eyes had dwelt rather curiously on Bunter for a moment. "We've got a charabanc waiting outside."

"Good!"

"A new recruit of yours, what?" asked the St. Jim's junior captain, as he walked down the platform with Wharton.

"Bunter?" Harry Wharton laughed. "No, not quite! He's come over with us because he's landed himself in a row at Greyfriars, and wants to put off the licking as late as possible. I keep on telling him that he's only making matters worse, but it's no use talking sense to Bunter."

"I remember him!" grinned Blake. "What has he done at Greyfriars?"

"Knocked his Form-master over in mistake for somebody else."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows," yelled Bunter. "Don't forget that I haven't a ticket. You'll have to pay at the gate."

The St. Jim's fellows grinned. They remembered William George Bunter of old, and they were not at all surprised to hear that he was travelling without a ticket.

Bunter's fare was paid when they reached

the gate, and the Greyfriars footballers walked out to the charabanc, Bunter keeping hold of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

According to Bunter, D'Arcy of St. Jim's was an old and trusty pal of his; and so the meeting ought to have caused mutual delight. But no one would have guessed from D'Arcy's looks that he was an old attached pal of Bunter's. The expression on his aristocratic face was almost unhappy, as Bunter took possession of him. But the swell of St. Jim's was a long-suffering youth in the cause of politeness and good manners. He gave Bunter his head, as it were.

In the charabanc, Bunter sat beside the swell of St. Jim's, and expanded into his most genial mood.

If D'Arcy answered him only in monosyllables, Bunter did not seem to notice it; as a conversationalist, Bunter was easily equal to the work of two. In fact, he preferred monologue to dialogue.

The run to the school was quite a pleasant one, for Bunter. Whether Arthur Augustus enjoyed it was another question.

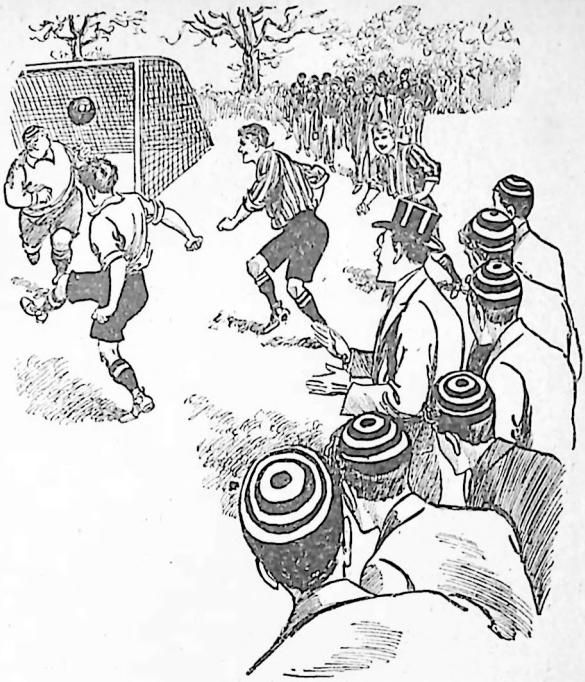
Certain it was, that when the party arrived at St. Jim's, somehow or other Arthur Augustus became detached from his affectionate friend, and disappeared. Perhaps even his Chesterfieldian politeness was not equal to too great a strain.

Bunter did not see his St. Jim's pal again till the footballers had changed, and were going down to the field.

"I say, Gussy——"

"Yaas, Buntah," almost groaned Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"I'm not playing in this match," said Bunter.



There was a shout as Wharton drove the ball into the net. "Goal!" It was first blood to Greyfriars. "A mere fluke!" was Billy Bunter's opinion. (*See Chapter* 6.)

"I know."

"I'm left out," said Bunter, rather bitterly. "There's a lot of jealousy in football."

"Bai Jove! Is there?"

"Oh, yes! Seeing me looking on at this game, while those chaps are playing, you'd hardly think that I was a better man than any of that crowd, would you?"

"I certainly should not, Buntah."

"Yet it's the case," said Bunter.

"Bai Jove!"

"Jealousy, you know," said Bunter. "Wharton can't stand being put in the shade by a better man. That's how it is."

"Weally, Buntah——"

"Centre-forward is my favourite place," said Bunter. "That's where I come out really strong. But you do think

Wharton will give up the place to me? No fear!"

"Pwobably not," assented Arthur Augustus, with a faint grin.

"Few can beat me in the half-way line, too," said Bunter. "Look at that clumsy ass Bob Cherry! I've offered to take his place! Wharton refused my offer."

"Did he weally?"

"He did! Then look at the backs," said Bunter. "That elephant, Johnny Bull, and that duffer, Mark Linley. I could play their heads off. Wharton either can't or won't see it."

"Oh!"

"In goal," pursued Bunter. "In goal, I'm what may be called a tower of strength. Wharton's picked out that chap Field—Squiff, you know. I don't say he's not a good man—he's fair. But look at him, and look at me!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy glanced at the sturdy, hefty Australian junior, and then at the fat figure rolling at his side, and smiled. Having looked at Squiff, and looked at Bunter, as requested, he was not really surprised that Wharton was playing Squiff in goal, and that W. G. Bunter was merely a spectator. However, he did not say so.

"Jealousy all round," said Bunter. "Bit sickening, isn't it?"

"Oh!"

"But I'm used to it," said Bunter. "It's what you might call the penalty of superiority—carping envy and jealousy all round."

"Bai Jove!"

"Come on, Gussy!" called out Blake.

"Comin', deah boy."

"I'll see you after the game," said Bunter. "I've got something rather particular to say to you, old chap. You know that I'm rather in trouble at Greyfriars."

"Sowwy, deah boy."

"Precious few fellows would have the nerve to knock over a Form-master," said Bunter. "But I'm not the man to stand any cheek, even from a Form-master."

"Wasn't it an accident, then, Buntah?" asked Arthur Augustus, staring at the Owl of the Remove blankly. He had heard in the charabanc what had happened at Greyfriars that afternoon.

"Well you see——"

"Buck up, Gussy!" shouted Blake; not that there was any particular hurry, but Jack Blake was kindly desirous of rescuing his chum from William George Bunter.

"It's a flogging," said Bunter. "A Head's flogging, you know. Quelchy was talking about having me expelled; but I know jolly well that the Head would think twice about that. He wouldn't like Greyfriars to lose a fellow like me."

"Oh! Wouldn't he?" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"No fear! But the fact is, I'm not going to take a flogging. I'm not going back to Greyfriars till Quelchy chucks up that idea."

"Bai Jove!"

"I'm going to say a few days with you, Gussy, old chap," said Bunter affectionately.

D'Arcy jumped.

"Wha-a-at? I'm sowwy, Buntah, but that is imposs, weally imposs. We are not allowed to have visitahs stayin' at the school, you know." Arthur Augustus seemed quite alarmed. "Quite out of the question, deah boy."

"I daresay you could get permission from your Housemaster."

"But——"

"Putting it to him that your best friend wants to stay a day or two, and has leave from his school," explained Bunter.

"But you haven't leave from your school, Buntah."

"That's all right. You can say so, you know."

"Gweat Scott!"

"We'll arrange it all right," said Bunter, airily. "If it's necessary to stuff your Housemaster, I'll put you up to what to say. I'm rather a dab at stuffing people."

"Weally, Buntah——"

"You can leave that to me," said Bunter. "I'll put you wise, and we'll pull Mr. Railton's leg all right. Rely on me."

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, almost overcome.

Jack Blake grasped his friend's arm and fairly dragged him on the field. Arthur Augustus had quite a dazed look.

"Blake, deah boy," he gasped, "that fat

boundah—I mean Buntah—is thinkin' of stayin' on heah aftah the match and—and—I'm to stuff Mr. Wailton that he has leave fwom his school, and—and—I suppose it would not be civil to kick a fellow who has come ovah with the Gweyfwiahs chaps, would it?"

Blake chuckled.

"Civil or not, I shall chance it if I find him around St. Jim's after the other fellows have gone," he answered.

"He weally is the limit, you know."

"The outside edge!" agreed Blake. "It's all right—I'll settle that matter with him after the game, before I take my football boots off."

And the footballers went on to the field.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

The St. Jim's Match.

BILLY BUNTER took up a position to watch the game. Ogilvy and Russell, who had come over with the team, were with him. There was a good crowd of St. Jim's fellows round the field, and Bunter knew a good many of them. In fact he had, as he so often said in the Remove, many friends at St. Jim's. Every fellow to whom Bunter ever spoke, and who did not kick him, was apparently a friend, and by this computation the name of Bunter's friends was legion.

The Owl of the Remove adopted a lofty and supercilious expression as he watched the kick-off and the beginning of the game. He wanted to make it clear that he looked on this game from the lofty and patronising point of view of a fellow who could do much better things.

"Not much chance for us this time, Russell," he remarked.

Russell looked at him.

"Why not, fathead?"

"Look at the way they've started," said Bunter. "Look at St. Jim's going up the field. That's a certain goal to begin with."

"What on earth do you know about football?" inquired Russell. "It that's a goal I'll eat my hat."

"You'll jolly well see in a minute!"

Russell was under no necessity of eating his hat. The ball was cleared into the St. Jim's half, and the Greyfriars men followed it up. Johnny Bull had cleared with a tremendous kick.

"Well?" grinned Russell.

Bunter sniffed.

"Look at that!" he said. "Skying the ball just for fluff! That's not the way to play soccer."

"You silly owl!" said Russell, and he moved off a little further from Bunter. He did not seem to want to hear any more expert comments on the game.

"I say, Ogilvy——"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Ogilvy, and he moved off after Russell. He did not want any enlightenment—from Bunter—about the game of soccer.

"There they go!" said Bunter, addressing his valuable remarks to some St. Jim's fellows. "You chaps can count on a win this time! Look at that ass Wharton—he could put the ball in now—but he won't. You see——"

The next moment there was a shout.

"Goal!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Bunter.

It was first blood for Greyfriars.

"That's a good man," remarked Wildrake, of the St. Jim's Fourth. "That was a jolly good goal!"

"A mere fluke!" said Bunter.

"Eh? What?"

"You've got a pretty rotten goalie to let a shot like that pass him," said Bunter scornfully.

"Our goalie's Fatty Wynn, the best junior goal-keeper at St. Jim's," said Wildrake, with a stare at Bunter.

"My hat! If he's the best, what is the worst like?" grinned Bunter.

Wildrake gave him another look, opened his lips and closed them again and moved off.

"Hallo, Grundy!" Bunter blinked at Grundy, of the St. Jim's Shell, and nodded to him.

Grundy stared at him.

Grundy was a Shell fellow, and a very important fellow in his own eyes. He was not in the least pleased by the familiar greeting from a Lower Fourth fellow from another school.

"Rather a scratch lot you've got playing to-day," said Bunter affably.

"Think so?" grunted Grundy.

"How's that?" asked Blake, as he stepped back to admire his handiwork, and the three juniors chuckled softly, as they gazed upon the soot-daubed countenance of the sleeping Bunter. (*See Chapter 7.*)

"Well, our lot are pretty feeble, but look at the way they're mopping up your men," said Bunter. "Is this what you call football at St. Jim's?"

Grundy walked away.

"There comes another goal!" said Bunter. "My hat! Two in ten minutes! The ball's going in this time—just look!"

Manners, of the St. Jim's Shell, at back, cleared away the ball even while Bunter was speaking. When the Owl of the Remove blinked again the game had swayed away into the visitors' half.

"Well, where's that goal?" asked Digby, of the St. Jim's Fourth, with a sarcastic grin at Bunter.

Bunter's fat lip curled.

"I should have taken it," he explained. "But we're playing a rotten lot to-day—and a kid could stop them. Call this football?"

Digby moved off. In fact, although there was a good crowd on the spot, William George Bunter soon found himself standing quite alone, as if somehow or other the St. Jim's fellows did not understand what a treat they were missing in losing his company and his comments on the game.

Billy Bunter was soon yawning.

As a matter of fact, what he did not know about Soccer would have filled large volumes. There was really first-class play on both sides, but it was all lost on Bunter. He was soon tired of watching the game; and would gladly have transferred his fat presence to the school shop. But as he was in his usual impecunious state, it was not of much use to do so; and he deeply regretted not having already "touched" his old pal Gussy for a little loan.

At half-time the score was goal for goal, Tom Merry having equalised. But Bunter hardly noticed what the score was. He was thinking of more important matters.

He was hungry!

When Bunter was hungry, all other things faded into utter insignificance. At such a time there was only one thing in the wide universe that mattered.

In the interval, he hoped to find an opportunity of speaking to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. But he did not find the opportunity; possibly because Arthur Augustus did not desire it to be found.

When the game re-started, Bunter was no longer watching it.

He left the football field, and wandered

away to the School House. Bunter had been at St. Jim's a good many times before, and he knew his way about the school. He had no hesitation whatever about "butting" into quarters where casual visitors were not supposed to penetrate. He rolled into the School House as if the House belonged to him. Some St. Jim's fellows glanced at him, but did not speak, and Bunter rolled on to the big staircase. He mounted the stairs, and on the first landing came on Cutts of the Fifth, who gave him a stare.

"Who the dooce are you?" asked Cutts.

"Eh! I belong to Greyfriars," said Bunter. "I came over with the football team, you know."

"I don't know," said Cutts coolly. "What the thump are you wandering about the House for, anyway?"

"I suppose I can sit down in my friend D'Arcy's study if I like," said Bunter. "It's jolly cold out there."

And he rolled on, Cutts of the Fifth glancing after him doubtfully.

Bunter knew his way to Study No. 6 in the Fourth, and he soon reached that celebrated apartment, fortunately without being asked any more questions.

Bunter blinked round Study No. 6. No doubt, being D'Arcy's old pal and best friend, he felt entitled to make himself at home there.

At all events, entitled or not, he proceeded to do so.

There was no fire in the grate, and it was a cold afternoon. Bunter found firewood in the bottom of the study cupboard, and coal in a box, and a Latin grammar which, fortunately, happened to be lying on the table, furnished paper to start the fire. There was soon quite a cheery fire going; and Bunter pulled the study table and the arm-chair towards it.

Then he explored the study cupboard, the upper part of which was used by Blake & Co. as a larder.

Bunter considered it probable that the chums of Study No. 6 would want something substantial for tea after a football match, and equally probable that the supply was already laid in. On both points he was right.

Ham and eggs, and a cold meat pie, and a cake, and several other excellent things, caught his eye.

He lifted them out on the table.

The good things had been intended to make a "high tea" for four. They supplied Bunter with almost enough for tea.

His fat face was irradiated with satisfaction as he sat down to warm his toes and dispose of Blake & Co.'s tuck.

It did not take him very long. In many things Bunter was slow, but as a trencherman he far exceeded the usual speed-limit.

Having finished the supplies in Study No. 6 to the last crumb, Billy Bunter leaned back in the arm-chair, with his feet

"Gweat Scott!" ejaculated D'Arcy, as he saw Bunter's black face; his glasses, catching the gleam of the fire, shone from his sooty features with weird effect.
(*See Chapter 7.*)

on the fender, in a full and happy and satisfied mood.

How the football match was going he did not know; and he cared not at all. He had, in fact, forgotten it. His eyes closed behind his big spectacles, and a deep snore proceeded from him. Bunter was sleeping the sleep of the just.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER
The Sleeping Beauty.

"GOAL!"

"Bravo!"

"Good old Wharton!" chuckled Russell.

"Bai Jove! Quite wippin', deah boy."

While William George Bunter was taking his ease in Study No. 6, the football match went on merrily in a keen wind, and drew to its close. Hard and fast was the play in the second half, and both sides came near to scoring—but the goals remained intact. Fatty Wynn for St. Jim's, Squiff for Greyfriars, put paid to all attempts—right up to the finish. And then by luck and pluck Harry Wharton & Co. came through, and the leather went in from the foot of the captain of the Remove.

It was a ripping goal, as D'Arcy generously declared; and it was the winning goal in the match. The whistle went.

"Well, we win," said Bob Cherry, as the footballers came off. "But I think we've earned it. A good game, you chaps."

"Topping!" said Tom Merry, with a cheery smile. "You really deserved that goal! Better luck for us next time."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The footballers changed, in a cheery crowd, and then the Greyfriars party joined Tom Merry & Co. at tea in the School House. Bob Cherry glanced round with a rather puzzled look.

"Where's Bunter?" he said. "Bunter knows we're teaing here with the St. Jim's chaps; it's not like him to miss it."

"Anybody seen Bunter?"

Nobody had, apparently.

Nobody, however, cared very much where Bunter might possibly be, and the Greyfriars fellows did not waste much thought on him. It was Blake & Co. of the Fourth who discovered the missing owl.

Blake & Co. did not tea in hall; they had something special in their own study. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remained with the visitors, but Blake and Herries and Digby went up to Study No. 6.

As they approached that apartment, a strange sound met their ears. It was something like the rumbling of a train in a tunnel, and something like the whirr of a distant aeroplane.

"What on earth's that?" exclaimed Blake.

"Some dashed animal in the study," said Digby. "Is it your blessed bulldog, Herries?"

"Towser doesn't make a row like that," answered Herries.

Blake threw open the door of Study No. 6. Then the Fourth-formers discovered the source of the strange and mysterious sound.

It proceeded from William George Bunter. Leaning back in the arm-chair, with his eyes closed and his mouth open, was the Owl of the Remove, snoring as if for a wager.

Blake & Co. stared at him.

"Bunter!" ejaculated Blake.

"Well, we want our giddy visitors to make themselves at home," said Dig, with a grin. "This chap looks as if he's been doing it."

"He does—he do! He's been feeding here."

"Wake up, Bunter!"

Bunter did not wake up. It was not easy to wake Bunter when he was sleeping off the effects of a Gargantuan feed.

Blake glanced into the study cupboard, and frowned. He was a hospitable fellow, but there was a limit. Visitors were not supposed to clear out a fellow's study cupboard uninvited.

"Well, my hat!" said Blake. "He's bagged the lot! It will be tea in Hall for us, after all."

"Fat pig!" grunted Herries.

"He is the giddy limit, and no mistake. Here, wake up, Bunter! Tea's going on downstairs, and you can't have had enough—you've only had enough for four. Wake up, fatty."

Snore!

"Look here, this is too jolly thick!" growled Herries. "Politeness is all very well, but this is too thick. I've a jolly good mind

to kick that fat bounder out of the study. Wolfing the whole shoot!"

"Well, he is a giddy porker, and no mistake!" said Dig. "But we can't make a fuss about the grub."

"Like his cheek to butt in here and go to sleep."

Blake grinned.

"It doesn't seem easy to wake him," he said. "Let him rip! I've got a wheeze."

Blake took the fire-shovel, and scraped soot down from the chimney. Dig and Herries watched him, and grinned, too.

Bunter slept on, snoring hard. Only a cannon-shot near at hand, or a severe shaking, would have wakened him. But the juniors did not want to wake him now.

Jack Blake proceeded to daub soot over the countenance of the sleeping Owl of the Remove.

Bunter did not stir.

While more and more soot was daubed on, he snored away peacefully, his little round eyes glued shut behind his spectacles.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Dig. "He looks a beauty!"

"The sleeping beauty!" grinned Herries.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shush!" whispered Blake. "Don't wake him up till I've finished."

But there was no danger of Billy Bunter waking up. He snored on peacefully while Blake rubbed on the soot.

In five minutes, Bunter had been transformed into a very good imitation of a Christy Minstrel. When there was not a spot on his fat face left unblackened, Blake stepped back to admire his handiwork.

"How's that, umpire?" he asked.

"Ha, ha, ha!

"Now we'd better cut down to tea," said Blake cheerily. "We'll leave him to it. It will be quite a pleasant surprise for him when he wakes."

And the chuckling juniors left the study.

Bunter snored on, while the early dusk deepened, and the study was illumined only by the firelight.

Blake & Co. joined the merry party downstairs.

They "tea'd" in Hall, with Tom Merry & Co. and the Greyfriars fellows. It was a cheery tea, but it had to be brief, as the visitors had their train to catch at Wayland. Tea over, Harry Wharton & Co. donned their coats to go in the charabanc which was waiting to take them to Wayland Junction. Then they remembered Bunter again.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Where's Bunter?" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "We can't go without our prize porker!"

"Bai Jove! Buntah seems to be missin'!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Pewwaps some of his fwiends heah have been entertainin' him in a studay!"

"Perhaps he's taking a rest in our study, being such a pal of yours, Gussy," said Blake gravely.

"I'll wun up and look," said Arthur Augustus; "Buntah must not be left behind by his fwiends."

Bunter being left behind was too alarming a prospect. Almost any St. Jim's fellow would have taken any amount of trouble to prevent William George Bunter from being left behind at St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus hurried up to Study No. 6, with as much haste as was consistent with the repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere.

As it happened, Billy Bunter had awakened a few minutes before. Possibly his inner Bunter was beginning to feel the need of another meal. At all events, he had awakened, and was sitting up lazily in the arm-chair, in the glow of the firelight, yawning.

Arthur Augustus looked into the study.

"Bai Jove, he can't be here, as the light's not on," murmured Arthur Augustus. "I wondah where he is? It would be too feahful for him to be left behind when those chaps go. I——"

Arthur Augustus broke off.

Bunter had heard his footsteps, and he rose from the arm-chair and blinked towards the doorway.

The swell of St. Jim's stared at him in amazement and alarm.

In the firelight he saw a startling black face, and Bunter's glasses, catching the light of the fire, gleamed from the black countenance with a startling and weird effect.

"Gweat Scott!" ejaculated D'Arcy.

He jumped back into the passage.

"What—what—who—which——!"

Bunter rolled towards the doorway. Arthur Augustus was a courageous youth, and he feared no foe, in shining armour or otherwise. But he was utterly startled by this awful apparition in his study. Looking there for a fat schoolboy, he had found a horrible-looking black man, and the shock was rather too much for him. He scudded away to the stairs.

"Found him?" called out Tom Merry, from the staircase.

"Eh? No! Look out!" gasped D'Arcy.

"What on earth——!"

"There's somebody in my studay—a howwible negwo——"

"What?" yelled Tom.

"A feahful-lookin' negwo!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"A negro?" repeated Tom Merry blankly.

"Yaas, wathah—an awful-lookin' cweature. Bai Jove, there he comes!"

Bunter rolled out of Study No. 6.

Tom Merry stared at him and jumped.

"Who—what——!" he stuttered.

"I say, you fellows——"

Arthur Augustus jumped clear of the floor in his amazement.

"Buntah!"

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.
Astonishing the Natives!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Bunter rolled along the passage towards the St. Jim's juniors.

He was quite unconscious of the change that had been made in his appearance. He had not the faintest idea that his fat face was as black as the ace of spades.

The amazed stares of the St. Jim's juniors astonished him.

"I say, you fellows, what's the matter?"

"Gweat Scott!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Is—is—is that weally you, Buntah?"

"Eh? Of course it's me! What do you mean?"

"But—but what is the mattah with you?"

"Nothing—only I'm hungry."

"What have you been doing?" ejaculated Tom Merry. "Been up a chimney?"

"Eh? Of course not!" said Bunter, blinking at him—a black blink. "What are you driving at? I've had a snack in your study, D'Arcy, but I'm ready for tea. I understand that we're teaing here. What the thump are you fellows staring at?"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"It seems to have got dark," said Bunter. "I've had a little nap in your study, D'Arcy. I knew you wouldn't mind, old fellow."

"Oh, you've been asleep!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

The captain of the Shell understood now. It was clear that some humorous youth had dealt with Bunter while he was sleeping.

"Eh? Yes, I had a little nap. I'm ready for tea," said Bunter. "Look here, what's this game? What are you staring at?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at. If these are St. Jim's manners, I must say I don't think much of them!" said Bunter warmly.

"Weally, Buntah——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "Somebody's been jesting with you, I think, Bunter. You look a giddy picture."

"I don't know what you're driving at, Tom Merry, and don't want to, as far as that goes! I'm going down."

"Are you going down like that?" gasped Tom.

"Like what?" hooted Bunter.

"That! Come and have a wash first——"

"Well, of all the cheek!" exclaimed Bunter. "I don't need washing so much as you St. Jim's chaps do, and chance it!"

"I—I mean——"

"Oh, rats!"

Billy Bunter rolled past the two juniors and took his way down the stairs. He was greatly incensed by the hint that he needed washing. Often and often he received such hints from Remove fellows at Greyfriars; but really he had not expected it at St. Jim's.

"Bai Jove, Buntah!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

"Go and eat coke!"

Bunter rolled on.

On the stairs he passed Levison, Clive, and Cardew, of the Fourth Form, coming up. The three juniors jumped as they saw him.

All the footballers became serious as soon as they saw Mr. Quelch's grave expression. "Wharton! Do you mean to say that Bunter has deliberately remained behind at another school?" he demanded—"that he is not returning to Greyfriars to-night?" "I—I suppose so, sir," answered Wharton. Mr. Quelch stared at them in amazement, stuttering as though he found it difficult adequately to express his opinion of Bunter's action. (*See Chapter 9.*)

"What on earth's that?" exclaimed Levison.

"Look here, Levison——"

"Bunter!" yelled Clive.

"Oh, gad, Bunter!" ejaculated Cardew. "Behold, he is black but comely."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter gave the hilarious three a glare.

"You cheeky cads! What's this game?" he hooted. "My hat! This is St. Jim's manners, is it?"

"Do you know what you look like?" shrieked Levison.

"Yah!"

Bunter brushed past them and rolled on down the stairs, leaving Levison & Co. shrieking.

He reached the lower hall, where Harry Wharton & Co. were gathered, dressed for their journey home. There was a roar as he appeared.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Is that Bunter?"

"It's Bunter's circumference, but where did he get that face?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass, Bunter, what have you been doing?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"What do you mean, you fat duffer? Is it a lark?"

"The larkfulness is terrific."

"I don't know what you mean!" howled Bunter. "I know I want my tea. You fellows needn't wait for me, if you're going. I'm not going back with you, you know."

"You jolly well are!" said Harry. "Tea's over, and you'll have to wait till we get home. Get a wash first, and quick!"

"Oh, cheese it!" exclaimed Bunter. "I don't know what the joke is, but I can tell you I'm fed up with it. I'm not going without some tea; in fact, I'm not going at all. I——"

"Bless my soul! What is this?" Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, had come along to speak a word to the Greyfriars footballers ere they departed, and he started at the sight of Billy Bunter. "Who—who—who is this?"

"I'm Bunter, sir," said the Owl of the Remove, blinking at the Housemaster. "You remember me, sir?"

"Upon my word! A Greyfriars boy!" said Mr. Railton. "How came you into that extraordinary state, Bunter? What has happened?"

"Eh? Nothing that I know of," said Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This is—is extraordinary!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "Is it possible, Bunter, that you are not aware that your face is black, that it is covered with soot——?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What!" gasped Bunter.

"I cannot understand this," said Mr. Railton, a little sternly. "If this is a jest, Bunter, I fail to understand it. How can you possibly have had your face blackened in that manner without knowing it?"

"Mum-my fuf-fuf-face——" stuttered Bunter.

"Buntah has been to sleep in my studay, sir," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, from the stairs. "I gweatly feah, sir, that some pwactical jokah has been playin' a twick on Buntah while he was asleep, sir."

"Upon my word!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"D'Arcy, kindly take Bunter to a bath-room at once!" said Mr. Railton, and he turned away with his face twitching.

"This way, Buntah, deah boy."

"But—but what——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter rubbed his face with his hand. His fingers came away black, and Bunter stared at them, as if he could not believe his spectacles. The expression on his sooty face made the juniors yell.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Oh! I—I say, you fellows, this is a rotten trick! I—I say, do I really need a wash?"

"You look like it!" roared Bob Cherry. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"This way, Buntah!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

And the Owl of the Remove was led away to a bath-room. There, he blinked at his reflection in a glass, and jumped.

"Oh, my hat! Is—is—is that me?" gasped Bunter.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy," chuckled Arthur Augustus. "Bettah get a wash, old scout! Heah's a towel, and I've turned on the hot watah! Go it."

Arthur Augustus retired, leaving Bunter to his ablutions. He joined the fellows downstairs with a smiling face. Bunter was very busy in the bath-room, with steaming water and soap; he had a great deal of washing to do to restore his normal complexion.

"It was weally too bad, you know," said Arthur Augustus. "I wondah who played that twick on Buntah?"

"I wonder!" murmured Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton glanced at his watch, after a considerable wait.

"We've none too much time," he said. "Bunter will have to buck up. If we lose our train we're done; there isn't another to-day."

"Bettah give Buntah a call!" said Arthur Augustus hastily.

He mounted the stairs again.

In a few minutes he came back, alone, with a rather blank expression on his noble face.

"Has Buntah come down?" he asked.

"No."

"I can't find him."

"Can't find him?" exclaimed Wharton.

"He seems to have disappeared."

"Oh, my hat!"

"It's a dodge!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "The fat idiot has some wheeze of getting left behind, because there's a licking waiting for him at Greyfriars. For goodness' sake root him out, you chaps; we can't lose our train."

There was a rush of Tom Merry & Co. to look for Bunter. Harry Wharton & Co. did not want to leave him behind; and most assuredly Tom Merry & Co. did not want him to be left.

But they came back without Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove was not to be found.

"What on earth's to be done?" exclaimed Harry Wharton blankly. "We can't lose our train—it's the only one. What the dickens——"

"You'd better start," said Tom Merry. "Goodness knows what's to be done with Bunter. But it looks as if he's keeping back on purpose. I—I—I suppose we can put him up for the night, and bundle him off in the morning."

"The duffer!"

"The fat chump!"

Wharton, with a worried brow, consulted his watch. There was time left to catch the express at Wayland, and that was all. Evidently the footballers could wait no longer for Billy Bunter, unless the whole party was to be landed at St. Jim's for the night; and that, of course, was not to be thought of. In a wrathful mood, Harry Wharton & Co. went out to the charabanc, and it rolled away with them to the railway station at Wayland—minus Bunter!

THE NINTH CHAPTER

Baffled!

"UNPRECEDENTED!"

"Unpardonable!"

"Extraordinary!" said the Head.

"Amazing!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Scarcely credible, in fact."

"Really, quite incredible!"

It was a sort of chorus, strophe, and antistrophe.

The Head and the Remove master were, of course, discussing Bunter.

William George Bunter, the least important fellow at Greyfriars in the estimation of everyone but W. G. Bunter himself, had drawn an unusual amount of attention that afternoon.

Flooring a Form-master was not an everyday occurrence at Greyfriars.

It was, in fact, as the Headmaster observed, unprecedented. It was, as the Remove master said, unpardonable. Likewise, it was extraordinary and amazing. All these epithets were well deserved.

Obviously, there was only one thing to meet the case. That was the Head's birch.

But there was a difficulty in the way.

The Head was there, and the birch was there! But William George Bunter was not there!

It was said of old that it takes two persons to make a bargain. A flogging could not take place without a floggee, so to speak, as well as a flogger.

BUNTER THE BOXER!

Billy Bunter is a terror when he's roused—if his opponent is small enough!

The performance was unavoidably postponed, owing to the absence of the principal performer.

Flooring a Form-master was bad enough—it was unprecedented and unpardonable and several other things. But Bunter had added to this offence by his incredible audacity in absenting himself and avoiding the dire but deserved punishment.

He had cleared out—where, was a mystery at first. Mr. Quelch, quite eager to see Bunter flogged, had sought him far and wide, and inquired for him up and down Greyfriars. He learned, at last, that Bunter had gone after the football party; he learned at the station that Bunter had taken the train with Harry Wharton & Co.

That was the climax.

There was no harm in a fellow going over to another school with a football team on a half-holiday; but it was necessary to obtain leave to go so far out of customary bounds. Bunter had not stopped to obtain leave. In the circumstances, leave would scarcely have been granted. But it added to his offences, that he had ventured to go over to St. Jim's without leave—at the very time that his Form-master was, in a manner of speaking, raging for gore.

Mr. Quelch had to bottle up his wrath, and consume his own smoke. It was not a pleasant process. His wrath did not diminish with the passage of time: rather, it improved in potency, like wine, with keeping. No punishment could be administered until the footballers came back from St. Jim's, and brought William George Bunter home with them. The punishment was not likely to be lightened on that account.

The sun went down upon the wrath of Mr. Quelch.

It was now time for the footballers to return. Mr. Quelch knew what time the express stopped at Lantham, and when the local train would get in at Friardale. He was in the Head's study now, and on the Head's table lay the birch—ready for service. Bunter was to have no respite. As soon as he appeared, Gosling, the porter, had orders to bring him directly to the Head. After which, Bunter was to suffer for his sins.

A sound of footsteps, and a buzz of voices in the quadrangle, warned the two masters that the Remove footballers were home again.

Mr. Quelch rose to his feet

"Now——!" he murmured.

He expected to hear the tap of Gosling's horny hand on the door. He expected to see the door open, and to see Gosling march Bunter into the room. But it did not happen.

There was no tap at the door: the door did not open. Mr. Quelch frowned portentously.

"Is it possible that Gosling has forgotten his orders?" murmured Dr. Locke.

"It is possible. I will see."

Mr. Quelch quitted the study.

In the hall of the House there was a cheery crowd of juniors, just come in. Wingate of the Sixth had come out of his study to ask how the match had gone. Mr. Quelch was not much interested in that matter. His gleaming eye roved over the crowd in search of Bunter.

"How did it go, Wharton?" asked the Greyfriars' captain.

"We beat them," said Harry cheerily. "Two goals to one, Wingate."

"Good man."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Quelchy!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Mind your eye—he looks waxy!" muttered Vernon-Smith. "This is where we are very good and respectful, and an example to all Greyfriars."

"The waxfulness is terrific."

All the footballers became very serious at once. The look on Mr. Quelch's speaking countenance showed that matters were grave. They had almost forgotten the existence of Billy Bunter; they were reminded of it now.

"Wharton!"

"Yes, sir."

"Where is Bunter?"

"B-B-Bunter, sir?" stammered the captain of the Remove.

"Yes. I understand that he went over to St. Jim's with you, without obtaining leave," said the Remove master.

"He went with us, sir," said Harry.

"You should not have allowed him to do so, Wharton, as head boy of the Remove, when you must have been aware that he had no leave."

"Oh, sir!"

Wharton wondered how he was to have prevented Bunter, or anybody else, from making a railway journey on a half-holiday if he liked. But he did not say so. Mr. Quelch, obviously, was not to be argued with.

"Where is he now, Wharton? I presume that he has returned with you."

"N-n-no, sir."

"What!"

"He—he hasn't come back with us, sir."

"Do you mean that he is travelling by himself?"

"I—I don't quite know what he's doing, sir. But he did not leave St. Jim's with us," said Harry.

"You left him behind?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"We had to catch our train, sir," said Wharton. "As Bunter was not on the spot when we had to start, we had no choice."

"You left him behind?" repeated the Remove master.

"We had to, sir."

"Cannot you answer yes or no, Wharton?" Mr. Quelch was not in a mood of sweet reasonableness. "Did you leave him behind, or did you not leave him behind?"

"Yes, sir."

"You should not have done so, Wharton."

"How could I help it, sir?" asked Harry. "If we'd stayed longer for him, we should have lost our train."

"He wasn't on the spot, sir," said Bob Cherry. "We——"

"You need not speak, Cherry!"

"Oh! Yes, sir."

"Wharton, you are head boy of the Remove and have responsibility in the matter. You should not have allowed Bunter to accompany you on the journey, and you should have taken care that he returned with you. You have been very remiss, Wharton."

The captain of the Remove did not answer. He was well aware that Mr. Quelch was "blowing-off steam," so to speak: and that middle-aged gentlemen had to be allowed to blow off steam when so disposed.

"Do you mean to say that Bunter deliberately remained behind at another school?" asked Mr. Quelch, with gleaming eyes.

"No, sir; I only know that he did not turn up in time for the train, and we couldn't wait for him. I can't say any more than that."

"Is he following by a later train?"

"I—I think there isn't a later train, sir."

Mr. Quelch breathed hard.

Bunter's conduct, hitherto, had been unprecedented and unpardonable and incredible. How to characterise it now was beyond Mr. Quelch's vocabulary. The superlatives in the English language were not equal to it.

"Then—then—then," the Remove master almost gasped, "then Bunter is not returning to Greyfriars to-night at all."

"I don't see how he can, sir."

"He is remaining away from school at night, without leave!"

"I—I suppose so, sir."

"Upon my word!" stuttered Mr. Quelch.

He stared at Wharton in silence. Perhaps he was trying to think of a word adequately applicable to Bunter's proceedings. If so, the resources of the language failed him.

There was a painful silence. Mr. Quelch broke it at last.

"Very well! Very well, indeed! No doubt you are aware, Wharton, that Bunter was to be flogged for no less an offence than assaulting his Form-master."

"Bunter told us something about it, sir," said Harry. "I understand that it was an accident——"

"Then your understanding is at fault, Wharton, as it was nothing of the kind," snapped Mr. Quelch.

"But, sir——"

"That will do!"

"Oh, very well, sir."

"Tom Merry told us that he would put Bunter up for the night, and bundle him off in the morning, sir," ventured Frank Nugent.

"He will, I presume, return in the morning," said Mr. Quelch. "Wharton, I am very displeased with you. You have been very remiss. You have not acted as I have a right to expect of my head boy. You need not speak. I am extremely displeased with you."

And Mr. Quelch whisked away, to return to the Head's study and acquaint Dr. Locke

with this amazing and unexpected development.

The footballers looked at one another.

"The fat's in the fire now!" grinned the Bounder. "I pity Bunter when he does come back."

"Yes, rather."

"This is rather thick," said Wharton. "What the thump could I have done?"

"Nothing, old chap."

"Quelchy seems to think——"

"The dear old scout is waxy," said Johnny Bull. "Let him blow off steam, if it's any comfort to him. He will be all right again when he can take it out of Bunter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Quelch, in the Head's study, was deep in discussion with Dr. Locke—in deep wrath.

There was discussion of Bunter's amazing proceedings in most other studies at Greyfriars that evening. Even the great men of the Sixth talked about it. In the Fifth-form passage, Coker of the Fifth asked what Greyfriars was coming to; and nobody in the Fifth could tell him.

In the Remove dormitory, when the Lower Fourth went up to bed, there was a vacant place. One bed remained unoccupied; and, for once, the deep and resonant snore of William George Bunter did not echo and re-echo through the dormitory. Bob Cherry remarked that somebody else was getting the benefit of Bunter's snore; and Bob charitably hoped that somebody else was enjoying it.

"I could lend you ten shillings, Buntah, if that's any use," said D'Arcy. Bunter held out his hand. "Thanks," old chap, it's not much—but, of course, you St. Jim's fellows are not wealthy. I forgot that!" (*See Chapter* 10.)

THE TENTH CHAPTER

Gussy's Guest!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Bunter!"

In Study No. 6, at St. Jim's, four juniors had just finished prep. when the door opened, and a fat face and a pair of large spectacles glimmered in.

Blake and Herries, Digby and D'Arcy, stared at Billy Bunter.

That the fat junior of Greyfriars was somewhere in the School House of St. Jim's they knew, as he had not gone off with Harry Wharton & Co. They had wondered when and where he would turn up. Now they knew.

Here he was, fat and fatuous as ever, apparently in a cheery mood. He nodded and grinned to the juniors in Study No. 6.

"They're gone, of course?" he asked, as he rolled in.

"If you mean the Greyfriars chaps, they've gone long ago," answered Blake, staring at the fat junior. "They're home before now."

"Good!"

"Weally, Buntah——"

"It's all right," said Bunter, "I thought I'd keep out of sight for a bit. Nothing like making sure, what?"

"Well," said Herries, with a deep breath, "you take the bun, and no mistake! What

do you think you are going to do here, Bunter ? "

Bunter blinked round the study.

" Well, I could do with some supper," he answered. " I'm jolly hungry. Are you having any supper in this study ? "

" Supper's off," answered Blake. " Somebody came in here and scoffed all there was in the cupboard."

" Oh, really, Blake——"

" You're welcome, as far as that goes," said Blake. " But there's nothing left, see ? But you can get bread and cheese in Hall."

Bunter sniffed.

" That isn't the kind of hospitality we hand out at Greyfriars," he said. " We treat our guests to something better than that."

" Perhaps your guests wait to be asked ? " suggested Digby.

Bunter decided not to hear that remark.

" Have you told your Housemaster I'm here, Gussy ? " he asked.

" I have not mentioned the mattah to Mr. Wailton yet, Buntah."

" Well, better let him know in time, so that a bed can be fixed up for me, you know," said Bunter. " I don't mind having a bed in your dormitory with you chaps. I'm not particular."

" Oh ! "

" I suppose you don't mind if I take the arm-chair ? " asked Bunter. " I'm rather tired."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was adorning the study arm-chair with his elegant person. He rose without a word, and took another chair.

Bunter settled down comfortably.

" That's better ! Now, what about supper ? I can't very well have a supper of bread and cheese, after what I'm accustomed to. I don't want to put you fellows to a lot of trouble, of course."

" That's all right: you won't ! " said Blake grimly.

" Not at all ! " said Herries.

" Not in the very least ! " said Digby.

Arthur Augustus coughed.

" As a mattah of fact, Buntah is a guest, in a way," he said. " We are bound to look aftah him a little. Unfortunately, the tuckshop is closed at this houah, Buntah, and we have nothing in the studay, owin' to—ahem ! But pewwaps I can find somethin' in anothah studay."

" Hardly fair to plant the fat bounder on another study," said Herries.

" Weally, Hewwies——"

" I want to have a chat with you, Gussy, about the immediate future," said Bunter. " Perhaps these fellows wouldn't mind leaving us alone for a bit."

" You'd like us to clear out of our own study ? " said Blake.

" That's it."

" Well, you can like ! " said Blake curtly.

" Pway go on, Buntah ; you needn't mind my fwiends bein' present," said Arthur Augustus gently.

Bunter blinked at him rather doubtfully. He was not so sure about that. His opinion of Arthur Augustus was, that that noble youth was " soft " ; but he did not suspect Blake & Co. of being soft. He would have preferred to deal with Arthur Augustus " on his own." Probably Blake & Co. suspected as much, for they obviously did not intend to leave the study.

" Well, about putting up here," said Bunter, at last. " I'm thinking of staying a few days, while I think things out. You see, I can't go back to Greyfriars till the question of the flogging is settled. I'm not going to be flogged."

" But——"

" After a few days I fancy that Quelchy will see reason. It will dawn on him that he's running the risk of losing me entirely," explained Bunter.

" Oh, my hat ! "

" So I shall have to stick it out somewhere for a few days at least. No good going home—my pater would send me back to Greyfriars."

" I should jolly well think he would ! "

" So that's no good. In this emergency," said Bunter, " I thought of my old pal Gussy ! I knew Gussy would stand by me."

" Weally, Buntah ! " murmured Arthur Augustus feebly.

" You frabjous ass ! " said Blake, in measured tones.

"Eh?"

"Frabjous ass! You frabjous ass, do you think you can put up at a school you don't belong to? You'll have to have a bed for the night, unless Railton puts you into the wood-shed; I jolly well would! But you'll be bundled off first thing in the morning, back to your own school."

"You see, Buntah, deah boy——" murmured Arthur Augustus.

"Is that what you call hospitality?" sneered Bunter.

"You see, we're not allowed to entahtain visitahs in term-time, deah boy. It's weally out of the question."

"Special circumstance, and all that," said Bunter. "I'll go with you to see your Housemaster, and you rely on me to stuff him all right. I'm an old hand at it."

"I dare say you are, Buntah, but I should certainly not be a party to stuffin' my Housemastah," said D'Arcy sternly. "If you tell Mr. Wailton anythin' in my pwesence, Buntah, you must tell him the twuth."

"Oh, don't be a silly fathead!"

"Wh-a-t?"

"Silly fathead!"

"Bai Jove!"

"I expected something better than this," said Bunter. "Look here, D'Arcy, I'm relying on you. I jolly well wish now that I'd gone to Rookwood instead—Jimmy Silver would have stood by me like a brick. Still, as the matter stands, I'm here, and it's up to you."

"Oh, deah!"

"Put it to your Housemaster how you like, if you're so jolly particular. Tell him I'm too ill to travel for a few days; that will do."

"Weally, Buntah——"

"I leave it to you, Gussy; I know you won't let me down," said Bunter cheerily. "Now about supper. That's important."

Blake & Co. looked grim. They did not attach the slightest importance to that important matter, and their looks said as much. But the long-suffering Arthur Augustus played up.

"Pway come with me, Buntah! I believe there is somethin' goin' on in Tom Mewwy's study, and I will do my best for you."

"Good man."

Bunter rose from his chair with alacrity. He rolled out of No. 6 after Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, leaving Blake & Co. staring. Jack Blake drew a deep breath.

"Well!" he said.

"Well!" said Dig.

"Well!" said Herries.

Really, it was all they could say. The fat and fatuous Owl of Greyfriars was too much for them.

Arthur Augustus piloted the fat junior along to the Shell passage. At the corner Bunter stopped him.

"Hold on a minute, Gussy."

"Yaas, deah boy."

"It's happened very unfortunately that I left my money behind; I left Greyfriars in rather a hurry, you know," said Bunter. "If you could lend me a fiver for a few days——"

"Bai Jove!"

"A couple of pounds would do," said Bunter, who was an adept in reading signs in a countenance—especially such an expressive and guileless countenance as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's.

Arthur Augustus breathed hard.

"I could lend you ten shillings, Buntah, if that is any use."

"Thanks, old chap! It's not much; but, of course, you St. Jim's fellows are not wealthy. I forgot that."

Breathing harder than ever, the swell of St. Jim's handed over a ten-shilling note. Then, with feelings really too deep for words, he led Bunter on to Tom Merry's study in the Shell.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

A Spread in Tom Merry's Study.

"Now, who's it to be?" said Tom Merry.

No. 10 Study in the Shell presented rather a festive appearance.

There had been a remittance that day, and it did not matter to which member of the study the remittance came. Like the Early Christians, the Terrible Three of St. Jim's had their cash largely in common. Funds for one were funds for all; and there was a handsome supper that evening in No. 10, and now the three chums were debating the

"Not a bad spread, you fellows!" said Bunter, gazing round at the Terrible Three. "Of course, it's not anything like the feeds I get in my study at Greyfriars! But, dash it all, I'm not the sort to complain of fellows who're doing their best!" (*See Chapter* 11.)

question of guests. With overflowing good things for supper, naturally they did not want to enjoy them all by themselves; it was a time for their friends to rally round.

"Let's have Study No. 6," said Monty Lowther. "They had all their tuck scoffed this afternoon by that fat animal from Greyfriars, I hear."

"Good! That's four. And Talbot," said Tom.

"That's five! What about Study No. 9?" asked Manners. "Levison, Clive, and Cardew. It will be rather a crowd, but we've got lots."

"Good egg! The more the merrier."

Tap!

"Come in!" sang out Tom Merry, cheerily.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy opened the door, and his eyeglass gleamed into the study. By it gleamed the big spectacles of William George Bunter of the Greyfriars Remove.

"Bunter!" exclaimed the chums of the Shell, together.

The Owl of Greyfriars nodded and grinned.

"Little me!" said he, brightly.

"Well, my hat! You're still here, then?" said Lowther.

"Certainly, old chap. I'm staying for a few days as the guest of my old pal D'Arcy," explained Bunter.

"Great pip! Railton will have something to say about that!" exclaimed Manners.

"Gussy's going to fix it with him."

"I—I—I will twy, Buntah!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"That's all right—I rely on you, old fellow," said Bunter. "I say, you fellows, that looks a decent spread you've got there. Not quite up to our spreads at Greyfriars, perhaps; but any port in a storm, what?"

"Oh, deah! You fellahs, Buntah is landed heah, and he wants some suppah!" said Arthur Augustus, dismally. "I—I was wonderin' whethah you fellows would play up, as I knew you had somethin' goin'."

"Of course they will," said Bunter. "We've been friends a long time, you fellows, what?"

"Have we?" said Manners. "First I've heard of it!"

"Oh, really, you know——"

"Glad you've told us, Bunter," said Monty Lowther, politely. "It's never too late to learn."

"Look here——"

"Weally, you fellahs!" murmured Arthur Augustus, in distress. "Buntah is a—a sort of guest, you know——"

"A guest of sorts!" said Lowther.

"Oh, roll him in!" said Tom Merry, resignedly. "I suppose it's up to us. We were going to ask a little party to supper."

"I don't mind a party," said Bunter. "In fact, I should like to meet my old friends round your table, Tom Merry. Only make sure there's enough to go round, before you ask a crowd. That's important."

"We shan't ask anybody else, if you're supping here," said Tom. "Unless you'd care to stay, Gussy?"

"Thank you vewy much, Tom Mewwy; but if you can weally stand Buntah—I—I mean, if you will give Buntah a feed, I will wetire."

"Leave him to us."

"Thank you vewy much, deah boy. Aftah all, we are bound to keep up our weputation for hospitality, even in these vewy peculiah circumstances. I twust you will excuse me for landin' Buntah on you?"

"Oh, don't mench, old chap."

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy retired, greatly relieved at having got clear of his remarkable guest.

Bunter sat down at the table.

The idea of asking a party to supper in No. 10 was quite given up. Ample as the supplies were, they were none too ample for four, when one of the four was William George Bunter.

"Well, this is a go!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Oh, play up!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

The Terrible Three felt that it was up to them. Hospitality to the stranger within the gates came before all other considerations. They took the situation good-humouredly and cheerfully; not that Bunter cared very much how they took it. He was already deep in tuck, and going deeper. For a quarter of an hour the chums of the Shell were not troubled with any conversation from Billy Bunter. His jaws were too busily occupied in another way.

But after that space of time even Bunter slacked down a little, and the delights of his conversation were added to the pleasure of his company.

"Not a bad spread, you fellows," he said.

"Glad you like it," said Tom Merry politely.

"Of course, it's not like the spreads I get in my study at Greyfriars. But, dash it all, I'm not the fellow to complain of fellows who are doing their best," said Bunter.

"Oh!"

"Pass the cake, old chap."

Tom Merry passed the cake.

It was quite a large cake, but it vanished at a wonderful speed. Bunter blinked round the table.

"Pass the dough-nuts! Thanks. I'll take the lot if you fellows don't want any?"

"Oh!"

"You chaps give me a look in, if you're ever over Greyfriars way," said Bunter, in the intervals of bolting dough-nuts at record speed. "I'll do the same for you—something a bit more handsome, in fact."

"Oh!"

"I hope we shall see a bit of one another, while I'm staying here," went on the Owl of the Remove. "If you've got a football match on for Saturday, I'll play for you, if you like. After what I've seen to-day, I imagine you'd be glad to get one really good man in your team, what?"

"Oh!"

"I shall be jolly glad to win a football match for you, while I'm here," went on Bunter, with his mouth full. "Sort of pay for my keep, what? He, he, he! Don't say a word—I'll do it!"

"So you're not going back to Greyfriars?" asked Manners, staring at the fat junior across the table.

"No! Not till it's settled about the flogging. If the Head wants me back, he's got to be jolly civil about it, I can tell him. Of course, he knows as well as I do that Greyfriars can't afford to lose a fellow like me."

"Oh!"

"Quelchy will have to mind his eye, too," said Bunter, brightly. "I've stood too much cheek from Quelchy! I don't believe in giving these dashed schoolmasters their head, you know. I daresay he'll benefit by what he got to-day. 'Tain't every chap who's got the nerve to knock down his Form-master."

"What?"

"You knocked down your Form-master?" asked Manners.

Bunter nodded.

"Yes, he was cheeky, and I floored him I'm about the only chap at Greyfriars that would have had the nerve to do it. I just let him have it, you know, and he went down like a skittle."

"Oh, my hat!"

Bunter blinked round the table.

It was bare.

The Terrible Three had not done much in the way of supper. But Billy Bunter was a host in himself in that line.

Where he had put it all was a mystery to the Shell fellows. But he had stacked it away somewhere inside his wide circumference.

"Anything more in the cupboard?" asked Bunter.

"Oh, crumbs! No!"

"My hat! Is that the lot?"

"That's the lot!" said Tom Merry.

"That's what you St. Jim's fellows call a study spread?" asked Bunter derisively.

Tom Merry & Co. did not answer that question. Really, they did not quite know how to deal with this remarkable guest.

Tap!

"Come in!" called out Tom.

The juniors jumped up as the study door opened. It was Mr. Railton, the master of the School House, who stood in the doorway. Bunter blinked round without rising—he was too deeply laden to move with ease. The guest in No. 10 was, in fact, loaded far beyond the Plimsoll line.

The School Housemaster glanced in.

"I think Bunter is here, is he not?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom.

"Bunter, I have just heard that you have been left behind here," said Mr. Railton. "The Headmaster desires to see you. Kindly come with me at once."

"Oh, very well, sir!" said Bunter.

And he detached himself, with an effort, from his chair, and followed the Housemaster.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther looked at one another when he was gone.

"It beats me, and I have to give it up," said Lowther. "Why don't they lynch him at Greyfriars? What?"

Tom Merry and Manners shook their heads. They gave it up, too.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

Not to be Stuffed.

DR. HOLMES, the Headmaster of St. Jim's, peered at Billy Bunter over his glasses. The Owl of Greyfriars rolled into the Headmaster's study quite confidently. He had no doubt of his ability to "stuff" the Head of St. Jim's. There was quite a peculiar expression on Mr. Railton's face; but Bunter did not observe it.

"Ah! This is—er—Bunter?" said Dr. Holmes.

"This is Bunter, sir," said the Housemaster.

"It seems that you have been left behind here, Bunter, by the Greyfriars boys who came here to-day to play a football match," said Dr. Holmes. "I have just heard——"

"The fact is, sir, I've stayed on," said Bunter.

"Eh?"

"I really came over, sir, to see my old friend, D'Arcy of the Fourth," said Bunter.

Dr. Holmes peered at him attentively.

"Dear me! I do not quite see how that can be, Bunter. Surely Greyfriars boys are not allowed to pay visits so far out of school bounds."

"Oh, yes, sir, with special leave!" said Bunter.

"Do you mean that you had special leave from your Headmaster?"

"Exactly, sir!"

"Bless my soul!"

Dr. Holmes seemed astonished, and Mr. Railton coughed expressively. Bunter could see no cause for surprise.

It was unusual, no doubt, but it was not unprecedented for a fellow to get an extended exeat. Bunter, for instance, might have had leave to go home for a few days. Why not leave to visit a friend? If his Headmaster chose to give him leave, it need not have astonished another Headmaster.

True, Dr. Locke had not given him leave. But that was a detail for Bunter to settle with his fat conscience.

Bunter, in fact, was scarcely aware that he was telling falsehoods. Leave from his Headmaster was the only reasonable yarn he could spin; and Bunter had decided to spin it. Whether it was true or not was a secondary consideration—with Bunter. He was accustomed to drawing upon his imagination whenever required; but his podgy intellect was quite unaccustomed to sifting truth from falsehood.

"The fact is, sir, D'Arcy wants me to stay with him a few days, and is going to ask permission," said Bunter. "As I have a few days' holiday from my school, sir, he thought it a good idea."

"Bless my soul!"

"I hope there is no objection, sir," said Bunter.

"I am afraid, Bunter, that there would be considerable objection to so very unusual a proceeding," said Dr. Holmes. "But without your Headmaster's leave it would, in any case, be impossible."

"But, sir——"

"If you have intentionally remained behind, Bunter, when your friends left, I am afraid that you have done it with the object of playing the truant from your own school."

"Oh, no, sir! I——"

"Kindly speak the truth, Bunter," said Dr. Holmes, with some asperity.

Bunter blinked at him.

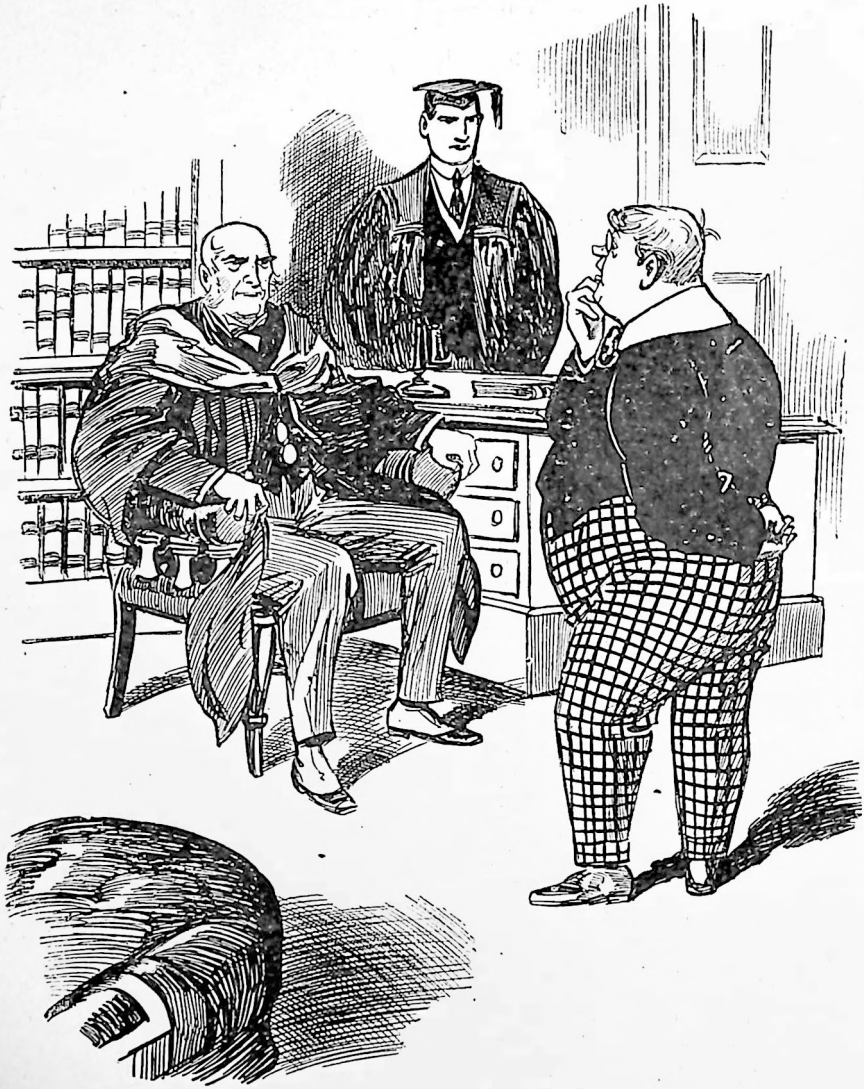
"I always do, sir. If you should ask Mr. Quelch, my Form-master at Greyfriars, sir, he would tell you that I am the soul of honour, and have never been guilty of untruthfulness. Mr. Quelch thinks very highly of me, sir."

"Indeed!"

"Oh, yes, sir. I'm his favourite pupil, really," said Bunter. "Head of the class, and an example to my Form, sir, really. It's because I'm so much ahead of all the other fellows in Form work that my Headmaster thinks I may have a few days' holiday, sir."

"Bunter!"

"That's how it stands, sir. I don't need the cramming the other fellows do. As it is, I shall leave them all behind at the exams. I hope to be able to give my friend D'Arcy some



"Oh, yes, sir. I'm Mr. Quelch's favourite pupil," said Bunter to Dr. Holmes, the Head of St. Jim's. "Head of the class and an example to my Form. It's because I'm so much ahead of all the other fellows in my Form work that my Headmaster thinks I may have a few days' holiday, sir." (*See Chapter* 12.)

Greyfriars Champions

BILLY BUNTER

(Champion Feeder)

Of all the folks who feast and feed
  And love the "flesh-pots" dearly,
The portly Bunter takes the lead:
  The champion feeder, clearly!
His appetite is keen and good,
  His study-mates inform us;
In fact, we've always understood
  That it is quite enormous!

He often lacks the wherewithal
  To satisfy his cravings;
He scans the post rack in the hall
  With ragings and with ravings.
No postal-order ever comes
  From Auntie Maud or Mabel;
And Bunter has to seek the crumbs
  Shed from the rich man's table!

But if, by some amazing luck,
  He finds himself with money,
He revels in a realm of tuck—
  A land of milk and honey!
"In life, there's nothing half so fine,"
  Said Billy once to Sammy,
"As Mrs. Mimble's tarts divine,
  And doughnuts, sweet and jammy!"

"Eat not to live, but live to eat,"
  Is Bunter's favourite maxim;
Whether it's muffins, rolls or meat,
  No food can overtax him!
Perched high upon the tuckshop stool
  We see his ample person;
The greatest gorger in the school,
  Bard ever vented verse on!

coaching while I'm here, sir—he's rather backward, I think. There are very few subjects that I haven't got at my finger-tips."

"If you have leave from your school, Bunter, there seems to exist some very strange misapprehension. Your Form-master, Mr. Quelch, cannot be aware of it."

"Oh, yes, sir! Mr. Quelch congratulated me on getting leave, and told me it was because I was a shining example to my Form, sir."

"Mr. Quelch did?" exclaimed Dr. Holmes, while the Housemaster stared at Bunter as if the fat junior fascinated him.

"Certainly, sir," said the Owl of Greyfriars cheerily. "He patted me on my head when I left, sir, and said, 'Bless you, Bunter! You are a comfort to me'."

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"If this is true, Bunter, I am glad to hear that you stand so high in your Form-master's estimation," said Dr. Holmes drily. "But it does not agree with what Mr. Quelch has said to me."

"What?" stuttered Bunter.

He blinked at the Head in amazement.

As St. Jim's was in Sussex, and Greyfriars in Kent, he could not imagine how Mr. Quelch had said anything to Dr. Holmes. And then he noticed the telephone at the St. Jim's headmaster's elbow, and comprehended.

"I have received a telephone message from Greyfriars," said Dr. Holmes grimly. "Your Form-master, Mr. Quelch, has informed me that you left your school without permission this afternoon."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"That you are sentenced to a severe flogging for the extremely serious offence of raising your hand against your Form-master," went on Dr. Holmes, with great sternness, "and that you have left your school apparently to escape your punishment for a time."

"Oh, dear!"

"He states that you remained behind here, when your friends left, probably intentionally," said Dr. Holmes.

"Oh, no, sir! It was quite unintentional."

"What! You have just told me that you designed to stay here for a few days," exclaimed Dr. Holmes.

"Oh, yes! Yes, sir! That—that's what I—I meant to say."

"Bless my soul! You seem to be a very foolish and untruthful boy, Bunter."

"I, sir!" exclaimed Bunter.

"Yes, you, Bunter! I have seldom encountered such reckless untruthfulness," said Dr. Holmes sternly. "Mr. Quelch has requested me to send you to the station in the morning, in charge of a prefect, to put you in the express for Lantham. That I shall do."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bunter, in dismay.

"Mr. Railton, doubtless you will see that this boy is accommodated with a bed in the Fourth-form dormitory for to-night."

"I will speak to the house-dame, sir."

"Very good. You may go, Bunter. You may breakfast in Hall to-morrow morning, and you will be taken to the station at half-past eight."

"Oh, sir! I—I—I—the fact is, sir——"

"That is enough, Bunter."

"If you'll let me explain, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"There is nothing to explain. If you were a boy belonging to this school, I should cane you for speaking to me untruthfully. As it is, you may go."

"But, sir, about old Quelchy——"

"About whom?" ejaculated Dr. Holmes.

"I—I mean Mr. Quelch, sir," stammered Bunter. "You—you mustn't take any notice of what he says, sir. It's all gammon, sir."

"What?"

"The fact is, sir, that old Quelchy—I mean Mr. Quelch—is—is rather liable to take a little too much, sir."

"Wha-a-at?"

"I hate to mention such a thing, sir, about a Greyfriars master, but the truth is, sir, he drinks," said Bunter.

"Good heavens!"

"That accounts for it all, sir," rattled on Bunter happily. "I've no doubt he was a little squiffy when he telephoned to you, sir——"

"Squiffy?" gasped Dr. Holmes. This was a new word to the headmaster of St. Jim's.

"That's it, sir—tipsy, you know," said Bunter. "When he's like that, Quelchy is liable to say anything, sir. That's how it is."

"Is this boy in his right senses?" asked Dr. Holmes, addressing space. "How dare you make such a scandalous accusation against a gentleman in Mr. Quelch's position, Bunter? How dare you, I say?"

"I—I mean——"

"You are a young rascal, sir!" exclaimed Dr. Holmes.

"I didn't mean——"

"Silence!"

"The—the fact is, sir, I—I meant——" gasped Bunter, in alarm, "I—I—I meant that Quelchy doesn't drink, sir! He's a strict tee-teetaller—I mean teetotaller, sir! That's what I really meant to say? But the fact is, sir—the actual fact is, sir—that Quelchy wanders in his mind a little—not always, you know, sir—but occasionally—and that's how he came to telephone to you what he did, sir. I—I hope you can take my word, sir."

"Take your word!" stuttered Dr. Holmes.

"Yes, sir! It's rather ungentlemanly to doubt a fellow's word, isn't it, sir?"

Dr. Holmes did not answer that question. He looked at Mr. Railton, who was still gazing at Bunter in a fascinated sort of way.

"Mr. Railton! Kindly remove this boy."

"Certainly, sir."

Mr. Railton's heavy hand dropped on Banter's collar.

"I—I say, sir——"

"Come!"

The fat junior was propelled towards the door. As he swung into the passage, he blinked round at Dr. Holmes.

"I—I say, sir, I—I suppose it's all right about my staying here a few days with my friend D'Arcy, isn't it?"

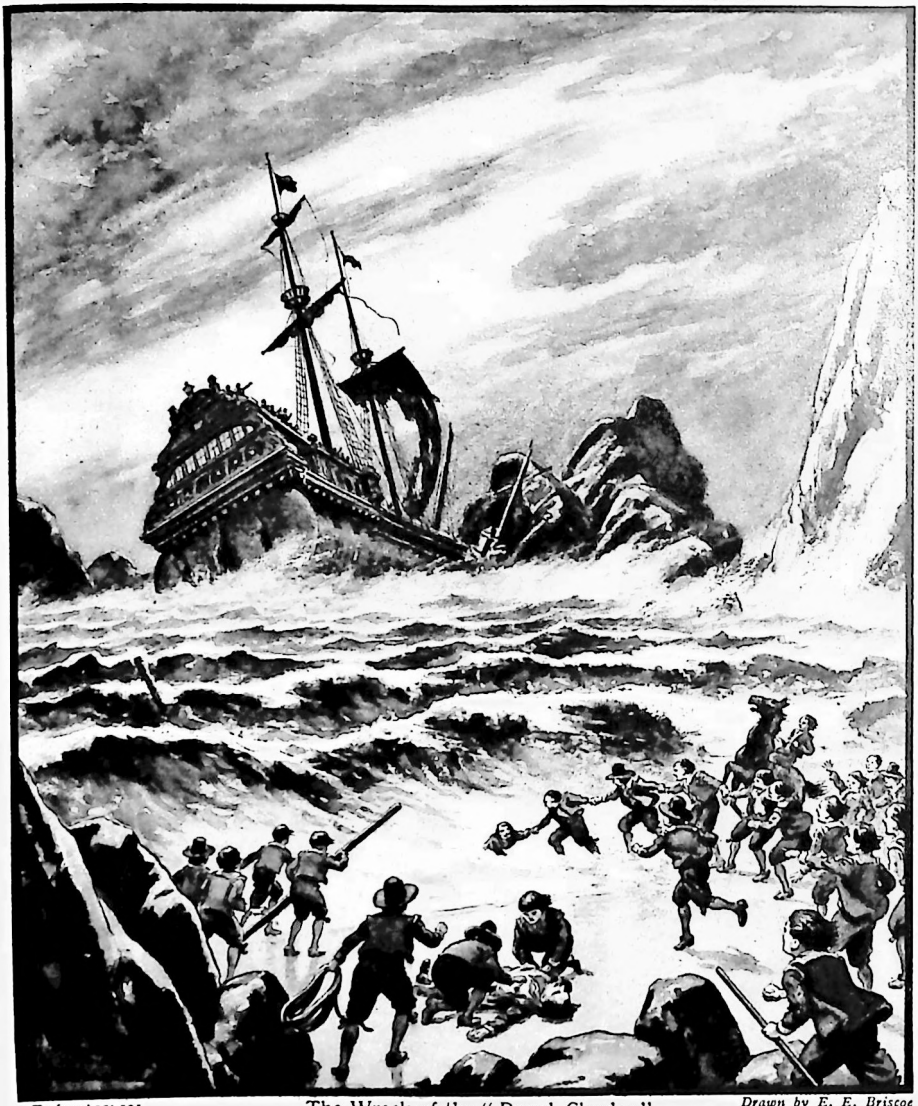
"No!" thundered Dr. Holmes, rising to his feet in stately wrath. "No, Bunter, it is not! If D'Arcy really is a friend of yours, which I doubt, I shall speak to him on the subject! I would not allow you to remain even one night under this roof, were it not too late, sir, to cast you forth!"

"Oh, lor'!" gasped Bunter.

"Take him away, Mr. Railton."

The strong hand on Bunter's collar propelled him along the corridor. William George

GREYFRIARS TO THE RESCUE!



To face page 121

The Wreck of the "Royal Charles"

Drawn by E. E. Briscoe

A TRAGIC EPISODE OF CHARLES II's REIGN.

THE night of February 1st, 1665, was a memorable one in the history of Greyfriars School.

All day a terrible storm had raged, which increased towards nightfall to hurricane force. About eight o'clock in the evening two Greyfriars boys, Redmayne and Swaine, both of the Sixth Form, were lying on the top of the cliff overlooking Pegg Bay, watching the roaring sea, when they suddenly made out the dark mass of a large ship quite close in to the shore. As they sprang to their feet, the ship struck upon the dreaded Shoulder with a crash that sounded above the roar of the storm.

Redmayne, who was at that time the captain of Greyfriars, acted with commendable promptness. Running to the nearest farmhouse, not a quarter of a mile away, he seized a horse from the stables and galloped off full speed to Greyfriars. In an incredibly short time Redmayne reappeared, still on his horse, at the head of the whole school, the boys having raced across country in the darkness, taking hedges and ditches in their stride.

By the time the school reached the shore the clouds had parted and a bright moon made the scene as light as day. The great ship, fast on the Shoulder, was recognised by the fishermen as the "Royal Charles," one of the finest vessels of her day. She was breaking up rapidly, and it was impossible to launch a boat in the mountainous seas.

Many of her crew jumped overboard, and attempted to struggle to the shore. Again and again the Greyfriars boys formed human chains and dashed into the surf in the endeavour to rescue the unfortunate mariners struggling in the water.

In all seventeen people were rescued out of a total of 105 souls on board. Shortly after midnight the "Royal Charles" broke up and sank, and all hope of further rescue work had to be abandoned. A full account of this tragic episode, written soon after the event, is still preserved in the Library at Greyfriars.

Continued from page 120).

Bunter blinked up at the St. Jim's Housemaster.

"I—I say, sir, the Head seems to be in rather a wax," he gasped. "I—I hope I didn't say anything to offend him, sir."

"Bless my soul!" was all Mr. Railton could say.

"Perhaps, sir, if you would put in a word for me, he would let me stay a few days, sir."

"I should certainly not dream of putting in a word for you, as you express it, Bunter."

"It will be a great disappointment for D'Arcy, sir."

"I hardly think so, Bunter; but if it should prove so, D'Arcy must bear that disappointment."

"But, sir——"

"Kindly say no more, Bunter."

"Oh, lor'!"

Bunter said no more. He had to suppress his indignation—with a discouraging feeling that he was as much misunderstood at St. Jim's as he was at Greyfriars. Really, it seemed that nowhere in the wide world was William George Bunter likely to be appraised at his true value.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER

Bunter's Farewell!

BILLY BUNTER slept that night in the Fourth-form dormitory, in the School-House of St. Jim's. He slept soundly enough.

The morrow was uncertain; but Bunter did not believe in meeting troubles half-way. He had had a good supper—and he had a comfortable bed. That was all right; and the morrow could take care of itself.

So he slept peacefully; and his snore reverberated through the St. Jim's dormitory, as it had been wont to reverberate through the Remove dormitory at Greyfriars.

When the rising-bell rang out in the morning, Bunter was still snoring. He snored on after the Fourth had turned out.

"Bai Jove! What a fearful wow, you know," murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "I suppose we had bettah wake him! He will want some bweakkah befoah he goes for his twain."

The swell of St. Jim's shook the sleeping

beauty by the shoulder. There was a grunt from Bunter.

"Grooogh!"

"Buntah, deah boy——"

"Leggo!"

"The wisin'-bell has gone, Buntah——"

Bunter opened his eyes, and blinked irritably at the swell of St. Jim's.

"Blow the rising-bell," he snapped. "Lemme alone."

"But the whole school is up, Buntah——"

"Blow the school!"

"Bai Jove!"

"I don't belong to this rotten school, do I?" snapped Bunter.

"This—this what?"

"This rotten school! Lemme alone! Mind your own business."

"Oh, gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus retired quite precipitately, and Bunter turned his head on his pillow, and settled down for another snooze. But he did not snooze long. Jack Blake dipped a sponge in a jug of water.

"I'll try next!" he remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake's attempt at waking Bunter was more successful than D'Arcy's. The Owl of Greyfriars started up with a wild yell, as the cold water splashed over his fat face.

"Yaroooooh!"

"That all right?" asked Blake cheerily, "I've got some more——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yooop! Beast! Oh, my hat! Yaroooooh!"

Bunter rolled out of bed, on the further side. Blake was still squeezing the sponge over him, and it was not nice.

"You cheeky cad!" roared Bunter, across the bed. "If these are St. Jim's manners, I can tell you I don't think much of them."

"Your own bein' so highly polished!" drawled Cardew.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Buntah, you weally must turn out, you know——"

"Oh, shut up."

"Wha-a-at did you say, Buntah?"

"Shut up!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Billy Bunter dressed himself sulkily. As he was not, after all, to stay on at St. Jim's, he did not see any reason for wasting civility on St. Jim's fellows. So he did not waste any.

"Jolly glad when I get out of this show," he told the dormitory generally, "I was a fool to come here instead of going to Rookwood. They know how to treat a chap decently at Rookwood. I was a silly ass to come here."

"You were a silly ass, and still are; no mistake about that," agreed Blake. "Not to mention that you are a measly worm and a frabjous fat rotter, too."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" snapped Bunter.

"What a nice youth!" murmured Cardew. "How they must prize him at Greyfriars—and how nice it will be when they get him back."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter's washing was soon over; it was not extensive. He was the last out of bed, but he was the first out of the dormitory. In the lower hall, Kildare of the Sixth came up to him.

"You're Bunter, I suppose?" he said.

"Yes, I am!" grunted Bunter.

"Then you're the kid I'm to take to the station at half-past eight. Be ready on time," said the captain of St. Jim's.

"I'll please myself about that!" retorted Bunter.

"What?"

"I'll do as I jolly well like."

Kildare looked at him.

"Is that how you talk to a Sixth-form prefect at Greyfriars?" he asked. "It won't do for St. Jim's." Kildare had his official ashplant under his arm, and he let it slip down into his hand. "Bend over."

"What?" roared Bunter.

"Bend over!" said Kildare crisply.

Bunter blinked at him with an infuriated blink.

"You can't cane me! Think you're a Greyfriars prefect! I don't belong to this rotten school!"

"You should have remembered that a little earlier, and gone where you belonged," said Kildare genially. "I'm waiting."

The look on the St. Jim's captain's face

"Cut off!" ordered Kildare, and Bunter promptly made himself scarce, still feeling the stinging lashes of the prefect's cane. This wasn't at all the sort of treatment Bunter had expected at St. Jim's! (*See* Chapter 13.)

decided Bunter that he would, after all, "bend over" as ordered. And he did.

Whack!

"Ow-wow-ow wo-wow!"

"Cut!" said Kildare.

Bunter cut, thrilling with indignation. Somehow or other, he had expected to be treated as an honoured guest at St. Jim's—knowing his own value, which nobody else knew at Greyfriars. But his expectations had certainly not been realised. Really, he might as well have taken a licking from Walker of the Sixth at Greyfriars as from Kildare at St. Jim's. He began to look forward to the moment when he would shake the dust of St. Jim's from his feet—though he had no intention of going back to Greyfriars. With the question of the flogging still unsettled that was, in Bunter's opinion, impossible.

He breakfasted with the Fourth, many curious glances being turned upon him. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made it a point to show him all the attention he could: his Chesterfieldian politeness holding out to the end.

After breakfast, Kildare came for him.

Bunter gave him a morose blink.

"I don't want anybody to come to the station with me," he said. "You can jolly well save yourself the trouble."

"Head's orders," said Kildare. "Get a move on."

"Look here, you can give me the money for my ticket——"

"That's enough! Get on."

A defiant answer trembled on Bunter's lips: but he remembered the ashplant, and did not utter it. With a frowning brow, he rolled down to the gates beside the St. Jim's Sixth-former.

Arthur Augustus cut across the quad for a last word.

"Buntah, deah boy——"

"Yah!"

"Sowwy it was quite imposs for you to stop, Buntah!" said Arthur Augustus, stretching a point, as it were, in the cause of politeness.

Bunter sneered.

"I jolly well wouldn't stop if you asked me on your bended knees!" he said. "This place is scarcely up to my standard."

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"I'm not a snob, I hope," said Bunter. "But a fellow has to draw the line somewhere."

"Weally, Buntah——"

"I draw it at this sort of a show!" said Bunter, with a disparaging blink round at St. Jim's generally. "Rotten hole, if you ask me! Jolly glad to see the last of it, and of you, too, D'Arcy! You're a milksop."

"A—a—a what?"

"A milksop! I despise you."

"Oh, cwikey!"

Bunter rolled on after Kildare, leaving the swell of St. Jim's quite overcome. Arthur Augustus could only stare after him, with his mouth open, like a fish out of water.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther were near the gates, and they called cheerily to the Owl of Greyfriars as he came along.

"Hallo, going, Bunter? Good-bye, kid."

"Rats!"

"Eh, what?"

"Go and eat coke."

"Is that how you say good-bye?" asked Tom Merry staring.

"Yah!"

Bunter rolled out of the gates after Kildare. Probably, but for Kildare's presence, he would not have escaped from the precincts of St. Jim's without a bumping. He blinked discontentedly up the road.

"Are we walking to the station?" he demanded.

"Yes."

"Look here, I'd rather telephone for a taxi."

"I daresay you would: but as it happens, we are walking. Get on."

"I'm jolly well not going to walk."

Kildare made a motion with his foot, and Bunter decided that he was going to walk. He grunted discontentedly as he plodded up the road. Not another word was spoken till they reached Rylcombe station, and there Kildare took two tickets. He was to see Bunter safe into the express at Wayland Junction. After that, he was to wash his hands of him, which would be a considerable relief.

Bunter sat and glowered in the local train. Kildare sat with a book on his knee, reading Livy, and taking no heed of the Greyfriars junior.

"Here we are!" he said at last.

They got out at Wayland. There, Kildare took the ticket for Lantham, Bunter eyeing him surlily.

"There's your ticket—take care of it," said the St. Jim's prefect. "This way to the train."

"I don't want you to see me into the train."

"Head's orders."

"I'm not going back to Greyfriars, so there!" howled Bunter.

"You can go to Greyfriars, or go to Jericho; but you're going into the Lantham express," said Kildare. "That's Head's orders. Come on."

Bunter was landed safely into the express. Kildare closed the door on him, and stepped back. But he did not go.

The Owl of Greyfriars blinked at him morosely from the window. So long as the St. Jim's prefect stood there he could not get out of the train. Rookwood was in the opposite direction: and Rookwood was Bunter's intended destination.

"Look here, you needn't wait!" he snapped from the carriage window.

Kildare did not heed.

"Deaf?" howled Bunter.

No answer.

"You silly ass!" roared Bunter. "Get out of it! Go and eat coke! Call yourself a Sixth-form prefect! Yah!"

Kildare's face flushed a little. He made a motion towards the carriage, but it was too late to get in and deal with Bunter as he deserved. There would have been no time to get out again.

Bunter was booked for Lantham. But he had the solace of telling Kildare what he thought of him, at least.

"I've a jolly good mind to get out and mop up the platform with you," he said. "Precious sort of an ass, aren't you? For two pins I'd get out of this carriage and kick you along the platform! Yah!"

Kildare breathed hard and deep. But the train was starting now, and Bunter was safe from vengeance.

The Owl of Greyfriars leaned from the window.

"Go and eat coke!" he shouted. "Fathead! Do you hear—fathead! Silly ass! Next time I see you, I'll pull your ears! Tell D'Arcy, from me, that he's a milksop: and tell Tom Merry he's a rank outsider! As for you, you're the limit, you are—fathead!"

And Bunter was gone.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

A Talk on the Telephone

"MIND your eye, you fellows!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Quelchy's wild."

The warning was scarcely needed.

As Mr. Quelch came into the Remove room, to take his Form in third lesson, the expression on his face was sufficient to warn all the Remove that they had better be very, very good.

Mr. Quelch was a just man and he would not have thought of visiting Bunter's delinquencies upon the unoffending heads of Bunter's Form-fellows. But it was quite possible that he might do it without thinking so! His gleaming eye and knit brow told plainly enough that it behoved his Form to be very careful. Little delinquencies that, at other times, might have passed unnoticed, were very likely now to bring down the vials of wrath.

Mr. Quelch's steely eyes roved over his class, and met only a view of quiet, respectful, sedulous faces. The Remove were on their guard.

Really, there was no fault to be found with that collection of extremely and unusually good boys. Third lesson commenced.

"Cherry!"

"Yes, sir."

"Kindly do not shuffle your feet."

"Oh! No, sir!"

"I have spoken to you before, Cherry, about shuffling your feet noisily in the form-room."

"Yes, sir!" murmured Bob.

"Mauleverer!"

"Oh! Yaas, sir!" gasped Lord Mauleverer, in alarm.

"Do you think it proper form to yawn in the form-room, Mauleverer?"

"Oh! No, sir."

"Take fifty lines."

"Oh! Certainly, sir."

Mr. Quelch's gimlet-eyes roved over the class again. Nobody yawned, and nobody shuffled his feet. Not for untold wealth would any Removite have shuffled his feet or yawned just then.

The lesson proceeded, with the Remove more than ever on their guard, and wondering inwardly who was going to be the next victim.

There was a vacant place in the form-room. That was the cause of all the trouble.

From St. Jim's that morning had come a trunk call. Dr. Holmes had informed Dr. Locke that William George Bunter had been placed in the Lantham express by a St. Jim's prefect, with his fare paid. Dr. Locke had thanked Dr. Holmes for the information, arranged to reimburse him for the cost of the ticket, and passed the information on to Mr. Quelch.

That should have settled the matter.

But it hadn't.

Bunter, speeding across country by express, should have arrived at Greyfriars by third lesson. But he hadn't arrived.

What did it mean?

Would the wretched boy—the unpardonable delinquent—have the audacity, the effrontery, to cause his Form-master more trouble, after all that he had already caused? Mr. Quelch could not help feeling that he would. He could not help a lingering doubt that Bunter might leave the train at some station not very far from Wayland, and keep away from Greyfriars after all. If he chose to do so, there was nothing to stop him. And really there was no telling what so fatuous a fellow might or might not do.

Third lesson ended in a thunderous atmosphere.

The Remove were glad to get out.

"Where on earth's Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton, as the Famous Five walked into the quad. "He ought to have been here long ago."

"The wherefulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The esteemed Bunter is not turning upfully."

"He can't be coming," said Bob Cherry. "The silly owl is keeping away till they let him off the flogging."

"The awful ass! I suppose that's it!" said Harry. "It will be a record licking when he does get it."

At dinner, Mr. Quelch, at the head of the Remove table, had a brow of thunder. The Remove were very circumspect.

After dinner, the Remove master walked in the quad, and not a single member of his Form wandered anywhere near where Mr. Quelch was walking. Really, the Removites were beginning to look upon their Form-master as fellows might have looked on a dog given to biting.

The angry master went to his study at last.

He was quite at a loss.

By this time it was amply clear that William George Bunter was not returning to Greyfriars.

Where was he?

Mr. Quelch was debating in his mind whether to ring up Mr. Bunter, and ascertain whether that gentleman's hopeful son had gone home, when the telephone bell rang. Mr. Quelch snatched the receiver off the hooks with a grab that very nearly up-ended the instrument.

"Who——what——"

"Is that Greyfriars?" came a fat and familiar voice along the wires.

"Bunter!"

"Is that Mr. Quelch?"

"Mr. Quelch speaking!" said the Remove-master in a grinding voice.

"Good! I've rung you up, sir, to ask you if it's all right!" said the fat voice. "I want to explain, sir, that it was an accident flooring you in the box-room with Mauly's bag. I took you for Walker of the Sixth."

"You see I don't want to be flogged," explained Bunter. "I should prefer to let the whole matter drop! In fact, unless the matter is entirely overlooked, I may decide not to return to Greyfriars at all, sir!" At the other end of the wire—

"Bunter——"

"In the circumstances, sir, I hope you will let me off the flagging."

"I shall do nothing of the kind, Bunter," hooted Mr. Quelch. "Your explanation that you intended to assault a Sixth-form prefect, and not your Form-master, lessens your offence very little. I command you to come back to school at once, and I promise you, sir, that you will receive the most condign punishment."

"No jolly fear!"

"What? What?"

"I'm not coming back till it's settled about the flogging, sir," said Bunter.

"You young rascal!"

"You see, sir, I don't want to be flogged! I should prefer to let the whole matter drop."

"You—you——"

"It would never have happened, sir, if Walker of the Sixth hadn't been after me. He's a bully, sir! Making out that a fellow bagged his cake—as if I'd touch his cake! I never even knew he had a cake. It was a rotten small one, too, with hardly any plums

—Mr. Quelch was gasping with rage and indignation. "Bunter! I—I—I——" The telephone clicked as the exchange cut Bunter off, and the master of the Remove remained glaring and stuttering at the instrument. There seemed to be no limit to Bunter's impudence. (*See Chapter* 14.)

in it. I hope you can take my word about this, Mr. Quelch, and that you'll speak to Walker, and tell him that he's got to let the matter drop."

"Bunter! This impudence—this insolence——"

"Oh, really, sir——"

"How dare you bandy words with me, Bunter? I have never heard of such unexampled insolence! You seem to be absolutely devoid of any sense of propriety—in fact, even of common understanding. I command you to return to Greyfriars instantly, and most certainly you shall not escape the punishment due for your unprecedented audacity. Do you hear me, Bunter?"

"I didn't catch that, sir."

"What?"

"Would you mind saying it over again?"

"I—I—I——!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

He did not say it over again; he was a little short of breath. He glared at the telephone, as if the unoffending instrument had given him deep offence.

"Are you still there, sir?" went on the cheery, fat voice. "I hope we shall be able to settle this matter all right, sir."

"Return to Greyfriars at once——"

"You're interrupting me, sir. We've got only three minutes, you know. Now, I've explained how it all happened, can I take it that the matter is to be entirely overlooked, sir?"

"No!" hooted Mr. Quelch.

"Then I'm sorry to say I can't come back, sir. It's your own fault, Mr. Quelch. I'm sure you'll see that."

"Bless my soul!"

"I feel that I ought to warn you, sir, that you are running the risk of losing me altogether."

"What?"

"I may decide never to return to Greyfrairs at all, sir. Think of that!"

"Upon my word!"

"I'm prepared to come back, sir, and—and overlook everything. I can't say fairer than that. But if you don't agree, I'm bound to point out the risk you're running of losing me. It won't be any good coming round, when it's too late! Better consider that in time, sir."

"Bunter! I—I——"

No answer.

Bunter had cut off, or had been cut off at the exchange. Mr. Quelch stood with the receiver in his hand, and an expression on his face that would have put his Form on their very best behaviour, had they seen it. For some minutes, the Remove master was at a loss. Only one thing could have comforted him—Bunter and a cane, in juxtaposition. And Bunter was far away.

But Mr. Quelch, calming himself with an effort, rang up the exchange.

"I have just had a trunk call, and was cut off suddenly," he said, in his calmest voice. "Can you give the number from which I was rung up? It is very important, and I shall be deeply obliged."

Bunter had not thought of that!

Of course, a fellow couldn't think of everything!

At least, Bunter couldn't!

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER
A Visitor at Rookwood !

JIMMY SILVER, of the Fourth Form at Rookwood, looked, and looked again.

"I've seen that fat chap before somewhere," he remarked.

"Same here," said Arthur Edward Lovell.

"It's Bunter," said Raby.

"That fat Greyfriars chap!" remarked Newcome.

And Jimmy Silver nodded.

"I remember him! He's been here before—I remember! What the thump is he doing here now?"

"Can't be a holiday at Greyfriars," said Lovell.

The chums of the Classical Fourth, of Rookwood School, looked with some interest and curiosity at the fat figure that had rolled in at the gates.

It was William George Bunter, of the Greyfriars Remove.

Jimmy Silver & Co. had seen something of him before, and they had not much admired what they had seen. They were on the extensive list of Bunter's friends, but were in blissful ignorance of the fact.

The Rookwood fellows were taking a walk in the Big Quad before dinner, which was nearly due. They were thinking of anything but Billy Bunter of Greyfriars, when that fat and fatuous youth appeared in the offing.

Bunter blinked round through his big spectacles, blinking at the fellows he saw in the quad, as if in search of someone.

There were a good many fellows there, and many of them glanced at Bunter, a second time, and a third. Bunter flattered himself that he was a distinguished-looking fellow; and undoubtedly he drew many glances wherever he appeared. It was, as a matter of fact, his circumference that did it.

"Hallo, Bunter!" called out Jimmy Silver.

Bunter blinked round again.

He sighted the Fistical Four, and an expansive smile overspread his fat countenance. He rolled over to them at once.

"Looking for you chaps," he said.

"Well, here we are," said Jimmy, with a smile.

"What on earth are you doing away from your school, in term?" asked Arthur Edward Lovell, puzzled. "It isn't a holiday, is it?"

"Not exactly a holiday," assented Bunter.

"Special exeat?" asked Raby.

Bunter nodded.

"That's it."

"Lucky bargee!" said Newcome.

Bunter grinned complacently. As he was away from school in term, the Rookwooders could only suppose that he had been granted a special exeat; really, it was all they could suppose. That Bunter had deliberately absented himself from school, because a flogging impended over him there like the sword of Damocles, they were not likely to guess.

Bunter had done some thinking during his journey from St. Jim's.

At St. Jim's he had been disappointed. It had dawned upon his fat brain that any fellow, howsoever well-disposed, really could not help him in his extraordinary escapade of playing truant from his school. It was a thing that could not be done. So Bunter had prepared an entirely new version of the state of affairs, on his way to Rookwood. St. Jim's having been drawn blank, and home being out of the question, Rookwood was his only resource—and he realised that it behoved him to be very careful, in order to prevent that last refuge being closed to him.

So he was no longer the fugitive schoolboy who had knocked over his Form-master, and was dodging a flogging. He was a specially-considered schoolboy who had been granted a special holiday by his headmaster, on account of the high esteem in which that headmaster held him. On these terms, he felt that Jimmy Silver & Co. could have no reluctance to stand by him. After his experience with D'Arcy he did not design to persuade Jimmy Silver & Co. to "stuff" their headmaster on the subject. But if they believed his new version of the story, they would "stuff" their headmaster unconsciously. That was what Bunter called strategy.

His task was really easy; for, knowing nothing of the amazing circumstances of the case, the Rookwooders had guessed that he had special leave. Bunter had only to leave them in their error.

But the Rookwood chums seemed a little perplexed, all the same. They did not doubt that Bunter had special leave from school—since he was away from Greyfriars. But they wondered why he had wandered to Rookwood. They did not know yet that they were his dear friends and old pals.

A bell began to ring; really, Bunter had timed his visit well.

"That's tiffin," said Lovell.

"Oh, good!" said Bunter.

"Hem!"

"I suppose you fellows can stand me some dinner here," said Bunter, blinking at them. "You see, I've got special leave from school, extending over the week-end, and I'm making a round of my friends before—before going home. See?"

"Oh!"

"You fellows being old pals, I thought I'd give you a look-in!" explained Bunter.

"Oh! I—I see!" said Jimmy Silver. He was enlightened now. "I—I daresay we could get you into dinner, Bunter—at least, I'll speak to Mr. Dalton, and ask his permission."

"Do, old chap," said Bunter.

The Rookwood crowd were going into the House to dinner, and Jimmy Silver & Co. joined them, with Bunter. They piloted him into the dining-hall, where Mr. Dalton, the master of the Fourth, glanced at him. Jimmy Silver hurried to explain matters to his Formmaster. And Mr. Dalton, although he gave Bunter a very curious look, nodded assent.

"Here's room for you, Bunter," said Jimmy.

"It's all right."

"Good, old chap."

Bunter sat down cheerily.

He was feeling quite bucked. It was quite a good dinner, and Bunter did it justice. His fat face was very cheery when he rolled out of the dining-room with Jimmy Silver & Co.

As Bunter sighted the Fistical Four, an expansive smile spread over his fat countenance. He rolled over towards them at once. "I was looking for you chaps," he said. (*See Chapter* 15).

"Like us to walk to the station with you?" asked Jimmy. "We can get leave to go down to Coombe."

Bunter blinked at him.

"I'm not going yet."

"Oh!"

"Stay on till classes—that's all right," said Raby.

"You fellows will have to go in to classes this afternoon, of course," said Bunter. "That's all right—I'll take a nap in your study."

"Eh?"

"Your Formmaster seems a good-natured sort of chap——"

"One of the best," said Jimmy.

"I suppose you could fix it with him for me to stay over the night?"

"Wha-a-t?"

"The fact is, that's the arrangement I've made," said Bunter. "I knew you fellows would be glad to put me up, for the sake of auld lang syne, and so on."

"Oh!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked at Bunter. They wanted to be civil and hospitable. But really they did not want Bunter.

"I hardly think we could fix that up," said Jimmy Silver gravely. "You really shouldn't have arranged that without asking us before, Bunter."

"I was relying on our old friendship," explained Bunter.

"Oh!"

It was the first Jimmy Silver & Co. had heard of the old friendship; but they did not like to say so. Lovell opened his mouth, but closed it again, and strolled away. Raby and Newcome gave Jimmy a rather comical glance, and strolled after Lovell.

Quite willingly Jimmy Silver would have strolled away also. But he felt that he could not leave the guest from Greyfriars entirely to his own devices. The Co. were already fed up with Bunter's cool cheek; but Uncle James of Rookwood had a great gift of patience.

"You can fix it all right," said Bunter, cheerily. "You see, I want to see my old friends while I've got this special holiday—a fellow doesn't get a special holiday in term time every day, you know. I've been to St. Jim's already to see my friends there, and they gave me a rousing reception."

"Did they?" murmured Jimmy.

"Yes. D'Arcy—you know D'Arcy of St. Jim's——"

"I know him."

"Well, D'Arcy begged me to stay longer—almost with tears in his eyes. I told him it couldn't be done, as I had to give you fellows here some of my time. They were sorry to lose me. A Sixth-form prefect came to see me off at the station," said Bunter—"the captain of the school himself! That rather shows what they think of me at St. Jim's—what?"

"Oh!"

"If you can't put me up," went on Bunter, "it will be all right. I shall put up at the inn in Coombe. I noticed a rather decent inn there. Then I can spend all my time with you fellows, just the same—see?"

Jimmy Silver might have been expected to brighten up at this. But he didn't. He looked as if he found it difficult, somehow, to live up to his own cheery maxim of "Keep Smiling!"

The prospect of Bunter spending all his time with his Rookwood friends did not seem to enliven this Rookwooder, somehow.

Jimmy Silver cast a longing glance after his chums, who were punting about a footer in the distance, with Mornington and Oswald, and some other Fourth-form fellows. But he did not go.

"Now, that being settled," said Bunter, brightly, "I'll tell you what—I want to telephone. I suppose I can use one of the school telephones. You see, my Form-master at Greyfriars expects me to keep him posted while I'm away. I'm rather a favourite of his, you know—I might say, the apple of his eye. I don't think I ought to neglect him."

"You could telephone from Coombe——"

Bunter grinned.

"Yes; but I should have to pay for that."

"Oh!"

There was a pause.

"I'll ask Mr. Dalton to let you use his 'phone," said Jimmy Silver, at last. "Come on."

"Right-ho, old chap."

Mr. Dalton was walking in the quad, and Jimmy Silver went up to him to ask permission. Again Mr. Dalton gave Bunter a very curious look, but he assented, and Jimmy led his remarkable guest into the Form-master's study.

"Don't wait," said Bunter. "My talk with Quelchy is rather private, you know."

Jimmy Silver had no intention of waiting. He was only too glad to land Bunter in Mr. Dalton's study and leave him there.

"I'll see you later!" called out Bunter

"Will you?" murmured Jimmy. The captain of the Rookwood Fourth had his own ideas about that.

He closed the door and retired, and Bunter proceeded to ring up Mr. Quelch at Greyfriars.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER
Friends in Need!

BILLY BUNTER rolled out of Mr. Dalton's study a little later.

His talk on the telephone with Mr. Quelch had made it clear that his "holiday" was not to come to an end.

Bunter had, in his own opinion, done all that he could.

He had offered to let the whole matter drop; and he had warned Mr. Quelch that, if he persisted in his unamiable attitude, he ran the risk of losing this valuable pupil.

Mr. Quelch had not chosen to listen to reason. That was his own look-out. Bunter had done all he could, and he had to let it go at that.

Rookwood hospitality was his resource now—as long as that might last. In a couple of days he would ring up Mr. Quelch again, when doubtless the Remove master would have come to a better frame of mind. At least, Bunter hoped so.

In the meantime, Bunter was "sticking it out."

He wondered, a little bitterly, how the Remove was getting on without him. They had never prized him at his true value at Greyfriars, while he was there. Now that he was gone they would realise their error. Serve them right! Bunter felt that they deserved it.

He rolled out in search of Jimmy Silver.

That youth, however, was not to be found.

The delights of Bunter's company had palled on him; and Jimmy Silver had gone for a walk with his chums, with the intention of returning just in time for class.

Perhaps he expected, or hoped, that this would solve the difficulty of his extraordinary guest. If so, he did not know Bunter. Bunter was a sticker.

A big Sixth-former tapped Bunter on the shoulder as he was rolling round the quad in search of the elusive Jimmy. It was Bulkeley, the captain of Rookwood.

Bunter blinked up at him,

"Who may you happen to be?" asked Bulkeley. "You don't belong to Rookwood."

"I'm Bunter."

"And who may Bunter happen to be?"

"I belong to Greyfriars"

"Then what the thump are you doing so far from your school?"

"Special exeat," said Bunter airily. "I've looked in here to see my old friends in the Fourth Form."

"Oh!" said Bulkeley, with a stare. "And who may your old friends in the Fourth Form happen to be, Bunter?"

"Jimmy Silver and his pals!" answered Bunter. "I'm looking for them now—they seem to have missed me."

"I noticed Jimmy Silver and his friends go out of gates about ten minutes ago."

"Oh, my hat! The rotters——"

"What!"

"They jolly well knew that I should look for them as soon as I'd finished telephoning!" exclaimed Bunter indignantly. "This is letting a fellow down!"

Bulkeley smiled.

"Your friends here don't seem very keen," he said. "Have you leave from a master to hang about a school you don't belong to?"

"Oh, really, you know——"

"If you haven't——"

"That's all right," said Bunter hastily. "Mr. Dalton knows I'm here—I'm staying to tea with Jimmy Silver." Bunter felt it judicious not to mention that he was staying for the night.

"Oh! Very well!" said Bulkeley. "I can't understand a junior kid being allowed to wander away from his school like this in term. But if Mr. Dalton knows, all right."

Bunter grunted and walked away.

It was not till the bell was ringing for class that Jimmy Silver & Co. reappeared. Then they came in, in a great hurry, and rushed for their form-room. Bunter sighted them and shouted after them in vain.

"I say, Jimmy! Jimmy Silver! I say, you fellows!"

But the fellows seemed deaf.

Bunter rolled after them in great irritation and annoyance, but the Fistical Four disappeared into the form-room with the rest of the Fourth, and Bunter could not follow them there.

He had to give them up till after class.

He rolled into the quad in a mood of great dissatisfaction. It began to look as if Rookwood hospitality would fail, as it had failed at St. Jim's—in fact, more rapidly. This was not what Bunter felt that he had a right to expect. A sensitive fellow might have felt wounded. Fortunately, Bunter was not thin skinned.

While the Classical Fourth were in class with Mr. Dalton, Bunter rolled discontentedly in the quad. He could not even drop into the school shop, for D'Arcy's ten-shilling note had been expended on the journey to Rookwood, and Bunter was "stony" once more. And a couple of hours after dinner he was, of course, ready for tea, or at least for a substantial snack to keep him going.

Three juniors came out of Manders' House, and sighted Bunter. The Owl of Greyfriars knew them by sight—he had seen them playing football in Jimmy Silver's team. They were Dodd and Cook and Doyle, of the Modern Fourth Form at Rookwood. While the Classicals were in form, the Modern Fourth had been in a chemistry class with Mr. Manders, and now they were free for ten minutes before going over to Mr. Bull's room for mathematics.

The three Moderns bore down on Bunter. Having nothing special to do for ten minutes they were prepared to extract a little harmless and necessary entertainment from the fat junior of Greyfriars.

"Bunter, isn't it?" asked Tommy Dodd, genially. "I saw you with those Classical chaps."

The Owl of Greyfriars nodded.

"Rotters!" he said.

"Eh? Who are rotters?"

"Silver and that lot," growled Bunter. "They've let me down! I don't think much of Rookwood."

Tommy Dodd stared at him.

"You don't?" he asked.

"No, I don't! Rotten show, if you ask me," grunted Bunter. Bunter evidently was not in a good temper.

"So jolly tactful to tell a Rookwood man so!" murmured Tommy Dodd. "Do you always ask for it like this, Bunter?"

"Eh?"

"Bump the cheeky porpoise!" growled Tommy Doyle.

Bunter backed away in alarm.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Bump him!" said Tommy Cook.

Tommy Dodd held up a commanding hand.

"Chuck it! These Classical chaps seem to have left you stranded, Bunter—of course, they ought to have told Dicky Dalton that they couldn't bother about class this afternoon, having an important guest to look after."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Cook.

"Still, we'll look after you," said Tommy Dodd, magnanimously. "Come into Manders' House, Bunter. It's rather cold about here; you'd like a comfortable armchair by a fire——"

"Good!"

"And an early tea——"

"Yes, rather."

"It will keep you going till the Classicals come out of form," said Tommy Dodd. "This way, Bunter."

Cook and Doyle stared blankly at their leader. But Dodd was the unquestioned leader of the three Tommies of Rookwood, and they made no remark. They walked Bunter into Mr. Manders' House.

The Modern Sixth had not yet finished mathematics with Mr. Bull, and the Sixth-form passage was deserted. It was to that quarter that Tommy Dodd led the Greyfriars fellow.

He opened the door of a Sixth-form study.

Cook and Doyle almost gasped. That study belonged to Knowles of the Sixth, the captain of the House—and one of the worst-tempered prefects at Rookwood.

"Doddy——!" murmured Cook.

Tommy Dodd gave him a warning glance.

"Trot in, Bunter."

Bunter rolled in.

Certainly, it was a very comfortable study. There was a bright fire, and a comfortable armchair near it. Knowles of the Sixth had plenty of money, and he "did" himself very well indeed.

Tommy Dodd opened a cupboard in a recess.

"Sorry we can't stop," he said. "But you'll find no end of stuff here, Bunter, and all you've got to do is to make yourself at home."

"Leave it to me," said Bunter.

And the three Tommies did.

They retired from the study and closed the door. In the corridor, Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle stared hard at Tommy Dodd, who was smiling serenely.

"I—I say, Doddy!" ejaculated Cook.

"Knowles has been getting in a feed for his friends at tea——"

"I know! That's why I put Bunter in his study."

"If that fat idiot scoffs Knowles's tuck—" murmured Doyle.

"No "if" about it—he will! I know him of old!" chuckled Tommy Dodd. "He doesn't think much of Rookwood—and says so at Rookwood to a Rookwood man! Perhaps he will think still less of it when he sees Knowles."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the three Tommies strolled cheerily away, leaving Billy Bunter to enjoy himself at a feast which was to be followed by a reckoning.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER

Knowles Gets Excited!

"PRIME!"

That was Billy Bunter's only remark.

After that, his jaws were too busily occupied for any remarks of any kind.

It was a feast of the gods.

Knowles of the Sixth often stood a handsome spread in his study. On such occasions supplies were laid in on a lavish scale. There was enough for Knowles and his friends Frampton and Catesby—more than enough, in fact, for three Sixth-formers. So there was nearly enough for Bunter.

It was the duty of Tomkins of the Third, Knowles's fag, to come to the study and prepare tea, at the time fixed by the great man. That time had not yet arrived; but tea was being prepared, and disposed of, at a great rate. When Tomkins of the Third should arrive, he was likely to find, like the celebrated Mrs. Hubbard, that the cupboard was bare.

Good things of all kinds graced the study table—Bunter did not leave a single article that was eatable in the cupboard. He did not believe in wasting anything.

He sat down to enjoy himself.

Undoubtedly, it was "prime." Bunter's fat face beamed over the feed. His thoughts ran on happy lines.

This was something like hospitality. He had been right, after all, in coming to Rookwood.

Those rotters, Jimmy Silver & Co., he could afford to disregard. He would throw them over without the slightest compunction. They could go and eat coke, and he would jolly well tell them so as soon as he saw them again. It was on the Modern side of Rookwood that he had found this lavish hospitality—and he would stick to the Modern side. It would be quite a pleasure to tell the Classical fellows that he was done with them.

Any fellow but Bunter might have seen something suspicious in the circumstances of this lavish hospitality. He hardly knew the three Tommies, and the way he had spoken to them could scarcely be called engaging. Yet they had rallied round him like this.

But it was quite all right in Bunter's eyes. These three fellows saw what Greyfriars fellows could not see, nor St. Jim's fellows, nor Jimmy Silver & Co.—they saw, at a glance, what a really splendid chap Bunter was, and they were keen to make much of him. That was how it was. For once, at long last, Bunter was getting justice; he was appraised at his true value. That was how it was, and that was all there was about it.

That was what Bunter thought, so far as he thought at all But he was too busy to put in much thinking. He was more accustomed to using his jaws than his intellect; and now his jaws were going strong.

Ample as Knowles's supplies were, they vanished at a record speed under Bunter's hefty attack. The feed in Study No. 6 at St. Jim's, the supper with Tom Merry, faded into insignificance beside this feed. Really it was a royal spread.

Bunter was getting towards the end, and breathing a little spasmodically after his exertions, when the door opened, and a diminutive Rookwooder came in.

It was Tomkins of the Third, though Bunter did not know him. Tomkins seemed to expect to find the study vacant; and he stared at Billy Bunter in great surprise.

"Hallo! what—what!" ejaculated Tomkins.

Bunter blinked at him.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"Eh! I'm Tomkins."

"Well, get out, Tomkins, and shut the door after you," said Bunter.

Tomkins stared at him blankly. His glance went to the study cupboard, and returned, in a horrified way, to the table.

"You're feeding here!" he gasped.

"Can't you see I am?"

"Who are you, then?" demanded Tomkins. "You don't belong to this school. I've never seen you before."

Bunter helped himself to the last wedge of a large cake.

With his mouth full, he blinked loftily and superciliously at Tomkins.

"You get out!" he said.

"You'd better jolly well get out, I think," said Tomkins.

"I don't want any cheek from a twopenny-ha'penny fag!" said Bunter. "Shut the door after you."

Bunter sent Tomkins of the Third sprawling in the passage. "Now clear off—and don't come back again!" warned Bunter. "There's some more of that, if you want it, you young cad!" (*See Chapter* 17.)

"You've scoffed all that tuck——"

"Mind your own business, you cheeky young ass! Look here, shut that door after you, and get out! I don't want fags' company."

"You've scoffed all that tuck!" repeated Tomkins, in a dazed voice. "My only aunt Selina! Why, you silly idiot——"

"That's enough! Clear."

"I tell you——"

Bunter jumped up. He was not a great fighting-man; but even Bunter was not to be cheeked with impunity by a Third-form fag.

He grabbed Tomkins of the Third by the shoulders.

"Out you go!" he snapped.

"Ow! I tell you——" roared Tomkins.

"Shut up, and clear!"

Bump!

The amazed and enraged Tomkins was swung into the doorway, and Bunter's boot helped him into the passage. Tomkins sprawled with a roar.

"Now cut, and don't come back again," said Bunter, grinning after him. "There's some more of that, if you want it, you young cad."

Bunter slammed the door, and returned to the table, to dispose of the remnants of the great feed. Tomkins picked himself up, in a dazed frame of mind, and went in search of Knowles of the Sixth. He had been ordered to get the great man's tea ready; but obviously he could not now get Knowles's tea—the tea had been got!

Bunter sat down contentedly to finish his feed. There was not much left, now; but little as it was, Bunter was not destined to finish it.

Five minutes after the fag had gone the study door re-opened, with a crash.

Bunter blinked round irritably.

But it was not a fag this time; it was a towering Sixth-former who strode into the study.

Bunter jumped up in alarm. This was not

a fellow whom he could kick out of the study if he was cheeky. If there was any kicking done this time, it was pretty certain that Bunter would be the recipient thereof.

Knowles of the Sixth stared at the table, and stared at Bunter, as if he could hardly believe his eyes. He had been hardly able to believe Tomkins's report that some fellow, who did not even belong to Rookwood, was in his study, scoffing his tuck. It seemed quite incredible; but Knowles had to believe the evidence of his astonished eyes.

"Great gad!" he ejaculated.

"Hallo! C-c-c-come in!" stammered Bunter.

"What?" roared Knowles.

"Come in, you know," said Bunter. "Fuf-fuf-fine afternoon, isn't it?"

Knowles glared.

Bunter could see that the big senior was in a rage, though he did not know or guess the cause. He hoped to placate him by politeness.

His hope was ill-founded.

Knowles strode up to the table, stared at the remnants—few and small—of the great feed, and then turned on Bunter with a deadly look. The Owl of Greyfriars backed away further. He realised that there was something wrong—something very wrong indeed; though what it was, was beyond his fat imagination.

"You—you—you——" stuttered Knowles, so enraged that he spoke with difficulty. "You've done this——"

"Eh?"

"You've had a feed here?"

"Yes—a ripping feed, old chap," said Bunter. "I say, if I'd known you were coming I'd have left you some of the cake, I would really."

Knowles gurgled.

"You'd have left me some of my own cake!"

"Wha-a-t! Whose cake?"

"Mine!" roared Knowles.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Oh, really, you know—if those fellows raided your cake—I didn't know—— I never thought—I wasn't—I—here, wharrer you at?" yelled Bunter.

The question was really superfluous.

Knowles of the Rookwood Sixth was "at" Bunter.

He bore down on him with a rush, and grasped him by his collar. Bunter swung helplessly, like a fat jelly, in the powerful grasp of the Rookwood prefect.

"I—I say—leggo!" howled Bunter.

"You young rascal!" bawled Knowles. "Scoffing

Knowles spread Bunter across what was left of the feed, and he laid the cane on with a willing hand. "Oh! Oh! Ooooh!" roared Bunter, as the crockery went flying under his struggles. "Oh! Oooooh!" (*See Chapter* 17.)

my feed! Who are you? Where did you come from? What—where's my cane? Where have you shoved my cane? What? Where is it?"

Shake, shake, shake!

"Groooooogh! Oooogh!"

"Where's my cane?" roared Knowles.

"Ooooooch!"

Shake! Shake!

"I say, chuck it—yaroooh! If you make my gug—gug-glasses fall off—ow! If they get bub-bub-broken—you-ow—you'll have to pay for them—yaroop!"

Shake!

Knowles glared round for the cane. There was a cane somewhere in the study, but if Bunter had known precisely where he would not have been likely to tell Knowles. Tomkins stared in at the door with a scared face.

"Find my cane, Tomkins!" roared Knowles, still shaking Bunter.

"Oh, dear! Yow-ow-ow-ow! Help!"

"Here it is, Knowles!" gasped Tomkins, fishing the cane out of a corner and handing it over.

Knowles grasped it savagely.

"Now, you cheeky young scoundrel——"

"Oh!" roared Bunter, in anticipation.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

Knowles sprawled Bunter across the table, in the midst of what was left of the feed, face down. The cane rose and fell rhythmically on William George Bunter's tight trousers. The dust rose from Bunter's trousers, and fiendish yells from Billy Bunter.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

Bunter kicked out desperately. This was worse than Walker of the Greyfriars Sixth—almost as bad as a Head's flogging. Bunter kicked, and his heel landed under Knowles's chin.

"Oh! Ah! Ugh!"

Knowles staggered back, clasping his chin, and involuntarily releasing Bunter for the moment. Bunter needed only one moment; to the very full he realised the value of time. He squirmed off the table, and fairly flew to the door. Tomkins was in the way, and Bunter cannoned him. Tomkins had about as much chance of stopping a rush with Bunter's weight behind it, as of stopping a motor-lorry in full career. He fairly crumpled up, and Bunter left him strewn on the study floor as he rushed out of the study.

Knowles whirled round after him in a few seconds. He stumbled over the sprawling, breathless Tomkins, as he rushed doorward. Staying only to give the hapless fag a cut with the cane Knowles tore out of the study.

"Stop!" he shouted, as he sighted a fat figure fleeing in the distance.

Bunter was generally considered, at Greyfriars, a dense fellow. But he was not dense enough to obey that order.

He raced out of Manders' House, with a speed that was amazing, allowing for the weight he had to carry.

Knowles rushed in pursuit. But he rushed in vain. Billy Bunter had vanished beyond the beeches by the time Knowles reached the door. Exactly what the matter was, Bunter did not know; but he knew that Manders' House at Rookwood was no safe place for him, and he concentrated all his energies upon covering the longest possible distance in the shortest possible time.

It was not till most of the school buildings lay between him and Knowles that Bunter stopped, quite pumped out, and sank upon an old oaken bench under the library windows in Little Quad. There—listening like a startled rabbit for the sounds of pursuit—he pumped in breath, and gasped, and gasped, and gasped, as if he were gasping for a wager.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER

Mr. Quelch Looks In!

"GONE, I suppose."

"Thank goodness!"

"Well, yes," said Jimmy Silver, "I really think Bunter's too much of a good thing, you know. Too thick—in every way."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I didn't want to kick him, as he's a sort of visitor of sorts," said Arthur Edward Lovell. "But I never saw a fellow who wanted kicking so much as Bunter."

"Thank goodness he's gone," said Raby.

"Yes, rather."

Jimmy Silver & Co. were in their quarters—the end study in the Classical Fourth passage. They had come in to tea—and they had had a

lingering fear of finding Bunter there. But Bunter was not there; and as they had seen nothing of him since classes, they concluded that he was gone. From a Modern fellow they had heard something of his adventures in Manders' House, and it was natural to conclude that he was fed up with Rookwood. So they felt that they had much to be thankful for.

"A fellow wants to be hospitable," remarked Jimmy Silver. "But we don't know much of Bunter, we don't like what we know, and he's the limit, anyhow. Really, it's too thick. I'd rather not tell him so—but it is, you know; and I'm glad he's taken the hint and gone."

"It was a pretty strong hint Knowles gave him, from what I heard from Towle," remarked Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fistical Four sat down contentedly to tea.

Tap!

Mornington of the Classical Fourth opened the study door, and looked in with a grin.

"Friend of yours here," he said.

"Eh?"

"He asked me to bring him to your study."

"Oh!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Oh, dear!"

Billy Bunter rolled into the end study, and Mornington walked away grinning. Probably he guessed just how keen Jimmy Silver & Co. were to see that friend of theirs.

"Oh! You're still here, Bunter!" exclaimed Lovell blankly.

"Oh, really, Lovell——"

"I—I thought you'd gone!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

"I shouldn't be likely to let down my old friends like that, old chap," said Bunter affectionately.

"Hem!"

Bunter's intention, formed in Knowles's study, of telling the Fistical Four that he was done with them, and that they could go and eat coke, was quite abandoned now. Even upon Bunter's obtuse brain it had dawned that those very friendly Modern fellows had been pulling his fat leg, and japing him when they planted him in a prefect's study in Manders House. It was Tommy Dodd & Co. with whom Bunter was "done."

As Jimmy Silver & Co. were his only resource at Rookwood, Bunter was very far from done with them—if he could help it.

"Just in time for tea, what?" he remarked, with a blink at the study table.

"Oh! Yes."

Raby silently pulled another chair up to the table. It was difficult to put on welcoming smiles for Bunter; but hospitality was hospitality. The chums of Rookwood could only hope that when he had fed he would go.

Bunter sat down.

It was a couple of hours since he had devoured Knowles's spread, and he had eaten only enough for four or five fellows. So naturally he was hungry again.

"Poached eggs, what?" he said, eyeing the dish upon which Lovell had turned out four eggs. "Good! I like them, you know!" Bunter turned the dish out into his plate. "Aren't you fellows having any?"

"Oh! Hem! Um! No."

"I say, you fellows, I've been treated rottenly while you were in the class," said Bunter, with his mouth full. "There seem to be a lot of rotten cads at Rookwood."

"Oh!"

"I've had my leg pulled," said Bunter. "A senior chap pitched into me, too. From what I gather, I was spoofed into going to his study. I didn't know it was his study, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. He had the cheek to pitch into me," said Bunter. "I'd have jolly well licked him, senior as he was, only—only I disdained to soil my hands on him."

"Soiled enough already, perhaps?" suggested Lovell, with a glance at Bunter's hands, which had been lightly washed at St. Jim's that morning—and not since.

"Oh, really, Lovell——"

"Shush!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

"I suppose that's Rookwood manners," said Bunter. "It wouldn't do for Greyfriars, I can tell you."

Lovell opened his lips and closed them again. Bunter helped himself to the ham,

LAST—BUT NOT LEAST!

taking a good two-thirds of it at one helping. After his recent performances in Knowles's study it was a great mystery where it went. But it went.

"I've been lying low," he went on. "I didn't want a row with that fellow what's his name—being a guest here. I preferred to treat him with the contempt he deserved. So I've kept out of his way. Kicking up a shindy may be all very well for Rookwood: we don't do it at Greyfriars."

"Oh!"

"I suppose you've spoken to somebody about my staying with you a day or two, Silver, old chap?"

"No. It can't be done, Bunter," said Jimmy, gently but firmly.

"On second thoughts, I shouldn't care to stay here," said Bunter. "I'm afraid the accommodation wouldn't be quite up to my standard. No offence, you know; but I'm accustomed to rather decent things."

"Oh!"

"I'll put up at the inn in Coombe," went on Bunter. "Sorry, and all that; but a fellow who's accustomed to the decencies of life can't be expected to rough it as you Rookwood fellows do. You see that?"

Bunter helped himself to the cake. It was not a large cake; which was perhaps the reason why Bunter helped himself to the whole of it.

"The only difficulty is," he went on, "that leaving Greyfriars rather suddenly, in the circumstances——"

"What circumstances?"

"Well, with that beast Walker after me, and Quelchy——"

"What?"

"I—I mean——" stammered Bunter.

"Well, what do you mean, Bunter?" inquired Jimmy Silver, looking very keenly at the Owl of Greyfriars.

"I—I mean, I—I didn't leave Greyfriars in a hurry. As for Walker of the Sixth, he's my best friend. I've friends in the upper forms at Greyfriars, you know—sort of general favourite. As for Quelchy, he's the apple of my eye—I mean, I'm the apple of his eye. I'm afraid he's feeling my absence a lot."

"Absence makes the heart grow fonder," remarked Raby. "I suppose everybody must like you better at a distance, Bunter?"

"Eh? Oh! Yes, exactly," said Bunter. "Quite so. Well, as I was saying, I left Greyfriars in rather a hurry. I mean, I didn't leave Greyfriars in a hurry at all, but I happened to leave my pocket-book behind, with all my banknotes in it."

"Oh, my hat!"

"All your fivers and tenners?" asked Newcome sympathetically.

"Exactly. And—absurd as it may seem, in a fellow of my wealth—I'm actually short of money at the present moment," said Bunter. "I suppose you fellows could lend me a little to see me through? A fiver would do it."

"My hat! Fivers don't grow in junior studies at Rookwood," said Jimmy Silver with a laugh.

Bunter's fat lip curled.

"No: I forgot you were poor here," he said. "You see, I'm accustomed to a wealthy school."

Arthur Edward Lovell seemed on the point of choking. He half-rose, but an imploring look from Jimmy Silver made him sit down again. Uncle James of Rookwood was feeling the strain, but he really did want Bunter to leave the study unkicked, if possible.

"Well, make it a couple of pounds," said Bunter carelessly. "That will see me through to-day, and to-morrow morning I'll telephone to one of my titled relations for a remittance."

"Better telephone to-day," said Raby. "We can get you the use of a school telephone, and I'll look out the number in the directory."

"I'd rather telephone in the morning. I suppose you can lend an old pal a pound to see him over the night?"

"Suppose again!" said Lovell.

"Hem!"

"Look here, Bunter," said Jimmy Silver very quietly, "Is it straight about your having special leave from school? If you bunked with somebody after you, it doesn't look like it; and it's jolly odd for a fellow to start on a holiday without a shilling in his

"Quelchy's a bit of an old Tartar," said Bunter. "He's cross-grained, and he's got the temper of a Hun—but he thinks no end of me, I can tell you! He——" It was then that the door opened. "*Bunter!*" sounded an ominous voice—the voice of Mr. Quelch. (*See this page*).

pocket. Have you been crass ass enough to run away from school?"

"Oh, really, Silver——"

"My hat!" ejaculated Lovell, staring at Bunter.

"Is that it?" exclaimed Raby.

"Eh? No! Certainly not! Nothing of the kind! It's a special exeat, and all that, and—and Quelchy patted me on my head when I left, and said 'Bless you, my children!' I—I mean, he said, 'Bless you, Bunter.' I'm the apple of Quelchy's eye——"

There was a knock at the door of the end study, and it opened, and Mr. Dalton appeared there. Another gentleman, in an overcoat, was behind him—a stranger to Jimmy Silver & Co.

Bunter rattled on unheeding.

"Quelchy's a bit of an old Tartar, you know—cross-grained and all that—temper of a Hun; but he thinks no end of me. It would be a blow to him to lose me, I can tell you! I——"

"BUNTER!"

"Eh?"

Billy Bunter leaped out of his chair as if the seat thereof had suddenly become red-hot.

Mr. Quelch, passing Mr. Dalton, strode into the study. Bunter stared at him with eyes that nearly bulged through his spectacles. He could scarcely believe that this dreadful vision was real. The ghost of Banquo, starting up at the ancient feast, did not cause so much dismay as the apparition of Mr. Quelch in the end study at Rookwood.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Oh! Quelchy! Oh!"

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER

Homeward Bound

MR. QUELCH fixed his gimlet eyes on Bunter.

The fat junior gazed at him, his jaw dropping, his eyes bulging, with a fascinated gaze, like a very fat bird fascinated by a serpent.

Jimmy Silver & Co. stood in silence.

They guessed now how matters stood; that Bunter had run away from Greyfriars

and that his Form-master had followed him to Rookwood to take him back. Bunter had tried their patience severely, but they compassionated him at this moment. The look on Mr. Quelch's face showed clearly enough that it was a case for compassion.

"This is the boy of whom you are in search, sir?" asked Mr. Dalton.

"This is the boy," answered Mr. Quelch.

"His coming here is a most extraordinary freak," said the Rookwood master, "I was given to understand that he had a special holiday from school."

He glanced severely at Jimmy Silver.

Jimmy coloured.

"We thought—we believed——!" he stammered.

"I am not surprised that Bunter has deceived these boys, sir," said Mr. Quelch. "He is the most untruthful boy at Greyfriars; indeed, I have sometimes thought that he is too stupid to realise the difference between truth and falsehood."

"Oh, really, sir——!" gasped Bunter.

"He is the very worst boy in my Form," said Mr. Quelch. "But for the fact that allowance is made for his extraordinary obtuseness, he would certainly be expelled from Greyfriars."

Jimmy Silver & Co. exchanged an involuntary glance. This really did not sound as if William George Bunter were the apple of his Form-master's eye.

"I am sorry that you should have been troubled with the boy, Mr. Dalton," said the Remove master. "I will take him away immediately. He has run away from school to escape a justly-deserved punishment. Bunter, get your coat and hat at once, and come with me."

"Oh, dear!"

"Lose no time!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"The—the fact is, sir——"

"Silence!"

"Oh, really, sir——"

"Enough!" said Mr. Quelch, in a deep voice. "Come."

"Oh, crikey!"

Bunter rolled out of the study. He nourished a faint hope of going downstairs for his hat and coat by himself, and dodging out of the house. But Mr. Quelch was taking no chances with him.

He dropped a heavy hand on Bunter's shoulder and piloted him to the stairs.

He did not mean to run any risks with that valuable pupil. Only by obtaining the Rookwood number from the telephone exchange had he learned where Bunter was. He had left his class in charge of a prefect for the afternoon to visit Rookwood in person and make sure of Bunter. After that departure from his usual customs, and that extensive waste of his valuable time, he was not likely to give Bunter a chance of bolting again.

Bunter was led downstairs—and a crowd of curious Rookwood fellows gazed at him, with many smiles, as he was marched along with the Greyfriars master's hand on his shoulder.

Outside, a taxi-cab was waiting.

In deep dismay, Bunter donned hat and coat. His fat countenance was the picture of dolorous woe.

What Mr. Quelch's feelings were like, he could guess from the steely glitter in his eyes and the compression of his lips. But Mr. Quelch suppressed his feelings. With great courtesy he apologised to Mr. Dalton for the trouble that had been given, and shook hands with the Rookwood Form-master. Then he led Bunter out to the waiting taxi.

"Step in, Bunter!"

"I—I say, sir——"

"Step in at once."

"After you, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"I shall be sorry, Bunter, to chastise you here——"

Bunter stepped in, in a great hurry.

Mr. Quelch followed him in and sat down, and the taxi rolled away. It rolled out of the gates of Rookwood, and followed the road to Latcham. Billy Bunter squeezed dismally into a corner as far as possible from his incensed Form-master.

Not a word did Mr. Quelch speak as the taxi ate up the miles to Latcham Junction. And Bunter was in no mood for conversation. The drive was made in grim silence.

At Latcham Mr. Quelch paid off the taxi; and compressed his lips hard as he paid.

It was a considerable sum—but that was an item to figure later in the bill for Mr. Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove blinked round him, but Mr. Quelch's heavy hand was on his shoulder, and he was marched into the station.

That heavy hand remained on his fat shoulder until he was seated in a carriage of the express, with Mr. Quelch sitting opposite.

The train rolled out of the station.

Bunter groaned.

The game was up now. The wanderings of the elusive Owl were at an end. Mr. Quelch had a newspaper; but Bunter's only solace was to go to sleep, which he soon did. The deep snore of the Owl of the Remove mingled with the whirr and rattle of the express, as the train rushed on through the dusky evening.

A sudden shake awakened Bunter from a delicious dream of pork-pies.

"Bunter!"

"Eh? Oh! What? Leggo! 'Taint rising-bell!"

"Bunter!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "We are at Lantham. Get up at once!"

The Owl of the Remove realised where he was. He dismally rolled out of the carriage after Mr. Quelch.

Once more his fat shoulder was gripped, and he was walked across the bridge to the local platform, and planted in the local train for Friardale.

He did not sleep on that run. Direful anticipations filled his fat mind, and kept him awake now.

He blinked every now and then at Mr. Quelch's face. But he read no hope there. Never had his Form-master looked grimmer.

"I—I say, sir——" stammered Bunter, at last.

"You need say nothing, Bunter."

"It—it was all a mistake, sir!" groaned Bunter. "I really thought it was Walker of the Sixth, sir, when I biffed you in the box-room."

"I think that is possibly true, Bunter, as I have spoken to Walker of the Sixth, and he tells me that he was searching for you, to punish you for purloining a cake from his study. But that is no excuse for your unexampled audacity in absenting yourself from school."

"I—I offered to come back, sir, if——"

"Silence!"

"The fact is, sir, I should prefer the whole matter to drop."

"No doubt!" said Mr. Quelch grimly.

"It was all Walker's fault, sir," urged Bunter. "I never had the cake. The fellows who saw me take it from Walker's study were mistaken, sir."

"Bless my soul!"

"In the circumstances, sir, as—as I'm the wronged party, I—I hope you will look over the matter, and—and—I—I don't want to be flogged, sir."

"You will be flogged, Bunter, as an example to all disobedient, reckless, and untruthful boys."

"Oh, lor'!"

"Silence!"

"But, sir, if—if it's necessary to flog a chap as—as an example, sir, couldn't the Head flog Walker, sir——"

"What?"

"As—as an example to me, sir!"

"Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

The train stopped at Friardale. Mr. Quelch's grip on his shoulder piloted Bunter out of the station and into the dark lane that ran to the gates of Greyfriars.

The Remove master strode along the dusky road. Billy Bunter trailed after him in the lowest of spirits.

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER

"Fool's Luck"

"'OLD on!"

"What?"

Mr. Quelch stopped abruptly.

He had reached the dip in the lane, halfway between Friardale and Greyfriars, where the trees almost met across the road, and it was very dark.

From the deep shadows a muscular form suddenly loomed up, and a dim but grim and threatening stubbly face looked into Mr. Quelch's, only a few inches away.

Mr. Quelch felt a sudden shiver.

The hour was late—the lane was lonely at that hour. Mr. Quelch had walked through

that lane so many times that no thought of danger had crossed his mind on this occasion. But it was suddenly borne in upon him that that familiar lane was very lonely late at night, and that it was not quite safe to walk home by it after coming in at Friardale by the last train.

A bulky, threatening form loomed over him in the gloom, a stubbly, ruffianly face glared at him from the shadowy darkness, and he caught a glimpse of a menacing cudgel. He had fairly run into a loafing tramp—a tramp by day and a footpad by night.

Billy Bunter gave a gasp.

He stopped, and stood rooted to the ground with terror, his little round eyes blinking wildly through his big spectacles.

"'Old on, old gentleman!" went on the rough, threatening voice. "This 'ere is luck, this 'ere is. 'And it over—sharp!"

"You scoundrel!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch indignantly. "How dare you stop me! I will give you nothing! Not a shilling! Let me pass at once."

There was a hoarse laugh from the bulky tramp.

"Not blinking likely!" he said.

"You rascal—oh!"

The ruffian's grasp was on Mr. Quelch, and he went down in the road, on the very verge of the deep-flowing ditch that bordered the lane.

He gasped spasmodically as he crumpled up in the grasp of the footpad.

"Help!" he spluttered.

"Who's to 'elp you 'ere, old gentleman!" jeered the ruffian. "Don't be a goat! 'And over the stuff before I crack your 'ead! Now, then!"

Bunter woke to action.

There was one thought in Bunter's fat mind, and that was to put a safe distance between his precious person and the ruffianly tramp. While the footpad was occupied with Mr. Quelch was his chance.

Bunter leaped forward, and ran, to pass the two struggling figures and tear away in the direction of Greyfriars.

Crash!

Mr. Quelch was by no means a match for the ruffian who had collared him and borne him to the ground; but he was a gentleman of courage and great determination. Wrath and indignation gave him added strength. He made a terrific effort, and hurled the ruffian back.

Bunter's frantic rush and the staggering back of the footpad synchronized.

The ruffian staggered fairly into Bunter's path as the Owl of the Remove rushed forward.

The crash was terrific.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

There was a howl from the tramp. He had not even seen Bunter, so far, in the gloom; and the sudden shock took him entirely by surprise. All Bunter's avoirdupois crashed upon him, with something like the force of a battering-ram. A charging tank could scarcely have swept the footpad over more completely.

Splash!

The crash of the collision was followed by a heavy splash, as the reeling ruffian pitched over the edge of the ditch.

"Groooooogh! Oh, my eye! Oooch! Gug-gug-gug!"

Mr. Quelch staggered to his feet.

"Bless my soul! Bunter—where are you, Bunter? Splendid, my boy, splendid! Come—quick!"

"Ow!" spluttered Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove was reeling from the shock, and scarcely knew whether he was upon his head or his heels. Mr. Quelch's grasp upon his shoulder steadied him.

"Come!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Do not lose a moment!"

The footpad, gurgling horribly, was struggling in four feet of water and mud. It was likely to be some minutes before he was able to turn his attention again to his intended victim.

Mr. Quelch made the most of those few minutes.

It was not exactly a dignified proceeding for a middle-aged Form-master to run a foot-race, but it was a case of needs must! Holding Bunter by the arm, Mr. Quelch scudded up the road with a speed that did him credit at his age.

Bunter rolled and plunged and ran, in a

In mad panic, Bunter crashed full pelt into the footpad. The impact was terrific, and the man plunged headlong into the ditch. "Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Oh! I'm hurt!" On the road, Mr. Quelch staggered to his feet. He saw the tramp gurgling in the ditch, with Bunter standing on the bank. "Splendid, my boy!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Well done, Bunter!" (*See Chapter* 20.)

dazed state, dizzy from the shock he had received—and given—and hardly knowing what had happened. Only the Form-master's grasp kept him from stumbling over a dozen times. But he ran as hard as he could: the thought of the footpad behind spurred him on to wonderful efforts.

"Bless my soul!" Mr. Quelch stopped at last, at the masters' private gate at Greyfriars, and groped for his key hurriedly. "Can—can you hear anyone on the road, Bunter?"

"Ow!"

"Lean on the wall, my boy, while I open the gate. You must be out of breath," said Mr. Quelch kindly.

"Grooogh!"

There was no doubt that Bunter was out of breath! He leaned on the wall, and pumped in air, while Mr. Quelch found his key and unlocked the gate.

"Come on, my dear boy."

Bunter was led in, dazedly wondering how and why he had suddenly become a dear boy instead of a reckless, disobedient, and untruthful young rascal.

The gate closed.

There was no sound of pursuit on the road, but both Mr. Quelch and Bunter were glad to hear the lock click.

"Bless my soul, what a terrible experience!" said Mr. Quelch. "I must telephone to the police station at once. Dear me, I am quite out of breath! You were not hurt, Bunter?"

"Ow! Groogh! No."

"It was splendid, my boy."

"W-w-w-was it, sir?" gasped Bunter, wondering dizzily what was splendid, and whether he was still in the train from Rookwood and dreaming.

"I should never have expected such presence of mind and such courage from you, Bunter."

"W-w-w-wouldn't you, sir?" stuttered Bunter.

"No; I confess that I should not," said Mr. Quelch. "But for your prompt and courageous action, Bunter, I should certainly have been robbed, and very probably severely injured, for I should not have submitted tamely to that ruffian."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"Such presence of mind was really very striking," said Mr. Quelch. "A grown man might have hesitated to attack that hulking ruffian. Really, Bunter, I could scarcely believe my eyes when I saw you rush upon him——"

"R-r-rush upon him, sir?"

"And hurl him into the ditch. It was well done, Bunter. I may say it was splendidly done."

"Oh, sir!"

Bunter began to understand.

"You have acted very wrongly, Bunter—the whole circumstances, indeed, are due to your reckless disobedience and disregard of authority. Yet I cannot overlook this—I cannot disregard the fact that you have saved me from robbery and injury, by an act of great courage, and the exhibition of really astonishing presence of mind."

"Oh!" murmured Bunter.

"I shall speak to the Head, Bunter, and say what I can in your favour," said Mr. Quelch. "Come—let us go in now! I think I can safely promise you, Bunter, that—considering what has just occurred—no flogging will be administered. I am sure that Doctor Locke will take my view upon that. Come, my boy."

Bunter rolled after his Form-master. He winked into the darkness, and followed Mr. Quelch to the House. It was one of Bunter's failings that he generally talked too much. On this critical occasion he realised that silence was golden.

THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER

Bunter Explains

"QUELCHY back yet?"

"No."

"Where on earth is he gone?"

"After Bunter, of course."

"Poor old Bunter!"

It was close on bed-time, and Harry Wharton & Co., in the Rag at Greyfriars, were discussing what was now almost the one topic in the school—the amazing proceedings of William George Bunter.

Wingate of the Sixth had had the pleasure—or otherwise—of taking the Re-

move that afternoon. Mr. Quelch had been absent.

Most of the fellows guessed that he had gone "after Bunter." And though Bunter was not exactly prized by the Remove, most of the fellows felt sorry for him—when Mr. Quelch got him.

"Poor old Bunter!" said Bob Cherry. "Some fellows ask for it—but Bunter begs and prays for it."

"And he will get it!" said the Bounder

"The lickfulness will be terrific, when the esteemed and ludicrous Bunter is bagged," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"But where on earth has he got to?" asked Peter Todd. "He can't be at St. Jim's now."

"Goodness knows."

Wingate of the Sixth looked into the Rag.

"Bed!" he said laconically.

"Can't we stay up till our Form-master comes in, Wingate?" asked Bob Cherry. "We—we're—ahem—anxious about him!"

Wingate grinned.

"No, you can't, you young ass! Cut off."

The Remove fellows marched off to their dormitory. Wingate put the lights out, and the Remove were left to slumber.

But they were not in a hurry to slumber.

Interest in the mystery of what had happened to Bunter was almost at boiling-point. Never in all his fat career had Billy Bunter occupied the thoughts of his form-fellows to such an extent.

A buzz of talk ran from bed to bed, all on the subject of Billy Bunter, of what could have happened to him, and of what was certain to happen to him when he fell once more into the vengeful clutches of Mr. Quelch.

But the juniors dropped off to sleep at last.

It was close on half-past ten when the last eye closed in the Remove dormitory, and by that time there had been no sound to indicate that either Bunter or Mr. Quelch had returned. It was near an hour later when the dormitory door opened, and the light flashed on

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry sat up in bed and rubbed his eyes.

"Bunter!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Bunter!"

William George Bunter rolled into the dormitory. He grinned at the Removites, sitting up in bed and staring at him.

"I say, you fellows——"

Mr. Quelch stood in the doorway.

"Go to bed, now, Bunter! I shall come back in a few minutes to turn out the light."

"Yes, sir!" said Bunter cheerfully.

Mr. Quelch retired, and Bunter proceeded to turn in. Every fellow in the dormitory was awake now, and staring at Bunter.

"So you've got back!" said Peter Todd.

"Looks like it," grinned Bunter.

"Has Quelchy scalped you?"

"Does it look like it?" chuckled Bunter.

"Well, it doesn't," said Bob. "But what——"

"Where did he dig you up?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Rookwood!"

"Great Scott!" yelled Bob. "Have you been to Rookwood?"

"I dropped in on my friends there," said Bunter calmly. "They were awfully glad to see me, of course. Jimmy Silver almost cried when I left—but I really had to go, you know. Quelchy was so pressing."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've had a pretty good time," said Bunter, peeling off his socks. "They made no end of a fuss of me at St. Jim's—same at Rookwood. It comes in useful at times to be a really popular fellow, you know."

"Oh, my hat!"

"And what about the flogging?" asked Frank Nugent. "Is that coming off in the morning?"

"Certainly not."

"You don't mean to say that Quelchy is letting you off?" exclaimed Harry Wharton, in amazement.

"Just that!"

"Gammon!" said Johnny Bull.

Bunter sniffed.

"You'll jolly well see! If you fellows had risked your lives to save Quelchy from a footpad——"

"What?"

"Which?"

"Draw it mild."

"I don't mind telling you fellows what's happened," said Bunter, as he divested him-

self of his well-filled waistcoat, "Quelchy bagged me at Rookwood—I mean, he requested me in a very civil way to come back to Greyfriars, and I didn't care to refuse."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't cackle! We had a rather nice journey back—Quelchy very affable."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Walking from the station, we were suddenly attacked by a gang of footpads."

"Go it!"

"Quelchy was floored, and he called to me for help. Of course, that did it! You can guess what I did at once."

"Bolted?" asked Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I rushed at them," said Bunter calmly. "Knocking them right and left, straight from the shoulder, you know."

"We don't know!" chuckled Bob.

"Well, you know now I've told you, fathead!"

"No, not even now.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, if you fellows can't take my word——"

"Your word! Oh, my hat!"

"I'm accustomed to jealousy," said Bunter. "Just the same in the football—you fellows don't like being put in the shade by a better man. Precious few chaps in this dormitory would have tackled three or four hulking tramps——"

"Precious few!" agreed Johnny Bull, "And you're not one of the few."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Won't you tell us what's really happened, Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton. "Quelchy seems good-tempered, somehow. Tell us what's happened."

"I'm telling you! Walking from the station five or six hulking footpads suddenly rushed on us, shouting, 'Your money or your life!'"

"Phew!"

"Three or four?" asked Nugent, "or five or six?"

"Five or six—in fact, six or seven," said Bunter. "I didn't stop to count them. I rushed on them like—like a lion——"

"Great Scott!"

"Knocking them right and left, I fairly strewed them in the road. Then I lifted up Quelchy, and told him to run for it. You see, eight or nine hulking ruffians were a bit too much for me; if it had been only three or four, it would have been a different matter, of course. As it was, I thought we had better clear. So I ran——"

"That sounds like the truth," remarked Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, if you don't believe me——"

"Believe you! Oh, crumbs!"

"Yah!"

Bunter plunged into bed.

"But aren't you going to tell us what happened?" asked Wharton.

"You silly ass! Haven't I told you?" hooted Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The dormitory door opened.

"Good-night, my boys," said Mr. Quelch, as he turned out the light. "Good-night, Bunter."

"Good-night, sir."

"Well, my hat!" said Bob Cherry, as the door closed on the Remove master. "Something's happened to make Quelchy jolly amiable. What was it, Bunter?!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You know what I've told you!" shrieked Bunter.

"Yes, we know that; but we want to know what happened."

"Yah!"

Bunter settled down to sleep, and the curiosity of the Removites had to remain unsatisfied. To all further questions Billy Bunter replied only with a deep and resonant snore.

. . . . . .

Harry Wharton & Co. knew, the following day, what had happened. Their opinion of the happening did not coincide with Mr. Quelch's.

Still, they were glad that Bunter was to escape the reward of his fatuous proceedings. The flogging was off, and so far as Billy Bunter was concerned, all was calm and bright.

THE END

VISIONS OF THE FUTURE!

There is no doubt in the mind of Billy Bunter that he will be a great man one day. His future is certain to be a glorious one, but in what direction will it lie? In his ambitious dreams, the fat Removite indulges in many flights of fancy, some of which our artist has indicated in the above drawing.

Schoolboys of the Empire!

By H. GWYNNE.

This song has been composed specially for the HOLIDAY ANNUAL; the music will be found on the following pages. Ask your sister to play it over for you.

Across the Empire's mighty space,
Through all her far-flung lands,
A sturdy band of schoolboys true
Are joining loyal hands.
We're one in work, in fun, in sport,
We're one in cheerful rag,
We're one in truth and honesty,
And one beneath her flag!

CHORUS.

Right worthy of our school we'll be,
Whatever be her name!
We'll try to do our very best,
And always play the game!
Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah! for the schoolboys.
(*Last line to be shouted.*)

Each one upholds the school he loves,
In every land the same;
The work he does, the games he wins,
Are added to her fame.
All other schools from North to South,
And from the East to West,
Are fine—but every schoolboy says
That *his* school is the best!

CHORUS.

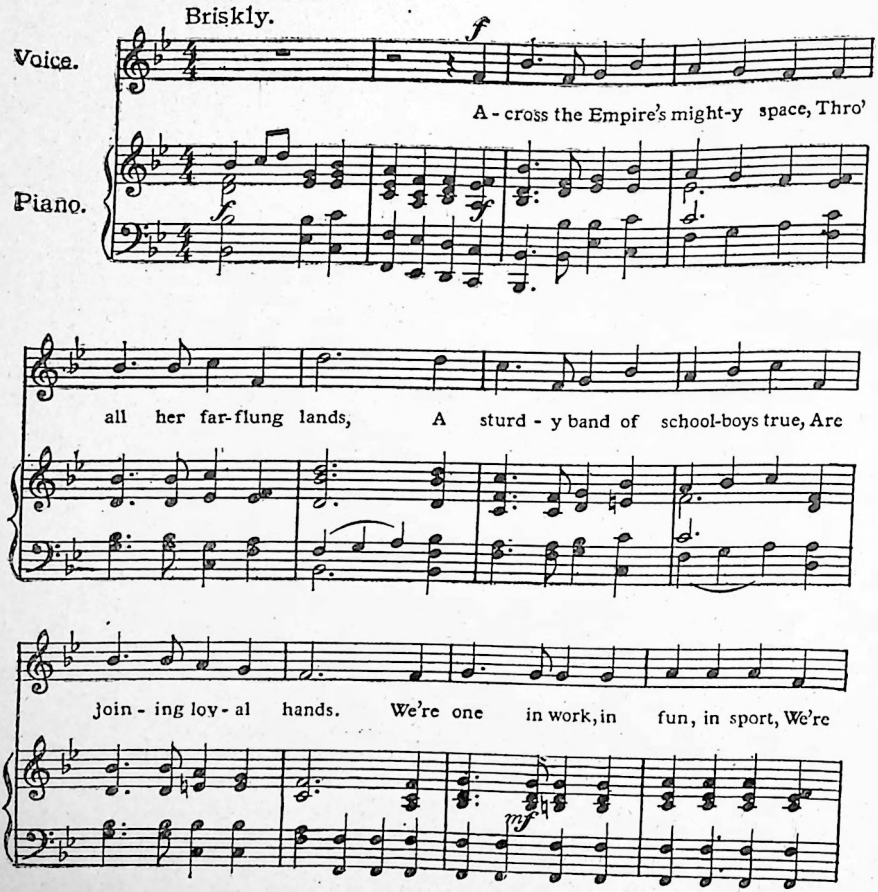
And when in time ahead we roam
The Empire near and far,
We'll think with pride of our old school,
That made us what we are!
And when we've passed those busy years
That stretch 'twixt Now and Then,
With hearts of gratitude, we'll thank
The school that made us men!

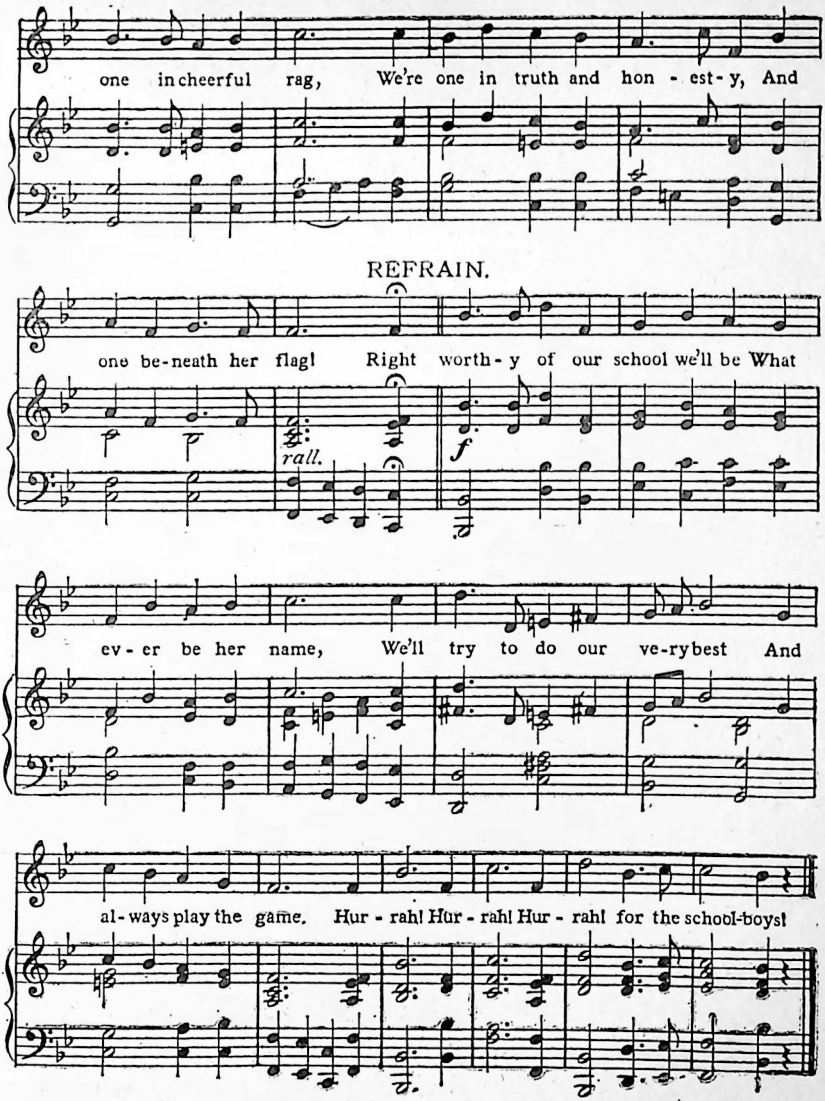
CHORUS.

Schoolboys of the Empire!

Music by
M. NUTBROWN

Words by
H. GWYNNE.




one in cheerful rag, We're one in truth and hon - est - y, And
REFRAIN.
one be-neath her flag! Right worth - y of our school we'll be What
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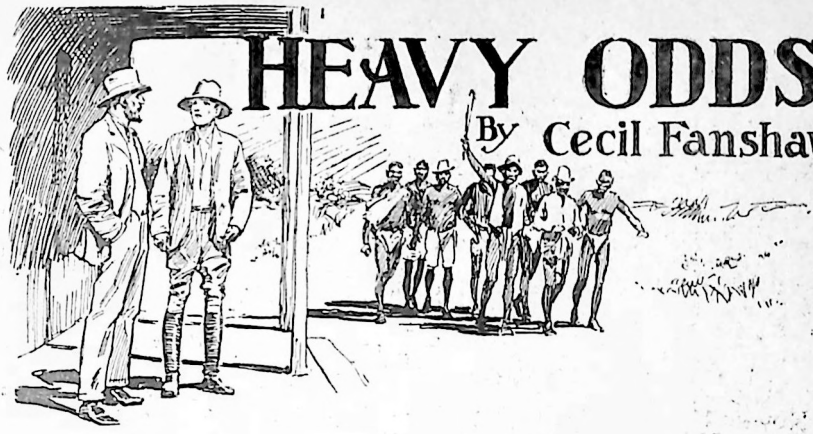
al - ways play the game. Hur - rah! Hur - rah! Hur - rah! for the school-boys!

PICTURESQUE SCENES OF COWBOY LIFE!



HEAVY ODDS

By Cecil Fanshaw

A Rousing Story of Exciting Adventure in Zululand

THE FIRST CHAPTER

Alec Shows His Mettle

On the veranda of the little wood and iron store stood two figures: a well-built, bearded man, hands deep in trouser pockets, and a clear-eyed youngster.

The African sun blazed down on a rolling plain, covered with clumps of mimosa thorn bush. In the distance a rocky ridge stood stark against the cloudless blue sky. It was scenery typical of Zululand.

The bearded man was the trader, John Baker. The lad was his nephew, Alec—and both were looking worried.

They had no eyes for the gorgeous scenery. They were staring at a knot of half-clad, big-limbed Zulus shuffling along the dusty wagon trail that ran close to the little store.

Hoarse laughter broke from the bunch of ebony savages. A club was flourished defiantly. Then the Zulus had passed on, churned-up dust billowing in their wake. The laughter and chattering grew faint.

"What d'you make of that, uncle?" burst out young Alec, glaring after the vanishing figures. "Not one of those fellows stopped here! What on earth's the trouble?"

John Baker growled something into his bushy beard. Then, from the pocket of his khaki shirt he fished out a huge pipe, crammed it with Boer tobacco, and applied a match.

"It's going to break me, my lad," he rumbled, puffing out a cloud of blue smoke. "This trading store of mine was as good as a gold mine till two months back. Natives from miles around came here to buy beads, wire, blankets, and such. Now, as you've just seen, they slouch past!

"I can't keep goin' much longer," he ended. "It's ruination. I shall quit Zululand. There's big trouble brewing, to my mind!"

Alec spun on his heel.

The lad had been in Zululand less than a year, having come straight out from England to help his uncle run the small trading store. He loved the country, and had no desire to leave.

"You'd quit Zululand for good, uncle?" he cried, dismayed.

"Or be ruined!" barked the elder man.

"But," protested Alec, "there must be

ome reason for the Zulus cutting us down like this. If we could——"

"There is!" came the swift rejoinder. "Rhinberg! He's the reason."

"Ah! That German trader over at Malima Kopje!" gasped Alec. "I haven't been near his place for weeks. Why, he only opened up about two months ago!"

"Exactly!" snapped the elder Baker. "Two months! And since then not a native has shown his face here. Rhinberg's gettin' all the trade. I'd have no complaint if I reckoned he was playing straight. But I'm almost certain he isn't. He's ruining me, and the natives as well, by underhand methods. But I can't prove it."

"Prove what, uncle?" broke in Alec. "What d'you suspect him of?"

"Of selling poisonous liquor to Zulus, my lad," John Baker replied. "Fire-water! He'll madden the natives till they're ready to break out. Of course, they won't come here now—they know we won't sell the stuff. But I'm only guessing. I can't accuse Rhinberg without proof."

John Baker broke off, striding up and down the veranda of his store, smoking furiously.

Young Alec knitted his brows and cudgelled his brains. If his uncle were right, Rhinberg would soon ruin them both, and also cause a native rising. Savages are quickly roused.

But suddenly a scheme flashed into the lad's brain.

"I've got it, uncle!" he cried. "I'll get over to that German's store, and tell him I've come to offer him some of our blankets and copper wire. If I catch him trading fire-water, I'll come down like a ton of bricks—give him twenty-four hours to quit the district.

"It would be no use you goin'," the lad went on eagerly. "As soon as Rhinberg spotted you coming he'd hide his stuff. Of course, if we're wrong, he wins. He's the smarter trader. That's all."

"There might be something in it," nodded John Baker. "An' 'tain't spying on the fellow. If you catch him red-handed you can accuse him right out. Besides that, a spirit trader's a public danger. All right, Alec. Get along! Taking the car?"

"Not much, uncle," Alec flung over his shoulder. "I don't want Rhinberg to know I'm coming before I'm half-way there! I'll ride Lightning."

Then Alec was down the veranda steps in two jumps. In two minutes he had reached the log stable where he kept his bay mare, Lightning.

Clapping on saddle and bridle, the lad vaulted up. Then he rammed home his heels and thudded away.

It was some distance to Rhinberg's store. But Lightning tossed her head and went down the dusty trail like a red streak.

Alec pulled down his big, floppy hat against the tug of the wind and gave the mare her head. On she swept, uphill and down, till Alec topped a rise, from the summit of which he could see the German's store.

"Hold hard, Lightning!" he breathed, and pulled her down to a canter.

Across a little valley, Alec saw the stony Milima Kopje. Near the foot of that hill stood the wood and iron building that was Rhinberg's store.

"There's a bunch o' Zulus squatting there," muttered the lad, shading his eyes with his hand. "Are they buying blankets—or t'other thing? I'll mighty soon find out!"

Then he left the wagon trail, pushing his mare through the tough, yellow grass at a walk.

Soon Alec was within a hundred yards of the store, threading his way through the scattered thorn trees. He could plainly see the Zulus grouped before the rough building on the slope above him. To his ears came hoarse, guttural laughter.

"Laugh away!" gritted Alec. "If I'm right you'll quit laughin' in another five minutes——"

The lad broke off, reining in sharply. Something stirred in the grass on his right. He caught the sound of gasps and groans.

"Who's there?" he cried. "What's wrong?"

The reply was only a stifled moan. Alec sprang to the ground, left his mare's reins

trailing, and darted forward. Thrusting aside the grass, the lad saw the figure of a small Kafir boy sprawling on the ground.

"What's the matter, son?" cried Alec. "What are you kicking up all this row about? By Jingo," he gasped, "someone's been giving you a lamming!"

The Kaffir boy sat up, gaping at sight of Alec. His thin, black legs were covered with white weals. He seemed about to run.

"Hold hard, kid!" exclaimed Alec. "I ain't goin' to eat you! What's your name? An' who's been lacing you with a sjambok?"

"My name Tuppence, baas," piped the black boy. "Me work along store of Baas Rhinberg. My baas done give me sjambok too much."

"Why, Tuppence," snapped Alec, "what have you been doing to deserve a hiding like that?"

"Nothing bad, baas," replied Tuppence, rubbing his scared legs. "I go to clean out store. I forgot Baas Rhinberg tell me not to go in end room. He catch me there—plenty angry—seize sjambok and beat."

"The brute!" gritted Alec, clinching his fists. "Fancy flogging a kid to ribbons for pushing in where he was told not to! I'll let Rhinberg know what I think of him.

"But," he added to himself, with a gasp, "why was Rhinberg so mad with this kid for buttin' into the end room? That sounds queer. I wonder if the ruffian really has got a stock of fire-water? I'll——"

A hoarse shout from above made Alec swing round. Striding down the slope towards him the lad saw a squat, powerfully built man, clad in dirty khaki drill.

The newcomer had hawk-like features, with a reddish moustache half-hiding a cruel mouth. His rolled-up shirt-sleeves revealed long, muscular arms. It was Rhinberg himself.

"Vot you vant?" the German trader bawled at Alec. "You vos der Baker cub, hein? Go avay! Who give you leave to buck mitt my 'boy' Tuppence?"

"I wasn't bucking with Tuppence, Rhinberg!" retorted Alec hotly. "I found him in the grass, and wondered who'd half-flayed him. I find it was you, you bully!" Rhinberg, his whip dangling from his wrist, planted himself before Alec. He shook a finger in the youngster's face.

The Kafir boy's thin legs were covered with white weals. "Who's been lacing you with a sjambok?" Alec demanded. (*See this page.*)

From above came a gust of deep laughter. Plainly the Zulus round the store enjoyed seeing the British lad hectored.

"I gif Tuppence der sjambok, young veller," leered Rhinberg, jabbing his finger at Alec, "because he do nod obey orders. He poke his nose into vot do nod concern him. I

t'ink you bedder be careful vhere you poke your nose!"

"Poof! You can't scare me, Rhinberg!" cried Alec, his eyes blazing. "I ain't a Kafir kid——"

"Be off!" roared Rhinberg, raising his whip. "Get out at vonce!"

"I'm going when I'm ready," flared Alec, forgetting caution. "An' that's when I've told you what I came for. I came to accuse you o' selling fire-water to Zulus. To grab cash, you're selling stuff that'll drive the fellows crazy! If you don't quit the district in twenty-four hours you'll have the police on your trail!"

Alec expected to see Rhinberg explode with wrath. He was thunderstruck to see the trader place his hands on his hips and bellow with laughter.

"Fire-water, you young vool!" guffawed the German. "I never sell der stuff. Ask der Zulus up dere. Ask Nkozi, der biggest chief for miles around. Go and get police if you vish. Search my store! Search Nkozi's kraal!"

"Aye, search my kraal, white youth!" came down a thunderous shout from a gigantic Zulu who had risen to his feet. "I am the chief, Nkozi. And I do not let my young men buy the poisonous fire-water. Neither will I be accused of doing so. It is a lie!"

Alec was amazed. Plainly Rhinberg and the big chief were speaking the truth.

"Zatisfied?" leered Rhinberg.

"No, I ain't!" retorted Alec. "I don't know what you're at, but you're up to some dark game. The Zulus didn't shun my uncle's store before you blew up here!"

"Go avay!" bawled Rhinberg. "Tell your uncle I vill break him inside of von month!"

Further speech was useless. Alec spun on his heel, strode over to his bay mare, vaulted up and swung her round.

He rammed in his heels, but he had hardly gone twenty yards when wild shrieks behind made him pull up.

"Don't beat me, baas!" the boy Tuppence was screaming, as he jumped up and down. "Me tell no tales! Me know nothing!"

"You talk mitt der Englander!" boomed Rhinberg, and his sjambok hissed through the air.

There was a thunder of hoofs. Lightning came galloping back full split, Alec riding with a loose rein.

"Blitzen!" howled Rhinberg and swung round, making to slash at Alec with his hippo-hide whip.

Alec ducked. Then came a thud. Rhinberg, struck by the mare's shoulder, rolled over and over on the ground. Alec was flourishing above his head the whip snatched from the German trader as he fell.

"I vill kill you for dat!" bawled Rhinberg, scrambling up.

"Come on then!" shouted Alec, but whipped his rifle from its bucket as the Zulus above started down with a roar.

At sight of the shining barrel the savages hesitated, spears half-lifted. Rhinberg clenched his big fists, but said nothing.

There was a moment's fateful pause. No one stirred. Then Alec whirled Lightning about, to shoot homeward at a hand gallop. There was nothing else he could do. Already he seemed to have done more harm than good.

Arrived back at his uncle's store the lad flung himself from his sweating mare and dashed up the veranda steps. Rapidly he related all that had happened.

"So you're sure Rhinberg ain't selling fire-water" exclaimed John Baker, as his nephew ended.

"Plumb certain, uncle!" replied Alec. "But he's up to some funny tricks. The Zulus used to be friends with us—now they hand us the frozen face. Why, chief Nkozi would ha' headed a rush at me if I hadn't had my rifle. Rhinberg's got some hold on 'em. It's a mystery!"

"I don't care what it is!" stormed the elder Baker, smashing his great fist down on the veranda rail. "We won't be hounded out o' Zululand by a German!

"I've changed my mind, Alec. We'll fight the fellow. Take the car to Duikersdorp to-morrow, an' fill it with trade goods. We'll get

our trade back somehow. Get the best stuff going!"

"Right you are, uncle!" cried Alec, his eyes shining. "I will!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER
Through the Storm

"Gosh, it's getting dark!" gasped Alec, as he bent over the steering-wheel of the car and went humming and roaring along the rough road. "I hope the dickens that storm don't burst before I'm home! I'll get stuck on the veldt for the night!"

Alec was eager to get home and start the trade campaign against Rhinberg. The back of the car was loaded up with blankets, beads, and wire he had bought in the little town of Duikersdorp.

It had been a long drive.

Night was already shutting down when Alec was still miles from home. The approach of night didn't worry him, but the threatening storm did.

"Blitzen!" howled Rhinberg, and Alec—just in time—caught the stock of the heavy hippo-hide whip as the man lashed out at him. (*See Chapter* 1.)

On hummed the car, jolting and banging. The sun had gone down. Nearly all the sky was black with thunderclouds.

In the dim light, Alec saw the thorn trees tossing and swaying. A sudden chill wind had sprung up, sweeping across the veldt.

All at once a drop of rain splashed on the lad's hand. It was followed by several more, pattering on the car's bonnet. In a moment the rain was lashing down like crystal rods.

"In for it, by Jingo!" cried Alec, and switched on his lights.

But now the rain was roaring down. Night had fallen in a twinkling. The car's lights scarcely pierced the haze of falling water.

Rapidly the dusty trail became mud. The car skidded from side to side.

"I wish I'd put chains on the wheels," thought Alec. "What a dolt I was! If it keeps on like this I'll be jolly well jammed."

Just then a red flicker of lightning zigzagged across the sky. It was followed by a deafening crash right overhead. The storm had burst in full fury.

Half-blinded by the rain, Alec drove on. His ears were filled with the drumming of the downpour, the constant peals of thunder like artillery.

The flashes of lightning seemed endless. One second the night sky was ablaze; then blackness followed that blotted out the landscape.

Slowing down, Alec struggled on for another hour. He was drenched to the skin, dazzled by the lightning, and deafened by the thunder.

The wagon track wound like a corkscrew. In a night storm it was impossible to keep to

it. And soon a terrific jolting told the lad he had left the road.

"Bushed!" he gasped. "I guess I'd best buzz back on my own track till I'm right again."

With difficulty Alec worked the car round. Then he was groping his way through the thorn trees, going back on his own wheel-tracks, which glistened in the car lights.

Worse followed. With a sudden grinding of machinery, a snort, and a bump, the car stopped dead. The lights went out.

"Hang this 'bus!" yelled Alec, leaping out. "She's conked out altogether. What a mess!"

Through the driving rain and the blackness the lad fought his way forward. Then he whipped out a pocket flashlight and frantically sought for the trouble.

His expert fingers fumbled here and there. He could find nothing wrong. But he suddenly looked into the petrol tank, then gave a whoop.

"Run out o' juice!" he cried. "She's dry. Thank Mike it was nothing worse. Well, I can't be far from home now. I'll leave the bus here, footslog home, grab a can o' petrol, an' run her home when the storm's over."

Alec guessed he was south of the road. So, as near as he could judge, he headed due north.

Again and again the lightning crackled. It sprawled blue and yellow trails across the ink-black sky. The frequent flashes helped Alec.

Ten minutes plodding through the mire, his sopped hat-brim clinging round his ears, and Alec found himself on the wagon trail.

"Got it!" he whooped. "Now we shan't be long. Hallo! What's that over there? A tin roof. It must be our store. Uncle'll crack his ribs laughin' when he hears I bust down ten minutes from home."

A vivid glare had just given Alec a glimpse of an iron roof. Darkness shut down again like a blanket. But he had got his direction.

He fought through the storm. In a few minutes he saw the dim outline of a building loom up ahead of him.

"No lights!" he gasped. "Where the thump can uncle be? He can't ha' gone to bed yet."

"Jumpin' snakes!" he broke off with a whistle. "'Tain't our store at all. It's Rhinberg's!"

Alec pulled up disgusted. He had reckoned himself home. Instead, he had struck the house of their enemy. For a second he paused irresolute. Then he exclaimed:

"Well, I ain't goin' on in this. I'd lose my way." He laughed shortly. "Rhinberg won't sell me petrol. I don't suppose he's got any. But he can't stop me from shelterin' on his veranda. Here's seeing, anyway."

Chuckling at the situation, Alec mounted the veranda steps. Then he shook cascades of water from his hat.

"Any port in a storm," he laughed. "But I ain't goin' to let Rhinberg catch me here an' accuse me o' spying on him at night. I'll knock him up and tell him why I'm here."

Not a light showed at any window. The house seemed deserted. Only a flash of lightning showed Alec the door.

"Rum!" muttered the lad. "Mighty rum!" Then he pounded on the wooden door.

Alec's blows were hardly audible. The rain was drumming on the roof. The thunder still cracked and banged mightily. There was no reply.

"I'm jolly well going to rouse him," gritted the lad. "I might get petrol at a price. Anyway, 'twould be deuced awkward if I lie low an' Rhinberg cops me here!" And he hammered again.

This time a low cry answered Alec.

"Who's there?" shouted the lad.

"Tuppence, baas," came in a thin wail. "Baas Rhinberg done gone away. I can't open door. He done leave me bound. Don't go away, baas. Free me. Hide thongs cutting my wrists an' ankles too much."

Alec sucked in his breath with a whistling gasp.

"The bounder!" he hissed. "What did he leave the wretched kid tied up for? If he's done anything wrong he ought to shove him in clink—not leave him tied like a dangerous beast.

"Righto, Tuppence!" he shouted aloud. "I'm coming."

Twice Alec hurled his sturdy frame at the door. At the second effort there was a splintering crash.

The lock had burst. Alec went headlong into a pitch-dark room, to land on his knees on the boarded floor.

"Burglary!" he laughed scrambling up. "Folk 'ud think I bust in to pinch something! I don't care! I ain't leavin' a kid tied up with hide thongs. They must cut like knives!"

Then he switched on his electric torch. The white eye of the lamp cleaved the darkness, showing the small form of Tuppence lying bound by the store counter.

In a second Alec whipped out his sheath-knife. In another he had sliced the Kafir boy's thongs and helped him to his feet.

"What's all this mean, Tuppence?" he barked.

"Me not understand, baas," replied the native boy. "But I t'ink big trouble close for you an' the baas, your uncle."

"Why? How?" Alec rapped out.

"You done take Baas Rhinberg's sjambok," answered Tuppence, "so I tell you. Otherwise you die one time quick. Baas Rhinberg done go to kraal of Nkozi. He say: 'Dem Bakers not live much longer.' He tie me up, leave me here, so I can no run warn you."

Alec whistled.

"Much obliged, Tuppence," he gritted. "But now you hop off. Get away to your own kraal. If Baas Rhinberg catches you after this he'll kill you. Run! Footsack!"

Tuppence didn't hesitate. He bolted out of the store like a jack rabbit, to vanish amongst the boulders and bushes.

Alec strode out on to the veranda. He stared across the veldt, thinking rapidly.

The storm had ceased as abruptly as it commenced. The black clouds had rolled away. Now a round, golden moon swam in the night sky, revealing glistening puddles and dripping thorn trees.

"Shall I hike home an' warn uncle?" muttered Alec. "Or shall I make tracks for Nkozi's kraal, stalk Rhinberg, an' find out what's in the wind?

"I guess I'm going to the kraal," he exploded after a second. "I'm goin' to find out just what that German's plotting!"

Alec quitted the veranda in a bound. He knew the way to Nkozi's kraal, and he started for it full split.

It was mighty lucky for many people that Alec had decided as he had!

Peering through the doorway, Alec saw Nkozi, his flat, ebony features diabolical in the red glow from the fire. Beside him stood Rhinberg, chuckling evilly. (*See Chapter* 3.)

THE THIRD CHAPTER
Alec's Strategy

RIPPED by thorns, stumbling over boulders, Alec pounded on through the strips of bush. The bright moon threw his flitting black shadow before him.

At last he pulled up, breath sobbing in his lungs. He could make out a cluster of domed, beehive-shaped huts, black against the moonlit sky.

"Nkozi's kraal!" panted the lad. "An' it's mighty lucky I visited it once on business for uncle. I know which is the chief's hut. It's that big one in the middle. Now, here's where I imitate a hungry cat," and down he went on his hands and knees.

Alec crawled forward cautiously, hugging the shadows. He knew if he were caught he would probably be promptly speared.

Nkozi had shown his hostility the day before at the store. And this time Alec had no rifle! Believing himself near home he had left his weapon in the car, under the seat.

But Alec's luck held. Unseen the lad crawled through a gap in the reed fence that surrounded the kraal. Then he paused, staring anxiously round.

From several huts came growling voices. In one a pariah dog snapped and snarled, but was quickly silenced. To Alec's nostrils came the smell of wood smoke and the reek of the hump-backed cattle that stamped in their muddy little enclosure.

"O. K." chuckled Alec. "Nkozi must ha' got the only visitor he was expecting! There's no guards about. Now for the earthworm business."

Alec dropped on to his stomach. Then he started working his way forward with his elbows and feet.

A few minutes' difficult progress and the lad was in the black shadow of the chief's big hut. He pricked up his ears, then gasped.

"Rhinberg's in there, or I'm a Dutchman!" he told himself. "I'd know his rasping voice anywhere. It's like a crow's!"

Then, very carefully, Alec inched his way round. At last, hugging the hut grass wall, he peered round through the low doorway.

What Alec saw made a gasp of triumph well up in his throat. But he bit it off, then strained his eyes and ears.

Before a smouldering log fire, Nkozi the chief squatted on his haunches, his chin cupped in his left hand. Rhinberg stood beside the chief, his thumbs hooked in his pistol belt.

In the red glow, Nkozi's flat, ebony features looked diabolical. Rhinberg was chuckling evilly. His squat figure threw an uncouth shadow on the hut wall.

"Den der rising starts to-morrow?" queried the German, unconscious of the watching Alec.

"That is the order I have received from my king," replied Nkozi, showing the whites of his eyes as he looked up at Rhinberg's vulture-like face. "Even now the impis gather from the kraals. I have fifty spearmen here. The meeting-place is half-way to the town of Duikersdorp.

"Wow, Baas Rhinberg! The Zulus will eat up that town. They will wipe out all the English in Zululand!"

"Great guns!" breathed Alec to himself. "I've stumbled on a sight bigger thing than I guessed! The Zulus are on the war-path! What part's that fiend Rhinberg playing?"

Alec quickly learnt. Choking in the vile atmosphere of the hut Rhinberg forced out:

"Dot is well, chief. I hate der Englanders. But dere are two near here who have a fire-waggon—dose Bakers, uncle und nephew. Dey may learn of der rising. Den dey vill rush to Duikersdorp swiftly und give warnings."

"That is the reason I sent for you, Baas Rhinberg," growled Nkozi. "You alone can stop the fire-waggon. Can you not secretly tamper with that demon cart's body, so that it will not run?"

Rhinberg's pig-like eyes glittered in the firelight.

"Gladly vill I do that, chief!" he snarled. "But why nod send warriors to kill der Bakers dis night? Dot would be easy."

Nkozi shook his bullet head.

"No," he replied. "I dare not. The king's orders are that there is to be no killing till he gives the word. If I start before that word comes the rising may be spoilt. I should be held to account."

"Vair well," nodded Rhinberg, "den I vill stop der demon-cart so dat der warnings cannod be taken. Your men can steal der

To face page 160

AMBUSHED!

Baker cub's horse. But vot do I get for my vork ? "

" You are our friend, baas," replied Nkozi, kicking the red embers together with his big foot. " Therefore the king's soldiers shall neither harm you nor burn your store. You have my promise. Is not that enough reward ? "

" No," spluttered Rhinberg, " it vos not enough. Gif me six of der things I always buy from you at der great price. Den I vill see der demon-car gannot run. Und when der rising start I vill kill der Baker cub mineself. He knock me down mitt his horse ! Donner ! I do nod forget dat ! "

" Good, baas," replied Nkozi promptly, fumbling with a buckhide pouch at his girdle, " I will pay for your work. Here is your reward.

" If the white police knew you bought these things from me you would go to gaol. But that is nothing compared with your fate if you fail to stop the fire-wagon ! You will die—not quickly."

" Trust me, chief," snarled Rhinberg. " I vill wreck der Bakers' fire-carriage and earn der reward. Now pay ! Den I go to der Bakers' store at vonce."

Alec couldn't see what followed. The lad's face was close to the ground, and he dare not raise it.

But he saw Rhinberg stoop towards the sitting Zulu. Something passed from the black hand to the white. Then Rhinberg straightened up again, patting his breeches pocket.

" I go, chief," he snarled.

" Aye, go quickly ! " replied Nkozi, without looking up. " Some time to-morrow the king launches the impis. Look to it that the fire-carriage is wrecked this night. If you fail——"

Alec heard no more. He saw the German make for the low door by which he was lying. Rapidly he wriggled away into the shadow.

" Gosh ! " the lad breathed to himself. " The Zulus are breaking out to-morrow. They'll kill all the English within fifty miles. An' that brute Rhinberg's taken some bribe to queer our car—so that we can't give warning if we get wind of the rising ! Guess again, Rhinberg ! " he gritted. " You ain't goin' to earn that blood-money ! "

Alec had crawled to the back of the big hut. Just then footsteps reached his ears. He lay motionless.

Then he saw the squat, powerful figure of Rhinberg stride past him, boots squelching in the mire.

Alec dimly saw the German pass out through the gap in the reed fence. Then he rose to his feet, soundless as a shadow.

A few seconds later Rhinberg was threading his way through the bush. And after him stole the lithe figure of young Alec.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

The Zulu Rising

ALEC's blood was boiling. His pulses leapt. He had discovered Rhinberg's villainous treachery, which would mean the death of many white folk. But he was not certain yet how to act.

Strong as he was, Alec knew the gorilla-like Rhinberg was a great deal stronger. Also the German was armed.

" Best thing I can do," muttered the lad, " is to hang on the bounder's trail till he's near our store. Then I can dodge round through the bush an' warn uncle.

" We'll catch the ruffian sneaking into our car shed, knock him out, and rope him up. Then we'll carry petrol to the car and beat it for Duikersdorp."

His brain working feverishly, Alec stuck close to the squat, ungainly figure striding ahead. He wanted to make sure Rhinberg was heading for his uncle's store before he dodged round through the bush.

It was mighty lucky the lad trailed the German for a bit. For he suddenly saw Rhinberg pull up with a savage grunt.

Alec stopped, too, not ten yards behind his quarry. He crouched by a thorn tree, measuring the distance with his eye and wondering what Rhinberg had found.

Rhinberg was stooping, staring at the ground. To Alec's ears came the ruffian's voice in a harsh, wrathful whisper.

"Tracks!" hissed Rhinberg. "Boot-marks in der ground. I haf been followed to Nkozi's kraal! Dere vos only two people round here who vould follow me—either Johan Baker or his cub nephew!

"It must be der cub! He haf spied round my store and Tuppence haf told him where I go. Blitzen! Der cub must be close now! I vill warn Nkozi to search der bush at vonce."

Rhinberg jerked upright and spun on his heel. In the moonlight Alec saw the German's vulture-like features were twisted with rage.

There was not a second to lose. Once Rhinberg reached Nkozi's kraal, Zulu warriors would be on Alec's tracks. The fleet savages would catch the lad before he was half-way home. The warning of the rising would never reach Duikersdorp.

All this raced through Alec's brain like a flash of lightning. And even as Rhinberg whirled round, Alec launched himself.

There was a quick thudding of feet. Then the German saw Alec come flying at him from the shadows.

It was a total surprise. For a split second Rhinberg stared thunderstruck. Then his hand darted to his pistol.

"You spied on me!" he boomed. "You jackal's velp! Take dot!"

The steel barrel glinted as the weapon flashed up. But Alec was coming like a shot from a gun. He covered the ten yards in three great bounds.

There sounded a hard smack—like the cracking of a coconut. Before Rhinberg's finger could tighten on the trigger Alec's bunched knuckles crashed to the villain's jaw.

It was a terrific blow. All the lad's weight was behind it. Down went Rhinberg like a felled ox. Unable to stop, Alec sprawled headlong across the prone body.

But the lad was on his feet in a twinkling. And, whirling round, he made to snatch up the dropped pistol.

His hand closed on it and he scooped it up. But the same instant his eyes fell on a small buckskin pouch that had fallen from Rhinberg's pocket.

"That's what Nkozi gave the rotter!" gasped Alec. "The reward for crocking our car. What the thump is it?"

Alec snatched up the little bag. He felt things inside like hard pebbles and shook them into his hand.

"Diamonds!" he gasped, his eyes bulging. "Rough diamonds! An' what did Nkozi say in the hut? Why, that police would be on Rhinberg's trail if they knew what he dealt in!

"By Jove!" he ended. "That explains everything. Rhinberg's an I.D.B. merchant! He buys diamonds that Zulus have stolen from the mines. No wonder he was mad with that kid Tuppence for barging into the room where he kept them! An' that's how Rhinberg collared uncle's trade. He must ha' promised to buy these stones from the Zulus on condition they traded with him only. Well, the game's finished now!"

As he ended Alec glared down at the senseless Rhinberg.

"You're an utter scoundrel!" he gritted. "For a handful o' stones you help Zulus on the war-path. You ought to die! But I'll give you a chance for your life. I'll just fix you so you can't budge for an hour or so. Then escape from your black pals if you can!"

Quickly Alec bound the stunned Rhinberg with strips of clothing. Then, seizing the pistol, and flinging the diamonds down, he made off through the moonlit bush as hard as he could pelt.

Already bands of Zulus must be swarming through the bush towards the appointed meeting-place. Only by a desperate rush could Alec and his uncle break through and warn the folk of Duikersdorp.

Panting for breath, Alec at last pounded up the steps of his uncle's store. He found old John Baker sitting up for him.

"Where's the car, lad?" cried the elder man, leaping up from his chair as his drenched nephew burst in. "What's happened?"

"Car's back in the bush, uncle!" cried Alec. "I ran out of petrol. Get your rifle, quick, and listen!"

Rapidly Alec related how he had overheard the plot to tinker with the car while the Zulus gathered.

"They're risen, uncle!" he ended in a yell. "They're only waitin' their king's order to start the killing! An' that ruffian Rhinberg

took a bribe to wreck our car so we couldn't get through! He's the Zulus' ally. He's been buying all their stolen diamonds, and that's how he crocked our trade!"

"An .I.D.B. man!" shouted John Baker. "Where's he now?"

"Where I dropped him!" yelled Alec. "Quick, uncle! Grab all the petrol you can. We'll have to shove it in the buggy an' drive Lightning. There's no time to footslog to where the car's bushed!"

Then the two Bakers hustled for their lives.

Alec raced to the stables, got his mare Lightning out, flung on the harness, and hitched her to the buggy. His uncle seized several tins of petrol, rushed down with them, and piled them in.

Five minutes later a whip cracked. Lightning sprang forward. Then the buggy's wheels whirred as the Bakers drove at a gallop for the stranded car.

Hoofs thudding, kicking up showers of mud, Lightning raced down the wagon road. Alec gripped the reins. His uncle sat beside him rifle ready, straining his eyes for a glimpse of Zulu spearmen.

As the barrel of Rhinberg's weapon glinted in the moonlight Alec lashed out with all his strength, his bunched knuckles crashing home on the villain's jaw. (*See Chapter* 4.)

But they saw no one. And soon Rhinberg's store showed plain in the moonlight.

"Car's quite close here, uncle!" explained Alec, and swung into the bush, the light buggy bobbing and dancing like a boat at sea.

But Alec had struck the wheel tracks where the car had left the road in the storm. They were quite plain now. And suddenly Alec uttered a muffled shout.

"The car, uncle!" he cried, pointing to a dim bulk through the trees. "Now we'll soon be buzzing!"

Out they sprang. The elder Baker dashed to the car, and started flinging all Alec's new trade goods overboard. In a few seconds the ground around was littered with blankets and bales of copper wire.

It meant the loss of pounds' worth of goods. But the stuff was far too heavy to be carried in a dash to save lives.

Meanwhile Alec placed chains on the car wheels to prevent skidding. Then he filled up the petrol tank and heaved the other tins into the back seat.

"Ready, uncle!" he cried. "Except for Lightning. I'll turn her loose. She'll follow a bit, then cut her own line for Duikersdorp. She knows the way. An' I bet no savage'll get within a mile of her!"

In a moment Lightning was unharnessed. Then both men sprang into the car and Alec started up. The engine roared to life, and the lad swung round and went bumping back towards the road.

They reached the road, and Alec gave the machine all the speed he dared. Forward leapt the car, roaring along the moonlit, muddy road. Lightning was quickly dropped behind. But Alec had no fear for her. The clever mare was certain to reach Duikersdorp some time.

" Got away, uncle ! " yelled Alec triumphantly, as he crouched at the wheel.

That very instant wild war-whoops rang through the bush. Glancing back, Alec caught a glimpse of flashing assegais as a bunch of Zulus spilled out from the bush and came roaring in pursuit. The car had been heard by Zulus on the march.

" Who cares ? " yelled Alec. " They can't catch us ! "

" No, but they'll signal to pals ahead ! ' shouted John Baker. " Drive, Alec ! Drive ! You'll hear the war drums in two shakes ! "

Alec gasped and opened wide the throttle. The car swayed and lurched desperately. But the lad was using all his skill. If the Zulus ambushed them, the warning would never reach the threatened town.

The car hummed and purred on. The wind whistled in Alec's ears. The bush went by like a black sheet. Boulders loomed up ahead, came abreast, and were dropped behind.

Suddenly, above the roar of the engine, Alec heard a throbbing sound. Steady beats came from far and near. The sounds died down, only to be heard later farther ahead.

" The drums ! " hissed Alec.

" Aye ! Signalling to block the road ! " cried his uncle. " Let her rip, Alec ! "

On they tore, mile after mile. The moon sank, and the eastern sky grew pale. Dawn was at hand.

Once Alec heard shouts on his right. But he let the car out and the sounds faded rapidly.

" That was a bunch of 'em, uncle ! " he yelled. " But we've slipped 'em ! "

John Baker said nothing. He sat with his rifle ready, and his beard jutting grimly forward.

The hours slipped by. The humming car seemed to eat up the miles despite the roughness of the road. At length the sun was beating down fiercely. Alec could see for miles over the green, bush-clad veldt.

" Beat 'em ! " cried the lad. " We ain't heard a drum for hours ! An' we can't be a dozen miles from town ! "

Came, then, a wild, warning yell from the elder Baker. He was standing up, and could see further than his nephew.

" Full speed, Alec ! " he howled. " There's Zulus swarming towards the road from each side ! There ! They're dashing along behind a line of bush ! Full speed, or we shan't get through ! "

Alec glanced where his uncle pointed, and the lad gasped as he caught the flicker of steel.

Down the road raced the car, stones whizzing up from the flying wheels. Zulus were converging on the road from both sides. A single spear could out the lad at the steering-wheel.

" Faster ! Faster ! "

John Baker's voice rose to a thrilling shout. But it was drowned by yells from the bush. From the corner of his eye Alec glimpsed naked black forms, waving feather headdresses, and brandished spears and clubs.

" We're through ! " he shouted, eyes on the track. " Those fiends won't get us ! "

That very instant came a knocking sound from the engine. The car was slowing down. The war-whoops broke out with bloodthirsty eagerness. They approached rapidly.

" She's missing, uncle ! " yelled Alec. " A plug oiled up, I guess. Can't you keep the brutes off a——"

Howls rent the air. Then from each side triumphant savages rushed bounding from the bush. An assegai whizzed through Alec's shirt sleeve. Another removed John Baker's hat. Then :

Bang ! Bang ! Bang ! John Baker was on his feet, emptying his rifle into the swarms of brown assailants. Several bit the ground. others jumped over the bodies and came roaring forward.

It was touch and go. Alec couldn't hit up speed. They had dropped to ten miles an hour. Spears shivered across the quivering car's bonnet. To Alec the air seemed full of flashing steel, and black, leaping bodies. Zulus were all round.

With a fierce shout John Baker clubbed his empty rifle. He whirled it round his head, to bring the butt crashing down on a warrior who sprang.

Again he struck, and once again. The Zulus were amazed at the strength of the huge, bearded man. He had downed three. But more were coming on, with whoops and strident whistles. The fight couldn't last.

Hoofs thudding, Lightning raced out into the storm, the buggy's wheels flinging up showers of mud. (*See Chapter* 4.)

All seemed over, when the car gave a sudden lurch. Then it shot forward. In a moment it was making forty an hour once more.

"Saved!" bawled Alec. "By the skin of our teeth!" and saw three Zulus who had leapt from the bush ahead go down before their headlong rush.

More spears came hurtling from behind. But they fell short. The Zulus were quickly outstripped. The bloodthirsty yells of rage and disappointment grew rapidly faint.

"A mighty close shave, my lad!" gasped Baker senior, leaning back and mopping his face. "But I guess that's the last of 'em. We ain't likely to strike more now. But keep your eyes skinned."

But they met no more Zulus. And shortly afterwards they hummed into Duikersdorp, shouting their warning. In ten minutes mounted police were clattering out to meet the Zulus.

But few were found. The savages knew the car would give warning, and rapidly dispersed to their kraals.

Thanks to Alec, the rising was nipped in the bud.

"I wonder what'll happen to Rhinberg?" cried Alec, as tired and travel-stained, he swung down from the car before Duikersdorp's one hotel.

"I guess the Zulus'll kill him," exclaimed John Baker grimly, "for not wrecking the car. They're vengeful folk."

But Rhinberg's fate was never learnt. He vanished completely. Whether he was caught and killed, or escaped to try his luck in another country, remained a mystery.

But what is certain is that Alec recovered his mare. Dust-grimed and sweating, Lightning clattered into Duikersdorp some hours after the car.

Also, the Bakers' store prospered more than ever before. Zulus admire pluck, even in their enemies. The tale of Alec's dash and John Baker's fight ran through the kraals; and natives flocked to the store to buy goods and gaze at the fighting traders.

There was only one drawback to the rush of popularity. Tuppence, who became the Bakers' store-boy, suffered badly from swelled head.

THE END

How to enjoy "Hare and Hounds"

For those who live in or near the open country, a paperchase—"hare and hounds" some folk call it—is one of the jolliest ways of spending three or four hours—that is, if you go to work in the right way.

To carry it on over six or seven miles and to make an actual race of the outing is very much the wrong way. The start off may be all right, but it won't be long before the slower runners find themselves left far behind; they have to run by themselves, they get tired and footsore, and they finish up fagged out and disagreeable. The outing hasn't done them a bit of good, and they have obtained no pleasure from it. Wrongly carried out, paperchasing becomes beastly hard and tiring work; it ceases to be a recreation.

For a paperchase to be a success, there ought to be open country to run over—trotting along through the dust of a hard road is no fun. The ground should be moderately dry under foot, also. To plod over a wet and heavy land, through thick, drenched grass; to get stuck up to the ankles—with the chance of losing a shoe in the mud—is anything but a joke. Though, if it should happen, there is sure to be a laugh at the expense of the victim! Who hasn't grinned over the description of the wretched plight of Tadpole, in "Tom Brown's Schooldays," as he painfully struggled back at the end of the "big side" paperchase, fagged out, plastered with mud from head to foot, and with only one shoe, the other having been left in the sticky clay of a small brook?

The idea of a paperchase is the sending out in advance of a couple of "hares," who usually get about ten minutes "law," as it is called. The "hounds" follow the route the "hares" have taken, by means of the "scent" left behind. This "scent" is just bits of paper, torn into quite small pieces and carried by the hares in some convenient receptacle. An old pillow or bolster case, unfit for further service, makes a capital scent bag.

As the hares go along, they leave this scent behind them, not in a continuous trail, but as small handfuls scattered here and there alongside their trail, dropped by a gate or stile, or so disposed that the hounds—the pursuers—are able to see it without taking a great deal of trouble. To hide the scent now and again, so that the hounds lose the trail and can't recover it without a lot of searching

and waste of time, may be smart, but it isn't to be recommended.

The hares should always be a couple of good runners, stayers as well as fast; and as they get their ten minutes law, it is hardly "playing the game" for them to employ any tricks for deceiving the hounds in order to rob them entirely of any chance of overtaking the hares.

For all that, there are several dodges, perfectly legitimate, that the hares may make use of. It is not unfair for them to separate, say at a stile, each laying a separate trail, and to meet again some distance beyond. The laying of a false trail is also perfectly legitimate. This is accomplished by the hares separating, and the fleeter footed of the two taking a direction at an angle with that of his companion, laying a scent as he goes. This may continue for a couple of hundred yards or so, when the hare, suspending the dropping of any more scent, cuts across to rejoin his companion.

When the hounds come upon this side trail, they are bound to follow it, since they have no means of telling whether it is a true or false one, and the pack will divide. If the hare who continues along the true direction, after scattering a little scent beyond the stile, then leaves a bare space for ten yards or so, or perhaps tucks a handful of scent behind a clod of earth or bunch of grass or weed—where it is not to be noted except by the sharp-eyed—the hounds are liable to be baffled and lose time.

Hastily assuming that the obvious trail they see is the one to follow, they continue along it until they are pulled up by its abrupt disappearance. Whereupon, there is a casting around to pick up the scent, ending with a return along the false trail back to the stile, where some eagle-eyed hound discovers the partly concealed scent they had all previously overlooked.

But the trick is not one for the hares to play too often in the course of a run.

It is always well for the hounds to have a leader, and he should *not* be the fastest runner. If he is, he is liable to take the pack along at a pace beyond the powers of the slowest; it should be a point of honour for the pack to keep as much together as possible—until, at least, the hares are sighted or the pack is within a short distance of the end of the run.

As a matter of fact, the first hound home is not at all certain to be the speediest runner. Running across country, thick grass, ploughed earth, up and down hill, is a very different proposition from running on a level track, which favours speed; cross-country running gives a chance to the more deliberate but long-staying runner, whose muscles are not so liable to be fatigued by the frequent changes in the going.

Paperchasing requires a different method of progression from ordinary running. The stride ought to be fairly short, and running on the toes is quite useless. The feet have to be lifted much higher than is usual; this gives "beans" to the front thigh muscles of those who are not used to the game.

There are a few tips novice paperchasers would do well to bear in mind. Leather-soled shoes, not rubber gym. shoes, should be worn. The soles of the latter are not substantial

To plod over wet and heavy land is anything but a joke.

enough; wetting does them no good; sometimes, even, the sole may get torn clean away. Cloth or flannel knickers are far better than running shorts. Boots are no good. If laced shoes are worn, they ought not to be tightly laced.

Old hands at paperchasing have a tip for crossing a ploughed field that gives a big advantage over runners who are not aware of it. Instead of trying to run from furrow to furrow (when going squarely or diagonally across the plough), or springing from the top of one furrow to the top of the next, they arrange the stride so that the foot alights on the nearer side of the ridge beyond; and so to the next and following ridges. By this means the feet are at more or less of a level all the time, and the calf and thigh muscles don't get tired quickly.

Climbing may be slower, but it conserves strength.

Going uphill, either drop to a walk or shorten the stride; and don't make the mistake of thinking that a bit of downhill is just the moment for increasing the stride. The toes will get sore if you do. Jumping over a succession of gates or fences becomes painfully tiring after it has been repeated many times; climbing may be slower, but it conserves strength.

In all sports it is really a bad thing to do too much. Naturally, it is very disheartening on, say, your first paperchase to find yourself being left behind simply because the leader of the pack isn't troubling to keep his men together. You may be a bit out of condition and perhaps for that reason seem to be the slowest runner and are getting left behind.

In such circumstances you are liable to tuck your elbows in and strain yourself to overtake the others and keep up. Now that's really a very wrong thing to do, and you are liable to do yourself a lot of harm.

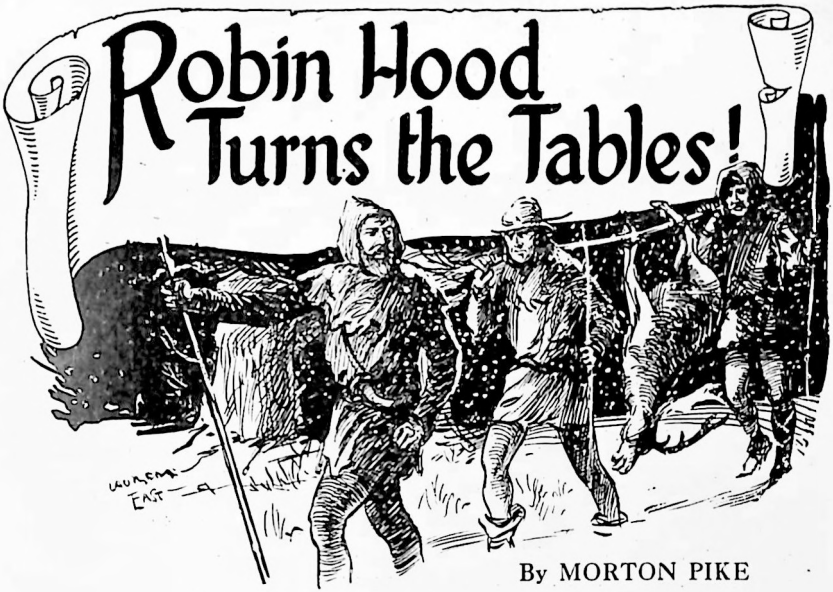
It is far better just to peg away at a speed that is well within your capacity, and let the others get on with it. Next time out you will have learned a bit, and you will be in better condition; after a chase or two you will find yourself well up at the front.

Most important of all: don't make the distance too long. Four miles as the length of a 'chase is ample. If a bit less, there will be no harm done. And, whether you're a hare or a hound, don't drink lashings of cold water immediately the run finishes. Cool down before you drink. Wash out the mouth half a dozen times with cold water, but don't swallow any.

And when dressed you'll be ready to enjoy a good tea!

THE END

Robin Hood Turns the Tables!



By MORTON PIKE

A Stirring Story of the Famous Outlaw of Sherwood Forest and His Merry Men

THE FIRST CHAPTER
The Footprint of an Enemy

FOR three days the snow had fallen without ceasing, filling up the dells, smoothing out the hollows, and making Sherwood look like a huge Twelfth Night cake, covered with white sugar fully four feet deep.

Three men came labouring through the snow, and two of them carried a deer slung on a branch between their shoulders. The third man led the way, prodding with his quarter-staff all the while, and every now and then they stopped, with the snow up to their middles.

"By my halidom!" said Leoffric of Leicester for the twentieth time that hour. "Was ever such a winter?"

His companions laid the deer down, and breathed upon their blue fingers as they rested. One of them was Will Scarlet, and the other Ulf, son of Gammel Goosefoot.

"Pardie!" said Will Scarlet. "Never have I seen the like. The oaks groan under the weight that bends their branches; an', i' faith, though I have known the forest, boy and man, methinks I should be hard put to it to find my way after nightfall."

"I wonder how it fares with Allan-a-Dale?" said Ulf. "He hath gone to Nottingham Town to see if there be any good cheer for we snow-bound outlaws. An' he find none, methinks this deer will be all the Christmas dinner we are likely to get, and none too fat at that." He pressed his knuckles into the carcase, and shook his head doubtfully. "The poor beasts suffer like their two-footed foes," he said. "But let us get forward; we have a good league yet."

They shouldered the deer again, and went on.

The afternoon sun, glowing like a ball of fire over the forest-top, made the glittering

particles of frost glint and gleam like diamonds and rubies, and it was very still.

Sometimes a mass of snow would fall with a soft thud, and the branch, released from its weight, would sway backwards and forwards, sending a shower down upon them, but that was all.

"Mark ye that?" said Leoffric, pointing with his left hand. "A pack of wolves has been this way. They are fierce this season, and heaven help the poor forester who chances on them single-handed!"

A little farther on he stopped and raised his finger, and, lifting his keen nose, sniffed the keen air like a hound.

"What is't, Leoffric?" said Will Scarlet in a low voice, for sound travels far in the frosty air.

"The smoke of a wood fire. Do you not nose it for yourselves?" was the reply.

"Ay, marry that I do!" said Ulf and Will in a breath. "Now, who in wonderment can it be who makes his camp so far from the beaten track?"

"Robbers, belike," said Leoffric. "The scent comes from yonder copse. Tarry here while I see into this matter."

They laid the deer down again, and, unslinging their bows, loosened each an arrow in the sheath, as men who take no chances and must be ready for all things.

Bending low, Leoffric of Leicester stole forward, keeping in the shelter of certain white mounds, which were in reality bushes of blackthorn, and in a few minutes he had disappeared. Beyond the bushes lay a white hollow, around whose rim grew a thick copse of twisted hornbeams, sheltering a stunted oak, whose rough and crinkled rind looked as if it had turned all goose-flesh with the cold.

"Ho, ho!" quoth Leoffric to himself. "Whoever he is, he has chosen a snug roost. Well do I know this spot." And over the outlaw's face there showed a smile of some forgotten woodland memory connected with that dell.

Among the gnarled roots of the oak a large hole yawned, within which Leoffric could see a heaped-up bed of dry leaves, and in front of it, on a tripod of sticks, hung a little iron pot, bubbling over a wood fire.

He stood immovable—dark and still as the trunk of the hornbeam against which he crouched, his quick eye taking in the circle of the dell, and peered into the branches overhead.

Whoever had chosen that desolate spot for a resting-place was evidently absent, and the outlaw was turning over in his mind how best to discover him without betraying his own approach, when his gaze fell on the track of a man leading from the oak-tree up into the hornbeams.

Stepping cautiously from root to root, Leoffric reached the spot where the trail left the dell, and this time the smile that came into his face stayed there, as, with flashing eyes, he looked down on the footprints, and knew who had made them.

Will Scarlet and Ulf were growing impatient at his absence, for the keen wind struck bitter chill upon them, when on a sudden they saw their comrade returning, still bending low under the shelter of the white heaps.

"Now, gramercy, what think ye of this?" he said in an excited whisper. "Thomas the Dog, the Sheriff of Nottingham's spy, hath made his quarters in the hollow yonder."

His companions started with astonishment, and then looked grave.

"This thing can have but one meaning," said Will Scarlet. "The rogue knows that we make merry at Christmas-time, and he plans to bring the sheriff and his men upon us."

"'Tis clear as yonder sun!" said Ulf, nodding his head wisely. "Come, we must make a wide detour lest we surprise him, for the sooner Robin hears this news the better for us all."

"And the worse for the Sheriff of Nottingham!" said Leoffric with a chuckle. "Take thou the staff, Ulf, and lead ahead; thou hast had more than thy fair share of the burden."

Ulf did as he was bid, and turning to the left, they went noiselessly on their way, searching every thicket's gloom as they passed it, but without a sign of the spy.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

Robin Hood's Plan

THE outlaws' camp was at the Red Thorns. The dense mass of gnarled and twisted bushes — which in the summer-time was

all aflame with scarlet may, scenting the forest far and near—formed in winter a capital bulwark against the keen east wind, and under its shelter they had made themselves snug.

They had not counted, however, upon that terrific snowfall, and in spite of the roaring fire in the centre of the glade, and the paths that had been shovelled away to the wattlehuts, there was a certain air of cheerlessness about the outlaws' lair as the three companions reached it and told their news.

At the outset it was received with moody silence, for, to say the truth, the Christmas larder was very empty, the common purse was low, and this last piece of intelligence was not at all to their liking.

All looked at Robin, who bent his frown upon the fire and seemed to be thinking deeply.

There was a low whistle from the watcher at the edge of the glade, and then the lithe figure of Allan-a-Dale, disguised in a tunic of hodden grey cloth, with hood drawn well over his head, came leaping through the snow, his cheeks all a-tingle with the keen wind.

"Egad!" he cried with a forced laugh. "There is better cheer yonder in Nottingham than here. By my halidom, the sheriff's kitchen is a sight for sore eyes! Thirty geese hang ready for the spit, two fat bucks are even now a-cutting up for pasties; there is a chine of beef upon the cook's table as big round as Friar Tuck's paunch, which is no small matter! Everyone is all smiles from the sheriff himself to the scullion-boys; while you, my masters, have faces as long as a minstrel's rebeck!"

With a loud squeak, Madcap the Jester, tripped over the root of a birch tree and plunged headlong into the snow, full at the feet of Thomas the Dog. (*See Chapter* 3.)

"Hark ye to this pup of ours, bringing hither such tales to make our mouths water!" cried Robin, throwing back his head as a bright light came into his eyes. "And this same sheriff, when he hath filled his belly full of good things, can find no better sport than to come a-baiting we poor folk, who have no roof to keep the cold out, and little enough lining for our hungry paunches!"

"Shame!" cried a score of voices; men looked solemn, and hands tightened on the long-bows.

"Ay, you may well cry shame, my good comrades! We have managed till this Christmas Eve, and all the luck has been against us; but, mark ye, I have a plan, and so good a one that ye shall whoop for joy when ye hear it."

"A plan—a plan!" cried the outlaws. "What is't, good Robin? Say but the word, and we will roast the sheriff before his own fire!"

"Soft!" said Robin, as he raised his hands. "Beshrew me, but you read my very thoughts, only that the sheriff shall lie cold rather than be roasted! Tell me, Allan-a-Dale, what following hath he in his house?"

"Why, as for that," said Allan, frowning, "there are fifty men-at-arms clanking about the courtyard, all in their harness, casting longing glances through the kitchen door. Moreover, there is whispered talk of something a-foot, but what that may be I could not discover."

"By my halidom," cried Robin, "the two tales tally! Here have we Thomas the Dog, that vile, creeping serpent, spying out our lair, and the sheriff's men ready to swing

leg over saddle when he hath found it. Fifty men you say, Allan? And we are sixty-five, without counting Friar Tuck, who is equal to five more any day in the week!"

"Thou mayest make it seven, Robin, on a Christmas Eve!" said the friar, with a twinkle in his eye. "Nay, if ten stood between me and my dinner to-morrow there would be meat for the crows and dinner for me!"

"Hark at the boaster!" laughed Robin fetching him a sounding smack upon the shoulder with his open hand. "But a truce to folly. How may we lure the sheriff and his men out here into the forest in such manner that we may come upon them and bind them safely?"

A sudden murmur of admiration went round the listening band, for the idea was one very much to their liking.

Then a small dry voice like the chirp of a bird spake up, and Madcap the Jester stepped in front of Robin Hood.

"Master," said he, with a mock bow, "I am thine own tom-fool, yet am I the man for this business. Cast me out, that I may go a-shivering through the cold, my fool's garb torn and tattered, and my chest heaving with sobs. I warrant me that I will blubber so loud that Thomas the Dog shall hear it; then will I tell a tale to his greedy ear that shall make him moo like a moon-calf. No matter what I shall say—that I have still to invent—but I will miscall thee so vilely that he will never doubt me. Thou shalt have but twenty men here in the hollow; of those, eight shall be down with the scurvy, and five a-sickening for the plague—la, la, la!—but if the sheriff cometh not helter-skelter to make an end of you all, then set me down a very fool indeed!"

Friar Tuck made one stride towards the little man, and, lifting him up head-high in his brawny arms with as little effort as if he had been an acorn, he kissed him on both cheeks, and set him on the ground again upside-down.

Madcap turned a somersault and righted himself, glaring furiously at the worthy man, as all the outlaws laughed aloud.

"Thou great, fat, bulbous, bottle-nosed, over-eaten hog of a man," piped the little jester, "wouldst make an ass of me before all these grinning knaves?"

"Hark at the turkey-cock!" said Friar Tuck, laughing till the tears ran down his cheeks. "Why, thimblekin, I love thee, for the very prospect of roast goose and warden-pie thou holdest forth to my hungry nostrils!"

"Ay, ay, lads!" cried Robin. "Madcap is the wisest fool of us all. How say ye, shall we lure the sheriff to his own undoing; and when we have stripped them all to the skin, shall we clad them in our Lincoln green, and donning their garments, carry them prisoners into Nottingham? Gadzooks, but with a little trimming of my beard I flatter myself I should make a very good counterfeit of our old enemy; a swathing over one eye, as if I had got an arrow wound in the cheek, and I warrant me the sheriff's own wife would not know the difference!"

And a roar of laughter greeted the outlaw's plan, the band's yells of merriment ringing out over the frozen waste and echoing even to the ears of crouching Thomas the Dog.

"There is no time, master, like the present," said Madcap. "Make what plans you may, I will start at once, and 'twill not be my fault if you see not the glint of steel cap and sword blade ere the bell of yonder monastery tolls midnight."

"Beware the wolves!" cried several voices.

"Leave that to me, my children!"—looking round with a sly smile. "When I have hoodwinked Thomas the Dog, all the other wolves in Sherwood may take care of themselves!" Saying which he darted up the bank, and vanished almost before they knew what he was about.

"Now, lads, look to your arms, for you will need them!" cried Robin. "Friar, Little John, and you, honest Will, come and hold counsel with me for the exact manner of the doing of this thing, for I would fain accomplish it without bloodshed this merry Christmastide!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER

Madcap the Jester and Thomas the Dog

WHEN the distant laughter rang over the silence and solitude of the snow-bound forest, Thomas the Dog remained motionless for some minutes.

With his low brow and projecting fangs he

From out the black belt of forest appeared the figure of a horseman, galloping for his life! Lean grey wolves were streaking along behind, hunting him down to his death. "Save yourselves!" the stranger shouted to Madcap and Thomas the Dog. An instant later and he had gone. (*See Chapter* 3.)

looked more like a dog than ever, and a bad one at that, and there came into his evil face a wolfish expression that heightened the resemblance still more.

His first impulse was to seize the long-shafted spear that stood propped up against the oak-tree beside him, and slink away in the direction of the sound.

He marked that it came on the wind, and that the wind was blowing due east, but he listened in vain for a repetition; and just then the seething pot on the tripod bubbled over, and the smell of the stew made him pause.

Thomas the Dog was very hungry, and he shivered with cold and excitement.

"'Tis the outlaws, right enough!" he growled, baring his red gums in a hideous grin. "I know now where I shall find them. They are not at the White Oak after all, but in the glade of the red thorns. Soft, Friend Thomas! Eat thy supper now; thou wilt be a better man for it to-morrow."

He lifted the pot from its hook, and, sitting there on his nest of leaves, drew a wooden spoon from the breast of his greasy jerkin, and began to ladle the savoury mess, all red-hot as it was, between his slavering jaws, alternately blowing on his scalded tongue and grinning hideously as he thought of the news he would carry to his master, the sheriff. Six spoonfuls in all had he swallowed when he suddenly paused and listened intently.

"'Twas naught but the sighing of the wind in the branches," he muttered half aloud, and then he proceeded with his meal.

He had found a half-frozen hare on the snow that noontide, and, coming upon the hind-quarters in the process of his ladling, he drew them forth with his fingers, looking more than ever like a starving cur, as he tore the flesh greedily and scrunched the bones with his dog's teeth.

An unmistakable snarl came out of his throat as he paused again, and this time there was no mistaking it.

There was someone out in the woods not far away—someone in trouble, too; and, putting his half-picked bone into the pot, the spy grasped his spear, thrust his knife tighter into his girdle, and slunk up the dellside.

Among the hornbeams within two feet of the spot where Leoffric of Leicester had recognised his footprints, by the inward drag of his right foot, which had once been caught in a man-trap, Thomas the Dog stood stock-

still and looked across the white mantle that clothed the forest floor.

Sharp as his eyes were, it was a few moments before he descried a quaint little bunched-up figure blundering across an open patch of clearing, although he had distinctly heard before the sobbing of someone in distress.

"Now, what in Heaven's name is this!" he thought, bending down to get the figure outlined against the sky.

As he did so the figure tripped over the root of a beech-tree, and, plunging headlong into a drift full three feet deep, gave a loud squeal, and with many a weird and piping oath belaboured the snow with arms and legs as though it had done him an injury.

"Odds!" muttered Thomas the Dog. "Methinks I should know that voice. 'Tis surely that little viper, Madcap the Jester, who maketh foolery for Robin Hood and his men, and should be scourged to death if I had my way!"

The little man in the snowdrift suddenly ceased his struggles, and stood upright, with the snow to his neck.

"Oh, dear," he wailed, in a high falsetto. "I shall die—I shall die—I shall die! May the foul fiend seize that twenty-seven times accursed miscreant who has driven me forth with stripes to pass the night in a wolf's belly! Stars in the sky fall down and burn him!" he screamed, shaking his fists in impotent wrath above his head, and his voice increased in shrill treble fury. "Trees of the forest crush Robin Hood the Outlaw, and roll him flat. Wild boars, sharpen your tusks and——"

"Here, my friend, what's the matter with you?" said a harsh voice, interrupting his frenzied raving. And Madcap the Jester squealed a piteous squeal as he received a hard prod in the back from the butt of the spear-shaft, and, looking up, he gazed, petrified with terror, at the uncouth figure of Thomas the Dog, who looked down upon him with a glitter in his eye.

"Come out of it!" said the spy, hauling him up by the neck of his hood, which was of parti-coloured cloth, pale-blue on one side and scarlet on the other. "What has Robin Hood done that thou cursest him, as surely no mitred abbot ever cursed yet with bell, book, and candle?"

"Oh, sweet Thomas—oh, dear Thomas, I will give thee the five groats I have in my pouch if you will but befriend me! I have been whipped with rods till I am black and blue, and spurned from the camp yonder by the very men who have laughed at my jests. Oh, woe is me; but hunger maketh folk do strange things!"

The tears tolled down the little man's cheeks, his mouth worked convulsively, and he shook his little fists in the direction of the Red Thorns with a vehemence so comical that the spy would have laughed outright had he not had far more serious thoughts in his dark mind.

"Stop your snivelling, thou misshapen little vermin! You've got to come with me!" And without more ado he seized the trembling jester by the arm, lifted him up on to his shoulder, and strode away with him towards the screen of hornbeams that hid his camping dell.

"One pair of feet tell less than two," said Thomas the Dog. "I must have some words with thee, thou saucy malapert! If they're to my liking, thou shalt have some supper; if not——" He did not finish the sentence, but made a significant motion with his glittering spearhead as he strode down the bank towards the hollow oak.

"Now, sit ye there," he said, tossing him down by the fireside, "and try to escape at your peril!"

Thomas the Dog settled himself on his bed of leaves, placed his spear beside him, and set the pot once more on the ground between his legs.

"Your story, jester," he said roughly. "You and I have old scores to settle, and many a crow to pluck; for I mind me thou wert overfree with thy jests such times as I marched with the outlaws."

Madcap looked alternately from the spy to the stew-pot and from the stew-pot to the spy, for the little man was really hungry.

But Madcap had a part to play, and he was a great actor.

It was a simple tale he told, in the passionate accents of an angry child, mingled with all

the venom of a grown man, and as he proceeded Thomas the Dog laid down the wooden spoon, and his very hair rose, quivering with the joy he was at no pains to conceal.

At last the outlaws were within his grip, and already he felt his pouch bulging with the hundred golden angels which the sheriff had promised him on the day Robin Hood should be laid by the heels.

From the depths of the forest came the howling of wolves as Madcap told how sick and sorry were all that remained of the once formidable band.

"Thou hast earned thy supper," said Thomas the Dog, passing the pot across to the little rogue, who cowered trembling over the fire, and, seizing it with avidity, Madcap dipped the spoon into the savoury mess.

If he had contented himself with leaving his story where it stood for the present he might have ate his supper in peace, but, pausing with the ladle half-way to his lips, he ventured on a closing statement:

"Friend Thomas," said he, blowing upon the great spoonful to cool it, "how standeth your master, the sheriff, with the White Abbot of Merly?"

"None too well," replied the spy. "'Tis said the outlaws did him some service in the old days when Abbot Anselm was hanged at Bollingwood, and the White Abbot is known to have a secret kindness for Robin Hood."

"Then, my friend, I fear that thou art undone," said the Madcap, "and I am robbed of my revenge, for the starveling pack will crave the hospitality of Merly at sunrise, disguised as homeless beggars."

Thomas the Dog leapt to his feet, snatched spoon and pot from the jester's hands, and overturned the contents of the latter into the fire.

"Thou fool of fools!" he cried, as the stew hissed among the hot embers, and a great waft of burning filled their nostrils. "Why didst thou not tell me this before? 'Tis a good three leagues to Nottingham, and the snow up to a saddle-girth most of the way. Come on, ass, dolt, blockhead, gluttonous, greedy beast! We must get us instantly to the sheriff, even an we spoil his night's rest."

He gripped his spear while Madcap, open-

Knife drawn, Madcap leaped to the aid of Thomas the Dog. Two wolves were snarling at the throat of the defenceless spy as he struggled on his back in the snow. (*See Chapter* 3.)

mouthed, and gazing ruefully at the food so cruelly snatched from his very lips, rose to his feet, and was bundled without more ado out of the dell.

Madcap the Jester began to cry.

"Stop that snivelling!" said Thomas the Dog angrily, hauling him along by the sleeve. "By my halidom, even these cursed woods have ears!"

"Yes, and eyes, too," thought Madcap to himself, as he spied a motionless figure watching them from a little distance.

He recognised the stalwart form of Leoffric of Leicester, and the knowledge that Robin would soon know that his plan was so far successful warmed the little jester's heart, and almost compensated for the loss of his supper.

Under the overarching bows they went, making such good progress by choosing the sheltered spots where the thick trees had warded off the snowfalls, although they sometimes landed in a drift well-nigh up to their armpits, that in a little more than an hour they had accomplished the first league of their journey.

Once or twice the spy stopped, and, raising a warning finger, set his head on one side.

The howl of a lone wolf seemed to follow them always away to their left hand, and both men drew closer together as the same fear filled their hearts.

"I like not that fellow's note," said Madcap, loosening the long Sheffield whittle in his belt.

"Nor I," said Thomas the Dog. "One wolf or two we may face, but a pack is another matter."

"If we meet them in a clearing, yes," said Madcap, shifting his hood back that he might hear the better; "but there are trees in plenty that will give us shelter."

"And a pretty pair should we look perched up the long night through on a beech-bough, and our prey safely housed within the abbey wall. No, my friend, the thought is not to my liking."

They had reached a spot where the high road wound through the forest, hidden now by the snow, but 'twas easier going now, for the oaks had sheltered it, and the white carpet was little more than a foot deep.

Still away on the left that long-drawn, hungry howl broke, echoing through the silence of the forest, and for some time neither man spoke.

"Hist!" said Madcap, all on a sudden. "Is not that the muffled beat of hoofs approaching?"

The spy threw his head forward, bending down until his ear was on a level with the snow.

"Surely no man is abroad to-night?" he muttered, as they crouched there listening, their hot breath floating like a cloud about their heads.

"Alack, I fear me, 'tis so," said Madcap. "And dost not hear another sound on the wind like the clamour of dogs a-hunting?"

"Yes, I hear it," said the spy, in an awe-stricken voice. "'Tis some poor wight who rides this way, with the wolf-pack at his heels."

Both men gave a simultaneous cry of horror as out of the black belt of forest beyond a little clearing which they had reached the figure of a man on horseback came in sight, galloping for his life.

He held a rein in each hand. He was bare-headed, his long hair streamed out over his shoulders, and close behind from the same black belt of trees there burst the lean, grey wolves, hunting him down to his death.

An agonised wail burst from the rider's lips as he saw the pair against the whiteness of the snow.

"Save yourselves!" he shouted in Norman French. And then he was gone down the wind of the track, and the grey wolves were upon them.

"Quick!" cried Thomas the Dog, snatching up his companion and lifting him to the bough overhead, and, springing half his own height into the air, he caught it himself, and scrambled up beside him.

The pack went by—there must have been a hundred of them at the very least—and it seemed as though a flash of red, gleaming eyes shot for a moment upon them, and then they were gone.

"Heaven save him!" murmured Madcap, crossing himself devoutly. "If he sticks to his horse he is done!"

The spy, sitting astride the bough, made no answer, but listened intently, dreading lest the death-cry should come too soon, for then the wolves, having made short work of the unhappy horseman, would return and besiege them in their place of refuge.

It came at last, a long way off—one agonised scream from the good beast that had carried

" Yield thee, sheriff, or you die, and every man with you ! " cried Robin Hood. The Sheriff of Nottingham's blood froze in his veins as he saw clothyard shafts menacing him and his band ; he was trapped and surrounded—taken by surprise by the doughty lads in Lincoln green. Resistance was useless.
(*See Chapter 4.*)

his master so well, and Madcap the Jester shivered as he pictured the unknown rider battling for a brief moment against those fatal odds, and then torn sinew from sinew and limb from limb beneath the bright stars that looked coldly down from the blue-black vault of heaven.

"Now, while they are busy!" exclaimed Thomas the Dog. "'Tis our only chance to reach the sheriff."

Already he had swung his legs clear of the bough, and in another second he would have dropped into the snow, when the howl which had followed them, and had ceased at the passing of the pack, was suddenly repeated close at hand, and out of the bushes sprang a huge lean wolf, followed by four others.

Thomas the Dog was so startled that he well-nigh dropped his spear, but fortunately he managed to draw himself up again, and get astride the bough.

"The plague upon it!" he hissed. "Wait a moment, my masters!" And, spitting on the palm of his hand, he took a firm hold of the butt-end of his weapon and, twining himself securely round the bough of the beech he made a circular sweep at the leaping brutes immediately beneath him.

"Ha, there is one of ye!" he laughed, as the sharp spearhead ripped its way from shoulder to haunch, and hurled one of the brutes bleeding on the snow.

In an instant its companions fell upon it. There was the horrible wrangle of a concentrated dog-fight, and a sickening stench rose up to them.

In a few minutes nothing remained but the steaming bones and the thick pelt, and then the four came under the bough again, licking their chops and ready for the second course.

"Come out to the end of the bough," said Thomas the Dog: "they will be better within my reach." And Madcap followed him. "It must be death," said the spy. "'Twere easy enough to shred off a paw, but the howls would bring those others down upon us. Come on, farther—farther!"

"Have a care," said Madcap; "the frost maketh the branches brittle." But Thomas the Dog paid no heed, and, waiting until the leaping brutes were immediately beneath him, he thrust his weapon between the shoulder-blades of the largest wolf, and pinned him to the ground.

Before he could withdraw the spear Madcap gave a startled cry. There was an ominous crack behind them, and the overloaded bough, snapping without warning, precipitated them headlong among the wolves beneath!

Madcap had the presence of mind to turn a somersault, and he landed a couple of yards off, where the snow luckily came no higher than his knees.

He drew his knife in an instant, and with the keen blade in his hand, the little man sprang pluckily to the rescue of his strange companion.

One of the wolves, pinned by the fallen beech-bough, was struggling to free himself; the other writhed in agony, like a cockchafer on a pin; but the two that remained had already sprung upon the defenceless spy and borne him over in the snow.

Nimble as an eel, Madcap passed his keen whittle into the heart of the first of them, and smote the other upon the muzzle as the yellow fangs were within an inch of the spy's throat, which so astonished the creature that he leapt away with a snarl of terror, and enabled Thomas the Dog to regain his feet.

Maddened with rage, Thomas the Dog drew his knife and rushed upon the wolf, who thereupon turned tail with a howl and bounded away into the depths of the forest.

The spy was torn and bleeding from the sharp claws; but he paid no heed to that, and despatching the other two wolves, with Madcap's help, he recovered his spear, and looked at the jester with a heaving breast.

"I owe thee thanks for your aid, Master Mountebank!" he panted hoarsely. "But that must wait. Meantime let us be off hot-foot. If the pack returns this feast will keep them busy awhile."

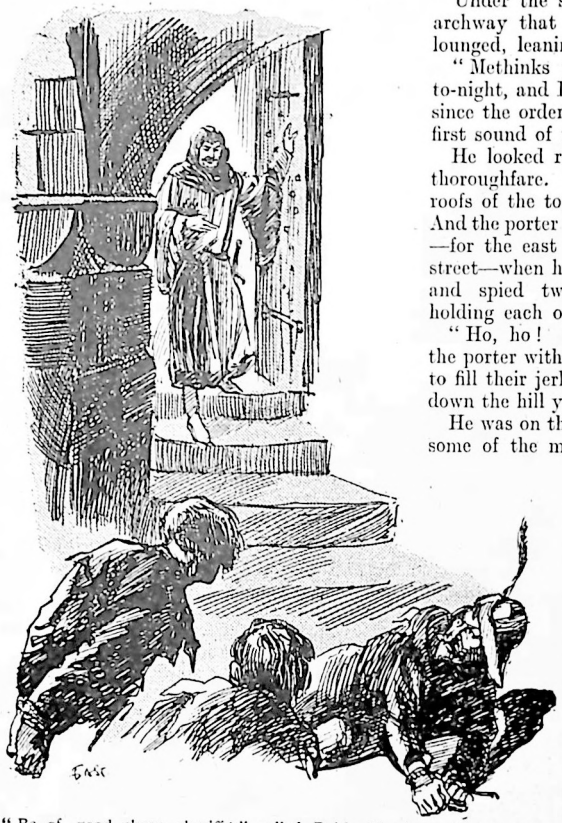
And, nothing loth to leave the spot, Madcap picked up his fool's bauble, and the pair plunged in the direction of Nottingham Town.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

The Turning of the Tables

IT wanted ten minutes of midnight, but notwithstanding the lateness of the hour the house of the Sheriff of Nottingham showed many lights, and there was great bustle, more especially in the kitchen.

It was Christmas Eve, and the joy-bells were ringing, and busy cooks still ran to and fro, basting and larding and turning, drawing bread from the ovens, and putting the finishing touches to the crust of innumerable huge pies.



"Be of good cheer, sheriff!" called Robin Hood, as he paused on the steps of the dungeon. "One day in the dark will not hurt you!" (*See Chapter* 4.)

The yard was still thronged with groups of men-at-arms, who lounged in the open windows, jesting with the cooks within, and licking their lips in anticipation of the great feast that would be held on the morrow.

Now and then a surreptitious jar of ale found its way out, and was passed from lip to lip, and there was rough horseplay and good-humour everywhere.

Under the spikes of the portcullis in the archway that led to the street, the porter lounged, leaning upon his glaive.

"Methinks there will be no riding forth to-night, and I had best be getting the keys, since the orders are to close the gates at the first sound of midnight."

He looked right and left along the silent thoroughfare. The snow lay thick on the roofs of the town. Not a soul was in sight. And the porter was turning under the archway—for the east wind swept keenly down the street—when he heard someone approaching, and spied two figures blundering along, holding each other's arms.

"Ho, ho! The old ale worketh!" said the porter with a smile. "'Twere good sport to fill their jerkins with snow, and roll them down the hill yonder!"

He was on the point of turning to summon some of the men-at-arms, when the figures staggered up to him, and he saw that one of them was Thomas the Dog.

The other was a little man in jester's garb, and both reeled with absolute exhaustion.

"Wine, Simon—wine!" gasped the spy. "A draught that will set the heart beating and the tongue to its work. For, by my halidom, I have news for our master to-night!"

"Thou must e'en be quick in the telling," said Simon, "for yonder goes the first stroke of the bell from the abbey tower. Get ye to

the buttery, and when I have closed the gates I will myself to our lord the sheriff."

"Hold," said the spy, "and leave the gate open! There is work for man and horse to-night! We have the outlaw in a trap at last!"

Half stumbling with the fatigue of those terrible snowy leagues, Thomas the Dog dragged Madcap through the men at arms who had clustered round, and so into the kitchen.

A hush seemed suddenly to fall over the house, broken after a few minutes by the voice of the sheriff.

"Ho, there, Gilbert! Bring me my head-piece and my furred mantle, and bid the knaves below to horse!"

Instantly every man ran to the stables, and in less than ten minutes Simon the porter stood once more at the gate listening to the clatter of iron hoofs growing fainter in the direction of the open country.

. . . . . .

"Yield thee, sheriff, or you die, and every man with you!" cried a rich voice; and, looking up, the Sheriff of Nottingham's blood froze in his veins, and he knew that he had been betrayed.

At the earnest entreaty of Thomas the Dog, he had divided his band of fifty men in two halves, that they might surround the glade of the Red Thorns, and capture the miserable band of sick outlaws without losing a man.

The sheriff and twenty-five sturdy retainers at his back were ploughing their way through a sunken lane, where the snow came up to the knees of a mounted man, and their progress was reduced to a scrambling walk.

Then in the middle of it came that dread summons, and from the height of the bank-top overhead fifty clothyard shafts menaced them, and in place of the sick and sorry stood the lads in Lincoln green, strong and sturdy as ever.

"Be wise, sheriff!" said Robin. "I would fain shed no blood at this season, and it will be your own rash fault if a single hair of you and your men be harmed!"

So completely taken by surprise were they that they had no time to draw sword or level spear, and in the twinkle of an eye every man of the party was disarmed, and a noose of untanned deerskin bound his elbows to his sides.

Then there rose a yell of triumph such as even the oaks of Sherwood had never heard, and from some little distance away to northward an answering shout told the outlaws that the sheriff's second party had also fallen into the ambuscade.

Not a word spake the sheriff as Robin, with a mocking smile upon his face, took the bridle of his tired horse and led it away to the glade, which he reached in time to see Friar Tuck and the rest of the band bringing in their prisoners.

Peal upon peal of laughter, roar upon roar of mirth, rang far and wide on the bitter winter wind; and when at last those joyous free-booters wiped the tears from their eyes and held their aching sides, a strange thing happened.

"Thou hast the whip-hand, Robin Hood!" said the sheriff bitterly. "Name your ransom, and I will give you my hand on it that it shall be paid."

"Nay, not so fast!" cried Robin, as Will Scarlett and Little John smote Friar Tuck lustily on his broad back—for the worthy man had laughed himself to coughing, and from coughing well-nigh into a fit. "'Tis no case of ransom. I am in the mind to see what it feels like to be Sheriff of Nottingham for one night and a day. Therefore, get thee nearer to the blaze lest the frost chills thee, for thou and thy men art going to strip to the very skin!"

"This is too much, outlaw!" thundered the sheriff, struggling to free his bonds.

But Robin smiled sweetly.

"Thou wilt find my fellows but poor tiring-maids, and I fear me if they have to take thy shirt off, some of the skin may come with it. Be wise, my friend—be wise, and the longer thou delayest learning wisdom the worse it will be for thee in the end!"

How the outlaws laughed to see the unfortunate sheriff, after vainly expostulating, take off his garments one by one, while Robin, sitting beside him on a fallen log, doffed his tunic of Lincoln green and put on the sheriff's chain-mail and furred mantle!

Some of the men resisted stoutly; but in

spite of it all, they were peeled like oranges. Soon they stood, a crestfallen band, with arms tightly pinioned, in the firelight.

A complete change had taken place.

Some twenty or more whose beards, red, flaxen, or black, might have betrayed the ruse, had been roughly shaved by their laughing captors; and now, had you peeped from behind one of the sentinel oaks, you would have seen to all appearance the Sheriff of Nottingham returning in triumph with his chain of prisoners.

And there rode bold Robin at their head, looking every inch the sheriff—his beard trimmed, and white cloth tied about his head, as though he had taken some hurt in the fray, the better to disguise him.

Simon Burleigh, the sheriff's right-hand man, was none other than Friar Tuck, for they were much of a size; Will Scarlett made an excellent John of Trent—and so on. Not a soul would have recognised them on the road; and it all depended on their reception at the sheriff's house how the thing would go.

They seemed to have little fear of that, for they sang lusty ditties in chorus to scare away the wolves; in spite of the snow, the leagues were soon passed, and the dark outline of Nottingham Town showed before them.

"Halt!" said Robin sternly; and the band came to a stand, the prisoners in the centre.

"Now, sheriff, and all the rest of you, listen to my words, for they are spoken in all seriousness!" he said, with a ring of iron in his voice not often heard there. "We are going to spend Christmas at your expense. We are going to eat you out of house and home. 'Tis a bold venture; but we have bold hearts, and how you fare will rest with yourselves."

His brow grew sterner, and the discomfited men-at-arms, shivering in their unaccustomed garb, gazed at him with a species of strange fascination.

"Do not tempt death—'twill come soon enough to us all," he said. "One shout, one sign, one whispered word when you reach the town, and you shall die to a man. Be mum, and ye shall live to laugh at the jest. Nor shall you, sheriff, be the poorer for one silver-mounted drinking-horn when we have gone."

A solemn silence followed, and then Robin, adjusting the bandage over his eye, set his horse going once more, and they soon reached the outskirts of Nottingham Town.

Robin waved his right arm, and on the instant his merry men set up a shout of triumph.

It rose and fell, increasing to a roar as they swung into the narrow street, and Nottingham awoke, marvelling what this thing could mean.

Startled citizens peered through their shutters, but were none the wiser.

A tumultuous crowd of horse and foot poured by, with the glint of the starlight on helm and hauberk; and then they had gone.

Robin swung the sheriff's steel mace and smote a bow upon the closed portals that made it boom like a cannon-shot. The dent was there full three inches deep when the stout oak door was sold for firewood in the days of Henry VII.

Out to the wicket ran Simon the porter, and, looking through the grill, he gave a glad shout, and turned the key in all haste.

"God save us, master!" he cried. "Have you taken the rogue at last?"

The only answer Simon got was a hand on his windpipe, a rough gag forced into his mouth, and a cord trussed him like a fowl.

The half-dozen men-at-arms who had been left behind were treated in the same manner, and then the sheriff's gate closed to with a clang. And surely, never had that fortified mansion held such strange Christmas guests before!

Torches were lighted, and poor Simon the porter, pricked behind by a sharp arrow, led them to the deepest dungeons carved in the sandstone rock, where the sheriff and his men-at-arms were left to their own devices.

"Be of good cheer, sheriff!" said Robin. "One day in the dark will not hurt you. And I promise we will do full justice to your larder above-stairs. A merry Christmastide to you all!"

And the great bolts shot on the outside of the door.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER
The King I

THE sun rose red and smiling on that joyous Christmas morning. How the snow-clad roofs glittered under its cheery rays, and what laughter and what uproar filled the house of the Sheriff of Nottingham!

"Gadzooks!" cried Allan-a-Dale, stretching his arms. "There are worse shelters than a roof-tree on a winter's night. I have slept like a top!"

"Which is more than the sheriff hath," grinned Ulf, son of Gammel. "Marry gap with a winion, but I'll wager he is just as warm as an icicle on an oak-tree!"

"He should leave honest rogues alone," said Friar Tuck, loosening his belt and lifting a great stone jar of brown ale to his lips for a morning draught. "Ah, the dog, he knoweth good liquor when he sees it!"

They were early astir, and found much merriment in each other's appearance, and taking it in turns to watch at the gateway; some groomed the horses; others set forth the trestle-tables in the banqueting-hall; while the rest set the spits a-turning and prepared the good things.

Half-a-dozen of his laughing comrades grabbed the protesting Friar Tuck and forced him towards the outer gate, despite his furious struggles. (*See Chapter* 5.)

Presently there came a clamour at the outer gate, and one of the outlaws came running to Robin.

"Master," said he, his face grinning from ear to ear, "we are in somewhat of a plight. The good people of Nottingham have heard of our capture, and have come to ask the sheriff to set us free, it being Christmas Day, when peace and goodwill should be for all men."

"By my halidom!" cried Robin, pulling a long face. "The friendship of these good folk is likely to be troublesome, I fear me. Muffle me in that mantle. I must speak them fair from the window over the gateway. Methinks I have the trick of the sheriff's voice, which is somewhat solemn and rather pompous."

There was, indeed, quite a tumult in the street outside. The rumour had spread. And Robin Hood, by his rough justice and kindness of heart, had so endeared himself to the common folk, that the weavers and butchers of Nottingham came in angry deputation to give the sheriff a bit of their mind—ay, and, if needs be, to batter his door down and release their favourite!

Suddenly the leathern curtain that covered the thurle-hole overhead was drawn back, and the Sheriff of Nottingham stood before them.

"Greeting, good people! Greeting, this Christmas morn!" said Robin. "But why this clamour at my gate so early? What do you here, Perkin Winkel, and you, Gregory Loom, and Simeon Saltmarsh, too, frowning like a thundercloud? How now, knaves—how now?"

"Worshipful sir," said Master Saltmarsh, a stalwart butcher, who carried his cleaver in his hand, "is't true that thou hast taken Robin Hood and his band, and hath them now in durance vile?"

"Friend Simeon," said the mock sheriff,

"thou hast been dreaming, or thou art in drink! What cock-and-bull tale is this that thou hast got hold of?"

A murmur of astonishment ran through the crowd, and the good citizens looked from one to another, very much taken aback.

"But, my lord sheriff," said Simeon Saltmarsh, returning to the charge, "surely thou did'st ride in 'twixt midnight and sunrise with a great string of prisoners?"

"True for you, Simeon," replied the mock sheriff, driving Allan-a-Dale back from the window with a nudge of his elbow that his delighted grins should not be seen by those below, "we did ride in with fifty of the greatest rogues and rascals the world has ever seen! They are even now shivering in the dungeons. But I pledge you my word as a man that neither Robin himself nor yet one if his band is amongst them. Tut, tut, Simeon Saltmarsh! Methinks thou are getting turbulent. This is not the respect due to my position, thou saucy caitiff! Away with you to your homes!"

Considerably crestfallen, the crowd fell back, but while they were still hesitating a red-faced woman struggled through the throng, and, setting her arms a-kimbo, looked up with a mixture of anxiety and defiance at the window.

"Rogues or no rogues, my lord sheriff," she cried, "thou hast had a fight, for thou art thyself wounded. Pray tell me of my man, Simon Burleigh, the stoutest of all your riders! Thou thyself"—and she raised her arms—"gave him leave to spend this Christmas Day with me and our little ones."

Robin, remembering that Friar Tuck was masquerading as this redoubtable Simon Burleigh, could not keep a straight face, and the dame's anger rose.

"It is well for thee to laugh, Sheriff of Nottingham," she cried; "but where is my man? By all the saints, if he be slain——"

"He is not exactly slain," said Robin, pulling his beard. "Quick, Will! Allan!" he said, in a low voice. "What am I to say to this termagant? An she smelleth a rat it may spoil all."

"'Twere a good jest," said Will Scarlet, "to send our worthy friar home to his family."

"Nay, nay!" laughed Allan, peering behind the leathern curtain. "An Simon Burleigh's dinner were not large enough he would eat the children!"

Down below, at the gateway, half a dozen of the outlaws had taken Friar Tuck by the arms and were forcing him towards the gate, in spite of his struggles. Fortunately, Robin's voice rang out, and rescued his worthy chaplain from a very serious position.

"What mean you?" cried the distressed spouse. "What mean you by not exactly dead? My man is maimed; he is sick!"

"Nay, dame; he would be better an he were, methinks," said Robin, "for, to say truth, thy good man did drink so much strong ale that he will not awake this good twelve hours."

Dame Burleigh's distress instantly turned to fury.

"Oh, the besotted hog!" she cried. "Wait till I get thee home, my pig! Marry come up, a merry Christmas thou hast made for me and mine!"

"Poor Simon Burleigh!" said Friar Tuck, with a twinkle in his eye, as the crowd disappeared. "There is a rod in pickle for thee."

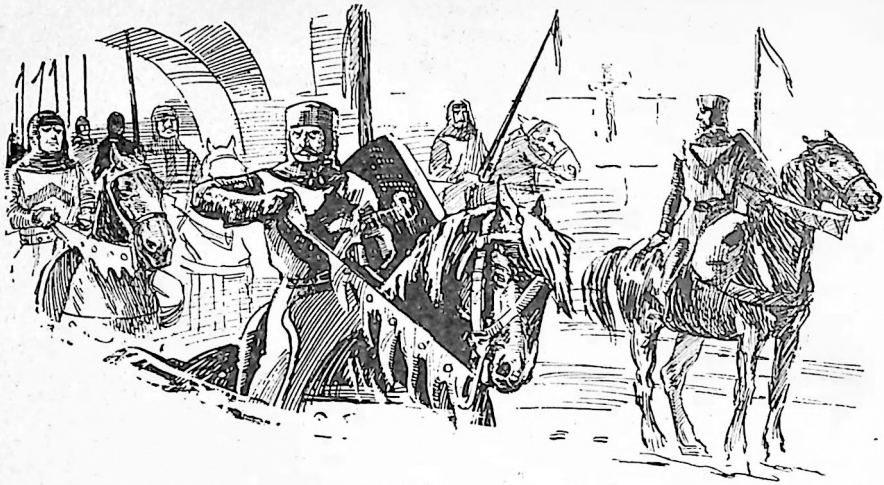
Then the outlaws, laughing right merrily, hied them into the hall, for the servers were carrying the meat from the kitchen, and the smell of good things was almost overpowering.

Goose, served with strong garlic sauce, mixed with wine; roast capons, basted with lard; boiled meat and baked, a boar's head, with a rosy-cheeked apple in his open mouth. By my halidom, it was a mighty feast!

Here a mammoth pie of deer's meat reared itself like a fortress from the planks of the table; there, a pike, soused in wine and water, showed his wicked teeth, just as Madcap the Jester whispered to Allan-a-Dale:

"Thomas the Dog would be showing his at that very moment in the dungeon below."

Forks there were none, but every man had his knife, and ate his meat from a flat, round cake of bread, marked with a cross and a flower. And—oh, the wine and the ale and



Under the archway clattered a file of horsemen, dissolute nobles with their men-at-arms. At the head of the cavalcade rode King John himself, and even stout Robin Hood's colour paled a little as——

the mead! Friar Tuck saw to that, and he made an excellent cellarman.

"God bless us all, and our meat upon place;
Sack is good to nourish the blood,
And so I end my grace!"

he said, raising his hand to enforce silence.

And then they fell to as the bell of a distant abbey tolled tierce, which was nine o'clock of the morning, and the dinner-time of those days.

Sext tolled, and nones, which made it three o'clock in the afternoon, the short winter daylight already showing signs of drawing to an end, and still they were eating.

Robin sat in the big fald-stool, beaming with quiet merriment. Here and there down the long table a man was to be descried fast asleep, with his head on his hands; and one or two were down among the rushes on the floor.

But all were happy, their only regret being that the whole world could not know of that thing and laugh with them.

Robin had been in the mind to send some jars of ale down to the unfortunate sheriff and his crew, but he had thought better of it.

"'Twill not harm them," said Scarlet, "to keep Christmas fasting for once in their lives, and when we go we can carry a scullion with us a league of the way, who can return with the keys and release them."

"You say truly, Will," said Robin, laughing. "And now a song."

George-a-Green, who had a fine mellow voice, began to troll forth a seasonable ditty:

"Winter days are dark and drear,
Christmas comes but once a year;
Therefore, pass the festive cheer.
Ho, the merry greenwood—ho!"

The song had scarce echoed to the rafters of the high hall when it ceased suddenly.

A furious knocking resounded on the outer gate, and Ulf, son of Gammel Goosefoot, came speeding into the banqueting-chamber, crying:

"Alack-a-day, here are horsemen, twenty in number, and persons of high quality, from their speech!"

Every man rose to his feet, and Robin changed glances with Little John.

—the King frowned down at him. "My liege, I crave your pardon!" cried the mock sheriff. "Thrice welcome to this poor house!" And Robin Hood made pretence to kiss the royal stirrup. (*See Chapter* 5.)

"Merry men all," he said, motioning them to sit down again, "keep up the jest, whoever it be, and play your parts well. Perchance, perhaps it is but some wandering baron who craves the sheriff's hospitality, and, by the rood, he shall have it!"

He followed Ulf, who, in corselet and steel cap, made a very presentable man-at-arms, and passed into the courtyard, followed by Will Scarlet and Little John, and, striding up to the gate on which the horsemen were still thundering, he opened the grille and looked forth.

Even stout Robin's colour paled a little, and he started as he looked into the face under the travelling hood that peered at him scarcely a foot away.

"Now, how much longer am I to be kept waiting?" cried an angry voice. "Must John of England shiver in the snow to wait his subject's pleasure?"

"Pardie!" whispered Robin. "We are in for it now. Open the gate!"

Under the archway clattered a file of horsemen, several of them bearing bundles upon their saddle-bows, and the King reined up beside the outlaw.

"My liege, I crave your pardon!" said the mock sheriff, making pretence to kiss the Royal stirrup. "I beg you hold me excused, for a sudden brawl drowned the sound of your knocking. Thrice welcome to my poor house: the more so that on a day like this we can treat our Sovereign right royally!"

"Enough, sheriff!" cried John dismounting. "And i' faith you will find me in a better humour than some we have left an hour agone. A word in thine ear, man." And he drew him aside, pointing to the bundles which his followers bore, and which clattered and chinked curiously. "We have paid the White Abbot of Merly a visit; and since he

had the insolence to preach us a sermon, I called to horse, and brought the abbey plate with me to teach the rogue a lesson!"

Now, the White Abbot of Merly, being a good old man, greatly beloved, and in secret a friend to the outlaws, Robin's heart was sore at this news; but, remembering the part he played, he broke out into a great laugh.

"My liege has done well, as ever he does!" he cried. "Gadzooks, these fat monks are the ruin of the land. But ho, there; warm water in a silver ewer for our Lord the King!"

And, bowing low, he conducted John into the great hall, followed by his company, which consisted of half a dozen dissolute nobles and a clump of men-at-arms—luckily, all strangers to the sheriff's household.

The King was instantly recognised, and at a sign from the mock sheriff the disguised foresters sprang to their feet, and gave a roar of welcome that made John's eyes sparkle, and brought his hands to his ears.

"Peace, good fellows," he cried, "and thank ye for your greeting! And now, sheriff, let us get to table, for, by my father's bones, the wind hath sharp set our appetites."

It was fortunate that there still remained roast geese as yet uncarved and a mound of other dainties, which were speedily served and set before the King and his companions.

"Sit ye here, good sheriff, by my right hand. Pardie, but 'tis good to feel the warmth once more. My legs well-nigh froze to my saddle."

The men-at-arms mingled with the rest of the company, who plied them with meat and drink; and although a thrill of alarm had passed through the company when the King entered, the light-hearted fellows soon forgot all about it, and knew that Robin would turn the situation to good account.

"An it please your liege," said the outlaw, whose eye had been watching the light fading from the west windows, in which the real sheriff had placed some of the new-fangled glass then coming into use in the houses of the wealthy, "I have something for thine ear which will make thy heart beat with great gladness. Your glass is empty; let me fill it to the brim, and we will drink to my news!"

John, if the old chroniclers are true, needed little pressing to the wine-cup, and his bad face was flushed already.

"Let me first," said the outlaw, "give some orders for the safer bestowal of the abbot's treasures, and then I will prepare a joyful surprise for thee."

"Gadzooks!" cried the King, turning to his next neighbour, who was gnawing a drumstick of a goose like any dog, notwithstanding the fact that he was a belted earl. "Did I not tell thee, Montfaucom, that 'twould be worth the ride to house with my man of Nottingham?"

"The King can say no wrong," said the earl, laughing, and wiping his red moustache with his greasy fingers.

And meantime Robin, with a wink here and a sign there, had passed down the hall and out into the courtyard, whither he was followed by Will Scarlet, Friar Tuck, and half a dozen of the others.

"Saddle every horse in the stable," said Robin, in a low voice, pointing to the bundles which had been laid inside the door. "When Allan gives you the signal, mount and away, carrying this plunder with you. Allan himself shall hold a horse for me, and we will join you ere you are a mile out of the town."

"But, good Robin," interposed the friar, "what is in thy mind to do? Surely thou art not going to kill the King?"

"Merry England would be the richer!" said the outlaw bitterly, as he thought of the crimes and tyrannies of the worst of the Plantagenets; "but I am no murderer. No; I have a better plan. John and his ruffians shall release our unfortunate sheriff and his men, who no doubt have untied themselves by this time, and are gentle of mood as a hunted boar. Pardie, I would give something to see the meeting before both sides discover their mistake. One of you pass the words to our lads within, and make haste, for in ten minutes you must all be off and away."

"Welcome again, good friend!" cried the King, as Robin strode up the hall and came behind the King's chair. "And now I mark me that thou art wounded. Gramercy, man, the tale—the tale!"

The mock sheriff smiled.

"An I keep my liege waiting," said he,

"They are in the dungeon below!" exclaimed Robin Hood, producing the keys. King John started to his feet. "Thou shalt have an earldom for this!" he cried. "Lead me straightway to the dungeon that I may glut my eyes upon the outlaws' misery!" (*See Chapter 5.*)

" a moment's space, 'twill be all the sweeter when you hear it. 'Twas but an arrow, which nearly missed the eye—an arrow from the bow of the outlaw ! "

He bent over the King, and gazed meaningly at him.

" Sangdieu ! " cried John, showing his teeth. " And has the scoundrel dared——"

" Soft, my liege ! " said Robin, shaking his forefinger and pointing to the ground. " The band are in the dungeon beneath us, loaded with chains and drinking the cup of bitterness ! What guerdon shall I claim for this ? "

" Man," cried John, springing to his feet, " thou shalt have an earldom without the asking. Lead me straightway, that I may glut mine eyes upon his misery ! "

" Hold torches there ! " cried the mock sheriff. And, jangling a bunch of heavy keys, he led the way to the head of the winding stairs that conducted them to the noisome prison below.

" On, varlets, on ! " cried the King, snatching the keys with his own hands. And, standing aside with a bow, Robin let the eager tyrant descend the stair, followed by his companions and his men-at-arms, who crowded greedily to see that thing.

When the last man had gone, Robin bounded back into the hall, to find every man on his feet.

At a wave of his hand they poured out into the courtyard and in a moment such as could find horses were riding into the street, while those on foot sped beside them, holding on to their stirrup-leathers.

Allan-a-Dale sat motionless in his saddle, holding the bridle of Robin's horse.

" Hark ! Do you hear them ? " said the outlaw. And the sound that came up the staircase was the sound of a great battle, for no sooner was the dungeon door opened than the outraged sheriff and his men sprang out and fell upon their deliverers, the torches were overthrown and extinguished, and a free fight took place.

Overthrown and badly trampled, John of England came within an ace of death ; but at length new torches were brought by the frightened servitors above-stairs, and a rush was made for the banqueting-chamber.

Alas for the vain hopes of the sheriff and his men ! The hall was empty, and the stables, too.

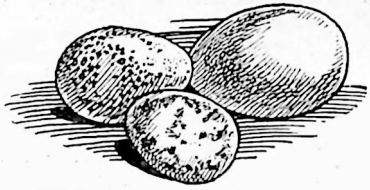
Far away in the distance, too far for any thought of pursuit, the frosty wind brought the sound of mighty laughter.

It was the outlaws, plunging deeper and deeper into the fastnesses of the snow-clad forest, well lined with good cheer, and never to forget the memorable Christmas Day.

Next morning the porter at Merly Abbey, opening his wicket with a heavy heart, tumbled over a leather sack lying across the threshold of the great gate, and on the scrap of parchment fastened to its neck he read the words :

" What bad kings steal,
Poor outlaws may restore.
Find Robin's offering
At your abbey door."

THE END



HOW TO COLLECT BIRDS' EGGS

The best way to commence a fascinating outdoor hobby

By CECIL MAYLOR

THE collection of birds' eggs, while hardly suitable for persons of the proportions of the redoubtable Billy Bunter, is ideal for those with a love for tree and cliff climbing, and for walks on heaths and moors, and who have an interest in the nest-building habits and egg tints of different birds.

The outfit entailed is only some form of knapsack or lined case in which to carry the eggs—which might get broken if put into the pocket—an old suit of clothes, a cabinet for filing specimens, and some white printers' card, glue, and ink.

The cabinet can be easily made out of an old tea chest, or any light case of three-ply wood laid on its side. Grooves or racks are made on the sides at four-inch intervals to support trays, which need not have sides, but should have high fronts, so that when all the trays are closed a fairly dust-tight front is presented. A study of the cabinet shown in the sketch will make clear the details of its construction.

Into this cabinet the birds' eggs will be indexed; but, first, the "decayable" contents of the eggs must be blown out. To do this, a very small hole at the small end of the egg should be made with a needle, just large enough to admit the passage of sufficient air to expel the contents, while a vent-hole is made on the side of the egg between the great end and the line of greatest diameter.

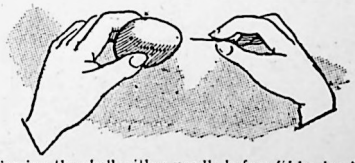
When the contents have been very cautiously blown out of the egg, it is advisable to clean the interior by immersing the vent-hole in a solution of boric acid and water or Milton and water, and then sucking some of the liquid into the shell, shaking well, and expelling. This process can be beneficially repeated two or three times until the solution comes out as clear as it goes in, after which the shell can be placed on blotting paper in an airy, but not sunny, place to dry, the vent-hole being arranged downwards so that any moisture remaining will roll out.

It is possible to obtain patent blowers for the eggs, but the amateur will most likely get better and cheaper results with the above method.

If the egg is very dirty, it may be gently cleaned with cold water. Some eggs, such as dabchicks' from the Essex marshes, are sometimes so engrained with dirt, thanks to the parent bird's muddy footprints, that all efforts to restore the original colours prove fruitless, for while the cleansing operations on a white egg can be drastic, coloured eggs must be treated as gently as coloured silks, for the colours are rarely "fast," and frequently the coloured spots will come away with the dirt. After cautious cleansing, the egg, as a precaution against strong light and dust, can be varnished with a little of the "white" of the egg itself.

The preparations for keeping finished, the egg can be mounted on a piece of white card for placing in the index cabinet. The egg is placed on its side so as to cover the vent-hole, and then secured in position with some water-gum.

The name of the egg, where found, what kind of nest, and the number of eggs observed,

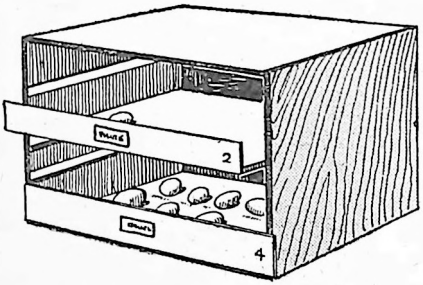


Piercing the shell with a needle before "blowing."

and the date should all be written on the card. Delightfully pretty effects can be obtained by the use of printed characters and printers' coloured inks contrasting with the colours of the eggs. Sometimes, writing in red, yellow or white poster paint on black card is very effective. Artists' shops will supply the necessary materials.

"How to index" is the problem that must be solved by the egg collector himself, the simplest method being to give the eggs their common or garden names—greenfinch, house sparrow, wren, etc.—and index them according to alphabetical order or to whether they are "hardbills" (seed eaters) or "softbills" (insect eaters).

Big collectors, however, index their specimens according to their *species, family* and *class* under Latin names, and the amateur not adopting the Latin or scientific system may at a later date find himself "at sea." In it, the birds are divided into five main classes—Raptores (prey catchers), Insessores (peckers), Rasores (scratchers), Grallatores (waders), and Natatores (swimmers)—which in turns are subdivided into further classifications.



This simple cabinet can easily be made to hold your collection. Two of the drawers are left out to show the racks on which they slide.

Atkinson's "British Birds' Eggs," or Yarrell's "British Birds," which can be borrowed from most public libraries, will give those desiring to adopt the scientific system complete guidance. It entails a little extra brain-fag at first, but if a big collection is aimed at it is worth while. On the other hand, those only desiring to collect for the prettiness of the eggs, and the knowledge gained of the habits of the birds in the locality, need hardly trouble.

The question of where to look for eggs is often raised. The answer is "Everywhere," for birds have been known to nest even in moving machinery. The ledges of rocky cliffs and walls are popular with many varieties, such as the hawk, martin, eagle, heron and buzzard families, but holes in cliffs and ditches, forks in tree branches, thick shrubs, in hedges, under low bushes, and rabbit and mouse holes are places used by British birds. In short, any crevice or cranny can always be suspected.

The situation of the nest and the number of the eggs therein should always be noted, as the marking and the size of eggs vary greatly, and the former two points are guides which often tell the collector what his specimen is in case of difficulty. Atkinson's book contains a chart giving the favourite nesting-places of 324 types of British birds.

A good idea is to encourage the birds to nest in one's garden by providing bread-crumbs, salt and water, and suitable sites such as coconut shells cut in half.

A warning must be expressed against thoughtlessly causing cruelty by carelessly pulling branches apart so as to injure or expose the nest, or by taking more than one egg from each nest. It should be the amateur naturalist's aim to do everything possible to preserve our British wild birds. For this reason a nest should never be needlessly robbed, or a sitting bird disturbed.

One egg from a "clutch" is all that the collector requires. In taking it, it is kind to the mother bird to be as careful as possible. Neither the nest nor the other eggs in it should be disturbed; if the nest is left, to all intents and purposes, as it was found, the bird will not be alarmed—and it is most unlikely that she will miss the egg which has been taken.

If the distinction between collection and robbery is carefully maintained, it will lead to the enjoyment of healthy walks, an intimate knowledge of local songsters, and a collection of beautifully coloured eggs.

THE END

COOLING MR. LICKHAM'S ARDOUR!

The hose started to play on Mr. Lickham as he mounted the ladder and a fierce jet of water knocked him backwards. He alighted with a wail of anguish on the Head's pet corn!

(*See "The Rebbles of St. Sam's!" inside*)

IN YOUR EDITOR'S DEN!

By BILLY BUNTER

MY DEAR READERS,—It is with pride and plezzure that I put before you another issew of my annual ANNUAL, which is an annual feature of the bigger ANNUAL. An' you'll like it, I feel sure. (Can you twig my clever pun?)

Well, here we are again, as large as life and twice as natcheral, as Bob Cherry would say! Eight paltry pages is all the Editor has aloud me; but into those eight pages I have crammed the finest feast of flekshun that was ever devoured by hungry readers. Strickly speaking, I ought to have the whole of THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL to myself. That would give me a chance to spread myself, as it were.

Since the last ANNUAL was laid at your feet—or placed in your hands—or thrown at you by an uncle you had been pestering to buy it for you!—I have had numerous communications from readers in all parts of the globe. Chatty letters from China; postcards from Peroo; suggestions from the South Sea Islands; bow-kays from British Columbia; and pats on the back from Peking! My post-bag has swelled to such proportions that it is a perfect Billy Bunter of a post-bag, bulging and inflated, and threttening to burst out of its skin, so to speak!

In the limited space at my disposal, I cannot possibly find room to reply to my vast army of friends and admirers. But I should like them to know how greatly I enjoyed their letters. If there is anything I do enjoy, in this world of woe, next to a first-rate feed at the tuckshop, it is a complimentary letter from some cheery reader of my ANNUAL. Not all the letters I get are complimentary. There was a fellow in New York who wrote to say that I ought to be put in a padded cell, bekawse I had bats in my belfry. He was quite safe in saying that, for he knew I wouldn't fag all the way across the Atlantick to make him eat his words! Talking of eating reminds me that I've had nothing to eat for nearly an hour! I must hurry along to the tuckshop, and fill the aching void.

Yours—till another year rolls by—

YOUR EDITOR.

Answers to Korrespondents!

J. MACPHAIG (Edinburgh) writes and asks me a conundrum: "Why does a chicken cross the road?" Blessed if I know why a chicken crosses the road, unless its because there is a bun-shop the other side. That's why this chicken crosses the road, anyway.

MISS CLARA (Stockport).—"I think you are a wonderful fellow, Billy." So do I!

"FAMISHED" (Wales).—"I haven't had a square meal for weeks, Billy, old chap"... etc. Neither have I. Take my tip and go in for round ones.

"ADMIRER" (Southampton).—"I think you ought to be captain of the Remove, Billy." So do I, but this world is eaten up with jealousy. Perhaps some day I shall have my rights. Here's to it!

S. A. R. CASTIK (Hants).—I think you are a fat..." Never mind what you think, young Castik. It's what I think that counts!

MY AERIAL ADVENTURE!

By TUBBY MUFFIN
of Rookwood

WHEN my cousin Jack, who is a midshipman in the Royal Air Force, paid a "flying" visit to Rookwood in his airoplane, he asked me if I would like a little flip.

"What's a flip, Jack?" I asked innosently.

"A flight, of corse—a joy-ride! Care to come up in the clouds for a bit?"

I began to feel rather wobbly at the knees, and cold shivers ran down my spine. To tell the trooth, I wasn't a bit keen on croozing about up in the clouds. That sort of thing may be all right for eagles and skylarks, but it duzzent appeal to me. I like to have both feet planted firmly on terror firmer.

I should have declined my cousin's invitation, only Jimmy Silver & Co. were standing around, and as I have often boasted to them about my dauntless curridge, I couldn't very well show the white feather.

"Well, what about it?" said Cousin Jack. "Buck up and make up your mind."

Quickly I pulled myself together. Jimmy Silver & Co. were looking at me curiously, and I could see that they were eggspecting me to cry off. But I didn't.

"I'll come, Jack!" I said.

"Good! Jump in, then!"

I scrambled into the passenger's seat, and Jimmy Silver & Co. waved their hands in farewell.

"Have you made out your last will and testament, Tubby?" asked Lovell.

"Are you insured against tumbling ten thousand feet through space?" inquired Newcome.

And Jimmy Silver quoted a passidge from Byron—or is it from Shakespeer?

"Fare thee well, and if for ever, then for ever fare thee well!"

Bulkeley of the Sixth, who knows all about airoplanes, swung the propellor, and up we shot into space.

Never shall I forget my sensations, at that awful moment! I cried out to Cousin Jack in a pannick.

"I—I say, Jack, old fellow! Don't go up too far! Just up to the top of the school tower, and then down again!"

But Cousin Jack couldn't hear me, bekawse of the enjin. And even if he had heard, I doubt weather he would have taken any notiss. The school tower was soon a mere speck, far below us; and the figgers on the cricket-field, from which we had made our assent, were like tiny crawling ants.

I confess that I was in a state of stark terror. Being a fellow with a vivid imagination, I thought of all the dreadful things that might happen. Supposing the airoplane burst into flames, and I was roasted? Cousin Jack would be roasted as well, but then, eggsperienced pilots are used to that sort of thing.

Supposing a wing fell off, when we were about ten thousand feet up? I should go crashing down to deth and destruction. Cousin Jack would go crashing down also; but that wouldn't be any consolation to me!

Supposing we ran into another airoplane, and smashed each other to bits? Supposing—well, there were a thowsand and one things that might happen. There was no limit to my superstitions.

Cousin Jack told me afterwards that the flight only lasted ten minnits. To me it seemed an internity of time, and beleeve me, there was never a more releeved person on this planet than Tubby Muffin when we swooped down on to Mother Earth, and landed safe and sound on the cricket-field.

I thought my garstly eggsperience would upset my appetite for tea. But it didn't. Cousin Jack stood me a hansom spread in the tuckshop, and I fortyfied myself with tarts and buns, and gradually recovered from the shock to my nervous cistern!

You won't catch me having any more "flips" in an airoplane. Enuff is as good as a feast!

The Rebbles of St. Sam's!

By Dicky Nugent

A thrilling story of a School Rebellion.

"UP, the rebbles!"

Jack Jolly's voice peeled like a thunderclap through the Fourth Form room at St. Sam's.

Jack's face, which was dethly pail, was purple with indignation. His cheeks were pink with pashun.

Mr. Lickham, the master of the Fourth, and the biggest tirant known to histery since Nero, had been on the warpath that morning. He had doled out lines and lickings with a libberal hand, and he had broken six canes on the backs of his pupils.

Some of the lickings had been terribul in their crool barbarity. Young Frayle of the Fourth, who was a weak, ondersized rat of a fellow, had receeved no less than fifty cuts with the cane, and he had fallen across the form in a feint.

Among the victims of Mr. Lickham's wrath were Merry and Bright, the two chums of Jack Jolly. Merry had been caned for telling the Form-master that it was William the Konkeror who signed the Magna Charter while Rome was burning; and Bright had been licked for saying that Parris was the capital of Pallestine.

Of course, both juniors ought to have known better. Merry ought to have known that it was Julius Seizer, and not William the Konkeror, who signed the Magna Charter; and Bright should have known that Parris was the capital of Persia—not Pallestine.

But there was no eggscuse for Mr. Lickham's eggstreme severity. He had gone too far—much too far.

All the morning, the Fourth had been smouldering with resentment; and now they burst into flame.

Jack Jolly had been called out in front of the class, to receeve private punishment—or, rather, corporal punishment. But instead of stepping to the four, Jack stayed where he was.

"Up, the rebbles!"

His voice tinkled through the Form-room like the booming of a gun.

Instantly the fellows were on their feet. Their hearts were flushed, their faces were thumping against their ribs with eggsitement.

"The hour has struck!" cried Jack Jolly dramatically, with a glance at the Form-room clock. "The time is now ripe for us to shake off the tirant's yolk——"

"Good egg!"

"And to launch the biggest rebellion that ever was!"

"Hooray!"

Mr. Lickham stared at his eggsited pupils with eyes which fairly started from their sockitts.

"Sit down at once, all of you!" he thundered. "How dare you behave in this disgraceful manner? Have you suddenly taken leave of your senses?"

"We're as sane as you are," flashed Jack Jolly. "What's more, we're in grim Ernest. The hour has struck, and the rain of the tirant is over. The great rebellion will now commence. March out, you fellows!"

Mr. Lickham began to wonder weather he was dreaming.

Rank by rank, file by file, the rebbles of the Fourth marched out of the Form-room.

Mr. Lickham stood quite still for a moment, like a petrified old fossil. Then he recovered the power of action, and rushed towards the door, brandishing his cane.

But he could not cheque the surging tide of humanity which flowed through the doorway. He was pushed out of the way without serremony, and he went sprawling. The reckless rebbles wiped their boots on him, and passed on.

Straight up to the Fourth Form dormitery they went, and on arriving there they held a breef council of war!

"Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows!" cried Jack Jolly, jumping on to a bed, "we're fed-up with that tirant Lickham and his brootal ways, and we're going to have a barring-out, until he prommises not to be so free with his cane in future. If there are any faint-hearted funks here, who haven't the curridge to take part in this rebellion, let them speak up now, or for ever hold their piece!"

Nobody spoke. Even Craven of the Fourth, the biggest funk at St. Sam's, refrained from backing out. But perhaps that was bekawse his mouth was full of toffy, and he couldn't speak!

"Merry and Bright," said Jack Jolly, "you will be my first and second left tenants respectfully. You will proseed to the tuckshop, and buy up enuff supplies to last us for a week."

"That's all very well, Jack," said Merry. "But who's going to foot the bill?"

Then up spoke Bullion of the Fourth—a fellow who was simply rolling in coppers.

"It's my treat," he said. "I shall be pleased to pay for all the grub."

"Good old Bullion!"

Merry and Bright hurried away on their mission. They were back in half an hour, carrying between them a tremendus hamper, crammed with tuck. They staggered into the dormitery with their burden, and dumped it on to the floor.

"Good!" said Jack Jolly. "Now, the next thing we've got to do is to barricade the door. All hands to the pumps!"

A cupple of beds were pushed towards the door, and placed on top of each other, forming a stout barricade. The rebbles then made themselves comfortable, and waited for things to happen.

They hadn't long to wait.

Footmarks could presently be heard ascending the stares. They were the familiar footmarks of Doctor Birchemall, the headmaster of St. Sam's.

The Head rapped on the panels of the door with his bony nuckles.

"Jolly! Merry! Bright!" he roared, in terrifying tones. "What's the meaning of this here? What do you think you're doing of?"

At the sound of that stern but skollarly voice, several of the juniors turned pail. But Jack Jolly didn't turn a hare. He, at all events, was not a frightened rabbit.

"This is a rebellion, sir," cried Jack, "and I am proud to be the ringleader! We refuse to be licked by Lickham any longer! And we're going to stay here until Lickham promises not to be such a tirant in future."

"Ho-ho!" said the Head grimly. "You're going to stay there, are you? We'll soon see about that! I'll have you driven out of this dormitery like rats from their holes!"

"Rats!" cried the rebbles.

"Go and eat coke!"

"Run away and pick flowers!"

Being a veggetarian, the Head didn't go and eat coke. And, not being a haughty-culturist, he didn't go and pick flowers. He ramped and raged on the other side of the door.

Pressantly Mr. Lickham's voice could be heard, talking to the Head.

"It is disgraceful, sir—possitively disgraceful! If I were you, I should birch 'em all, Birchemall!"

"And so I will!" roared the Head angrily. "The cheeky young bratts. Jolly is the ringleader, and he shall be sacked from the school for this—chucked out on his neck! I am so angry, Lickham, that it is as much as I can do to refrain from using undiggnified expressions!"

"They appear to have barricaded the door, sir," said the master of the Fourth. "What steps shall we take to get them out?"

"No steps at all, but a long ladder," replied the Head. "There is one behind the woodshed. Run and fetch it, Lickham, there's a good fellow, and we'll rear it up to the dormitery windows.

Mr. Lickham fetched the ladder, and the Head joined him down in the quad.

At the windows above appeared the grinning faces of the rebbles. The Head shook his fist at them.

"You can grin!" he roared. "But you'll soon find out the truth of the old proverb that he who laughs laughs laughs laughs!"

"Ha, ha ha!"

"I'm coming up after you!" said the Head grimly.

"I should advise you to stay where you are, sir," warned Jack Jolly. "If you come up this ladder, we'll train the hose-pipe on you!"

"What! What!" gasped the Head, scarcely able to beleeve his ears. "You would dare to swamp your head-master?"

"Come up, and see!"

The Head backed hastily away from the foot of the ladder.

"I think, my dear Lickham, that you had better make the ascent," he said. "I was a good climber in my young days, but my hands and feet have lost their cunning. Go up and fetch the young rascals down!"

Gingerly, Mr. Lickham set foot on the ladder. Gingerly he started to climb. But before he had taken half a dozen steps, the hose started to play on him from above, and a feerce jet of water knocked him backwards. He alighted, with a wail of angwish, on the Head's pet corn.

"Yow-ow!"

"Yaroooo!"

The Head danced around, his face scrood up with pane. And from the windows above came a peel of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Lickham made no further attempt to climb the ladder. One shower-bath a day kept the doctor away: but a cupple might have given him a seveer chill. Fossil the porter was fetched, and ordered to go up and fetch the rebbles down. But Fossil shared the fate of Mr. Lickham. He was a porter when he went up the ladder; when he came down he was dripping.

All efforts to dislodge the rebbles having failed, the Head was obliged to give it up for that day. And the rebbles sat down to dinner in great spirits. They were top dog, so far: and they had no fears for the future.

On the second day, the Head fetched the local police force. But, as the local police force konsisted of one fat constable, who could do nothing but wave his truncheon and say: "Hi! You come along down out of it!" Jack Jolly & Co. were not seriously trubbled.

On the third day, the rebbles were still holding out; but their supplies of tuck were beginning to get very low. Tubby Barrell, the fat fellow of the Fourth, had been keeping guard during the night, and he had helped himself liberally from the hamper. When the rebbles woke up, they found there was only one tin of biskits left, thanks to Tubby's greediness.

The fat junior was given a jolly good bumping, but this didn't console the rebbles for the loss of their grub.

Some of the weaker spirits began to quail at the prospect of slow starvation. Craven, the funk of the Fourth, started to sob.

"I say, Jolly," he said, "let's give in! We can't possibly stay here without grub."

"Cowherd!" cried Jack Jolly scornfully. "You had your chance to back out, when the rebellion started, and you didn't take it. Now you can stay where you are!"

"Boo-hoo!" wailed Craven. "I shall starve!"

"Well, you'll starve in good com-

Merry and Bright were back in half an hour, carrying between them a tremendous hamper.

pany," said Merry consolingly. "We're all in the same boat."

Even Jack Jolly grew rather anxious as the day passed. It was not possibul to obtain further supplies, and there was now only one patter-cake biskit left. How could forty rebbles possibly eggsist on one patter-cake biskit?

It began to look as if the rebbles would have to give in: in which case, Jack Jolly would have been sacked from the school, and the others publickly flogged.

Just before dusk on the third day, however, a car came snorting in at the gates of St. Sam's.

Jack Jolly rushed to the window, and gave a glad cry.

"My pater—General Jolly! Oh, what luck!"

The general, a tall, marshal-looking man, with a millitary mistosh and a nautical gate, stepped out of the car.

"Why, Jack," he cried, catching sight of his son, "what are you doing up there?"

In a few words, Jack Jolly eggsplained the situation. The general lissened grimly.

"You say that Mr. Lickham has behaved with gross brootality, what?" he said.

"Yes, sir!" said Merry. "He gave me an awful licking the other day. I can show you the wheels, if you like. I've got wheels all the way down my back!"

"Same here!" echoed a duzzen voices.

The general tugged feercely at his mistosh.

"Leave this to me, my boys!" he said sternly. "I am a Guvvernor of this school, and I will see Doctor Birchemall at once. Rest assured that you shall have your rights!"

"Hooray!"

The juniors knew nothing of the stormy interview which followed, between the Head and General Jolly. But they knew who got the best of it, bekawse when the two gentlemen came out into the quad, the general was looking flushed and triumphant, and the Head was looking awfully sick.

"He's done it," cried Jolly from the window. "I knew the pater would have his own way with the Head. They had to make him a General in the Army for the same reason—there's no stopping the old chap when once he gets going."

"The Head looks pretty sick with himself," said Merry." "I say Jolly, I wish I had a pater like that."

"He's a useful old bird," smiled Jolly. "He's promised to make me a general in the Navy when I grow up. And you can bet your last bread crust he'll do it."

"He looks if he could do anybody," said Snarler.

"Shut up, Snarler," snapped Merry, brightly. "The old chap's looking at us. Don't let him see your ugly phiz or he'll die of apple plexy."

All eyes were now phocussed on the General.

"My boys!" cried the general, glancing up at the anxious faces of the rebbles. "You can come down now. Your trubbles are over. I have made Mr. Lickham prommis, in the presence of the Head, that he will in future rule by kindness, instead of with a rod of iron. I have also eggstracted a sollum prommis from the Head that he will not punish any of you in connection with this rebellion."

"Oh, good!" cried Craven of the Fourth, who had had visions of being hoisted on the porter's shoulders, and reseeving about fifty strokes with the birch. "Three cheers for General Jolly!"

And the cheers of the rebbles tinkled across the quadrangle like the roaring of many waters.

The Great Rebellion was over, and in the Fourth Form at St. Sam's all was Jolly and Merry and Bright!

GOING STRONG!

At eating the Editor of "B. B's. Annual" is a real "professor"!

Fads and Fancies!

(Collected by FATTY WYNN, of St. Jim's.)

I HAVE just spent a very busy afternoon, collecting people's confessions. I called on a number of fellows and asked them to name their favourite sport, their favourite hobby, the sort of dinner they liked best, and which popular song and book were their favourites.

Surprising how tastes differ, isn't it? Although I questioned half a dozen fellows I never got the same answer twice.

Here is the list of fads and fancies which I have collected:

ERIC KILDARE.

Favourite Sport: Cricket.
Favourite Hobby: My duties are so numerous that I've no time for hobbies.
Favourite Dinner: Irish stew.
Favourite Song: "The Minstrel Boy."
Favourite Book: "David Copperfield."

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY:

Favourite Sport: "Dancin', deah boy!"
Favourite Hobby: "Overhaulin' my wardrobe, bai Jove!"
Favourite Dinner: "Pigeon pie. They nevah serve it at St. Jim's, but I enjoy it at Eastwood House duwin' the vac."
Favourite Song: "Yaas, Let Me Like a Soldier Fall!"
Favourite Book: "Any book dealin' with Smart Fashions for Stylish Fellahs."

BAGGY TRIMBLE:

Favourite Sport: Eating contests.
Favourite Hobby: Listening at study keyholes.
Favourite Dinner: Horsee D'oovers, Tomato Soop, white bate, stake pooding, boiled beef and carrots, jam roly-poly Plenty of strorberries and cream to wind up with.
Favourite Song: "The Gobbler's Song."
Favourite Book: I hate books. I prefer to "devour" a jolly good feed!

WALLY D'ARCY.

Favourite Sport: Tadpole fishing.
Favourite Hobby: Keeping white mice.
Favourite Dinner: Herrings toasted at the fire in the fags' common-room.
Favourite Song: "That Old-fashioned Brother of Mine!"
Favourite Book: THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL, of course!

TOM MERRY.

Favourite Sport: Footer.
Favourite Hobby: I'm constantly changing my hobbies. First I was crazy on stamp-collecting, then coin-collecting, and after that picture postcard collecting. Nowadays I seldom find time to collect anything—not even my wits!
Favourite Dinner: I've no favourite. Any good, honest fare, well cooked, suits my palate.
Favourite Song: "Drake Goes West."
Favourite Book: "Treasure Island."

Skimpole of the Shell, when questioned as to his fads and fancies, was deeply engrossed in a ponderous tome written by Professor Balmycrumpet. Consequently, his answers were a bit mixed. He informed me that his favourite sport was roast pork and apple sauce; his favourite hobby was "Rule, Britannia"; his favourite dinner was a volume of Balmycrumpet; his favourite song "The Old Curiosity Shop," and his favourite book, butterfly-catching!

Ten Little "Jigger" Boys!

By DICK PENFOLD

A Cycling Tragedy

TEN little "jigger" boys, starting for a spin,
Little dreamed how very soon their troubles would begin!

Ten little "jigger" boys, took a steep decline,
One applied his brake too late, and then there were nine!

Nine little "jigger" boys, pedalling at a rate,
One pitched o'er his handlebars, and then there were eight!

Eight little "jigger" boys, "scorching" down in Devon,
One collided with a car, and then there were seven!

Seven little "jigger" boys, tried some fancy tricks,
One went plump into a pond, and then there were six!

Six little "jigger" boys, down a dale did dive,
One turned twenty somersaults, and then there were five!

Five little "jigger" boys, saw a grocer's store,
One went through the window-front, and then there were four!

Four little "jigger" boys, tired as tired could be,
One "dropped off" through weariness, and then there were three!

Three little "jigger" boys, cheeked a man in blue,
One was forcibly detained, and then there were two!

Two little "jigger" boys, a lorry strove to shun,
One succeeded, one did *not*, and so there was one!

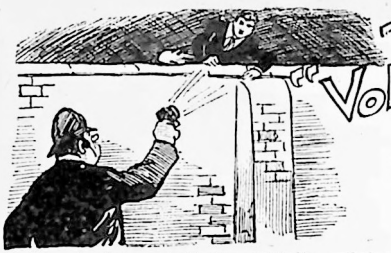
One little "jigger" boy had a fatal spill,
He vanished in the ambulance, and now there are nil

No little "jigger" boys on the roads were seen:
Moral—Stick to "Safety First" when riding a machine!

But do not take too much to heart the lines I've just set down.
And please remember Safety First in country or in town,
When cycling midst the 'buses and where the "shovers" shove,
You will feel the utmost gratitude for the bobby's useful glove.

But bear in mind this point when you ride to take the air—
The best old bike that ever creaked wants treating with much care.
The handlebars are useful, but not for neat gym stunters,
Just ride alone and never load the back step with fat Bunters.

As a wind up to my sage advice just take this tip from me—
Beware the awful slippery road and the skid of misery.
And let your rear light twinkle like a star at evening-time,
A wrinkle worth the having, while it's a first class word to rhyme.



The "Volunteer"

By Dick Penfold

A special contribution (I believe I have seen worse), by a long-haired Removite who thinks he's good at verse.
B.B.

THE moon had raised her lamp above; there was a fearful storm.

And Harry Wharton shivered as he peered around the dorm.

"Is anyone awake?" he asked. There came a soft reply. "I'm wide awake," said Peter Todd. "Yes, rather!" "So am I!"

The midnight chimes were sounding from the ivy-mantled tower. And everybody shuddered as the clock toiled forth the hour.

"Now what about this midnight feast?" Bob Cherry softly said. And all the fellows gave a cheer, and tumbled out of bed.

The candles glimmered in the gloom, and everything was jolly. But Harry Wharton gave a frown—a frown of melancholy.

"We haven't got the grub," he said. "Now who will volunteer to journey to the village shop and fetch the hamper here?"

Then on the dormitory there fell a long and chilling silence. Had anybody dropped a pin, it would be heard a mile hence!

"Come, come!" said Wharton. "Who'll agree to undertake this mission?"

Said Billy Bunter, "I'm quite game. But this is the position. I sprained my ankle yesterday, and cannot walk a yard; and so, as far as I'm concerned, this midnight trip is barred!"

Then Harry Wharton turned to Squiff, and ordered him to go.

"Oh, crumbs!" groaned Squiff. "But what a night! The stormy winds do blow! The trees are swaying in the Close, the rain is pelting down. I really think you ought to give the job to Bull or Brown."

"I think our Squiffy chum should go and fetch the worthy hamper," said Hurree Singh. And we exclaimed:

"Yes, rather! Off you scamper!"

And then, while Squiff got up and dressed, we made a rope of sheets, and lowered him into the Close—the trickiest of feats!

Away went Squiff, with grim intent, to bring the hamper back. And peering through the gloom, he saw old Quelchy on his track!

Squiff ran like fury, and old Quelch was panting at his heels. (You should be in that plight yourself, to know just how it feels!)

"Come back! Come back!" cried Mr. Quelch.

But Squiff ran all the faster. Then Quelchy stumbled on a stone, and met with dire disaster.

Squiff scaled the wall, and down the lane he sped just like a hare. He'd gone about a dozen yards, then met a blinding glare.

The fat and portly Tozer flashed his bull's-eye on the scene.

"Young rip!" he growled, surveying Squiff. "Wot does this conduct mean?"

For answer, Squiff shot out his left, and Tozer hit the mud.

"Yaroooooh! Young 'ooligan!" he raved. "For this I'll 'ave yer blood."

But Squiff had taken to his heels: he sped on through the night. And when he came to Friardale, he had another fright.

For Loder of the Sixth was there, emerging from a "pub."

"What are you doing here," he cried, "you insolent young cub?"

Squiff leapt upon the prefect like a tiger from a cage. He simply peppered him with blows, and Loder snarled with rage.

"Yow-ow! Stand clear, you cheeky brat!" the angry prefect yelled. "For this night's work I'll see that you are publicly expelled!"

Then Loder hit the pavement with a most resounding whack. His nose was swollen, and his eyes were swiftly turning black!

Meanwhile, our hero rushed away and reached the village shop. He got the hamper, which was crammed with tuck and ginger-pop.

He bore the hamper on his back in safety to the school.

"My hat! I'm jolly warm!" he gasped. "I wish I could keep cool! I wonder if the rope of sheets has been hauled up again? No, there it is, still dangling down, and sodden by the rain."

He gave a low, soft whistle, and a voice from overhead responded to his signal.

"We will haul you up!" it said.

"You'd better take the hamper first; I'll tie it on the end," said Squiff, and shortly afterwards he watched the thing ascend.

"It's all serene. We've got the tuck!" came Harry Wharton's voice. "And now we'll haul you up, friend Squiff, and revel and rejoice!"

"Buck up!" said Squiff. "I'm frozen stiff, and soaked right to the skin!"

"It won't take long to haul you up," said Wharton, with a grin.

Squiff clutched the knotted rope, and then a voice cried, "Haul away!" And soon he was inside the dorm, where all was bright and gay.

"I've had an awful time," he said. "First Quelch came on my track. Then Tozer intercepted me—I put him on his back! Then Loder of the Sixth loomed up, and asked me what I meant. I threw him off the pavement—and I threw him off the scent!"

"Well done!" said Wharton. "You're a sport! I think we all agree that you deserve a knighthood, or at least an O.B.E. No other chap would take the risk—not even Bull or Brown."

"I would," said Billy Bunter, "but that foot of mine broke down!"

"Come on, you chaps!" said Cherry. "We will now attack the feast. I feel so hungry I could eat a rabbit-pie, at least!"

We gathered round by candle-light, and started on the tuck. Then drank Squiff's health in ginger-pop, and praised him for his pluck!

THE END.

CHINESE CHATTER.

By Wun Lung.

Me tinkee "Billy Bunter's Annual" would be much imployed if little Wun Lung got a place on the staffee. (Me no savvy.—Ed.)

Me tinkee Hop Hi ought to takee a handee, too. (He'll take a boot if he comes nosing round this establishment.—Ed.)

Me contlibute lovely bloodthilsty tolies about my native countlee. (Groo!—Ed.)

Me manage the paper velly muchee better than that fool Billy Buntel. (You wait till I get hold of you, you pigtailed pest. I'll flay you alive!—Ed.)

Me expectee to getee at least five bobee for these notes. (Blessed is he who expecteth nix: and then he won't find himself in a fix.—Ed.)

Me simply must getee jobee on staffee somehow. If Wicked Billy Buntel say no, me choppee offee pigtail in disgust! (Go ahead with the merry execution!—Ed.)

Me blingee out "Annual" of my ownee, and then "Bully Buntel's Annual" will have to shut up shopee! (Me givee Wun Lung a taste of my fistee, and then he will have to put up the shutters!—Ed.)

Favourite Mottoes!

By Greyfriars Celebrities.

BILLY BUNTER :
A motto that you cannot beat :
" Eat not to live, but live to eat ! "

LORD MAULEVERER :
" When the storms of life are brewin',
Lie an' read some sweet romance.
Let us, then, be up an' doin'
Nothin'—while we have the chance ! "

BOB CHERRY :
I've got three :
Here they be :
" Never get slack when things look black."
" A miss is as good as a mile."
" Pack up your troubles in your old kit-bag,
And smile, boys, smile ! "

HURREE SINGH :
" Look before you jumpfully leap."
" Let sleeping dogs slumberfully sleep."
" A penny saved is a quid of gainfulness."
And " Pleasure follows after painfulness."
" A friend in need is a friend indeedfully."
" More hasteful haste, less speedful speedfully."

HAROLD SKINNER :
" Eat, drink, and be merry ! "
An excellent motto, very !

BOLSOVER MAJOR :
" Twice armed is he who hath his quarrel just ;
But thrice is he armed who gets his blow in fust ! "

SIDNEY SNOOP :
" He who fights and runs away
Will live to fight another day.
But he who stays and takes his chance,
Will exit on the ambulance ! "

ALONZO TODD :
" A little deed of kindness,
A little word of cheer,
Will heal poor Bunter's blindness,
And make Tom Dutton hear ! "

PETER TODD :
" All that glitters is not gold,"
And Bunter's " ticker's " not, I'm told.

FISHER T. FISH :
" He who whispers down a well
About the goods he has to sell,
Won't reap the shining silver dollars,
Like he who climbs a tree, and hollers ! " .

or,

" Gather ye dollars while ye may,
Old Time is still a-flying ;
And in my study every jay
Will find some stuff worth buying!"

CLAUDE HOSKINS :
My favourite motto knocks out all the rest : " Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast ! "

THE LEG-PULLER !

By DICK PENFOLD.

Bob Cherry hailed me in the hall
With, " Have you heard the latest ?
Of all the stunts I can recall
It is the best and greatest !
Our worthy Head, and Mr. Prout,
Are fighting in the gym ! "
The genial Bob, I soon found out,
Had pulled my lower limb !

Next day he hailed me once again.
" Hast heard the news ? " he cried.
" Old Coker has become insane,
And scared the countryside !
He's scattering people left and right
Along the road to Pegg ! "
I hurried off to view the sight—
But Bob had pulled my leg !

That night, when I was sound asleep
Bob Cherry roused my ire ;
Straight from his bed he gave a leap
And loudly bellowed " FIRE ! "
I woke in panic and dismay,
And feared that I might roast ;
Till I heard Cherry calmly say,
" I've had you all on toast ! "

Next morning, Bob came up and said,
" Hallo, hallo, hallo !
You're wanted, Penfold, by the Head."
I grinned and didn't go !
I thought 'twas one of Cherry's jokes
(What else could you expect ?)
I've now received six painful strokes—
Bob's message was correct !

SONS O' DEVON!

By PHILIP HARDY

"The little Revenge ran on
Sheer into the heart of the foe."
TENNYSON.

LORD THOMAS HOWARD climbed down the side of the Revenge, and into the pinnace which tossed alongside, and Sir Richard Grenville turned back from the bulwarks.

As he passed beneath one of the booms, a slim figure swung itself down and dropped lightly beside him.

"Why, Crispian, lad! Where hast thou been clambering?"

Crispian Grenville, second cousin to Sir Richard, was a boy of sixteen—a young man in those days—blue eyed, fair haired, and ready for every joke that came along. Just now, however, his eyes were alight with excitement, and he caught his cousin by the arm.

"There are ships on the horizon, Sir Richard—many ships! Dost thou suppose them to be Spaniards?"

"Ay, lad, they are Spaniards; the news was brought a moment before thou dropp'st upon me like a rotten apple from a bough."

Crispian gave a whoop of joy.

"Art prepared for the fight, cousin? Think'st thou there would be treasure?"

It was Crispian's first voyage, and so far it had been uneventful.

Sir Richard sighed.

"We shall have to show a clean pair of heels this time, my lad. There be fifty-three of the Dons, and we are but six. A third of my Lord Howard's men lie sick, and ninety of mine own. My lord flies and we follow."

"But the ninety Devon lads who lie ashore?"

Sir Richard patted his cousin on the shoulder.

"That's spoken like a Briton and a Grenville, Cris.' But have no fear, we do not move till every sick man is safely stowed away on board.

"Give me three sailors, Sir Richard, and I'll have 'em safe in no time," cried Crispian; and Sir Richard let him have his way.

So Crispian toiled through the morning heat and the noonday haze, while Lord Howard vanished away into the mists with his five vessels, leaving the little Revenge smallest of all that gallant six—alone on the blue waters. And ever nearer crept the stately galleons, till the British sailors could see the glint of their gilded prows in the sun.

And at last the anchor was weighed and the tiny ship slid oceanwards.

Only a hundred seamen had Sir Richard to work the ship or to fight, if needs be—only a hundred hale men, and ninety lying sick in the hold. Yet as the Revenge drew nearer to the proud Spaniards, with their thousands of soldiers and sailors, the blood in Sir Richard's veins seethed with a mad desire to fight.

On the faces of his crew he read the same longing, the irrepressible British longing for a fight against odds. Suddenly Sir Richard Grenville laughed.

"Lads!" he cried, "we be good Devon men, and equal to all the Dons that ever cursed the seas. Up with the guns! We'll show our teeth ere we show our heels!"

A roaring cheer gave answer, led by the voice of Crispian himself, and in an instant the ship was alive with men who, swiftly and silently, obeyed their leader's commands.

The Spaniards came on, their great fleet divided into two sections, with a long, narrow lane of water between. Sir Richard gauged the width of that lane, and called his helmsman to his side.

"Canst thou steer through *that?*"

"Ay, your honour—and with room to spare!"

"Then do so!"

And the Spaniards, who had been wondering whether the tiny ship were worth the waste of a ball, gasped in sheer amazement as the Revenge swung round and came flying like a sea-bird into the very midst of them.

"She'll dash herself to pieces!" they cried: but the Revenge headed clear and clean for the narrow strip of water, headed for it, and entered it with the ease of a sword entering a scabbard.

And as she passed between the towering galleons, the Spanish soldiers looked down at her and laughed.

"A crazy Englishman!" they scoffed, "he is hardly worth destroying."

But from the British ship the guns awoke, and a yawning hole was torn in one of the gilded prows, so that the soldiers ceased to laugh, and the maimed galleon drew hastily out of range.

It had been Sir Richard's intention to run the gauntlet of the enemy's fire, and pass through the centre of the fleet and away. But the great San Philip sailed majestically across the narrow opening and the way was blocked.

"See—see, cousin!" cried Crispian, wild with excitement, and the thrill of the danger in which they stood. "They are going to fire upon us!"

"If they can!" laughed Sir Richard.

The Spanish guns thundered out, and tore away a portion of the little ship's rigging, but the shots never reached her deck—she was so small that the angle could not be reached by the death-dealing weapons with which the galleons bristled. Her very insignificance made her invincible.

"God save Queen Elizabeth! Fight on, lads!"

Crispian's young voice rang out blithely, and again the Revenge exacted her toll from the surrounding ships. The Spaniards cursed and looked down upon the active sailors and their leader—at the grizzled commander and the slim young boy who darted in and out amidst the men, and they wondered anew at the madness of the English.

But presently the Spanish officers decided upon another mode of attack. A volley from the soldiers' muskets broke over the Revenge and the gunner next to Crispian fell across his weapon, with a ragged wound in his head. The boy was on his knees beside him in an instant, but the poor fellow was past human aid, so Crispian laid him reverently down and, seizing the torch, fired the already loaded cannon. The ball crashed into a group of Spanish soldiers who were seeking to clamber down into the British ship, and the gunner was avenged. But more and more Spaniards poured forth from the galleons on to the impudent intruder, and the ninety-nine seamen were hard put to to drive them back.

Sir Richard, sword in hand, fought like a demon, and the enemy soldiers crossed themselves, believing that they fought Satan and his hosts. Close by his side was Crispian, his cheeks flushed and his eyes afire, and more than once it was his sword that cut down the Spaniard who else would have ended Sir Richard's story there and then.

No less gallantly fought the remaining seamen, and a dozen times the Spaniards sought to overwhelm the indomitable handful of Britishers, but always were they driven back over the bulwarks and into the sea.

The sunset came—and the night, yet still the battle waged—the strange, incredible battle of the one and the fifty-three! Crispian's young voice could be heard above the din, ever cheering on the men and shouting defiance at the foe.

"Men o' Bideford, show 'em how we do it down 'long Devon way! Into the sea with 'em. Hurrah for England! God save Elizabeth!"

Ship after ship drew alongside, discharged her unavailing cannon, and was driven back by the guns of her tiny, dauntless adversary. Ship after ship sent hosts of soldiers to board the Revenge, and saw them defeated by the handful of men, the boy and the mad Englishman.

When dawn shed her rosy light over the scene, fifty ships lay in a maimed condition round the one little British vessel, fearing to try their strength again lest more slaughter should be their reward. Yet the Revenge was harmless enough now. The powder spent, the pikes broken, and her masts lying

To face page 201

ONE AGAINST FIFTY-THREE!

over her side in a tangle of rigging. Only from the end of that fallen mast the Cross of St. George fluttered in the morning breeze, as if in proud disdain of defeat.

"Fight on, fight on!" cried Sir Richard, urging his depleted handful to even greater efforts, and as he shouted a musket shot took him full in the breast.

Crispian's despairing cry rang over the waters, but there was no shout of triumph from the Spaniards. They looked at their enemy and were silent.

"Fight on, fight on!" gasped the dying man, raising himself in the boy's arms, and the battle surged on again.

But the British shaft was shot, and even British courage could not avail against overwhelming odds. Of that gallant hundred who had cheered their leader's daring scheme, only sixty remained alive, and a half of those sixty lay helpless on the crimson decks. Many a shot had pierced the hold, and many a sick man was cold and still—but in the powder magazine stood one more keg of powder.

Sir Richard Grenville looked at the wreck of his little ship, and at the scattered handful of men; the Spaniards had been once more beaten back and waited another chance to attack again.

"Lads, we've fought such a fight as history will ne'er forget," he cried, his voice ringing strong despite the wound which drained his life away. "Let us fall into the Hands of God, but not into the hands of the Inquisitors. Gunner, there is one more keg of powder; sink the ship and blow the Dons to atoms with us!"

He sank back exhausted, and the gunner saluted. But the seamen shook their heads.

"We have children and wives who wait for us. We are not defeated, for the Dons are ready to hear conditions."

It was true. Weary of loss of life, the Spanish commander was crying to them to name their own conditions, and come aboard the flagship.

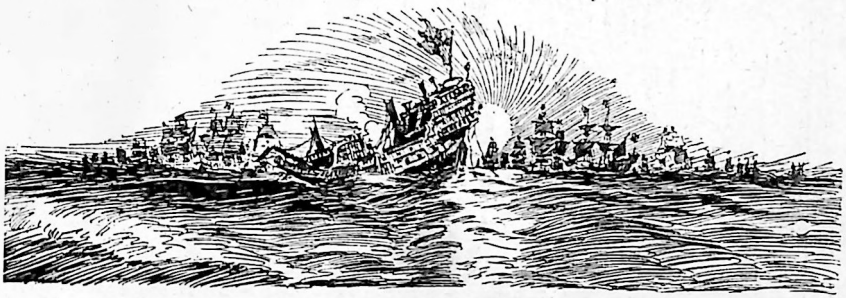
Sir Richard lay dying. Crispian was too overwhelmed with his grief to heed what went on around him, and the seamen yielded to the Spaniards' offer.

So they carried Sir Richard aboard the San Philip and the Spaniards bowed before him, praising him to his face for his courage. But the dying man staggered to his feet.

"Senors! Had I done less I should have been no Englishman and no son of Devon! I am a servant of my Queen, and I die in her cause. God save Elizabeth!"

He waved his broken sword over his head, and fell prone at the commander's feet.

Crispian flung himself down beside him, but the gallant gentleman had fought his last fight. And what a fight! The Spaniards looked down at him and marvelled. But they held to their promise, and so it came about that the little Revenge, with shattered masts and sadly rent cordage, returned to her native land, sailed by a swarthy crew, while Crispian received the treatment a prince might have envied, though his grief was too great for him to care what became of him just then. But he lived to fight many a fight for his Queen and his Faith, but never one so strange nor so gallant as the fight of the One and the Fifty-Three!



A Famous Character in Many Poses!

LORD EASTWOOD'S EXPERIMENT

A Topping Story, featuring Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and his Chums at St. Jim's.

BY MARTIN CLIFFORD

* * *

THE FIRST CHAPTER

The Problem

"SUPPOSE——"

"Eh?"

"Suppose——"

"Well?"

"Suppose——"

For the third time Arthur Augustus D'Arcy paused.

Tom Merry and Jack Blake were sitting on the back of a bench under the elms in front of the School House at St. Jim's, swinging their legs. Blake was in flannels, with a cricket cap, and Tom Merry had a straw hat on the back of his head. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was dressed with his usual elegance, and his silk hat glistened in the sun, as did his diamond stud and his gold-rimmed monocle.

He stood before the two juniors with an extremely thoughtful expression on his face. Tom Merry and Blake had been talking cricket when he came up, but they politely bestowed their attentions upon D'Arcy when he began to speak.

But the swell of St. Jim's did not seem quite able to get his sentence out.

'Suppose——" he began, for the fourth time.

Tom Merry grinned.

"I'm quite ready to suppose, if you like," he assented. "But what shall I suppose?"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Suppose Gussy is an ass!" observed Blake. "Suppose he is a chump—a gilt-edged, double-action, non-skidding chump!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Suppose——"

"I was goin' to wemark——"

"Well, go ahead!"

"Suppose——" began D'Arcy.

Then he paused once more.

Blake looked at Tom Merry, and tapped his forehead significantly.

"Fairly off it!" he murmured.

And Tom Merry nodded.

"Poor old Gussy! I suppose what he means to say is, suppose we have a whip-round to buy him a strait-waistcoat," he remarked.

"Nothin' of the sort, Tom Mewwy. I was goin' to say, I am in a wathah awkward posish, and suppose——"

"Oh, get on with the washing!" said

Blake. "Our supposers are in perfect working order, and we'll suppose anything you like. I can't say fairer than that."

D'Arcy paused a moment. There was evidently some difficulty in getting out the statement he wanted to make.

"You see, I am in a beastly awkward posish," he said. "I am short of money——"

"How odd!" said Tom Merry.

"Never mind, Gussy!" said Blake consolingly. "I've been short of tin before, and lived to tell the tale. It's a thing you can live down."

"Pway don't be an ass, Blake! I was goin' to say, I want you fellows to advise me, but pway do not wot. It's a wathah sewious mattah!"

"Go ahead, old son!" said Tom Merry, giving his straw hat another push back, which brought it dangerously near toppling off altogether. "What's the trouble? Not in love again, I hope?"

"Pway don't be an ass. Suppose——"

Another pause.

"Do you think you could get it out if I patted you on the back?" asked Blake, with great sympathy.

"Suppose a chap's governah wefused to play the game?" said Arthur Augustus, getting it out at last. "What would you fellows do?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see anythin' to laugh at. It's a beastly awkward posish. Suppose a chap's governah wefuses to play the game, what is a chap to do? I wegard it as a sewious pwoblem!"

Tom Merry and Blake assumed expressions of great gravity.

D'Arcy was evidently in earnest, and required them to take his problem seriously, and they did their best not to grin.

"What would you fellows advise a chap to do?" said D'Arcy, jamming his monocle into his eye, and surveying Tom Merry and Blake through it. "Suppose a chap's governah wefuses to play the game——"

"That depends," said Tom Merry, with almost preternatural gravity. "We must know the circumstances. Whose governor are you talking about?"

"My governah."

"He refuses to play the game?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, it looks to me as if you haven't brought him up properly," said Tom Merry, with a shake of the head. "In that case, the fault lies with you."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Did you care for him in his early years?" asked Tom. "Did you watch over his boyhood with a loving eye? Did you train him in the way he should go——"

"I wegard you as an ass, Tom Mewwy!"

"Quite right!" said Blake. "He is an ass! But what has your governor been doing, Gussy? We ought to know the offence before we pass the sentence."

"Yaas, that's wight enough! I am short of money——"

"I believe I've heard you make a remark to that effect before," Tom Merry observed.

"Pway don't intewwupt me. This is how the mattah stands. I have an allowance fwom my governah, and I always get thwough it before the week is half out."

"Either the week is too long or the allowance is too short," said Blake. "I don't see how you can have the week altered, so it will have to be the allowance that is set right."

"Exactly!" assented Tom Merry.

"Well, I have to eke out my allowance, you know, by askin' my patah to send me fivahs," said D'Arcy. "He used to be quite libewal with fivahs. But since they've passed the Budget my governah has been wathah close with money. He sent me a fivah last week, and when I w'ote for anothah he didn't weply to my lettah for two days."

"Rotten!"

"I wouldn't have minded that so much, only when he did weply there wasn't any tin in the lettah, and I wegarded that as cawwyin' the thing altogethah too fah."

"I should say so! I hope you put it plainly to him?" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah! I w'ote again and again—in fact, I w'ote quite a large numbah of lettahs, and pointed out to the governah that he was puttin' me to gweat expense in postage-stamps, you know. I thought that ought to

have some effect, because he's always opposed to extwavagance, you know. But he nevah sent any money."

"Horrid!"

"Then I sent him a wiah."

"And the fiver came by return, I suppose?"

"Not at all! He didn't weply to the wiah."

"Oh, come, that's too bad!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas. I wegarded it as wathah wotten, you know. I cannot considah that the governah is playin' the game," said D'Arcy.

"I am in a state of howwid stoniness, and if the governah wefuses to play the game what am I to do?"

Tom Merry nodded seriously.

"That's what I want advice about," went on the swell of St. Jim's, frowning thoughtfully. "If a chap's governah wefuses to play the game what is a chap to do? I wegard it as a vewy sewious pwoblem."

"Lord Eastwood will have to be taught the error of his ways," said Blake seriously. "Suppose we send him a round robin, pointing out that he's settin' a bad example to youth by refusing to play the game."

D'Arcy looked thoughtful.

"Or we might ask leave of the Head and go down to Eastwood House in a body and interview him," suggested Tom Merry. "There's nothing like a personal interview to clear up doubtful points."

"Yaas, wathah! That's a good wheeze! I suppose the Head would give us leave if I explained the mattah to him?" said D'Arcy, in a thoughtful way.

"You wottah!" exclaimed D'Arcy as he cannoned into the figure around the corner. "You uttah ass——" Then he discovered that it wasn't Tom Merry into whom he had crashed; he staggered back in dismay. "The governah!" he gasped. (*See Chapter* 1.)

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry and Blake together.

They could not help it.

The idea of D'Arcy asking leave of the Head, and giving such an explanation, was too much for them.

They roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The swell of St. Jim's jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and surveyed the two juniors with mingled surprise and annoyance.

"Weally, deah boys——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any weason whatevah for this wibald laughtah. I twust you have not been wottin', you wottahs——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Oh, dear! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as a wottah! Pway get off that bench, deah boy, and put up your

hands," said D'Arcy wrathfully. "I am going to give you a feahful thwashin'."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus brandished his clenched hands under Tom Merry's nose, but the hero of the Shell only roared louder.

"Will you put up your hands, you wottah?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am goin' to give you a feahful thwashin'——"

"Give it to Blake instead," suggested Tom Merry. "I'll hold your hat."

"I am goin' to thwash Blake as well——"

"My hat! He's getting dangerous!" ejaculated Blake, looking greatly alarmed. "We'd better cut."

"Yes, rather!"

Tom Merry and Blake slipped off the bench. They took the swell of the Fourth Form by the shoulders, and with a sudden jerk sat him on the grass. Then they ran off laughing towards the School House.

A handsome automobile had just glided up the drive, and stopped outside the house. Tom Merry and Blake passed it as they ran in. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat in the grass under the elms for a few moments in a dazed state. His hat had fallen over his eyes, and his monocle was clinking against his watch-chain.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated.

He jumped up, red and wrathful.

"You wottahs!" he shouted. "Come back! I insist upon your comin' back and bein' thwashed!"

But Tom Merry and Blake did not come back.

D'Arcy jammed his hat tightly on his head, stuck his monocle in his eye, and rushed in hot pursuit.

He bounded up the School House steps, and rushed into the hall—and rushed right into a tall, handsome gentleman who had just entered.

There was a sharp exclamation.

"Oh!"

"You wottah!" exclaimed D'Arcy, under the impression, in the confusion of the moment, that he had run into Tom Merry. "You uttah ass——"

"Eh?"

"Oh!"

"Arthur!"

D'Arcy staggered back in dismay.

"The governah!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER

D'Arcy Makes It Pax

LORD EASTWOOD breathed rather fast. He was frowning a little. Lord Eastwood was an exceedingly stately gentleman, and his stateliness had been considerably disturbed by the collision.

But his frown melted into a smile as he saw D'Arcy's dismayed face.

"Arthur!" he repeated. "So it is you?"

"Ya-a-as, wathah!" gasped D'Arcy.

"Ah! You were so eager to see me that you rushed in at top speed, I suppose?" said Lord Eastwood.

"I—I—— As a mattah of fact, I—I did not know you were heah," said Arthur Augustus. "I was wunnin' aftah a couple of feahful wottahs. I did not notice your cah. I——"

"Well, never mind," said Lord Eastwood. "Fortunately, no harm is done, but I should recommend you to look where you are going in future."

"Yaas, wathah, dad! I suppose you have come down to see me?" said Arthur Augustus.

The earl smiled grimly.

"Quite a mistake, Arthur. I have not."

"But——"

"I have come to see the Head."

"Oh! But you have had my lettahs?"

"Yes."

"And my wiahs?"

"Certainly."

"Then you know just how the mattah stands?"

"Exactly."

"Then I twust——"

"Will your lordship please to follow me?" said Binks, the buttons.

"Thank you!"

"But weally, fathah——"

Lord Eastwood gave his son a nod, and walked away. The swell of St. Jim's was left looking after him in dismay.

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy. "This is

wathah wotten. I weally do not undahstand the governah at all."

He ascended the stairs slowly to Study No. 6, where he expected to find Blake. There was a sound of chuckling in the study as the swell of St. Jim's approached it.

D'Arcy coloured.

He looked in at the open door. His study-mates, Blake and Herries and Digby, were there.

Tom Merry was with them, and the four juniors were chuckling, and D'Arcy had little doubt that it was his collision with his "governor" in the hall below that was the cause of their merriment.

"Hallo, here's Gussy!" exclaimed Blake. "Look out!"

"My hat!" gasped Tom Merry, in great alarm. "En garde!"

Tom Merry seized the tongs from the grate; Blake snatched up a cricket-bat. They set their backs to the wall, as if terrified by a fearful danger, but determined to sell their lives dearly. Herries and Digby yelled with laughter, but Blake and Tom Merry only looked alarmed.

Arthur Augustus surveyed them wrathfully.

"You uttah asses——" he began.

"Keep off!" shrieked Tom Merry, brandishing the tongs. "Hands off!"

"Stand back!" yelled Blake.

"We will defend ourselves to the bitter end."

"To the last gasp."

"And sell our lives dearly."

"You uttah chumps!"

"Make it pax," said Tom Merry. "Otherwise, we shall very likely faint with terror. I feel it coming on."

"So do I!" gasped Blake. "I can read slaughter in his eye and bloodshed in his eyeglass. See me tremble!"

And he trembled so violently that his boots clattered on the floor.

D'Arcy looked at him wrathfully. Even D'Arcy could see that the juniors were elaborately "rotting" him.

"I wegard you as a pair of uttah boundahs," he exclaimed. "Howevah, I will make it pax, as I have no time to thwash you now."

Tom Merry gave a great gasp of relief, with a sound like air escaping from a punctured tyre.

Blake dropped the cricket-bat with a crash to the floor, and staggered towards D'Arcy, and threw his arms round the elegant junior's neck.

"Saved!" he sobbed.

"Oh, keep off, you ass!"

"Saved!"

"You uttah duffah!"

"Saved!"

"Saved!" panted Tom Merry, and he hurled the tongs into the grate, and also clasped D'Arcy round the neck. "Saved!"

"Ow! Yawooh!"

"Spared!"

"Leggo!"

"But we're showing our touching gratitude——"

"Yow! Leggo!"

Arthur Augustus wrenched himself away. His collar was crumpled, and his necktie pulled out. He glanced at the sobbing juniors.

"You feahful wottahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I should give you a feahful thwashin' if I had not made it pax. I wegard you as wotten boundahs. But I am in an awkward posish."

"More trouble?" sighed Tom Merry. "What is it now?"

"My governah has come down."

"Then everything in the garden is lovely. You've only got to ask him for a fiver—or I should make it a tenner, I think."

"Yaas, I thought it was all wight when I saw him," said D'Arcy. "I thought he had come down to give me a lecture, you know, and then to hand out the tin. I wouldn't have minded the lecture, weally. I think a chap ought to be willin' to stand a lecture evewy now and then fwom his governah. It shows pwopah wespect."

"Hear, hear!"

"But he hasn't come down to see me," said Arthur Augustus. "He's gone in to see the Head. He hasn't come to see me at all. It looks to me as if I shan't get the fivah aftah all, and I am short of money, you know. What would you fellows advise a chap to do?"

The fellows all looked very serious.

"Must see him," said Blake, shaking his head. "Don't let him escape without an interview; that's the important thing."

"Yes, rather?"

D'Arcy nodded.

"But if he won't see me——"

"Suppose we puncture the tyres of the motor," suggested Herries, "then he will be delayed when he wants to go."

"Bai Jove!"

"Ass!" said Blake. "Do you think the chauffeur will look on while we're puncturing the blessed tyres?"

"H'm-! I forgot the shover."

"We must capture him before he gets out of the house," said Tom Merry. "Suppose we wait for him in the hall, and nobble him as he comes out. If we could get a clothes-line or something, I wouldn't mind lassoing him."

"Pway don't be as ass, Tom Mewwy!"

"Still, it's a good idea to ambush him in the hall," said Blake. "He's gone down the passage to the Head's study, I suppose?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, we can wait for him at this end of the passage, and step out when he comes by," said Blake. "We can all step up and present our respects, and hope he's well, and then you can gradually and diplomatically work the conversation round to the subject of fivers."

"Good! I wathah think that's a good ideah," said D'Arcy.

"Then let's go down. He mayn't stay long with the Head, you know."

"Vewy well. I will change my collah, and then I'll be weady."

And D'Arcy changed his collar, and the juniors descended to keep watch and ward at the end of the passage for Lord Eastwood.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

The Polite Letter-Writer

DR. HOLMES, the Head of St. Jim's, rose to his feet, and greeted his noble visitor very courteously. Lord Eastwood was a governor of St. Jim's, as well as an old friend of the doctor's. Lord Eastwood was also an old St. Jim's fellow, and he had been through the old school as junior and senior in his time; and perhaps his recollection of that time made him as lenient as he was with his two hopeful sons there.

He sat down in one of the deep, comfortable armchairs, after he had shaken hands with the Head. Dr. Holmes was looking a little perplexed. He was glad to see Lord Eastwood, but he could not guess to what reason to assign the visit.

Lord Eastwood smiled genially.

"I was passing within two miles," he explained, "and as I wished to consult you about a certain matter, I called in. It is about my son."

"Ah, yes. Which son?"

"Arthur," said Lord Eastwood, smiling again, "the elder. As for Wally, he is such a young rascal that I have really given up thinking of his reformation."

The Head laughed.

"I must agree with you that D'Arcy minor is a young rascal," he said. "He is really only wild, however; there is nothing at all like vice in him."

"Oh, I am sure of that; and as for Arthur——"

"D'Arcy major is one of my best juniors, in most respects," said the Head. "There are sometimes little difficulties, but I have no fault to find with him."

Lord Eastwood nodded.

"I am glad to hear you say so, doctor; but I have a fault to find with him."

"Indeed!"

"He is very extravagant, I think, and careless with money."

"Ahem!" Dr. Holmes coughed. "Perhaps that is really—er—due to his being provided with more money than is really good for a boy of his age."

"Possibly. Yet"—Lord Eastwood paused—"I do not wish to stint my boys, and I am sure that Arthur would never put money to any culpable use. He is simply extravagant, and does not fully realise the value of it, I think. I have received from him several applications for money of late, which throw some light upon his point of view in the matter."

The earl opened a pocket-book, and took out

As the footsteps came nearer Gussy stepped forward and bowed. The rest of the juniors moved with him. "Good afternoon, sir!" they said politely. Binks, the School House page, stopped and stared at them in blank astonishment. (*See Chapter* 4.)

several letters and telegraph forms, and laid them on the Head's writing-table.

"I think they are interesting," Lord Eastwood remarked.

The Head laughed quietly as he glanced through the letters.

They were brief, but very much to the point. The first one ran as follows:

"Study No. 6, School House, St. Jim's,
"June 20th.

"Dear Father,—I am extremely sorry to say that the fiver is all gone. I took your advice, for which I was very grateful, and made it last as long as possible. If you would be kind enough to send me another fiver, I will do the same again. Please tell Ethel not to forget the white mice.

"Your affectionate son,
"ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY."

"June 21st.

"Dear Dad,—Just a line to mention that I have not yet received the fiver.

"In haste, ARTHUR."

"June 22nd.

"Dear Father,—I have not yet received the fiver, so suppose that my letters have miscarried. Shall I inquire at the post-office about them, or will you communicate with the Postmaster-General?

"Affectionately,
ARTHUR."

"June 23rd.

"Dear Father,—Would you mind letting me have the fiver by return of post, as I am in debt at the tuckshop, and I owe Tom Merry five shillings, and I think he needs the money. Of course, I am not thinking of

myself; but you have always told me to be careful not to be in debt, and I am anxious to get clear.

"With love to all, ARTHUR."

Then followed the telegrams.

"Fiver not received.—ARTHUR."

"Please answer wire.—ARTHUR."

"Very anxious. Hope not ill.—ARTHUR."

Dr. Holmes laughed.

"Is that all?" he asked.

"There were some more, I think," smiled Lord Eastwood. "Now, as Arthur had five pounds last week, I think it is altogether too soon for him to be out of money. I really want him to learn the value and responsibility of money."

The Head pursed his lips.

"I should advise giving him less," he remarked. "Suppose you limit his pocket-money to two shillings a week?"

"Poor Arthur!"

"Or say to five shillings—that is very liberal for a junior."

"Quite so; but——"

Lord Eastwood paused.

"The fact is," he said, "that I am thinking of trying an experiment in the matter. Instead of cutting short Arthur's money, I think I might teach him a greater sense of responsibility by placing a larger sum in his hands."

"H'm."

"I think with a larger sum to handle he might learn the lesson of frugality," said Lord Eastwood. "In my experience I have always observed that, among the poorer classes, improvidence is always in proportion to lack of money. The people who are most careless with money are those who have very little, and are uncertain of getting that little."

"That is true of the poorer classes, but——"

"In dealing with a poor man, the surest way to make him careful and thrifty is to give him a regular income."

"Quite true; but——"

"You do not think the same plan would answer with regard to my son? Well, I am thinking of trying it, unless you have any objection."

"Not at all," said the Head with a smile. "But surely you do not think of placing a large sum in the lad's hands?"

"Not exactly; I should not do that," said Lord Eastwood. "My idea is to give him a bank account with a cheque-book."

"Oh."

"In fact, I have already made arrangements with my bankers for the purpose," said Lord Eastwood. "I have placed fifty pounds to Arthur's credit, and I have brought a cheque-book here for him. I have an idea that, finding himself in this position, a greater sobriety in the use of money will come to him."

"I hope so."

"You do not think so?"

"Well, it will be an interesting experiment," said Dr. Holmes in a non-committal way. "At all events, if the money is wasted, it will not be used for any bad object. You can rest assured upon that point."

Lord Eastwood glanced at his watch, and rose to his feet.

"Then that is settled," he remarked. "I must hasten now, and I daresay your time is valuable, doctor. You will hand the cheque-book to Arthur, and explain the matter to him, will you not?—at the same time adding any little advice you think fit."

"Certainly."

"I think the experiment will be a success—at all events, we shall see."

"I truly hope so."

Dr. Holmes rose to see his visitor out. Lord Eastwood did not go down the passage into the School House again, but Dr. Holmes showed him out by his private door. They shook hands very cordially, and the earl mounted into his car, and Dr. Holmes returned to his study with a smile upon his face. The Head of St. Jim's did not think that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's bank account was likely to last very long.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

Gone!

"JOLLY long time!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Look here, Gussy, you shouldn't let your governor get into these long-winded habits," said Blake, with a yawn. "How long is he

going to keep us waiting here, I wonder."

"Yaas, I wondah."

Tom Merry looked at his watch.

"We've been here a quarter of an hour," he remarked.

"Bai Jove!"

"Seems longer," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry looked round the corner into the passage. The juniors were waiting for Lord Eastwood to come back, quite oblivious to the fact that he had been shown out by a different way. The interview in the Head's study seemed to them a very long one. There was no sign yet of the noble earl in the passage.

"Well, we've got to wait," said Digby yawning.

"Better," said Herries. "We're all short of funds, and if Gussy can get a fiver, it will set the whole study up."

"Yaas, and I owe Tom Mewwy five bob, and Lowthah thwee——"

All the juniors crowded round as D'Arcy began to write the letter to his governor—a letter which was to express, in no measured terms, their opinion of Lord Eastwood's conduct! (*See Chapter 5*).

"What are you chaps hanging about here for?" demanded Monty Lowther, coming up with Manners. "Anything on?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Gussy's governor's with the Head," said Tom Merry. "We're waiting for him. We're all going to speak to him nicely, and he's going to fork out a fiver."

"Good; I'll help!"

"What-ho!" said Manners.

And the seven juniors waited. They peeped round the corner frequently, and once Tom Merry stole down the passage and looked round the next corner towards the Head's study. But the door was closed, and he crept back.

"Hasn't come out yet?" said Digby.

"No."

"My hat! What a gift, to be able to jaw all this time, in this hot weather," said Herries. "I suppose it runs in Gussy's family."

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"You chaps waiting to catch mice, or what?" asked Kangaroo—Harry Noble, of the Shell—as he came by with Clifton Dane and Bernard Glyn.

"We're waiting to catch Gussy's pater."

"What are you going to do with him?" asked Glyn.

"Ha, ha! Make him shell out."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"He's been with the Head twenty-five minutes now," said Blake, looking at his watch.

"They're keeping it up, eh?"

"Blessed if I know what they find to jaw about."

"Oh, Gussy's sins, of course," said Lowther. "If I had a son like Gussy, I should feel awfully anxious about him."

"Weally Lowthah——"

"I should probably keep him on a chain, or in a cage——"

"Weally——"

"Yes, rather," agreed Manners. "He must be a fearful anxiety to his governor."

"My governah——"

"Must be a patient chap," said Lowther solemnly.

"I always make it a point to show gweat wespect to my governah. I have only

diswegarded his instwuctions in one wespect. He always impwesses upon me to be vewy careful in the company I keep," said D'Arcy. "Howevah, I allow myself to stwetch a point in that wespect, as I don't want to dwop you fellows——"

"Why, you ass——"

"You cheeky chump——"

"You frabjous cuckoo——"

"Weally, deah boys——"

"Bump him!"

"I wefuse to be bumped——"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Tom Merry, laughing. "His noble governor may be along any moment, and he mustn't find us bumping his hopeful son."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"We'll let him off with a caution this time," said Lowther. "But——"

"Hark!"

"He's coming."

Footsteps were approaching down the passage. Tom Merry dragged back Digby, who was about to put his head round the corner.

"Hold on!" he said. "Don't stare, you know. His lordship ought to happen on us here, quite by chance——"

"Ha, ha! Good!"

"Quiet, then."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Order!"

"I will step out as soon as the governor appwoaches," said D'Arcy. "You fellows can all step out aftah me, and back me up. All say 'good-afternoon' at once."

"Good-afternoon at once," said Lowther.

"Pway don't be an ass, deah boy. Weady?"

"Quite."

The footsteps came quickly on.

Just as they reached the corner D'Arcy stepped forward.

The juniors all stepped after him.

"Good-afternoon, sir!"

A plump face and a plumper form in buttons loomed up before the juniors. Binks, the School House page, stopped as he came round the corner, and stared at the crowd of juniors in blank astonishment.

"My 'at!" he muttered.

Tom Merry & Co. turned red.

"Binks!"

"Ho!" said Binks. "I say——"

"Bai Jove! It's that wascal Binks, and not my governah at all," said D'Arcy in disgust. "Weally, Binks, I wegard you as an inopportune ass."

And the juniors looked annoyed. They felt absurd in having wasted that concerted salutation upon so unimportant a person as Binks.

Binks grinned.

"Ho!" he remarked. "You was waiting here for Lord Eastwood, Master D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Binks chuckled.

"Ho!" he said.

"Well," exclaimed Tom Merry, "what's the matter with you, Binks? Got a pain inside?"

"Ho! No."

"Then what are you cackling about?"

"Ho! You was waiting for his nibs," said Binks chuckling again. "Ho!"

"Is he coming?"

"Ho! No."

"Well, we shall have to wait," said Herries. "Clear off, Binks."

"Suttingly."

"Yaas, wathah! You are an inopportune ass, Binks. Pway buzz off."

"Werry well, but——"

"Oh, don't jaw, deah boy; twavel off."

"But——"

"Pway bunk."

"Ho! Werry well," said Binks. But Tom Merry caught him by the shoulder as he turned away grinning, and swung him back.

"What were you going to say?" demanded the hero of the Shell suspiciously. "What's the joke, anyway?"

"Ho! If you don't want to hear——"

"But we do want to hear. Go ahead."

"Well, then," said Binks, grinning, "it ain't any good waitin' for Lord Eastwood, that's all, Master Merry."

"Wats!" said D'Arcy.

"But why isn't it any good?" demanded Tom Merry.

"He's gone!"

"Eh?"

"GONE!"

The juniors all stared at Binks. The School House page chuckled cheerfully. He evidently regarded the matter as quite humorous.

"Imposs.," ejaculated D'Arcy. "We've been waitin' heah all the time."

"He couldn't have passed——" began Manners.

"Oh!" said Binks. "You see, he went out the other way."

"Oh!"

"The 'Ead showed 'im hout by his own door into the quadrangle."

"Oh!"

"How long has he been gone?" howled Blake.

"About ten minutes, Master Blake."

"Oh!"

"The car may not be out of the gates yet," panted Blake. "Come on—we may catch him yet! Put your beef into it!"

And the juniors dashed helter-skelter out of the School House.

There was no sign of the motor-car in the quadrangle. But the gates were open, and the juniors tore across to them. They dashed out into the road.

Far away down the road was a cloud of dust; lingering in the summer air was a smell of petrol. From the distance came a faint sound:

Zip-zip!

Lord Eastwood was gone!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

A Severe Letter

"BAI Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked after the disappearing cloud of dust.

He adjusted his monocle and looked after it again. But Lord Eastwood was gone.

"Bai Jove! I wegard that as wotten!" he said.

"Rotten isn't the word," said Blake, in great disgust. "Fancy a chap who has a seat in the House of Lords dodging us like that! I must say that Lord Eastwood—well, I will respect Gussy's feelings as a son, and I won't say what I think."

"Same here," said Tom Merry, with a shake of the head. "I can't call this playing the game."

"Rather not."

"Gussy had better write to him," suggested Kangaroo. "He can point out that the St. Jim's fellows don't like this sort of thing, and we'll sign the letter."

"Good egg!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy nodded.

"Yaas, wathah! I can't have the governah goin' on like that, you know," he remarked. "I believe in a chap being patient with his pater, but there comes a time when he must put his foot down."

"Hear, hear!"

"Hallo, cockey!" said D'Arcy minor, as the juniors turned back into the quad. "Did you see the pater?"

"Weally, Wally——"

"He dodged us," said Tom Merry indignantly. "While we were waiting at one door, he went out by another."

Wally D'Arcy chuckled.

"Just like you chaps," he remarked. "Sorry I didn't see you, Gussy. I stopped the pater just as he was getting into the car."

"Any result?" asked Kangaroo, with a grin.

Wally held up a pound note.

"My hat!" said Blake, with a whistle.

"Bai Jove! And I——"

"You've got nothing?"

"Nothin', deah boy."

"Well, halves," said Wally. "Let's change this quid, and you shall have half, old man. Share and share 'alike."

"Weally, Wally, that is wathah wippin' of you, and I will accept your offah, as I am stonay," said D'Arcy. "Mrs. Taggles will change it."

Two youths of the Third Form who were with D'Arcy minor stared at him blankly as he made his major that generous offer.

"You young ass!" gasped Jameson. "If you want to go halves, you can go halves with me."

"Or with me," said Curly Gibson, with equal heat. "Fourth-Form chumps are barred."

"Weally, Gibson, if you allude to me as a chump——"

"Look here, Wally——"

"You travel," said Wally. "I'm sharing this with Gus. If you chaps like to come to the tuckshop, I'll stand ginger-pop and tarts."

"Oh, all right!" said Jameson and Gibson together.

And the party adjourned to Dame Taggles's little establishment.

There the pound note was changed, and half of it duly handed over to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy; and as the weather was very warm, and the juniors thirsty, a considerable amount of it was immediately expended in ginger-pop and lemonade.

Wally chuckled over his foaming glass.

"You must have been a chump to miss the pater, Gus," he remarked. "He was in an awfully good temper, and he might have been worth a fiver or a tenner to you."

"It was weally Tom Mewwy who was to blame, you see——"

"Eh? What's that?" said Tom Merry.

"You wemembah you were waitin' at the end of the passage——"

"So were you."

"Yaas, but I was waitin' because you were——"

"Well, I was waiting because Blake was—"

"I was waiting because Gussy was," said Blake, with a grin. "Of course, it was all Gussy's fault from beginning to end."

"Weally, Blake——"

"It jolly well always is," said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"We might have gone thirsty all the afternoon, but for Wally," said Digby indignantly. "Nice state of things, when we have to depend on a Third-Form scallawag for a drink in hot weather."

"Weally, Dig——"

"Oh, come and get that letter written!" exclaimed Lowther. "Lord Eastwood has simply passed the limit this time, and I think we ought to point it out to him."

"Yaas, wathah; but——"

"If you're done guzzling, Gussy, come on——"

"I have had only one glass——"

"So have I," said Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"It was filled several times, but it was only one glass—the same glass all the time," Lowther explained elaborately.

"Oh, don't be funny, Lowther!" implored Blake. "Not in hot weather, you know."

"Look here——"

"Oh, come on!" exclaimed Tom Merry, dragging Lowther away. "Let's get the letter written, and we can catch the post with it. It goes in a quarter of an hour."

"Right-ho!"

And the juniors walked over to the School House, and adjourned to the junior common-room, there to write the letter.

D'Arcy sat down at the table, and drew pen and paper towards him.

He jammed his monocle into his eye, and gnawed the end of the pen-handle, these apparently being indispensable preliminaries to writing the letter.

The other fellows stood round to help.

"Go it, Gussy!" said Tom Merry encouragingly. "You ought to write the letter, you know, and we'll all sign our names."

"Yaas, wathah! But how shall I begin?"

"It's a good idea to begin at the beginning," said Monty Lowther. "It's an old-fashioned custom, but it's good."

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Still, you might begin at the middle, or you might tackle it at the end if you found it come easier."

"Weally——"

"Suppose you start with 'Your affectionate son, Gustavus,' then you could get on to 'I hope the dog is quite well,' and work your way back to 'Dear Pater,'" said Lowther, in his blandest tone.

"I wefuse to w'ite the lettah if Lowthah is goin' to be funnay. The weathah is too hot for me to stand Lowthah's jokes."

"Hear, hear!"

"They muzzle dogs in this hot weather," Blake said, in a reflective way. "I wonder if we could try the same dodge with Lowther."

"Hear, hear!"

"Ass!" said Lowther. "What I say is——"

"Piffle!"

"Look here——"

"Order!"

"Silence for the letter-writer!"

As D'Arcy struggled in the grasp of the juniors, the cheque-book dropped from his pocket. Digby picked it up and gasped in his amazement. "My hat! A cheque book!" "It's mine—you uttah asses!" roared D'Arcy. (*See Chapter 6.*)

"Good! The complete letter-writer forward," grinned Tom Merry. "Go it, Gussy, and if Lowther jaws again, I'll sit on his head."

"Vewwy well. I wathah think that 'Deah Patah,' or 'Deah Governah' will sound a bit too gentle," said D'Arcy reflectively. "I think that undah the circs., I ought to be wathah stiff. I don't want to seem to come wound too easily."

"Quite right."

"At the same time, I shouldn't like to be diswespectful—that would be aw'fly bad form," D'Arcy said anxiously. "I despise a chap who speaks of his pawents diswespectfully."

"Yes, rather!"

"You ought to strike the medium, somehow," Blake remarked.

"That's it!" exclaimed Lowther. "Hit the medium, as the chap did at the spiritualistic seance, you know."

"Order!"

"Yes, shut up, Lowther, old chap. Supposing you begin 'Dear Sir'?" suggested Manners.

"Too formal," said Tom Merry.

"Well, 'Respected Sir,' then——"

"Yaas, that sounds wespectful, and at the same time it's not too chummay," remarked Arthur Augustus. "'Wespected Sir' is about wight. What do you fellows say!"

"Good!"

"First chop."

" Vewy well; that goes, then."

And the swell of St. Jim's commenced the letter with " Respected Sir." Then he stopped. He had made a beginning, at the beginning as Lowther had suggested; but the letter threatened to stop at that point.

" Well, get on," said Digby.

" Yaas, wathah; but——"

" That's not enough."

" Oh, no!" said Blake seriously. " That would be altogether too concise."

" Weally, Blake——"

D'Arcy chewed the handle of his pen and did not finish. The juniors watched him with interest. They made several suggestions, but as D'Arcy was not listening to them, the suggestions did not interrupt his train of thought.

His pen began to move at last.

Tom Merry & Co. watched him as he wrote, and read the words over his shoulders.

" ' Respected Sir,—I am very sorry to be compelled to call your attention to the fact that I—and a considerable number of fellows here—do not consider that you have been playing the game.' "

" Good!"

" Very nicely put."

" Go it!"

" On the ball!"

D'Arcy's pen was travelling over the paper now that it had once started.

" ' I desire to respectfully point out that I had no hand in inducing Mr. Winston Churchill to bring in the Budget, and so I strongly object to my pocket-money being cut short on that account. I waited to see you as you left the Head, with some of my friends, and we were greatly surprised and disappointed when we missed you. Blake thinks that you dodged us on purpose——' "

" Yes, rather!" said Blake.

" And Tom Merry says it isn't playing the game."

" Hear, hear!" said Tom Merry.

" I therefore wish you to reflect on this——"

" That's what the governah always says when he gives me a lecture," said Arthur Augustus, looking up. " It sounds vewy impressive, and I suppose it's all wight."

" Right as rain."

" And upon reflection you may decide in a way calculated to afford more satisfaction to your affectionate father——"

" That's how he goes on," said D'Arcy. " It's a vewy good sentence, and only wants altewin' a little to suit the occasion."

" Ha, ha!"

" I've got an idea, though," said Digby. " Why not shove the letter into the third person, Gussy? It sounds more dignified."

D'Arcy nodded thoughtfully.

" Yaas, there's something in that. My tailah w'ites to me in the third person when he wants his money vewy badly. It sounds as if you're on your dig., and mean bizney."

" Yes, rather!"

" Good egg!" said Tom Merry. " Write it out again in the third person, Gussy."

" Vewy well."

" Then we'll all sign it, and it can go by the next collection."

" Good!"

D'Arcy took a fresh sheet of paper, gnawed his pen thoughtfully, and started again. The complete letter was quite imposing:

" Respected Sir,—A. A. D'Arcy, Esquire, is sorry to be compelled to point out the fact that he, and a considerable number of fellows here, do not consider that Lord Eastwood has been playing the game. He wishes to respectfully observe that he had no hand in inducing Mr. Churchill to bring in the Budget, and that it is not cricket to cut short his pocket-money on that account. The aforesaid A. A. D'Arcy and the other fellows mentioned hereafter waited to see Lord Eastwood as he—Lord Eastwood—left the Head, and were greatly surprised and disappointed when he and they missed him. J. Blake, Esquire, thinks that Lord Eastwood dodged him and them on purpose, and Thomas Merry, Esquire, is of opinion that it isn't playing the game. He and they therefore wish him to reflect on this, and upon reflection he may act in a way calculated to afford more satisfaction to his affectionate son. So no more at present from

" ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY.
" J. BLAKE.
" ARTHUR DIGBY.
" G. HERRIES.

"H. MANNERS.
"MONTAGUE LOWTHER.
"TOM MERRY.
"H. NOBLE.
"CLIFTON DANE.
"B. GLYN."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy surveyed the letter with considerable satisfaction.

"I wathah think that's good," he remarked.

"Jolly good!"

"Ripping!"

"Gorgeous!"

"You don't think I've been wathah too severe with him, you fellows?" asked Arthur Augustus, a little anxiously.

"Not a bit of it."

"Too gentle, if anything."

"You haven't said anything about passing the limit; and that's what he's really done, you know."

"I think it just meets the case; not too gentle, and not too severe," said Herries.

"Of course, it will make him feel a bit uneasy when he knows that a lot of fellows in the Fourth Form and the Shell here are down on him."

"That's just what we want."

"Exactly."

"Yaas, wathah; I think it will do," said Arthur Augustus, as he addressed an envelope. "I shouldn't like to be too severe on the governah, but I weally must point out things to him. This lettah is just the thing."

He sealed the letter in an envelope and looked at his watch.

"Five minutes to the collection," he remarked. "Heaps of time. I'll wun and post it myself."

And he hurried out of the School House and walked across to the school letter-box near the gates, and duly posted the letter.

Binks, the page, looked into the junior common-room a minute after Arthur Augustus had left it.

"Master D'Arcy here?" he asked.

"He's just gone out. He'll be back in a minute," said Tom Merry.

"The 'Ead wants him."

"Oh!"

"In his study at once, please," said Binks, and departed.

Tom Merry & Co. looked serious.

"The noble lord can't have been complaining about Gussy, surely," said Monty Lowther. "Is he in for a carpeting, I wonder?"

"I hope not."

"Looks like it, though."

"Anything w'ong, deah boys?" asked Arthur Augustus, entering the common-room, and observing the serious looks of his chums.

"The Head wants you in his study."

"Bai Jove!"

"I hope it's all right, Gussy!"

"I supose the governah has been sayin' somethin'," said D'Arcy resignedly. "I am wathah glad I've w'itten a wathah stiff lettah now."

"We'll come and see you through," said Tom Merry.

And the whole party accompanied Arthur Augustus to the passage and waited there while he went on to the Head's study and tapped at the door. They heard the deep voice of the Head from within the room.

"Come in!"

D'Arcy opened the door and went in. The door closed behind him, and he disappeared from the gaze of his anxious chums.

Tom Merry & Co. listened with all their ears. It might be a lecture that D'Arcy was booked for, or it might possibly be a caning; and they listened for the voice of the swell of St. Jim's raised in anguish. But they did not hear it.

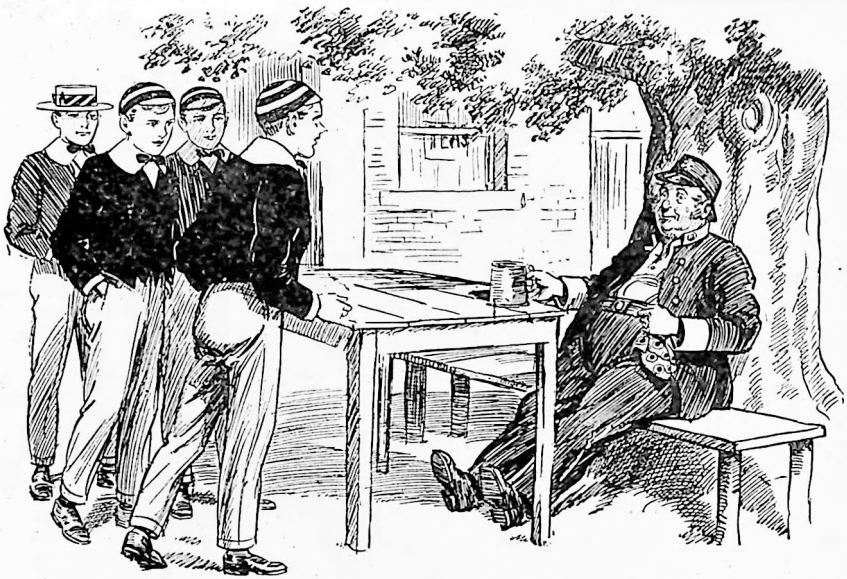
They ventured close enough to the door to hear a faint murmur of voices within the study, but that was all.

Whatever D'Arcy was getting, it was not a licking, and the juniors were somewhat relieved to know that. They wondered what it was; but in their wildest conjectures they never guessed anything like the truth.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

The Cheque-Book

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY entered the Head's study with secret misgivings. Lord Eastwood's visit to St. Jim's, and his departure without an interview with his son, boded ill. The swell of the school



Blagg, the Rylcombe postman, sat on a bench with his legs stretched out and a foaming tankard on the table before him. The crowd of juniors came up, panting as they looked eagerly for the postbag containing Gussy's letter to Lord Eastwood. The bag was nowhere to be seen! (*See Chapter* 7.)

House made up his mind for a "wigging," and he determined to go through with it without allowing it to disturb the repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere.

Dr. Holmes glanced at the junior, as he stood before him with his eyes respectfully downcast, but with a stiffening of the back which showed that he guessed what was coming, and was prepared to endure it with fortitude.

"Ah, D'Arcy," said the Head. "Lord Eastwood has paid me a visit——"

"Yaas, sir."

"On your account, D'Arcy."

"So I supposed, sir. I twust my patah has no complaints to make?" said the swell of St. Jim's firmly.

"Unfortunately he has."

"About me, sir?"

"Yes."

"You are quite sure he was not wefewwin' to my youngah bwothah Wally?" asked D'Arcy.

Dr. Holmes smiled.

"I am quite sure, D'Arcy. Lord Eastwood considers you extravagant, and careless with money."

D'Arcy looked surprised.

"Bai Jove! I am weally astonished, sir. I made my last fivah last me neahly a week."

"Indeed."

"Yaas, wathah, sir. My governah impwessed upon me that I must be careful with it, and it lasted exactly six days, sir."

"H'm! Well, his lordship wishes to teach you a lesson in—in thrift and carefulness with money," said the Head. "He therefore——"

"He hasn't left a fiver with you to give me, sir?'

"Certainly not!"

"Oh! Is he going to send me one?"

"I think not."

D'Arcy looked dismayed

"Bai Jove! Then I shall have nothin' till my allowance is due again!"

"I think your allowance will cease, D'Arcy."

"Gweat Scott!"

"Instead of that, Lord Eastwood has decided to give you a bank account and a cheque-book, hoping that this system will teach you economy and greater care of money."

D'Arcy almost jumped.

More than once he had explained to his father that a cheque account would be extremely useful to him, and save a great deal in postage-stamps.

Lord Eastwood had always smiled at the suggestion.

Arthur Augustus could scarcely believe his ears now.

"Bai Jove, sir!" he ejaculated.

"Now, D'Arcy, you will see that this is placing a great responsibility upon you," said Dr. Holmes. "You will see that you must not be careless or extravagant, and make this experiment a failure, and disappoint your father."

"Certainly, sir!"

"You must not yield to any desire to squander money, or buy things which are useless; or, indeed, to be careless of your account in any way."

"I shall be vewy careful, sir."

"Here is your cheque-book. Lord Eastwood has placed fifty pounds to your credit with his own bankers."

"Bai Jove! Fifty pounds!"

"That is the sum. You will see it entered in the pass-box. The cheque-book contains sixty cheques—as, naturally, the cheques you will draw will be for small amounts."

"Oh, yaas!'

"His lordship did not specify any particular length of time which the money is to last," pursued the Head. "But you will understand that such a sum must last you a long time. A year at least, I should say."

"Oh, it will last an awf'ly long time!" said D'Arcy confidently. "I don't suppose I shall have spent it all by the time I leave St. Jim's."

The Head smiled.

"I hope that will prove to be correct, D'Arcy. Take care of your cheque-book, and mind that it does not pass out of your own hands. Take care of the money, and do not be reckless. You may go."

"Thank you vewy much, sir."

And Arthur Augustus left the study.

He walked down the passage as if he were walking on air.

Arthur Augustus had always had plenty money all his life, and was seldom short of it, and then only temporarily. But he had never possessed such a sum as fifty pounds—and a cheque-book.

The cheque-book was, as he would have said, stunning.

He put his hand into his pocket twice in half a minute to feel it, and make sure that it was really there.

Tom Merry & Co. looked relieved as they saw him. The manner of the swell of St. Jim's was a sufficient indication that he had not been "ragged."

"Well?" demanded Blake.

"Well, deah boy."

"Have you been carpeted?"

"Not at all."

"Jawed?"

"No."

"Any impots?"

"Certainly not."

"Then what did the Head want you for?" demanded five or six voices together.

"Oh, only a little mattah of bizney," said D'Arcy negligently. "My patah left my cheque-book with him, that's all."

"Eh?"

"My patah left my cheque-book with him to be given to me."

"Your what?"

"Cheque-book."

The juniors stared at D'Arcy. He spoke quite coolly, as if he had been in possession of dozens of cheque-books from his earliest years.

"Oh, come off!" said Blake, at last.

"Draw it mild."

"Cheese it!"

"You can't pull our legs like that, you know."

"Weally, deah boys——"

"Look here, what did the Head want?" demanded Monty Lowther.

"What did your pater come down for?"

"What's the row, anyway?"

"I have alweady informed you, deah boys. My patah came down to hand my cheque-book to Dr. Holmes."

Blake snorted.

"This isn't the first time Gussy has started in business as a funny man," he said; "but I suggest that it should be the last."

"Hear, hear!"

"Bump him!"

"Weally, you know——"

"Bump the chump!"

"Weally—hands—off—yow!"

A dozen hands fastened upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He was rushed backwards to the wall and jammed against it, and pinned there helplessly.

"Now, then, tell us the truth before we bump you!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "What did the Head want you for?"

"Ow!"

Arthur Augustus wriggled in the grasp of the juniors. But he could not get away.

"Answer, you ass—no rot!"

"Ow! Pway welease me! You are wumplin' my clothes feahfully. My collah is gettin' simply cwushed."

"Then——"

"Explain."

"Bump him!"

"Hold on, deah boys. The Head sent for me to——"

"Well, to what?"

"To hand me my cheque-book."

"Why, there he goes again!" exclaimed Blake, exasperated. "Bump him!"

"Ow—yow!"

Bump!

"Yawooh!"

Bump!

"Yowp!"

"Once more!" exclaimed Digby. "Now—my word, what's that?"

The cheque-book had fallen from D'Arcy's pocket as he was bumped. Digby picked it up in astonishment.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "What's that?"

"A blessed cheque-book."

"My hat!"

"It's m-m-my cheque-book!" gasped D'Arcy. "You uttah asses!"

The juniors, in their astonishment, released the swell of St. Jim's, and he staggered to his feet, dusty and dishevelled and wrathful.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

Too Late!

TOM MERRY & Co. stared blankly at the cheque-book. Digby held it aloft for all to see. There it was—a fat cheque-book plain for all eyes to see.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Monty Lowther at last. "Then it's true!"

"Looks like it!"

"It's a cheque-book."

"A real cheque-book."

"Where did you get it, Gussy?"

D'Arcy dusted his jacket with a cambric handkerchief, and sniffed.

"I have alweady informed you that it is my cheque-book," he said.

"But——"

"My governah left it with the Head for me——"

"But——"

"He has placed fifty pounds to my cwedit in the County and Town Bank."

"Great Scott!"

"And that's the cheque-book?"

"My word!"

There was no doubting it now.

It was a real cheque-book, and it really belonged to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The swell of St. Jim's dusted himself down, and readjusted his collar, and put his monocle into his eye, and surveyed the astonished juniors loftily.

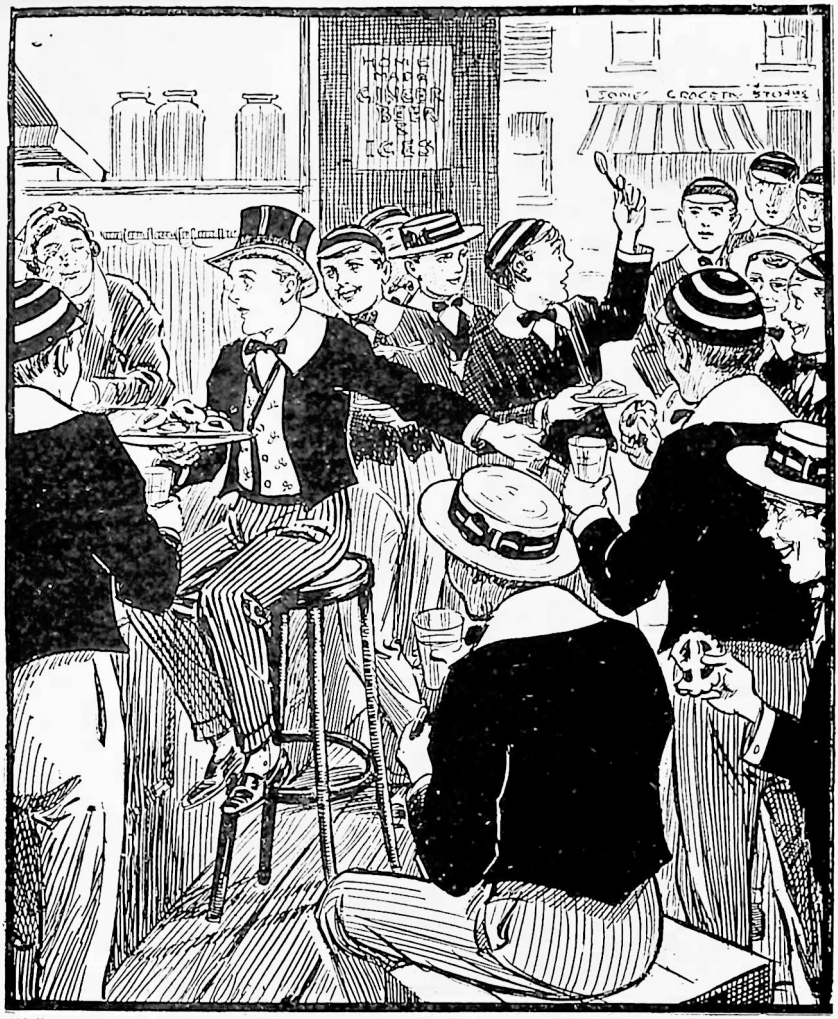
Digby opened the cheque-book and turned the leaves over.

"About fifty of them," he remarked.

"Sixty, deah boys."

"And you can draw on as much money as you like?"

"Yaas, up to fifty pounds."



"Walk up, deah boys! Pway don't stint yourselves!" said D'Arcy, and the juniors set to with a will. Mrs. Murphy had never been so busy in her life; even her large stock soon showed signs of petering out. Jam tarts, cream puffs, currant cakes, and pork pies disappeared at an amazing rate, while ginger-pop and lemonade gurgled merrily from dozens of opened bottles. Arthur Augustus surveyed the scene with a happy smile; there was no doubt that all the fellows were enjoying the feast he was standing them.

(*See Chapter 9.*)

"My hat!"

"Well, this is ripping!" exclaimed Blake. "I must say that your governor has played up decently this time, Gussy."

"Yaas, wathah."

"Sorry we bumped you; but it doesn't matter."

"I wegard it as mattewin' a gweat deal. My clothes are wumpled."

"Never mind."

"My collah is quite soiled."

"Blow the collar! Look here, the best thing we can do is to get to the tuckshop, and let Mrs. Taggles have the first cheque."

"Good egg!"

"Ripping idea!"

D'Arcy nodded genially.

"Quite wight, deah boys. We——"

"By Jove!" exclaimed Tom Merry, suddenly. "The letter!"

"Eh?"

"The letter!"

"What letter?"

"The letter to Lord Eastwood."

"Phew!"

"Bai Jove!"

"We've accused him of not playing the game, and given him a fearful dressing, and all the time he was fixing this up with the Head!" exclaimed Tom Merry, in dismay.

"Bai Jove!"

"It's beastly unlucky," said Blake.

D'Arcy looked greatly concerned. He had forgotten the letter to his father in the excitement of getting the cheque-book.

He wrinkled his aristocratic forehead thoughtfully.

"It's wotten!" he said. "The governah won't know I w'ote that lettah before I got the cheque-book, and he'll think me an ungwateful beast, you know!"

"Sure to."

"We must get the letter back!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

Blake shrugged his shoulders hopelessly.

"Too late," he said. "We couldn't fish it out of the box, anyway, and it's collected now. The collection's gone a good ten minutes."

"Bai Jove, we must do somethin'," exclaimed D'Arcy, in great distress. "It's wotten! I would give anythin' to get that wotten lettah back again."

"Yes, rather!"

"The post may not have gone yet; you know, the collection's sometimes late," said Kangaroo, hopefully. "If it hasn't gone, and we interview the postman, we may be able to get him to give it back."

"It's against the law," said Manners.

"Yes, but the postman knows us—knows Gussy's writing."

"Let's twy!" said D'Arcy.

And he ran off, with the rest after him, at top speed to the letter-box in the school wall near the gates.

The sight of ten juniors rushing out of the School House at top speed attracted, naturally, a certain amount of attention. Fellows called out to Tom Merry & Co. to inquire what was up, but they received no answer. Skimpole, of the Shell, tried to stop D'Arcy by catching at one of his buttons, in the objectionable way Skimpole had, but the swell of St. Jim's was not to be delayed just then.

"Pway don't stop me, deah boy!" he panted. "I'm in a huwwy."

"But——"

"Pway get out of the way."

"It's rather an important matter I want to speak about," said Skimpole, catching at D'Arcy as he ran. "You see, I'm now doing the final chapter of my book on Socialism."

"Buzz off!"

"Really——"

D'Arcy gave the amateur Socialist of St. Jim's a gentle push, and Skimpole sat down in the quad.

D'Arcy stumbled over him, and then ran on, and each of the juniors as they passed trod carefully upon Skimpole.

The genius of the Shell lay in a dazed state, wondering whether he was in the middle of a particularly severe earthquake, till the last of the juniors had passed.

Then he sat up, and blinked after them through his big spectacles.

"Dear me!" he murmured.

Tom Merry & Co., laughing as they ran, dashed on towards the gates.

They reached the letter-box.

But a glance at it told that they were too late.

The collection had been made.

They halted, panting.

"It's gone!" said Tom Merry.

"We mayn't be too late to catch the postman," said Blake. "Taggles! Hallo, Taggles! Turn your beautiful face this way!"

Taggles, the school porter, turned his face towards them. It was not a beautiful face—that was Blake's little joke. As a matter of fact, Taggles was frowning.

"Have you seen the postman, Taggy?" asked Blake.

"Yes, Master Blake."

"Has he been gone long?"

"About five minutes."

"There's a chance yet!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "After him!"

The juniors dashed out into the road.

They knew that the postman went towards Rylcombe after collecting at St. Jim's, and there was a chance of overtaking him on the road. If the letter was still in his bag there was no reason why Blagg should not hand it out. It was not as if the juniors were strangers to him. He knew D'Arcy, and knew D'Arcy's writing, and it was possible that he would stretch a point in the elegant junior's favour. At all events, the chance was worth trying.

The juniors streamed down the lane at a run.

"We'll make him give it up!" grinned Bernard Glyn. "There are enough of us to eat him, if he doesn't."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hallo, here he is!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

He had caught sight of the postman.

By the side of the road, at some distance from the school, was a little hedge inn, and on the bench outside, under a big oak tree, they could see the postman sitting. Blagg was taking a rest. The afternoon was hot, and the road was dusty, and Blagg evidently considered himself entitled to rest and refreshment.

He sat on the bench with his legs stretched out and a foaming tankard of ale in front of him on the wooden table. His bag was not to be seen, and the juniors guessed that it was in the inn.

The crowd of juniors came up panting.

"Good-afternoon, Blagg!" said Tom Merry.

"Good-afternoon, Master Merry," said Blagg. "It's 'ot, sir."

"I should say so," agreed Tom Merry. "I say, you chaps, we may as well have something to drink. Who says ginger-pop?"

"Ginger-pop!" said nine voices, with singular unanimity.

"Ginger-pop it is. You don't mind us sitting at your table, Mr. Blagg?"

"Honoured, sir," said Blagg.

"Thanks."

"It's 'ot!" said the Rylcombe postman, emptying his tankard and gazing at it longingly. "You get very thirsty this weather, Master Merry."

"Yes, rather! Order the ginger-pop, Monty."

"Right-ho!"

"And ale for Mr. Blagg. You'll drink with us, Mr. Blagg?"

"Thank you kindly; I will."

And he did.

Blagg drank ale, and the juniors ginger-pop, with great friendliness. The tankard was soon emptied, and Tom Merry ordered it to be refilled again. Blagg was in the highest good-humour by this time. The ale was good, and it had a mellowing effect, and Blagg could not have felt more obliging than he did at that moment.

It was evidently a good time to tackle him about the letter.

"I suppose you've made the collection at St. Jim's?" Tom Merry remarked, as he sipped his ginger-pop.

"Oh, yes!" said Blagg.

"Bai Jove! Did you notice a lettah among the othahs in my w'itin', Blagg?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Acry.

Blagg smiled.

"There was a good many letters, Master D'Arcy," he said.

"Well, Gussy's one was there," Tom Merry observed.

"If it was there, I collected it," said Blagg. "You needn't be afraid about your letter,

Master D'Arcy. It's in my bag all right."

"Yaas, but——"

"Your tankard's empty, Blagg," said Tom Merry. "I suppose you can manage another?"

"Thank you kindly."

"Now, this is how the matter stands," Blake remarked. "Gussy, as usual, has been making blunders——"

"Weally, Blake——"

"And he's posted a letter that ought not to have been posted."

"That's bad," said Blagg, sipping his ale.

"Yes, isn't it? We thought that if we spoke to you in time, you might let Gussy have his letter back," said Tom Merry.

"Agin the law, Master Merry."

"Yes, but——"

"Letters once posted is the property of the person addressed," said Blagg, with a shake of the head.

"Yes, I know; but this letter is to Gussy's father, as you could see by the address, and it's all in the family, you know. That makes a difference, doesn't it?" urged Tom Merry.

Blagg nodded.

"Yes, perhaps so, Master Merry."

"Gussy will open the letter in your presence, and show you that it's all serene," said Tom Merry. "It's simply a case of a letter being posted in too great a hurry."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Blagg looked doubtful; but the ale was mellowing him more than ever now, and he did not like to be disobliging.

"Well, you see," he remarked, "I'd like to do anything I could for you young gentlemen, but——"

"You see the whole thing's all right, don't you?"

"Oh, yes, but——"

"Then you agree?"

"Yes, but——"

"You shall see the letter opened."

"Yes, but——"

"Now you're not going to refuse, Blagg," said several of the juniors at once, persuasively. "Don't be a cad, you know."

"No, I won't refuse, but——"

"Well, then, fish out the letter."

"You see——"

"Where's the bag?"

"Come, Blaggy——"

"You see——"

"Come on, old man. Where's the bag?"

"It's not here," Blagg got out at last.

"Eh! What?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Not here!"

"No. You see, it was so 'ot, and the school was my last collection, and the carrier passed me on the road," explained Blagg. "I gave him my bag to carry in to the post-office."

"Oh! Then where is it now?"

"It'll be at the post-office afore this," said Blagg.

"Oh!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"Blagg, you're a careless villain!" exclaimed Tom Merry, shaking his finger at the Rylcombe postman. "You know you oughtn't to part with your bag."

"But I've knowed the carrier all my life," said Blagg. "It's all right."

"I dare say it's all right, but it's against the law," said Tom Merry severely. "You see what comes of breaking laws! You break them to please yourself, and then it prevents you from—from——"

"From breaking them to please us," suggested Monty Lowther.

"Oh, don't be an ass, Lowther!"

Blagg grinned.

"I'm sorry, Master Merry——"

"Well, it can't be helped, I suppose," said Tom Merry, rising. "The letter's gone, Gussy, and we've had our run for nothing."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It's rotten, but it can't be helped."

And the juniors left the inn, leaving Blagg finishing his ale.

"I suppose I'd bettah send a telegwam to the governah," said D'Arcy thoughtfully. "That lettah will have to be explained away somehow."

"Yes, rather!"

"Then let's go down to the post-office."

They strolled on to Rylcombe.

Three youths were standing outside the village tuckshop, which the juniors passed as they entered the village. They were three fellows of the New House at St. Jim's—

MY TOWSER!

A POETIC TRIBUTE TO GEORGE HERRIES' BULLDOG

By ITS OWNER.

Who visits Study Number Six,
And gets the cushions in a mix,
And plays all sorts of doggy tricks ?
My Towser !

Who takes a playful snap at Gus,
And makes that worthy fume and fuss,
And scowl and howl ? ('Twas ever thus !)
My Towser !

Who loves to feed on juicy bones ?
Who utters weird, unearthly groans
When chaps are playing gramophones ?
My Towser !

Who follows faithfully to heel ?
Who learned to beg, but not to steal ?
Who makes the rats with terror squeal ?
My Towser !

Who follows scents for miles and miles,
And tackles hedges, gates, and stiles,
And banishes the burglars' smiles ?
My Towser !

Who plunges in the River Rhyll,
And swims towards the water-mill
As gracefully as trout or brill ?
My Towser !

Who loves to fight, in battle keen,
With Peke, or Pom, or Aberdeen,
And gains the verdict all serene ?
My Towser

Who fought the kitchen cat one day,
And conquered it in fierce affray ?
Who fairly made the fur fly, eh ?
My Towser !

Who loves his trainer and his teacher,
And shows his love in every feature ?
Who is a really champion creature ?
My Towser !

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn. They were looking in at the window, and Fatty Wynn was evidently explaining to Figgins and Kerr that it would be a good thing to go in and sample the excellent things displayed there by Mother Murphy.

"That's all very well," said Figgins, as the School House fellows came by, "but the funds are too low, Fatty. It can't be did."

"I'm hungry."

"Well, let's get back to tea," said Figgins. "We shall have to tea in the Hall, too. It's no good staring at the tarts, Fatty—you can't have any of them."

"I'm awfully hungry."

Arthur Augustus halted. His cheque-book was burning a hole in his pocket, so to speak, and the swell of St. Jim's was always generous.

"Figgins, deah boy——"

Figgins & Co. turned round and favoured the School House fellows with a steady stare.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

The Telegram

"HALLO!" said Figgins. "How did they come to let you out?"

"Weally, Figgins——"

"Hallo, Blake! Where did you dig up that chivvy?" asked Kerr cheerfully.

"Look here——"

"No fear! It worries me!"

"Cheese it!" exclaimed Tom Merry, laughing. "We are not looking for rows now, Figgy, and, if we were——"

"It would be bad for Figgins," remarked Kangaroo.

"Oh, rats!" said Figgins.

"Bai Jove! I think we ought to bump the wottahs, just to teach them to be pwopahly wespectful to the cock house at St. Jim's," said D'Arcy.

"Good egg!"

"Bump the bounders!"

The crowd of School House fellows gathered round the New House trio. Figgins & Co. put their backs to the shop-window.

"You're forgetting the telegram, Gussy," said Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove, yaas!" said Arthur Augustus. "I stopped to speak to these wottahs to wemark that I was standin' tweat——"

Fatty Wynn pricked up his ears.

"What's that?" he exclaimed quickly.

"I am standin' tweat to these chaps, as I think I will let Mother Murphy have my first cheque——"

"Your first what?" exclaimed Figgins and Kerr together.

"My first cheque."

"Off his rocker?" asked Figgins, glancing at Tom Merry.

Tom Merry laughed.

"No. His pater has given him a cheque-book! Honest Injun."

"My hat!"

Fatty Wynn came a little nearer to D'Arcy.

"How good!" he exclaimed. "Your governor's an awfully decent chap, D'Arcy. So are you. I've often said to Figgins that I wished you were in the New House, because I should like to chum up with you."

"I don't remember it," said Figgins.

"Well, perhaps it was Kerr I said it to——"

"I don't remember it, either," said Kerr.

"Oh, come now——"

"Still, Gussy's an awfully good sort when he's got a cheque-book," said Figgins. "I vote that we encourage Gussy as long as the cheque-book lasts."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"House rows are bad form," said Fatty Wynn, looking round at the School House fellows. "I think it's a much better idea for both Houses to pull together, and—and promote peace and—and harmony, and all that, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Are you standing the feed now, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then we'll join you with pleasure.

"Yes, it's pax," said Figgins—"pax with anybody who's got a cheque-book. Pray allow me to give you my arm into the shop, Gussy."

"I've got to go to the post-office first," said D'Arcy. "Don't you fellows wait for me, though. Begin at once."

"Good!"

"Certainly!" said Fatty Wynn, bolting into the shop.

He was giving orders in one second more; in two seconds he was beginning. The juniors crowded in after him.

D'Arcy and Tom Merry went on to the post-office. The other fellows, with Figgins & Co., took full advantage of D'Arcy's hospitality. They were beginning.

The two juniors reached the post-office, and D'Arcy took a form and a pencil, and began to gnaw the handle of the latter.

"I don't know exactly how to put it," he remarked. "Have you got any suggestions to make, deah boy?"

Tom Merry looked thoughtful.

"Suppose you cancel the letter?" he suggested. "That's how you do a cheque if you don't want it to be cashed."

"But——"

"If you wire that the letter's cancelled, and that your pater is not to read it, that ought to make it all right," said Tom Merry. "Lord Eastwood'll get the telegram before the letter, see, and then he won't read the letter."

Arthur Augustus brightened up.

"Bai Jove! That's a wippin' dodge!"

His pencil scribbled over the form.

"Don't shove in the whole dictionary," Tom Merry suggested. "You have to pay for every word, you know."

"Yaas, that's all right. I have a cheque-book, you know."

Tom Merry grinned.

"That won't last for ever, Gussy, and they won't take the cheques here, anyway."

"Bai Jove, I nevah thought of that! Nevah mind, you can pay the telegwam, and I'll give you a cheque, deah boy."

"Right-ho!"

The telegram was written at last.

"Lord Eastwood, Eastwood House, Easthorpe, near Cleveland.—Letter cancelled. Please do not read it. Many thanks for cheque-book.—Your affectionate ARTHUR."

"Think that is all wight, Tom Mewwy?"

"Right as rain!"

"Then I'll send it off."

And the telegram was dispatched.

Then the two juniors strolled back to the tuckshop.

Mrs. Murphy's little shop was already pretty well filled when they entered, and there was not very much room to move.

Thirteen juniors filled up a considerable space. Some of them were sitting on the little rickety chairs, and some on the counter and some on the edges of egg-boxes or dog-biscuit cases. Some were standing, some leaning. But all were either eating or drinking, or both.

They greeted Arthur Augustus with enthusiasm.

"Here he comes!"

"Here's the founder of the giddy feast!"

"Take my place, Gussy," said Monty Lowther, slipping off the counter. "Here you are! Shove him up!"

"Weally——"

"There you are!"

Arthur Augustus was plumped upon the counter. A plate was placed upon his knees, and a glass in his hand. A dozen voices were giving orders at once, and Mrs. Murphy was busy in executing them as fast as she could.

It was a cheerful scene.

The rate the good things were disappearing at would have been alarming to anyone who was not in possession of a cheque-book.

But D'Arcy smiled serenely.

The feast was at its height when three or four fellows looked in at the door. Tom Merry uttered an exclamation at the sight of them.

"Look out! Grammar cads!"

THE NINTH CHAPTER

The First Cheque

GORDON GAY, of the Fourth Form at Rylcombe Grammar School, looked in at the door of the tuckshop, and grinned at the St. Jim's crowd. Behind him were Jack Wootton and Frank Monk, Lane, and Carboy, all of the same Form at the Grammar School. The juniors of St. Jim's were prepared for war at once, but Gordon Gay & Co. were not on the war-path. The odds were too heavily against them for that.

Gay waved his hand amicably.

"Pax!" he exclaimed.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus. "Pway do not have any wows now. I wathah think it would be a good

In great admiration the juniors watched D'Arcy as he wrote out a cheque for nine pounds, eight shillings and threepence—the cost of the feed. Mrs. Murphy was evidently much impressed at sight of the cheque-book. "Thank you, Master D'Arcy," she said, as she took the cheque and blotted it carefully.

(*See Chapter 9.*)

capah for the Gwammah cads to join us, in ordah to celebwate the occasion."

"Good egg!"

"Certainly!" said Gordon Gay. "We looked in for some ginger-pop, and we'll feed with anybody. We're not particular, are we, Monkey?"

"Certainly not!" said Frank Monk. "I'm quite willing. Nobody's likely to see us."

"Oh, don't be funny," said Tom Merry. "Walk up and feed. It's Gussy's treat."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The Grammarians lost no time in accepting the invitation.

The St. Jim's fellows made room for them, and they squeezed up to the counter, and Mrs. Murphy attended to their wants.

They gave their orders liberally.

"Ginger-pop!"

"Lemonade!"

"Jam tarts!"

"Currant cake!"

"Pork pies!"

"Try the ham," said Fatty Wynn, with a beatific smile on his fat face. "I can recommend the ham. I've had some."

"So we will! Ham, please!"

"Have some of the cold beef with it. I've tried it, and it's all right."

"Good!"

"The pork pies are good, too. I've tried 'em."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So are the patties. I've tried 'em."

"Go hon!"

"And the veal pies, too. I've had some."

"Anything you haven't had?" asked Gordon Gay.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Walk up, deah boys! Pway don't stint yourselves."

"We're not going to!"

"No fear!"

"The jam tarts are a bit stale," said Fatty

Wynn. "The cream puffs are good. I've only had nine jam tarts; I don't care for 'em."

"My word!" murmured Gordon Gay. "How many would he have if he did care for 'em?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I asked you for some cream puffs," said Fatty Wynn reproachfully. "Mrs. Murphy, I asked you for some cream puffs."

"I gave them to you, Master Wynn."

"No; you only gave me six."

"I—I'll get some more."

"Give me a dozen marmalade tarts to go on with, then."

"C-certainly!" gasped Mrs. Murphy.

"And I'll have some more ginger-beer. And I may as well have a pot of that strawberry jam, if you'll give me a spoon. I'm fond of jam."

"Go it, Fatty!" said Figgins admiringly. "Keep up the reputation of the New House."

"I'm going to, Figgy!"

Arthur Augustus surveyed the scene with a pleased smile.

He liked to see happy faces round him, and there was no doubt that all the fellows were enjoying themselves.

School House and New House and Grammar School were on the best of terms now.

"This comes like corn in Egypt," Jack Wootton remarked. "We've just had a long walk, and we were feeling too hungry to walk back to school without a snack, you know."

"Try the sausages," said Fatty Wynn. "They're good."

"Have you tried 'em?" grinned Gordon Gay.

"Well, I had seven, so I know they're all right. I was going to try them, but I had some of the veal patties instead."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ginger-pop, Mrs. Murphy."

"Lemonade here."

"Pass the tarts."

"Cheese cakes, please."

"And vanilla jellies."

"Mine's an ice."

Mother Murphy had never been so busy in her life. Her stock, too, showed some signs of petering out. More than once she had to reply that some particular article called for was exhausted. But the juniors were accommodating. If they couldn't have one thing, they were quite willing to have another.

As jam tarts and cream puffs disappeared, tins of biscuits and bottles of sweets were opened, and these were almost inexhaustible.

Gordon Gay had seen some considerable feeds, both at St. Jim's and the Grammar School, but the extent of this one surprised him.

"Did you say Gussy was footing this little bill?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!"

"Have you been robbing a bank, then?"

"Weally, Gay——"

"Or have you come into a fortune?"

"I'm wathah flush at present."

"Good! We'll soon alter all that!" grinned Frank Monk.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, Gussy's all right!" said Monty Lowther. "He's rolling in filthy lucre. His pater has just given him a bank account and a bank-book."

"My hat!"

"You're rotting!"

"Honour bright!" said Tom Merry.

"Let's see the giddy book."

D'Arcy held up the cheque-book.

"My word! Then it's true!" said Gordon Gay. "Well, I must say some chaps have all the luck!"

"I haven't dwawn any cheques so fah," said D'Arcy. "I am goin' to give Mrs. Murphy the first cheque in the book, you see."

"It will be a rather big cheque, I think," grinned Gordon Gay.

"That's all wight, deah boy!"

"There's a crowd gathering round the shop," Tom Merry remarked, looking out of the doorway. "Rylcombe is interested."

Quite a crowd of village lads were staring into the shop. The continual popping of corks, and the voices and loud laughter, had attracted most of the youthful idlers of Rylcombe.

Arthur Augustus recognised his old acquaintances Pilcher and Grimes among them, and waved his hand to them cordially.

"Pway come in, deah boys!" he exclaimed. "I'm standin' tweat, and there's enough for all!"

Pilcher winked at Grimes.

"That's good enough," he remarked.

"What-ho!" said Grimes.

"Come in, deah boys—all of you! Those who can't get in, give their orders, and we'll pass out the stuff!"

"Phew!" said Tom Merry.

As there were a dozen or fifteen fellows outside the shop, the order was a big one. But D'Arcy, in the consciousness of having inexhaustible funds at his command, was simply overflowing with hospitality.

Needless to say, the village lads promptly gave their orders.

Some of them could not be fulfilled, because Mrs. Murphy's stock was running out, but there was ample ginger-beer and biscuits and cake.

The feast was a royal one.

Tom Merry looked at his watch at last.

"Time we got back, or we shall be late for locking up!" he exclaimed. "Give Gussy his little bill, Mrs. Murphy, please."

"Certainly, Master Merry."

Mrs. Murphy had been keeping a rough account on a sheet of sugar paper. The hieroglyphics she inscribed there had no meaning for anyone but herself; her system of booking, like the documents that are sometimes advertised for, was of no value to anyone but the owner. She seemed to make meaning out of it, however, and after wrinkling her forehead over the sum, she at last presented Arthur Augustus with his account.

D'Arcy glanced at the paper.

"Nine pounds, eight shillings and thwee-pence," he remarked.

"By George!"

"My only hat!"

D'Arcy did not turn a hair. He took his cheque-book from his pocket.

"Can you lend me a pen, Mrs. Murphy?" he asked.

"Certainly, Master D'Arcy!" said the good dame, much impressed by the cheque-book. "Here it is, and the ink."

"Thank you vewy much."

Arthur Augustus filled in the cheque.

Then he marked off the amount on the counterfoil, and tore the cheque from the book and passed it across the counter.

The juniors watched him in great admiration.

"Thank you, Master D'Arcy," said Mother Murphy, carefully blotting the cheque.

"We will now weturn to St. Jim's, deah boys."

"Well good-bye, and thanks for an awfully ripping feed!" said Gordon Gay.

"Not at all, deah boy!"

"Many thanks," said Frank Monk. "I shall probably give you a call soon, Gussy. You're a nice chap to know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Grammarians went their way. Tom Merry & Co. took the road to St. Jim's, and Pilcher and Grimes and the rest gave D'Arcy a cheer as he departed, to which the swell of St. Jim's responded by gracefully bowing and raising his silk hat.

THE TENTH CHAPTER

Binks Is Made Happy

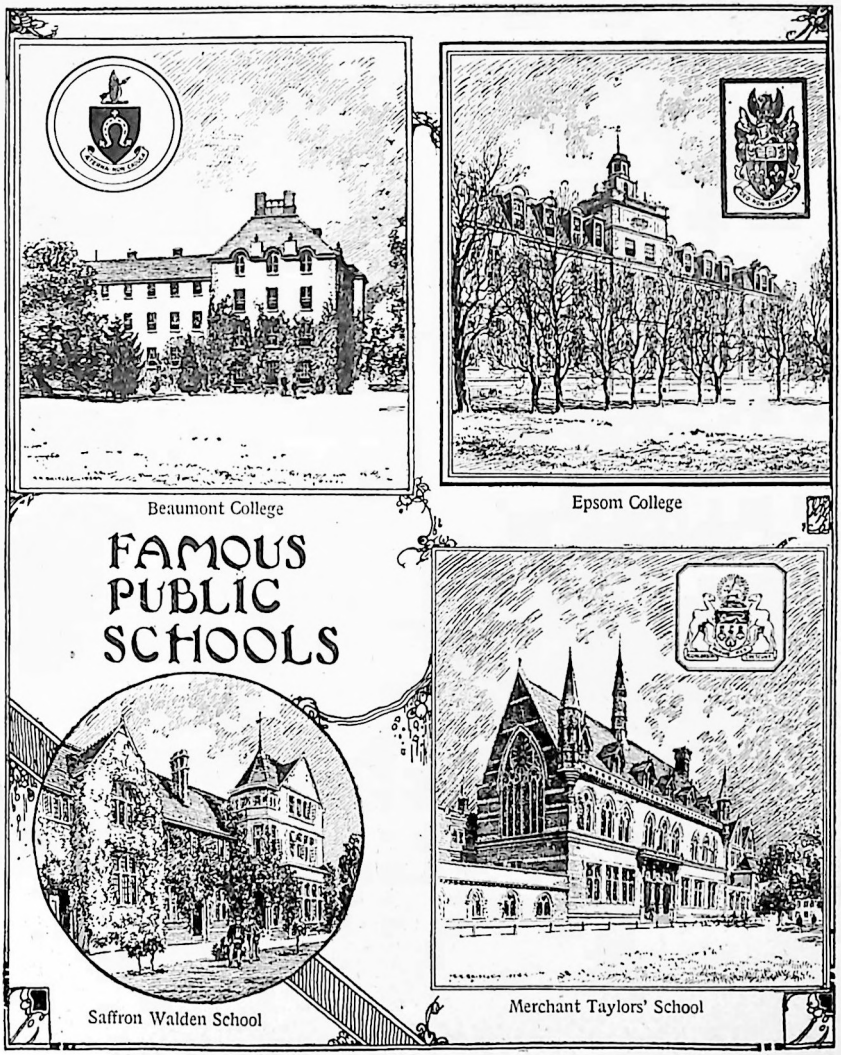
THE next day Arthur Augustus D'Arcy found himself the most remarkable fellow at St. Jim's.

A junior who possessed a cheque-book, with a sum at the bank which seemed inexhaustible to fellows who seldom had more than a few shillings at a time, was a novelty at St. Jim's, and they were all interested in him.

There was no "swank" about Arthur Augustus, and that made him all the more interesting and prevented any feelings of ill-nature or envy from cropping up.

The swell of St. Jim's had generally had plenty of money, and the others were used to that; and his manner did not change now that he was permanently flush.

He had rather an airy way of taking his cheque-book out and drawing a cheque, that was all; but that really excited only admiration.


Beaumont College
Epsom College
FAMOUS
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS
Saffron Walden School
Merchant Taylors' School

D'Arcy borrowed a fountain-pen from Monty Lowther to carry about with him for convenience in drawing cheques when wanted.

During the first day several cheques, some of them for good amounts, were drawn in favour of Mrs. Mimble at the school tuckshop.

The juniors all considered that a fellow with a banking account was good for unlimited feeds; and D'Arcy was far too generous and far too thoughtless in money matters to deny any claimant.

Impecunious juniors developed a sudden and remarkable attachment for D'Arcy, and he could have held quite a court if he had chosen.

Even Upper Form fellows heard about the cheque-book, and asked D'Arcy to let them see it, and honoured him by accepting small cheques.

To decline a loan to a senior was difficult when he knew that there was the money to be had, and D'Arcy drew cheques for Sefton, of the New House, and Knox, the prefect, and several more seniors, the money to be repaid at some time in the hazy future.

Among his own chums, of course, his generosity had no bounds.

Fortunately for him, his own chums were by no means inclined to plunder him or sponge on him in any way, or they might have done it to their heart's content.

That the rich youth should stand unlimited feeds was only right, but that was as far as it went.

"Well, what does it feel like being a giddy millionaire?" Tom Merry asked D'Arcy, when he met him after afternoon school.

D'Arcy smiled.

"I wathah like it," he replied. "It's a wippin' good ideah of the governah's. Nothin' like givin' a chap a decent sum of money to make him feel a sense of wesponsibility."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Are you looking after your money?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Keeping a careful account of every cheque you draw?"

D'Arcy hesitated.

"Well, I did at first," he said. "I began by entahin' the full amount, and so on, on the counterfoil, you know. But I forgot some of them; and, upon the whole, it's wathah a bore. The bankah can do that just as easily as I can."

"The banker?"

"Yaas. What's a bankah for if he doesn't keep your accounts for you?"

"But you won't know when all the money's gone."

"Oh, I expect the bankah will let me know."

"Ha, ha! I rather think he will!" grinned Tom Merry. "But what I mean is, you won't know how the money's going, and it will come to an end all of a sudden and leave you on the beach, perhaps."

"Oh, that's all wight," said D'Arcy confidently. "Fifty pounds is an awful lot of money, and I mean to make it last all this term and next."

"But——"

"I shall send in my passbook at the end of the term, and then I shall see exactly how I stand."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy turned his monocle inquringly upon the hero of the Shell.

"I weally fail to see any weason for laughtah, Tom Mewwy," he remarked.

"I was thinking that there mayn't be any money left at the end of the term, that's all, at the rate you're going on," said Tom Merry.

"Oh, wats! There's heaps, you know. Besides, if the bankah wants any more money, I can send him a cheque for it."

"Eh?"

"I've got sixty cheques in the book, you know, and I've only used six or seven. I can always keep one for the bankah."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Oh, Gussy, you ought to be the head of a big bizney in the City," almost sobbed Tom Merry. "You ought, really. You'd make such a ripping business man."

"Well, as a mattah of fact, I wathah fancy myself as a business man," said D'Arcy. "I fail to see what amuses you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry staggered away to relate D'Arcy's intentions to Manners and Lowther.

The swell of St. Jim's looked after him with a puzzled expression.

"I wegard Tom Mewwy as an ass," he murmured. "I suppose the bankah would accept a cheque on his own bank—he would know that was all wight. I wegard that duffah as a howlin' ass."

And D'Arcy strolled away. He was debating in his mind whether he should purchase a new bicycle now that he could draw a cheque to pay for it, and he strolled under the elms to think it out. Three fags of the Third Form followed him. They were Wally, Jameson, and Gibson. The scamps of the Third were on the track of the cheque-book. Wally had divided his tip with his major, so it was only fair that Arthur Augustus should share out his good fortune; so Wally thought, at all events.

D'Arcy stopped as he walked into the shadow of the trees.

He did not observe the Third-Formers in the distance. It was the sound of a gulping breath, suspiciously like a sob, that made him stop.

He glanced round through his monocle.

"Bai Jove, Binks!"

Binks, the School House page, was standing under one of the elms, the picture of misery. Binks' face was not very clean, and a couple of big tears rolling down it had made a whitish furrow. He blinked at D'Arcy.

"What's the mattah, deah boy?" asked D'Arcy, touched at once.

"I—I—I've lost my money," said Binks. "It was a pound. It's gone."

"Bai Jove!"

"It must 'ave slipped through a 'ole in my pocket," said Binks miserably. "I was goin' to the post-hoffice, and when I got there it was gone."

"The post-office was?" asked D'Arcy, in astonishment.

Binks grinned through his grimy tears.

"No, Master D'Arcy; the pound note."

"Bai Jove, it's wathah weckless of you to have holes in your pockets, Binks!" said Arthur Augustus with a shake of the head. "You can't afford to lose notes, you know. But what were you takin' a pound to the post-office for?"

"To get a postal-order, Master D'Arcy," groaned Binks.

"Oh!"

Arthur Augustus understood. Binks, the buttons of the School House, was a curious

The School House page looked the picture of misery as he stood under one of the elms, with big tears rolling down his cheeks. "What's the mattah, deah boy?" asked D'Arcy, touched by the sound of Binks' sobbing. "I-I-I've lost my money. It was a pound! It's gone!" was the stammered reply. (*See Chapter* 10.)

youth in many respects, with a fervent desire to start in life in the Rocky Mountains as a masked highwayman. But his heart was in the right place. and some of the fellows knew that he sent home the greater part of his wages to his mother to help in the maintenance of a horde of smaller Binkses.

D'Arcy felt for his cheque-book and the fountain-pen.

"It's all wight, Binks," he said.

"How is it, Master D'Arcy? I——"

"I've got a cheque-book," explained D'Arcy. "I'll give you a cheque for the amount."

"Oh!"

"Dwy your teahs, deah boy. It's all wight."

Binks turned scarlet.

"Oh, Master D'Arcy. I—I didn't mean that—I never thought—I didn't know you could give away a pound. I——"

"That's all wight, deah boy."

D'Arcy rested the cheque-book on his knee, and wrote out the cheque. He handed it to the astonished page.

"There you are, Binks."

"Oh, thank you, Master D'Arcy! I'll save up and pay it back."

"Wats! You won't do anythin' of the sort. Go and get it posted."

"Thank you so much, Master D'Arcy."

"Wats! Buzz off!"

And Binks buzzed off, with his face bright and his heart lightened. D'Arcy slipped the cheque-book back into his pocket, feeling quite satisfied. Doubtless, he had wasted a good deal of the money placed to his account by Lord Eastwood; but he had done at least one good deed by means of his cheque-book.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

Another in Trouble

"GUSSY!"

Arthur Augustus turned round as the heroes of the Third came up. He adjusted his eyeglass, and stared at them.

"Weally, Wally, I wish you would put on a clean collah!" he exclaimed.

"Why, this was a clean one this afternoon!" exclaimed Wally indignantly.

"Bai Jove, it's a soiled one now!"

"Rats!"

"Weally, Wally——"

"Look here, I didn't come here to talk collars," said Wally. "I'm hard up. One good turn deserves another. Savvy?"

"I wegard that as a vulgah expwession."

"I could do with a pound" said Wally.

"If you are in want of money, deah boy, I shall be vewy pleased to dwaw you a cheque," said D'Arcy, and the cheque-book came out again.

Wally grinned.

"That's exactly how the case stands," he said. "Make it a pound. Mrs. Taggles will cash it."

"Oh, I say," exclaimed Curly Gibson warmly, "what's the good of a pound! He's just given young Binks a pound. I saw him."

"Shut up, Curly."

"Shan't!" said Curly. "Look here, make it a fiver."

"Weally——"

"Well, say, two pound ten," said Jameson. "That's better, Wally. May as well make hay while the sun shines, you know."

Wally shook his head.

"We're not going to plunder Gussy," he said. "I let Gussy have ten shillings out of my tip. He's going to give me a whole pound—that's all right."

"Look here, make it two pounds."

"Rats!"

"It's a waste," said Jameson indignantly. "I don't approve of wasting money. Make it two pounds, Wally."

"More rats!"

"Look here——"

"Shut up, Jimmy. Make the cheque for one pound, Gussy. I dare say I shall come to you for another later, but that's enough for now."

"Vewy well, Wally."

And Arthur Augustus drew a cheque for a pound for his minor.

Wally took it with a grin. Jameson and Gibson were looking wrathful. To have a major with a cheque-book, and not ask him for more than a pound, seemed to them the extreme of folly. They were very much

inclined to turn upon their chum and bump him.

"Come on," said Wally.

"You ass!" said Jameson.

"You frabjous chump!" growled Curly.

"Rats! Are you coming to the tuckshop?"

That was an invitation it was impossible to resist. Jameson and Gibson swallowed their wrath, and followed Wally to Dame Taggles's little shop, where the good dame cashed the cheque with great willingness, and the greater part of it was immediately expended in eatables and drinkables.

Arthur Augustus went to cricket practice, and soon forgot all about the scamps of the Third. But he was not yet done with them.

As he went back towards the School House a little later, he heard the sound of a loud sob close at hand.

He glanced round in surprise.

"Boo-hoo!"

A diminutive form was on one of the benches under the elms, and it had its face buried in its hands, but D'Arcy recognised Gibson of the Third.

The fag was weeping bitterly.

Arthur Augustus, with his tender heart touched at once, came towards Curly Gibson, and tapped him on the shoulder. The fag gave a start, as if in surprise, and looked up.

"Boo-hoo!"

"What's the mattah, deah boy?" asked D'Arcy sympathetically.

"Boo-hoo!"

"Are you hurt?"

"No. Boo-hoo!"

"What is it, then? I'm sowwy to see you like this," said the swell of the Fourth. "I twust no one has been bullyin' you. If anyone has, tell me who it is and I'll give him a feahful thwashin'."

"It isn't that. Boo-hoo!"

"Then what is it?"

"M-m-m-my grandmother!" sobbed Curly.

"Bai Jove!"

"Boo-hoo!"

"What's the mattah with your gwandmothah, deah boy? I sincerely trust that she is not dead?" said D'Arcy.

"N-no! Boo-hoo!"

"Bai Jove. I suppose you're not cwyin' because she's not dead?"

"Ow! Boo-hoo!"

"What's the mattah with her, Curlay?"

"She—she—she—— Boo-hoo!"

"Yaas?"

"I was going to—to send her a—a postal-order," sobbed Curly. "She's poor, you know—awfully poor, and—and I was going to send her a postal-order."

"That was vewy decent of you, Curlay."

"I—I—I——"

"Anythin' happened to the postal-ordah?"

"I—I—I've lost it!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Boo-hoo!"

"How weally wemarkable! The same thing happened to Binks. It is vewy unfortunate that you lost the postal-ordah. How much was it for?"

"A-a-a p-p-pound."

"How cuwious! It was a pound that Binks lost. It is weally a most wemarkable coincidence."

"Boo-hoo!"

"Pway don't cwy, deah boy. I'll give you a cheque for a pound to send to your gwandmothah," said D'Arcy.

Out came the cheque-book and the fountain-pen. Curly Gibson bestowed a wink upon the pigeons in the quad., but as D'Arcy glanced at him, he became grave again.

"Better make it payable to me," he said. "M-m-my grandmother is an old woman, and—and won't understand cheques. I'll cash it, and—and send her a postal-order."

"Vewy well. Mrs. Taggles will cash it for you."

"Right-ho!"

"Curly! Curly!"

Curly Gibson looked alarmed. It was the voice of Wally, calling through the elms. D'Arcy was writing out the cheque in his leisurely manner. He never did anything in a hurry.

"Curly!"

"That is Wally callin' you," said D'Arcy, pausing with the fountain-pen.

"Yes; that's all right—buck up!"

"Yaas, but——"

"Have you finished?"

"Yaas——"

"Gimme the cheque, then!"

"All except signin'——"

"Oh, buck up!"

"Curly! Oh, here you are!"

Wally came upon the scene, looking rather red and breathless. He stared at Curly Gibson and Arthur Augustus.

"I've been looking for you, you ass!" he exclaimed. "Jameson's waiting, too. What the dickens are you doing here?"

"Oh, buzz off!" said Curly hastily. "I'll join you!"

"You'll come with me now. You've got to cook the herrings."

"You get the frying-pan ready, and——"

"Rats! Come on!"

"Here you are," said Arthur Augustus. "It's wet. Cawwy it in your hand till it's dwy, unless you've got some blottin'-papah."

Wally stared at the cheque.

"What on earth's that for!" he exclaimed.

"It's all wight, Wally——"

"What are you giving Curly a cheque for?"

"It's all right," said Curly. "Come on."

Wally jerked the cheque from his hand.

"It's not all right," he said. "I told you Gussy wasn't to be plundered. I tell you I won't have it."

"Weally, Wally——"

"Don't you be an ass, Gus."

"It's for Curlay Gibson's gwandmothah——"

"Eh?"

"His gwandmothah is vewy poor, and Curlay has lost a postal-ordah he was goin' to send her, so it's all wight. Give him the cheque."

Wally stared at Arthur Augustus, and then at Curly Gibson. The face of the latter became very red. Wally tore the cheque into fragments.

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Curly. "That is my cheque."

"Bai Jove, Wally——"

"You ass!" ejaculated Wally.

"Weally, Wally——"

"You chump!"

"I wefuse to be called a chump!"

"You frabjous burbler!"

"I wegard those expwessions as diswespectful, Wally. I twust you will wemembah that I am your majah."

"You burbling ass!" said Wally. "Can't you see that Curly has been rotting? He hasn't a grandmother!"

"I have," said Curly. "I've got two."

"You don't send 'em postal-orders, then. Can't you see that he's been pulling your leg, Gussy, you ass? He heard Binks yarning to you, and he's yarning to the same tune to squeeze a pound out of you."

"Weally, Wally, I wefuse to believe anything of the sort. I——"

"Look here, you buzz off, Wally," said Curly Gibson. "If Gussy likes to give me a cheque, why shouldn't he? You cut!"

"No fear!" said Wally; and he seized his comrade of the Third by the shoulders. "You young spoofer! Now, then——"

"Ow!"

"Confess!"

"Yarooh! Leggo my n-neck!"

"Were you going to send a postal-order to your grandmother?"

"Yow! Yes! Yarooh! No."

"Get off!"

"Yowp!"

"Don't you be an ass any more, Gussy." said Wally severely. "Blessed if I know what'd become of you if you hadn't me here to look after you."

"Weally, Wally——"

"Leggo!" gasped Curly Gibson, in a stifled voice. "Leggo! You're chook-chook-chooking me! Leggo, Wally, or I'll land you one!"

"You get off! If I find you spoofing Gus again, I'll squash you! Gus is my major, and nobody's going to spoof him but me."

"Look here——"

"Weally, Wally——"

"Oh, don't you begin, Gus! Off you go, Gibby!"

And Wally helped Curly Gibson to start by planting his boot behind him. He started, and Wally followed, still kicking, as if he meant to dribble Curly Gibson like a footer across the quadrangle. Curly broke into a run, and Wally did the same, and they disappeared through the trees at a great speed.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his monocle in his eye, and looked after them in great astonishment, and ejaculated :

" Bai Jove ! "

Then he put his cheque-book and the fountain-pen in his pocket, and took his way to the School House, looking very thoughtful.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

Overdrawn

THERE never was a more generous fellow than Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, and he proved it amply during the next few days.

Any fellow who wanted a small loan had only to mention the matter to D'Arcy, and out came the cheque-book.

Blake tried to point out to him that, at this rate, the fifty pounds Lord Eastwood had placed to his credit would not last long ; but D'Arcy smiled superiorly.

D'Arcy knew what he was about.

" You see, deah boy, you don't undahstand bizney," he remarked.

Blake jumped.

" Bizney ! Do you mean to say that you're scattering your loot like this on business principles ! " he demanded.

" Well, not exactly, but bankin' is a wonderful system," said D'Arcy. " You know that the population of the world is divided into two classes—those who have money and those who haven't. And bankin' is a system invented to keep your money gwowin', you see. You get intewest on money in the bank, and compound intewest, and so forth, and you weally nevah know how much money you have."

" You don't get interest on a current account, duffer."

" I wefuse to be called a duffah. I suppose I am gettin' intewest on my money. I should decline to have no intewest."

" Ass ! "

" Weally, Blake——"

" And even if you were getting four per cent., that wouldn't mount up quick enough to cash all the cheques you're drawing," said Blake.

" You don't undahstand bizney, deah boy."

" Chump ! "

" Weally, Blake, I must decline to be called a chump ! I wegard it as an oppwobwious expwession ! There is no dangah of my ovahdwawin' my account. Why, I have more than forty cheques left ! "

" Eh ? "

" Weally, Blake, I twust you are not gwowin' deaf."

" What good are the cheques if there's no money to meet them ? " roared Blake. " If you draw a cheque, and there's no money in the bank to meet it, it's fraud, and you're liable to prosecution."

" Weally, deah boy, you don't undahstand bankin'," said D'Arcy patronisingly. " There's heaps of money in the County and Town Bank, Limited. My governah says it is one of the oldest and safest banks in England."

" But the money there isn't your money."

" Weally, Blake, I must wemark that you are wathah dense. As soon as I find my account wunnin' low, I can always weplenish it by dwawin' a cheque in favah of the bank managah ! "

Blake gasped, as Tom Merry had done.

" Gussy——"

Words failed him.

" Well ? "

" You're too good to be true ! " gasped Blake. " You ought to be stuffed and put in a glass case. You ought really."

" I wefuse to continue the discush, if you are goin' to make personal wemarks," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity.

" Now, look here——"

" I decline to do anythin' of the sort. I——"

" Let me explain——"

" My deah fellow, you can't tell me anythin' about bankin', I'm quite up to that subject, you know ; I wathah fancy myself at figures."

" But——"

" Let the mattah dwop, deah boy. Now, I was thinkin' that we'd bettah have new curtains and a new squah of carpet in the studay."

Blake shook his head.

" Carpet and curtains cost money," he remarked.

" I didn't expect to win them in a waffle," said D'Arcy. " I am quite aware that they

cost money. I have, as a mattah of fact, alweady ordahed them."

"Ordered them?"

"Yes."

"But where's the tin to come from?" demanded Blake.

"Oh, I'll dwaw them a cheque!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any cause for this diswespectful laughtah, deah boy," said D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass freezingly on his hilarious chum.

"Oh, all right, Gussy, you can go ahead with the cheques!" said Blake. "When the cheque comes back unpaid, we can raise the money to pay the bill!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"And if you get arrested for trying to spoof tradesmen with dummy cheques, we'll stand by you and bail you out," said Blake affectionately.

"Weally, you know——"

"So go ahead with the carpet and curtains."

Digby and Herries grinned when the carpet and curtains came home. But they agreed that if the cheque-book was burning a hole in D'Arcy's pocket, it was best to give him his head, as Blake expressed it.

The study certainly looked much nicer.

D'Arcy looked round the room when it was finished, and there was a smile of approval upon his aristocratic features.

He nodded with much satisfaction.

"I wegard this as a gweat impwovement," he said.

"So it is," said Blake.

"Yes, rather!" agreed Digby. "It's ripping. The only trouble about refurnishing a place is that the things have to be paid for."

"That's all wight, deah boy; I've given the chap a cheque."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Dig——"

"It's all right, for the present, anyway!" grinned Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! Is there any othah little impwovement you could suggest, deah boys?" said Arthur Augustus. "My cheque-book is absolutely at the disposal of the studay, you know."

The three chums looked thoughtful.

"Well, we might have a set of gilt fire irons," suggested Digby.

"Weally, Dig——"

"I should like a diamond-studded collar for Towser," said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"And we might drink pearls in our coffee, like Cleopatra," said Blake. "I rather think that would be a ripping wheeze."

"If you cannot be sewious, deah boys——"

Binks put his head in at the door.

"Letter for Master D'Arcy."

"Thank you vewy much, Binks."

Arthur Augustus took the letter.

It was addressed to him in a clerkly hand, and on the back of the envelope was printed "Town and County Bank."

"It's a letter fwom the bank, deah boys," said D'Arcy.

The chums exchanged a grin.

"Good!" said Blake. "I expect there's news."

"Pewwaps!"

D'Arcy opened the letter.

He read the missive inside, and then carefully adjusted his eyeglass, and read it again. Then he looked perplexed.

"Bai Jove!"

"Well?" demanded three voices.

"Listen, deah boys! Or, wathah, you wead it out, Blake," said D'Arcy, tossing the letter across to Blake. "I wegard the thing as wank impertinence."

Jack Blake took the letter and looked at it. He chuckled, and read aloud the following communication:

"'Master D'Arcy, School House, St. James' Collegiate School, Sussex.

"'Dear Sir,—We are to inform you that your account with us is now overdrawn to the extent of £4 5s. 11d.—four pounds five shillings and elevenpence. Awaiting your instructions, we remain,

"'Yours faithfully,

"'THE TOWN AND COUNTY BANK, LTD.'"

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER

Arthur Augustus Knows How to Settle It

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY looked at his chums, and they looked at him. The

"If I find you spoofing Gus again," exclaimed Wally D'Arcy warmly, "I'll squash you! Gus is my major, and nobody's going to spoof him but me!" And he helped Curly Gibson on his way with the toe of his boot. (*See Chapter* 11.)

three were grinning, but D'Arcy was quite serious, and a little perplexed.

"Well, deah boys?" he said at last.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see anythin' to excite mewwiment."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway be sewious, deah boys. Can you tell me whom that lettah is fwom? Surely the managah would not w'ite in that impertinent stwain?"

"It's from the chap who looks after your account, I suppose," said Blake. "A bank always lets a chap know when his account is overdrawn. You've gone ahead a little too quickly, you see. The money's gone—and I dare say there are half a dozen cheques not presented yet, too."

"Yaas, but——"

"You'll have to go slower," grinned Digby. "You see, fifty pounds won't last for ever."

"The lettah seems to me to be impertinent in tone."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And what instwuctions do they want? I suppose it means with wegard to payin' out for the west of the cheques."

"It's a polite way of putting it," explained Blake. "They mean you're to send them the balance due to them, and stop drawing cheques till you've got some more money there to meet them."

"Oh!"

"The best thing you can do with the cheque-book now is to shove it on the fire."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Now that's good advice!"

"You uttah ass! You don't know anythin' about bankin'."

"Eh?"

"I shall have to make up this four pounds five shillin's and elevenpence," said D'Arcy. "There are also some more cheques out, amountin' to somethin' like fifteen pounds, or twenty, or somethin' like that. I don't remembah exactly. I shall have to send them enough to cover all that, also to keep in hand against future cheques dwawn on them."

"But you haven't got any money!"

"Money is not necessawy, deah boy. I've got the cheque-book."

"Oh!"

"I am goin' to send them a cheque for thirty pounds—or, wathah, I may as well go the whole hog. I'll make it a hundwed pounds."

"What?"

"That will see me cleah for a long time."

"You ass——"

"I wefuse to be called an ass."

"But if you send the bank a cheque

itself for a hundred pounds, what money is to meet the cheque ? " howled Blake.

" My deah chap," said D'Arcy, in a tone of explanation, " you don't undahstand bankin'. Why, the Town and County Bank has a weserve of half a million."

" You chump——"

" Weally, Blake——"

" Oh, carry me away, somebody ! " sobbed Digby. " He'll be the death of me. I know he will ! "

" I wegard you as an ass, Digby ! "

" Now look here, Gussy——"

" Weally, Blake, what the dickens is a weserve fund for, then ? "

" Oh, you ass——"

" Once for all, Blake, I decline to be called an ass. I——"

" You can't send that cheque——"

" You don't undahstand bankin', deah boy. Leave me alone, and I assure you it will be all wight."

" But——"

" Oh, don't wowwy, deah boys ! I assure you there is very little in the science of bankin' that I don't undahstand."

Blake collapsed into a chair. He was almost weeping.

" Do you mean to say that you're going to send that cheque ? " he gasped.

" Yaas, wathah ! "

" And you won't take advice ? "

" Certainly not," said D'Arcy. " I undahstand bankin', and you don't."

" Oh, my word ! "

" Pway shut up, deah boys, while I w'ite to the bank said D'Arcy.

Blake, Herries and Digby looked at one another. D'Arcy sat down at the table and opened his cheque-book.

They watched him draw the cheque.

" Pay to the Town and County Bank, Ltd., the sum of One Hundred Pounds.—ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY."

Then he wrote the letter.

" Dear Sir,—Thank you very much for your communication. Please find enclosed cheque for One Hundred Pounds (£100), to be placed to credit of my current account.—Yours truly, A. A. D'ARCY."

The juniors stood in silence while D'Arcy

The Smuggling Headmaster.

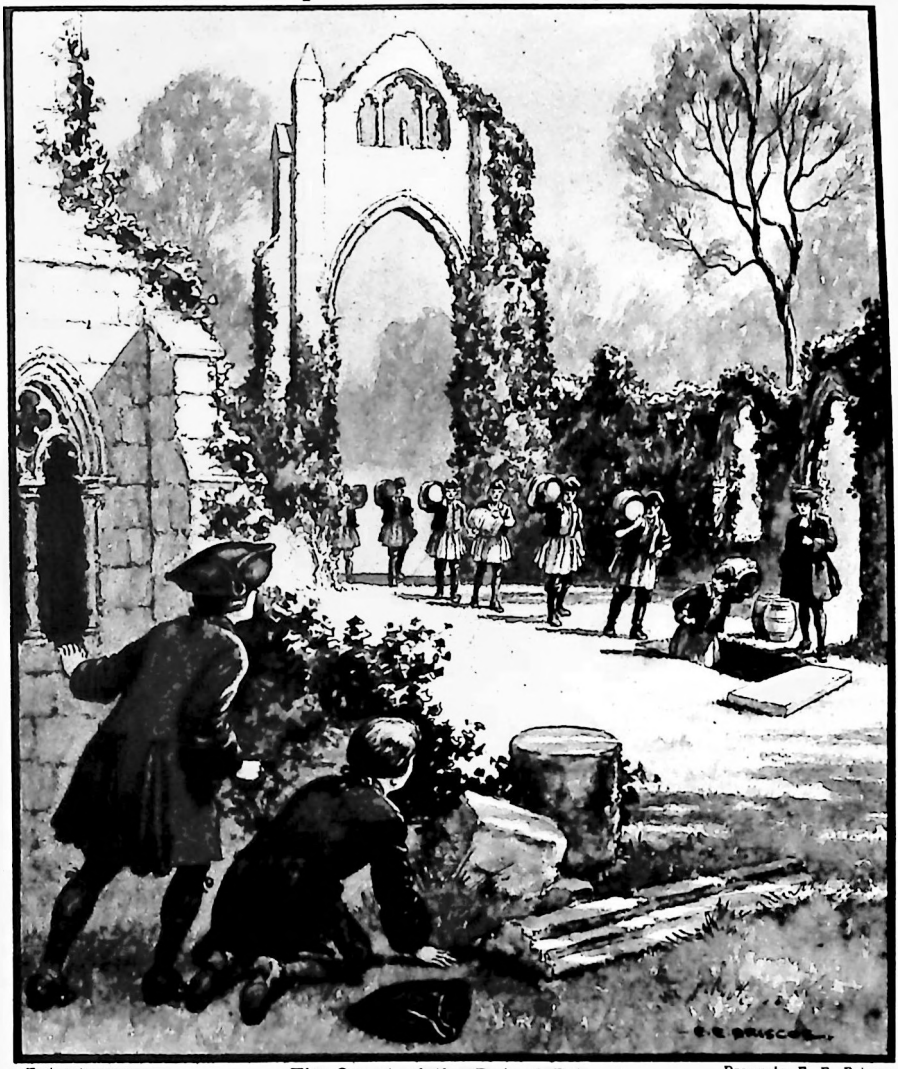
IN the long roll of former headmasters of St. Jim's are numbered many eminent scholars and notable men of whom the old Sussex school has good reason to be proud. But there were one or two exceptions, of whom one was Dr. Septimus Foskett. The doctor ruled the school for the short period of two years during the reign of George the Third, and appears to have been rather popular with the boys. But Dr. Foskett was rather too enterprising to be content to remain a schoolmaster alone. He engaged in secret in the business of smuggling contraband goods into the country on a large scale, so that at the time of his ultimate discovery he was said to be the principal smuggler in Sussex ! His methods were to have the contraband cargoes, brought from France, transferred at night to barges off the mouth of the River Rhyll. The barges were then brought leisurely up river and unloaded a night or two later at the school's private landing-stage above Rylcome village !

The Doctor received his contraband goods in person, and used the vast underground vaults of the ruined Priory, a couple of miles from the school, as a storage chamber. By day he was, of course, the dignified and highly respected Head of St. Jim's !

But one night two Fifth Formers of sporting tastes named Cade and Tregelli, were returning from Rylcombe. Passing the Priory about midnight they heard the tramp of feet and took cover—not being anxious to make the acquaintance of Dr. Foskett's birch in the morning. Before their amazed eyes a file of smugglers came into view and proceeded to deposit their burdens of contraband spirits in the Priory vaults, directed by no less a person than the Head of St. Jim's !

It is said that Cade owed the Doctor a grudge for an unmerited flogging ; at any rate, he made it his business to inform the Revenue Officers and as a result the redoubtable headmaster-smuggler was caught red-handed a few night later. Thus ended one of the most amazing and romantic episodes in the history of the old school.

A Romantic Episode in the History of St. Jim's



To face page 240

The Secret of the Ruined Priory!

Drawn by E. E. Briscoe

tore the cheque from the book, folded it inside the letter, and placed the letter in an envelope, which he addressed to the Town and County Bank, Wayland Branch.

Then the swell of St. Jim's looked up.

"I wathah think that settles it all wight," he remarked.

Blake gasped.

"You think that settles it?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah."

"My hat!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"You're going to post that letter?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah."

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy went out of the study with the letter in his hand. The chums crossed to the window and watched him emerge from the School-House and walk over to the school letter-box.

"He's posted it," said Digby.

"My hat!"

"What will the bank chaps think?" murmured Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"My only hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry looked into the study as he passed. He stared at the three Fourth-formers doubled with mirth.

"Wherefore this thusness?" he demanded. "What's the jokelet?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Gussy's heard that his account's overdrawn——"

Tom Merry grinned.

"Already!"

"Yes—and he's sent the bank a cheque on itself to make it up."

Tom Merry roared.

"Good old Gussy! Ha, ha, ha!"

And he staggered away to tell Manners and Lowther.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

The Testimonial

"D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, deah boy."

"He's here," said Reilly, turning round from the door of Study No. 6 to the crowd of fellows behind him. "It's all right."

It was twenty-four hours after the incident last recorded. D'Arcy had not yet received an answer from the bank, but he had not given that any thought, for he had not the least doubt that that matter was satisfactorily settled.

D'Arcy was alone just now in Study No. 6. Blake and Digby had gone down to Rylcombe after afternoon lessons, and Herries was at the kennels looking after his bulldog. D'Arcy was seated at the open window, polishing his Sunday silk hat—an occupation of which he hardly ever seemed to tire.

He glanced round as the shaggy head of Reilly was thrust into the study.

A look of surprise came over his face as the juniors crowded in.

There were Shell fellows and Fourth-formers in the crowd, and more than a dozen of them altogether.

"What do you want, deah boys?" said the swell of St. Jim's, adjusting his eyeglass and looking at the newcomers. "Weally, I am wathah busy at the pwesent moment, you know. What is the mattah?"

"Oh, we've come to see you, you know," said Reilly affably.

"Weally, Weilly——"

"We've come to see you," said Kerruish, of the Fourth. "It's rather an important matter."

"Yes, rather," said Hancock. "Very important."

"Awfully important," said Gatty.

"Bai Jove!"

"The fact is," said Reilly, who seemed to be the spokesman of the party, "we admire ye very much, D'Arcy, and we've been thinkin' of gettin' up a sort of testimonial."

"A testimonial?"

"Faith, and that's the idea!"

D'Arcy laid down his silk hat.

"Weally, you are vewy kind," he remarked. "I feel vewy flattahed, you know; but I weally don't know whethah I could accept a testimonial."

"Oh, that's all right," said Kerruish. "As the most popular fellow with a cheque-book—I—I mean the most popular fellow in the house, you're entitled to a testimonial."

"Hear, hear!"

"Good old D'Arcy!"

"Weally, you know——"

"We've decided on the testimonial," said Jones minor. "That's settled."

"Yaas, but——"

"Faith, and we've thought it over carefully!" went on Reilly. "We thought first of an illuminated address, but we decided against that."

"Costs money," said Roberts.

"Shut up, Roberts!"

"Order!"

"Then we thought of a gold cup," said Reilly unblushingly. "But we didn't happen to have any gold cups lying about, so we gave up that idea."

"Weally, Weally——"

"Finally, we thought of an excellent scheme," went on Reilly. "Now this is the idea, and I think you're bound to approve of it."

"Of course that's very important," remarked Hancock. "If D'Arcy doesn't approve of it we shall have to think of a new scheme."

"Faith, of course!"

"D'Arcy knows what's what, you know. If he doesn't approve of the thing it shows that the thing's no good," remarked Kerruish, with a solemn shake of the head.

"Hear, hear!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I must say I think you're wight, deah boys. I wegard myself as bein' a fellow of tact and judgment, and in a case of doubt you can genewally depend on me to point out the pwopah thing to do."

"Hear, hear!"

"Well, this is the idea," said Reilly. "We thought it would be a good idea to stand you a big feed, you know, as a mark of appreciation."

"That's the dodge."

"You are weally vewy kind——"

"Not at all. Do you approve of the idea?"

"Yaas, I suppose I must accept, as you are so kind——"

"Hear, hear!"

"Faith, and he accepts!"

"Bravo!"

D'Arcy rose to his feet, and put down the

Greyfriars Champions

HORACE COKER

(Champion Comedian)

Our Horace is a comic card,
He is, in fact, the "Joker;"
The Greyfriars fellows find it hard
To hide their grins from Coker!
In everything he says and does,
In every quaint experiment,
He never fails to cause a buzz
Of breathless mirth and merriment!

He doth bestride the narrow world
Just like a huge colossus;
But from our studies he is hurled
If he should try to boss us.
He blows his trumpet, and he brags,
Despite our scornful banter;
He calls Removites "cheeky fags,"
Then eats his words instanter!

He owns a crazy motor-bike
That hurtles down the highways,
And comes to grief in hedge or dike,
Or scatters fowls in byways.
When Coker mounts his mad machine
He bursts with pride—well, nearly;
And roars, "Jump in the side-car, Greene!"
But Greene loves life too dearly!

The Championship of Comic Clowns
Is Coker's for the choosing;
And I foresee some fearsome frowns
When this he starts perusing!
He'll gnash his teeth and tear his hair,
His wrath will increase tenfold;
And direful vengeance he'll declare
Upon the poet Penfold!

velvet pad; for a moment forgetting even his silk hat, which he had placed on a chair beside him, so much moved was he by this mark of appreciation on the part of the School House juniors.

"Weally, deah boys," he remarked, "I must say I am gweatly touched by this—this desiah on your part to show your good-feelin' towards me."

"Hear, hear!"

"I wegard it as a gweat honah, and I shall be vewy pleased to accept."

"Bravo!"

"Jolly good!" said Reilly. "The honour's on our side."

"Vewy well put indeed, Weilly."

"There is only one small difficulty in the way," went on Reilly. "Standing a feed costs money; but, of course, we can't allow vulgar considerations of that sort to enter into a matter like this."

"Bai Jove! I should hope not."

"And as we're short of tin, an' can't stand the feed, it's really only a matter of form who pays for it—the mark of appreciation is just the same in any case," said Reilly in a hurried manner. "So if you drew a cheque to pay Mrs. Taggles——"

"Bai Jove!"

"I suppose that's all right, D'Arcy?"

"Oh, that's all right!" exclaimed Roberts. "There's nothing mean about D'Arcy."

"I'm sure D'Arcy wouldn't allow vulgar considerations of money to enter into a matter of this sort," said Kerruish.

"Oh, rather not."

"Faith, and sure ye're right!"

D'Arcy looked at the juniors through his eyeglass in a rather perplexed way. To be asked to pay for a feed stood to himself by his admirers in the School House was a little extraordinary. But, as Roberts said, there was nothing mean about D'Arcy; and, after all, was not the mark of appreciation just the same, whoever paid for the feed?

"Well, what do you say?" said Reilly. "We've admired you for a long time, D'Arcy, ever since you——"

"Ever since you had a cheque-book," said Roberts.

"Shut up, Roberts!"

"But——"

"You ass!"

"Silence!"

"Ever since you came to St. Jim's, D'Arcy," said Reilly, with a withering look at the unlucky Roberts. "We've admired you no end, and this testimonial is the only way we can think of to show all the school how we really regard you."

"Hear, hear!"

"You are quite right to scorn vulgar considerations of money, D'Arcy," Reilly continued. "We admire you for that more than for anything else, don't we, chaps?"

"Yes, rather."

"Hear, hear!"

"So you accept the testimonial, D'Arcy?"

What could D'Arcy say?

"Yaas, wathah!" he replied. "I must wemark that it is a wathah peculiah kind of testimonial, you know; but I accept it with pleasure."

"Hear, hear!"

"Come on, then," said Reilly, linking his arm in D'Arcy's. "Nothing like striking the iron while it's hot. Come on!"

"I was just polishing my hat——"

"It's beautifully done," said Hancock, picking up the silk hat and putting it on D'Arcy's head. "There you are!"

"You ass! You've put it on backwards!"

"My mistake."

D'Arcy reversed the silk hat and allowed himself to be marched from the study. In the midst of an enthusiastic crowd, the swell of St. Jim's walked out of the School House.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER

Let 'Em All Come

THE scheme for presenting the owner of the famous cheque-book with a testimonial had evidently been much discussed, for as Reilly & Co. marched out with D'Arcy in their midst, they were joined by more juniors from all sides. Quite a little crowd poured out into the quadrangle, and there, too, they were joined by more recruits. D'Arcy's shining silk hat, like the white

plume of Navarre of old, was a rallying-point for all. There were twenty or twenty-five fellows crowding round Arthur Augustus as he crossed towards the tuckshop with his graceful walk.

Blake and Digby came in at the gates, and caught sight of the crowd, and the well-known topper in the midst of it.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Blake. "There's something on!"

"Gussy's being ragged, I suppose."

"Come on!" said Blake hastily.

They dashed forward and ran into Tom Merry, and knocked him flying. The hero of the Shell jumped up wrathfully.

"What the——" he began.

"Sorry!" gasped Blake. "Gussy's being ragged; can't stop!"

Tom Merry burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha! It's all right, he's not being ragged. It's a giddy testimonial."

But Blake and Digby had rushed off, and could not hear.

They dashed to the rescue.

The two juniors burst upon the crowd round D'Arcy like a thunderbolt. Unless their elegant chum was being ragged, there seemed no reason to Blake and Digby why he should be marched across the quad. in a shouting crowd, and they rushed to the rescue without stopping to inquire.

"Give 'em socks!" gasped Blake.

"Go it!"

Biff—biff—biff!

Reilly gave a roar as he rolled over under Blake's right, and Hancock yelled as Digby floored him.

The rescuers reached D'Arcy's side in a moment, hitting out furiously

There was a roar round them.

"What the dickens——"

"What the——"

"Who the——"

"You ass!"

"You fathead!"

"Get out!"

"Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy. "What's the mattah, deah boys? What are you hittin' Weilly and Hancock for?"

"Eh?"

"What's the wow?"

"The row? We're rescuing you!" exclaimed Blake indignantly.

D'Arcy stared at him.

"Wescuin' me?" he ejaculated.

"Yes, you ass!"

"I wefuse to be called an ass! I——"

"Sock it to them!" gasped Hancock, struggling to his feet. "Bowl 'em over! Bump them!"

"Hold on——"

"It's all wight, deah boys!"

"Look here! Aren't you being ragged, Gussy?"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Are you being ragged or not?" roared Blake.

"I should wefuse to be wagged!"

"Then you're not?"

"Certainly not!"

"Well, of all the chumps——"

"Pway don't go for my fwiends, deah boys!" said D'Arcy pacifically. "Blake is wathah an ass, but it's all wight!"

"All right, is it?" roared Reilly, clasping his nose, from which the claret was flowing redly. "I'll show the spalpeen if it's all right!"

"Weally, Weilly——"

"Faith, and sure I——"

"Pax, deah boys! I twust you will not make a wow. You have been wathah too hasty, Blake. I was not bein' wagged; this is a testimonial."

"A which?" gasped Blake.

"A testimonial."

"A tes-tes-testimonial?"

"Yaas, wathah! These fellows are standin' me a feed as a sign of their appweciation," said D'Arcy. "You chaps can come, too."

"Oh!" ejaculated Blake.

"My word!" said Digby.

"Oh, let's get on!" said Kerruish. "Don't make a row now, Reilly, on an occasion like this."

"Look at my nose!"

"Never mind your nose. Think of the feed."

"Faith, and I——"

"Oh, come on!"

"Pax!"

"Get along there! We're waiting for you, Gussy."

"All wight, deah boys!"

Blake and Digby joined the crowd. If there was a feed going, there was no reason why they shouldn't be in it; but they hardly understood as yet. Blake felt a tap on the shoulder and looked round to see the Terrible Three grinning at him.

"I told you it was a testimonial," said Tom Merry. "It's a rather ripping idea of Reilly's, isn't it?"

"Oh, it's Reilly's idea, is it?" said Blake.

"Yes."

"All these fellows going to the feed?"

"Looks like it."

"And who on earth's footing the bill?" demanded Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha! Gussy, I suppose."

"Eh? Is Gussy standing himself a testimonial, then?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gussy, you ass——"

"Did you addwess me, Blake?" said D'Arcy, turning round in the doorway of Dame Taggles' little shop.

"Yes, chump——"

"I decline to be called a chump."

"Shut up, Blake!" said Hancock. "We won't allow you to address Gussy in a disrespectful manner. Order!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Who's standing this feed?" shouted Blake.

"These chaps are," said D'Arcy. "They're standin' it to me as a testimonial."

"But who's footing the bill?"

"Oh, that's only a mattah of form! I shall give Mrs. Taggles a cheque."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry.

"My only hat!" gasped Lowther. "Oh, Gussy is getting too funny! Gussy, old man, you are being done! Can't you see that your noble leg is being pulled?"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"They are pulling the wool over your noble eyes, Gussy!"

"Weally, you know——"

"Oh, get in!" said Reilly hastily. "You chaps shut up! If you want to join in the feed, join in; but don't interfere, and don't jaw."

"Hear, hear!" said Fatty Wynn, elbowing his way into the tuckshop. "Don't you bother, Blake, but make way for a chap's that hungry."

"New House rotter! Kick him out!" rose a cry.

"Rats!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn warmly. "Don't I want to take part in a testimonial to a chap I admire like Gussy? Haven't I admired him immensely, and as much as anybody, ever since he had a cheque-book—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Wynn——"

"I—I mean ever since—ever since I admired him," said Fatty Wynn. "I'm going to have a hand in this testimonial as—as a sign of appreciation from the New House."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Quite wight, Wynn," said Arthur Augustus. "Pway join us."

"What-ho!"

And Fatty Wynn did. He had determined to have a share in that testimonial—as a matter of fact, he had a lion's share. All the juniors did themselves well, but Fatty Wynn really distinguished himself.

"It's all right, Blake," said Tom Merry, patting the rather excited junior on the back. "Don't worry! The cheque-book won't last much longer, and the fellows are making hay while the sun shines."

Blake burst into a laugh.

"Oh, all right! Mine's ginger-pop."

"Mine's lemonade."

"Jam tarts, please."

"Ham patties."

"Vanilla ices."

"Cream puffs."

And the testimonial was soon going very strong.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER

A Business Call

THERE was a letter for D'Arcy on the following morning. He found it when he came downstairs with his chums, and opened it carelessly enough. It was from

the bank, as he knew by the inscription on the back.

"It's all wight," he remarked. "Only an acknowledgment of my cheque, I suppose."

Blake chuckled.

"Something more than that, I imagine," he remarked.

"Weally, Blake——"

"Well, look."

D'Arcy unfolded the letter and glanced at it. A folded cheque fell out. Digby picked it up. It was a cheque for one hundred pounds, signed with D'Arcy's name; in fact, the cheque he had sent to the bank to renew his account.

The juniors read the letter over D'Arcy's shoulder. It was brief, but very much to the point.

"Dear Sir,—We return your cheque herewith, and remark that we do not understand your object in sending it to us. Your account is overdrawn, as we have previously advised you, and we have been compelled to decline to honour several cheques since presented to us.—Yours faithfully,

"THE TOWN AND COUNTY BANK, LTD."

D'Arcy's face was a study.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured.

Blake roared.

"What did you expect, Gussy?" said Tom Merry, with a grin.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any cause for laughtah. I wegard this as a piece of wank impertinence on the part of the bank managah."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The chap has wefused to honah a cheque dwawn on his own bank. I wegard that as a pwoof that the bank is in a wocky condish."

"Oh, Gussy!"

"I shall w'ite to my governah and warn him that the bank is wocky, so that he can look aftah his money there."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Everybody thought that the scheme to present D'Arcy, the owner of the famous cheque book, with a testimonial, was a good one, and in the midst of an enthusiastic crowd the swell of St. Jim's walked out of the old School House. (*See Chapter* 14)

"As for this chap's impertinence in weturnin' my cheque, I shall call on him this aftahnoon, and speak to him vewy plainly."

"You—you're going to the bank?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But—but——" gasped Tom Merry.

"I wegard it as my duty to keep this bank managah chap in his place," said D'Arcy firmly. "I cannot allow impertinence of this kind to pass unwepwimanded."

The chums shrieked.

"Oh, let him go!" gasped Blake. "I think we'd all better go with him and see the fun."

"Good egg!"

"Nothin' of the sort, deah boys! You chaps don't undahstand bankin' or biznay methods, and I could not take you with me on a purely business call."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Besides, you have tweated the whole mattah in a wibald spiwit."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, there's the cricket this afternoon, too," said Tom Merry. "But I should awfully like to see Gussy's interview with the bank manager."

"I will tell you all about it, deah boy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you know——"

But the juniors roared—they could not help it. D'Arcy crumpled the letter into his pocket and walked away, with his nose very high in the air.

It was a half-holiday that afternoon at St. Jim's. There was a junior cricket match on between the Shell and the Fourth, and D'Arcy's name had been put down for the Fourth Form team, but Reilly was quite willing—and able—to take his place. As the swell of the Fourth explained, his business with the bank at Wayland would not wait. If his cheques on the bank were not being paid, it would cause trouble—an opinion in which his chums fully concurred. They were expecting trouble.

When the cricketers went out to play, Arthur Augustus, in gleaming collar and shining hat, walked down to the station and took the train for Wayland Junction.

The swell of St. Jim's was in a determined mood.

He was not going to stand any nonsense from the bank manager. His aristocratic features wore a quite grim expression when he stepped out of the train at Wayland.

The bank was at the corner of the High Street, and Arthur Augustus was not long in reaching it from the station.

He entered the bank, making quite a handsome picture as he stood in the dull place—like a fragment of Bond Street transported bodily into the quiet building in the old-fashioned country town.

A young gentleman upon a stool ceased for a moment gnawing a pen, and glanced inquiringly at the swell of St. Jim's.

"Pway, can I see the managah?" asked D'Arcy.

"H'm! Mr. Wix is engaged just now, I'm afraid," said the clerk. "What name, please?"

"D'Arcy—Arthur Augustus D'Arcy."

The clerk grinned. His grin showed that D'Arcy's cheques had caused a certain amount of hilarity at the bank, as well as at St. Jim's. The elegant junior frowned.

"Pway inform the managah that I wish to see him," he said loftily.

"Certainly, sir."

The clerk disappeared into an inner apartment for a moment or two, and then reappeared and conducted the swell of St. Jim's into the manager's private room.

A stout, pink-complexioned gentleman of middle age rose to meet A'Arcy. His face was serious, but there was a twinkle in his eyes which seemed to indicate that he was carefully suppressing a desire to smile.

"Ah, Master D'Arcy!" he exclaimed, shaking hands with the junior. "One of our clients! I am very glad to see you! Pray sit down!"

"Thank you vewy much."

Arthur Augustus sat down.

"You were in Wayland, and you thought you would give me a call," remarked Mr. Wix. "That was very kind of you."

"As a mattah of fact, my deah sir, I have called upon a mattah of business," said D'Arcy.

"Yes! You wish to pay in something to your account?"

"Not at all."

"No!"

"I wish to know what this lettah means!" said D'Arcy, laying the crumpled letter from the bank upon the table.

The manager stared.

"Ahem! Surely that letter is plain enough?"

"You have weturned my cheque."

"Ye-es."

"And dishonoured some cheques I drew on the bank?"

"Ye-es. There have been several more since the letter was sent you, too. You see, we had no resource. I communicated with Lord Eastwood on the matter, informing him that your account had been overdrawn, and he replied that on no account were we to allow it to be further overdrawn. You see, therefore, that we had no resource but to

A HERO OF ST JIM'S!

A FLIGHT OF FANCY

By BAGLEY TRIMBLE

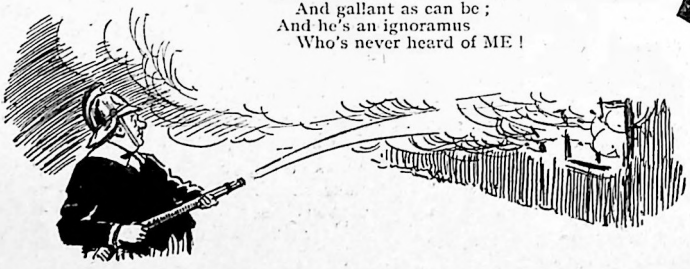
SOME talk of Alexander,
And some of Hercules;
Of Hector and Lysander,
And puny dwarfs like these.
But since the time of Nero,
Quite early in A.D.,
The world has known no hero
So great and grand as me!

The heroes drawn by Henty
And Ballantyne and Co.,
Had pluck and grit in plenty,
They feared no frowning foe.
But I'm a braver figure
Than any one of those;
I'd boldly punch with vigour
A *giant* on the nose!

I've saved a dozen fellows
At least from watery graves;
In answer to their bellows
I plunged beneath the waves.
I've medals and diplomas:
And in the briny sea
I'm just as much at home as
A chap on land would be!

When buildings are a-blazing
And flames are spreading fast,
I don't stand idly gazing,
Or hurriedly walk past.
Alert, alive, and nimble,
A ladder I ascend:
The cry goes up, "'Tis Trimble!
The peril's at an end!"

St. Jim's historians tell us
That I'm a craven clown;
Such scribes are surely jealous,
They envy my renown.
I'm fit and fat and famous,
And gallant as can be;
And he's an ignoramus
Who's never heard of ME!



decline to pay the cheques that were presented to us."

"But I sent you a cheque to place to my account."

"Eh?"

"A cheque for one hundwed pounds!" said D'Arcy indignantly. "Do you mean to say that the bank has no funds to meet it?"

"But—but——"

"You state on your published balance-sheet that you have a weserve fund of half a million, sir. Yet you have weturned my cheque."

The manager stared.

"Really, my dear lad, you—you hardly seem to understand the rules of banking," he murmured faintly. "You are not allowed to draw cheques on our reserve funds—really."

"Weally, deah boy—I mean, my deah sir——"

"Ahem! You hardly understand, but——"

"I undahstand perfectly cleahly now," said D'Arcy, rising. "But I weally think that it would be more fwank on your part to make that statement on your balance-sheet."

"But—but, really!"

"Undah the cires., this cheque-book will be no furthah use to me" said D'Arcy loftily. "I will leave it here. Bai Jove!"

His hand came empty out of his pocket.

"Gweat Scott! I must have dwopped it!"

Mr. Wix looked concerned.

"Dear me! This is serious!"

"Well, it wasn't much use, as you decline to cash my cheques," said Arthur Augustus, with some sarcasm. "I weally do not see that it mattahs much."

The bank manager coughed.

"Well, if it fails into bad hands we shall have the numbers of the cheques, so forgery will hardly be practicable," he said. "However, I hope it will be recovered. You are going?"

"Yaas. I think I should wemark to you—it is only fair—that I intend to warn my governah of the wocky state of his bank."

The manager hid a smile with his hand.

"Very well, Master D'Arcy. I dare say Lord Eastwood will understand, Good-day!"

"Good-day!" said D'Arcy loftily. And he left the bank.

The manager sat down in his chair and laughed for three consecutive minutes—which did not look as if he were very nervous about the result of Arthur Augustus's threatened report to Lord Eastwood.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER

Many Creditors

"D'ARCY!"

"Where is D'Arcy?"

"Anybody seen D'Arcy?"

Jack Blake had just come off the cricket-field, with his bat under his arm—out! He glanced round inquiringly as the excited voices called for D'Arcy.

"What's wanted?" he demanded.

"D'Arcy!"

"Who wants him?"

"Three or four people," said Jones of the Fourth, with a grin. "There's Gorman, the grocer, of Rylcombe——"

"And Whippet, the tailor——"

"And Tucker, the ginger-beer merchant——"

"And Thompson——"

Blake looked bewildered.

"My hat! All Rylcombe coming to visit D'Arcy?" he asked.

"Looks like it," said Kangaroo, coming up. "Where is Gussy?"

"He's gone out."

"Just like Gussy—when he's wanted."

"He's gone over to the bank at Wayland," said Jack Blake. "What the dickens do they want with him?"

"Cash."

"What?"

"They've all got cheques that the bank won't pay."

"Phew!"

"Poor old Gussy!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "The cheques are coming home to roost at last!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, this is jolly serious," said Blake. "I'll cut off and see them!"

And he ran towards the School House.

Binks met him in the doorway. Binks was looking concerned. He liked D'Arcy, like everybody else, and he saw that there was trouble in the air for the swell of St. Jim's.

"Oh, Master Blake," he gasped, "there are six people here asking for Master D'Arcy!"

"Where are they?"

"I've shown them up into Study No. 6," said Binks. "I—I thought I'd better get them out of sight, Master Blake, so that Mr. Railton or the Head wouldn't see them—not till Master D'Arcy comes in, anyway."

Blake slapped the page on the shoulder.

"Good for you, Binks! You're a giddy jewel!"

Blake ran up the stairs.

A fat, red-faced man stood in the doorway of Study No. 6, and other visitors could be seen within. Mrs. Murphy had a shawl over her shoulders, and she was looking worried; but all the men in the party looked excited. Digby had dashed after his chum, and Tom Merry followed him, and they reached the study a few seconds after Blake. What was to be done they had no idea, but they meant to back up Jack Blake in any way they could.

"Hallo!" exclaimed the fat gentleman, whom Blake recognised as Mr. Gorman, the grocer. "Where is he?"

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Gorman," said Blake politely.

"Where is he?"

"Fine weather for cricket, ain't it?"

"Where is he?" roared Mr. Gorman.

"He? Who?"

"D'Arcy! The young villain who has been giving us waste-paper instead of our money!" roared the excited Mr. Gorman, waving a cheque in the air. "They won't take this at the bank! It's for three pun ten!"

"And look at this!" howled Mr. Whippett, brandishing another cheque. "Fifteen pounds ten and ninepence! They won't pay it!"

"And this!" murmured Mrs. Murphy.

"And this!"

"And this!"

"Young swindler, I say!" said Mr. Gorman.

Blake turned red.

"If you mean to say that my friend is a swindler, Mr. Gorman, you'll get into trouble," he said. "If you don't want to go out of the house on your neck, you'd better mind what you say."

"Hear, hear!" said Tom Merry.

Mr. Gorman nearly exploded.

"Where's my money, then?" he roared.

"Oh, that's all right!"

"All right, is it? Three pun ten! Where is it?"

"D'Arcy's word is as good as his bond," said Tom Merry. "You'll be paid all right. Don't get excited."

"Fifteen pounds ten and ninepence," said Mr. Whippett.

"Two pun five!" said Mr. Thomson.

"Oh, cheese it!" said Tom Merry. "You'll be paid, if we have to pawn our exercise-books and pen-wipers to make up the money."

"Ha, ha! That's right!"

"Where is D'Arcy?"

"He's gone out."

"Gone out—to avoid his just creditors," said Mr. Whippett.

"I don't believe it!" roared Mr. Gorman. "Trot 'im out! Where is D'Arcy! Produce D'Arcy, or I'm going to the Head!"

"So am I!"

"And I!"

Blake exchanged a hopeless look with Tom Merry. The visitors to Study No. 6 had cause for their exasperation, for the cheques being dishonoured led them to the not unnatural suspicion that D'Arcy had been spoofing them with cheques that did not belong to him. They had a right to be angry and uneasy, but it would never do for them to go to the Head.

That would lead to too much trouble for D'Arcy. Blake racked his brains for a "dodge," but he could not think of one. What was to be done?"

"Now, then," roared Mr. Gorman, after a pause to take breath, "are you going to trot him out, or do I go to the Head?"

"Look here," said Tom Merry, "keep your wool on! As soon as D'Arcy comes in he'll make some arrangement with you to pay the money. Until then——"

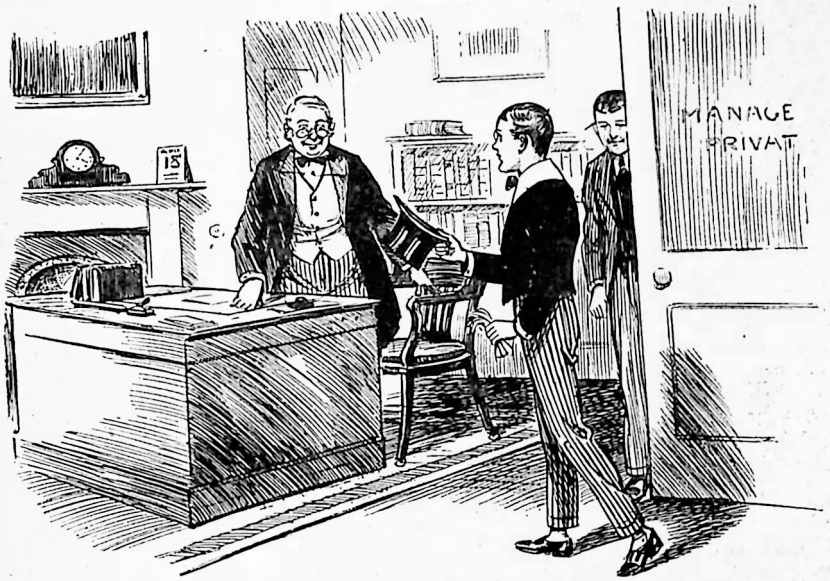
"How long will he be?"

"I don't know, but——"

"Then I'm going to the Head!"

And Mr. Gorman made a movement to leave the study. Blake's eyes gleamed.

"Wait a minute!" he exclaimed. "Hold on a few minutes, and I'll see what can be done."



The bank manager rose from his chair as D'Arcy entered. "I have called on a mattah of business," said Gussy. "I want to know the meaning of the lettah I received this morning." (*See Chapter* 16.)

Mr. Gorman took out a big gold watch.

"I'll wait for five minutes," he said—"five minutes, and not a second longer."

"Oh, all right!"

Blake beckoned to Tom Merry and Digby to follow him from the study. They went out into the passage, Blake whipping the key from the lock in passing. The next moment the door was shut and locked on the outside.

Tom Merry gasped.

"My hat, Blake, you've locked them in!"

"They're not going to the Head," said Blake grimly.

"Phew!" said Digby.

"It's the only way."

"Yes, I suppose it is."

There was a terrific pounding on the inside of the study door, Mr. Gorman's bull voice was heard bellowing through the keyhole.

"Hopen this door, you young willain!"

Blake put his mouth to the keyhole to reply.

"Rats!"

Bang, bang, bang!

"Hopen the door!"

"I'll have the law on you!"

"Rats!"

The juniors walked away. A terrific uproar from the crowded study followed them. As they went downstairs the voice of Binks was heard below.

"Yes, sir. Master D'Arcy is out at present, sir. Shall I show you to his room, sir, where you can wait for him, sir?"

Blake groaned.

"Another of 'em!"

"My hat!" murmured Tom Merry. "This is getting interesting."

A very red-faced gentleman was standing in the hall. Tom Merry recognised him as Mr. Sanders, a person who supplied cricket-

bats and such things to the juniors of St. Jim's. Mr. Sanders was looking very excited, and he held a cheque in his hand.

"This cheque has been refused by the bank," he exclaimed, as he saw Tom Merry. "If D'Arcy is not here, I shall take it to Dr. Holmes."

"He will be back soon, sir,"

"Nonsense! I will not be eluded like this," exclaimed Mr. Sanders. "I will go directly to the Head. Kindly show me to the headmaster."

"Come this way, sir," said Tom Merry. "I think we can arrange the matter on behalf of D'Arcy, sir."

"Oh, very well; I have no objection to that, of course. The cheque is for seven pounds fifteen shillings."

"My hat! This way."

Mr. Sanders followed the juniors upstairs. He started as he entered the Fourth Form passage, and the pounding in Study No. 6 burst on his ears.

"Dear me! What is that noise?" he exclaimed.

"This way, sir."

Tom Merry led the way to his own study, and showed Mr. Sanders into it with great politeness.

Mr. Sanders sat down. Tom Merry stepped out of the study, and Blake jerked the door, shut, and locked it.

Tom Merry wiped the perspiration from his brow.

"This is getting warm," he murmured.

There was a crash on the door from inside.

"Open this door immediately, you young rascals!"

They exchanged a rueful grin with Binks as they met him at the bottom of the stairs.

"Any more of 'em?" asked Tom Merry.

"No, Master Merry," said Binks. "If they come——"

"We'll wait here in case they do."

"Ah! Is Master D'Arcy indoors?" asked a voice at the door.

"Here's another!" grunted Tom Merry, swinging round. Then he uttered a sharp exclamation. "Lord Eastwood!"

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER

D'Arcy is Quite Satisfied

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked a little downhearted as he walked in at the gates of St. Jim's. He felt that the bank manager at Wayland had proved himself a very unreliable person, and that there would be trouble when the cheques came in. D'Arcy could not blame himself, but he felt that there was something very wrong with the system of banking.

He came towards the School House, and two or three juniors came down the steps to meet him.

"Here he is!" exclaimed Blake.

"At last," said Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon them inquiringly.

"Anybody been to see me, deah boys?" he asked.

Tom Merry chuckled.

"Only about half Rylcombe," he replied.

"Bai Jove!"

"And your governor."

"Gweat Scott!"

"He's only just come in," said Tom Merry. "It seems he's heard from the bank, and has come down to see about it. How did you get on at Wayland?"

"Wotten! The bank manager is a wotten, unbusiness-like person."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ah! Is that you, Arthur?"

D'Arcy raised his silk hat to Lord Eastwood.

"Yaas, wathah, dad!"

"I wish to speak to you," said the earl, in a severe tone. "I have heard from the bank in connection with your overdrawing your account. I will come to your study."

"Certainly, fathah."

"Hold on!" exclaimed Tom Merry, in alarm. "The—the study's hardly in order for his lordship, Gussy. Better—er—talk somewhere else."

"Very well; we'll go to your studay, deah boy."

"N-n-no, mine isn't in order either," said Tom Merry, turning red, as he felt that Lord

"Where is he?" roared Mr. Gorman, excitedly waving a cheque in the air. "Where's D'Arcy? The young villain who's been giving us waste-paper instead of our money! This cheque's for three-pun-ten—and they won't cash it at the bank!" (*See Chapter* 17.)

Eastwood's eyes were curiously turned upon him. "You—you see—in fact——"

"That's how it is," said Blake.

"Weally, deah boys——"

There was an echo of crashing and banging from above. Lord Eastwood must have noticed it, though he made no remark.

"I undahstand there are a lot of visitors for me," said D'Arcy. "Where are they?"

"They're—they're waiting," murmured Blake, making signs to D'Arcy to drop the subject—signs quite lost upon the swell of St. Jim's, but which Lord Eastwood perceived well.

"Bai Jove! Where are they waitin', deah boy?"

"You—you see——"

"Arthur must attend to his visitors first," said Lord Eastwood. "Where are they, Blake?"

"I—in my study," said Blake reluctantly.

The voice of a prefect was heard on the stairs at that moment.

"If you don't stop that row in No. 6, Blake, I'll come and see you about it."

"Bai Jove!"

Blake gave a sickly smile.

"Dear me! What does this mean?" said Lord Eastwood.

"Oh, that's Knox," said Blake. "That—that's Knox's little joke, you know."

A little man in a frock-coat came bouncing up the steps of the School House. The juniors suppressed a groan as they recognised Mr.

Topton, the hatter of Wayland. They guessed that he was another of D'Arcy's creditors, especially as he was holding a slip of paper in his hand, easily recognisable as a cheque.

"I want to see D'Arcy!" he exclaimed. "Oh, you are here! Master D'Arcy, this cheque has been returned from the bank. They refuse to pay it. I must ask you to hand me seven pounds eighteen shillings and sixpence immediately."

"Ahem!" said Lord Eastwood. "This is a little more of your carelessness, Arthur."

D'Arcy shook his head.

"It is not my fault, sir. I have called on the bank managah, and he wefuses to listen to weason. I can't help his wefusin' to pay my cheques."

Lord Eastwood smiled.

"You may send in your account to me, my friend," he said to Mr. Topton; and the hatter—all politeness at once—bowed almost to the floor. "Blake, are my son's other visitors on the same errand as this gentleman?"

"Ye-e-es, sir."

"Take me to them at once, please."

Blake gave Tom Merry a hopeless look, and led the way. Lord Eastwood looked astonished as he approached Study No. 6, and heard the terrific din therein.

"Whatever does this mean?" exclaimed Lord Eastwood.

"You—you see, sir," explained Blake, quite crimson, "they—they wanted to go to the Head, so—so we locked them in."

Lord Eastwood tried to look stern, but he failed lamentably. His face worked helplessly for a moment, and then he burst into a laugh.

"You young rascals!" he exclaimed. "Open the door at once!"

Blake obeyed. There was a yell within.

The excited occupants of the study started back at the sight of Lord Eastwood, cool and composed again now. Blake went quietly along to the next study, and then to Tom Merry's, and unlocked the door. Mr. Sanders came rushing along the passage, but, he, too, quieted down at the sight of the earl.

"Gentlemen," said Lord Eastwood, "I am truly sorry that you should have been put to this—er—this inconvenience. And you, madam, pray accept my profound regrets. Any cheques my son may have given you are fully worth the money they are drawn for; you may send in your accounts to me, and they will be paid in full at once."

The speech was like oil on troubled waters.

The raging lions became meek lambs at once. Even the ferocious Mr. Gorman protested that he knew it was all right all along, and went away quite subdued. When the last of the excited visitors was gone, Lord Eastwood stepped into the study and turned a long and steady look upon his son. Arthur Augustus adjusted his eyeglass, and returned his lordship's stare with affectionate interest.

"I'm vewy glad to see you lookin' so well, dad," he remarked; "and I'm awf'ly sowwy about that lettah we sent you—the one we cancelled, you know."

Lord Eastwood coughed.

"Arthur, how much do the combined accounts amount to which you have accumulated in this reckless manner?"

"Oh, not vewy much, sir: about sixty pounds, I think, ovah the owiginal fiftay."

"H'm! I will pay these accounts for you, Arthur, and you will promise me to draw no more cheques under any circumstances whatever," said Lord Eastwood severely.

"Certainly, sir."

"We will revert to the former system of a money allowance," said Lord Eastwood.

"Vewy well, dad. A cheque-book is wathah a wowwy, aftah all," said D'Arcy. "Pewwaps the old system is weally bettah. What do you think, Tom Mewwy?"

"Heaps better!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Vewy good! Let us wevert to the old system by all means, dad," said Arthur Augustus. "By the way, I twust you have a fivah for me now."

"What!"

"I am stonay bwoke," explained D'Arcy. "As we are wevertin' to the old system, I should be very glad of a fivah just now."

Lord Eastwood looked at his son very expressively for some moments, and then silently, as if overcome, drew out his pocket-book, and handed Arthur Augustus a five-pound note. It was the end of Lord Eastwood's Experiment.

THE END

A Fat and Funny Fellow Fitly Featured!

SPORTING RECORDS OF ST. JIM'S

By ERIC KILDARE
School Captain.

CRICKET.

IT has been a most exciting cricket season, and our two matches with Greyfriars, home and away, provided enough thrills to satisfy the most fastidious cricket enthusiast. The first match, at Greyfriars, we lost by the narrow margin of 2 runs, after leading on the first innings. The second match, on our own ground, resulted in a tie! It was a breathlessly exciting finish. When our last man went in, we needed 12 runs to win. Eleven of the runs were obtained by dogged, resolute batting, and then a magnificent catch by Wingate, of Greyfriars, prevented the winning run being scored. A great finish to a great game!

* * *

GEORGE DARRELL, one of our most improved players, scored over a thousand runs in the course of the season, and also took over a hundred wickets. His highest score was 177, not out.

* * *

THE juniors also enjoyed a good season, the most prominent features of their play being the vigorous batting of Tom Merry, and the fine bowling of "Fatty" Wynn. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was also well in the limelight, having scored two centuries.

* * *

A CERTAIN Saturday in July was set apart for a special match between St. Jim's First Eleven and a Masters' Eleven, under the captaincy of Mr. Railton. The masters made a brave show, despite the fact that some of them are well past their prime. But, notwithstanding a hard-hit 55 by Mr. Railton, the Staff was ultimately beaten by a wide margin. The "underhand" bowling of Mr. Lathom caused great amusement. Mr. Linton kept wicket in capital style.

* * *

THE M.C.C. did us the high honour of sending a team down to St. Jim's, to play a two-day match with our senior eleven. We were defeated, but not disgraced. Darrell and Langton made an heroic effort to save the game, in the second innings—an effort which was only frustrated by some extraordinary bowling on the part of the M.C.C.

* * *

In the match between St. Jim's First Eleven and a Masters' Eleven, the underhand bowling of Mr. Lathom caused great amusement.

FOOTBALL.

ST. JIM'S experienced a fluctuating football season, the form displayed being somewhat erratic. We opened our campaign with a handsome win over Abbotsford; then we journeyed to Greyfriars and were severely trounced. We sprang to life again the following Saturday, and defeated Wayland Wanderers in hollow

style by 7—0. But this "in-and-out" sort of form was hardly satisfactory, and a big improvement will be looked for next season.

* * *

HAD we been able to field the same eleven right through the season, we should have come out with a better record. But an epidemic of influenza caused a good deal of chopping and changing in the team, and the new men found it difficult to adapt themselves. This partly explains why we won handsomely one week, and were badly beaten the next.

* * *

I HAVE been speaking of senior football only. The Junior Eleven enjoyed a splendid season. Tom Merry found the net on 50 occasions, and Talbot was close behind him with 47 goals. The sterling goalkeeping of "Fatty" Wynn won him numerous ovations.

* * *

I HAVE been trying to get some particulars of how the fags fared during the football season, but their Secretary has got their records so muddled and confused that I cannot make head or tail of them. D'Arcy Minor tells me that a good many matches were played without an official referee. The rival teams kept their own tally of the goals scored, and, needless to say, each tally differed widely from the other! Thus, according to D'Arcy Minor, St. Jim's Fags defeated Greyfriars Fags by 4 goals to 3. But according to the Greyfriars Fags, the boot was on the other foot!

* * *

GENERAL NOTES.

THE Annual Boat Race between St. Jim's and Greyfriars, rowed on the River Rhyl, resulted in an exciting win for the St. Jim's Crew by a quarter of a length.

Water Polo has caught on at St. Jim's; both senior and junior teams have scored many successes.

GEORGE DARRELL was again successful in winning the Senior Boxing Championship.

* * *

THE Junior Boxing Championship fell to Tom Merry, after a strenuous tussle, lasting twelve rounds, with Harry Noble, the Australian.

* * *

WATER POLO is a sport which has "caught on" at St. Jim's, and both senior and junior teams have scored many successes.

* * *

SPORTS Day was a great success. Over one hundred and thirty fellows faced the starter for the School "Mile," which is, of course, a handicap race. I was lucky enough to finish first, just managing to overhaul young Bernard Glyn on the post. Darrell was third, and Tom Merry ran into fourth place.

* * *

CUTTS of the Fifth won the Senior Obstacle Race in very good time, while Bob Cherry was first home in the junior. "Fatty" Wynn, who was persuaded to enter for this race, got stuck in the pig-net, which had to be taken up before he could be released—an incident which caused great amusement to the visitors.

* * *

FIGGINS of the New House won two of the junior events—throwing the Cricket Ball and the Half-Mile.

* * *

THE Medal for the Best Athlete in the School was presented this year to Darrell. The winner thoroughly deserved his award, which was heartily endorsed by the whole school.

THE ST. JIM'S PUZZLE CORNER

RIDDLES

WHY is St. Jim's a very strange and curious place ?

Because it has a " Gunn " you can't shoot with ; a " Baker " who " kneads " no " dough " ; a " Crooke " that is useless for blackberrying ; a " Racke " that is unsuitable for light luggage ; a " Dane " who is really Canadian ; a " Brooke " you can't fish in ; and a " Redfern " which no botanist can gather.

* * *

WHO is the biggest cynic at St. Jim's ?

Baggy Trimble ; because he is always " scoffing."

* * *

WHY is the Shell the most miserable Form at St. Jim's ?

Because it contains only one fellow who is Merry.

* * *

WHY are the Fifth and Sixth the most dangerous Forms at St. Jim's ?

Because there are " Cutts " and " Knox " to be encountered in them.

WHY is Bernard Glyn a more successful inventor than Baggy Trimble ?

Because Glyn's inventions always " go down well," but Baggy's " inventions " are never " swallowed."

* * *

WHAT is the difference between a mouse and Miss Marie Rivers ?

One harms the cheese—the other charms the he's.

* * *

HOW do we know that Baggy Trimble is a poor cricketer ?

He gets " caught " and " bowled out " in his transgressions ; he is fairly " stumped " when asked a question in the Form-room ; and every morning at rising-bell he is sure to " get out."

* * *

WHY is No. 10 Study, in the Shell, the politest at St. Jim's ?

Because Tom Merry and Monty Lowther always take good care of their " Manners."

ANAGRAMS

EACH of the following jumbled phrases when rearranged forms the name of a well-known person at St. Jim's.

1. Licker I Dare. (Eric Kildare).
2. I See Herr Gorge. (George Herries).
3. Try Big Gamble. (Baggy Trimble).
4. Hi ! Spell " Mercy." (Percy Mellish).
5. Buy Rare Cake. (Aubrey Racke).
6. Cadge Real Wren. (Edgar Lawrence).
7. Tall Briton, Egad ! (Reginald Talbot).
8. Phew ! Darn Reckless Car ! (Ralph Reckness Cardew).
9. Faced Linton. (Clifton Dane).
10. " Marm " On Trail. (Mr. Railton, M.A.).

TRIPLE ACROSTIC

My first means either tracked or found,
My second's a land where Arabs abound.
My third is a person who entices,
My fourth at auction sales bids prices.
My fifth applies to Fatty Wynn,
My last is what the " seconds " throw in
My whole, three famous names will spell
Of fellows in Sixth, and Fourth, and Shell.

SOLUTION

T	ra	C	e	D
A	r	A	bi	A
L	u	R	e	R
B	id	D	e	R
O	b	E	s	E
T	o	W	e	L

Health, Strength and Fitness

A Cheery Chat concerning physical fitness and athletics

By PERCY LONGHURST

EVERY right-thinking lad admires fitness—the fitness that will enable him to play a good part in any sport or game right up to the end without being winded or fagged.

Health, strength, and fitness are the three essential qualities, and the way to gain them is by physical exercises taken regularly; but they must be exercises of the right kind, not the uninteresting drill sergeant's sort.

I've heard it said more than once that a boy does not need these daily exercises, that he gets all the exercise he needs to make him strong and keep him healthy in his normal running about. That is not correct. All of us need exercise of a practical, rational, and developmental kind. And those who get it are the ones who shine at games and who do best at all kinds of sports.

Success in games depends upon strength and fitness, power of muscle and quickness of action, condition of wind and staying power. Skill, of course, does count. It is simply silly to underrate the value of skill; but it is only too plain that strength and fitness, plus skill, is a far better and stronger combination than skill plus weakness and want of condition.

I'm going to tell you how you may make yourself a better player than you are already and how you may enjoy your sports even more than you do now.

The first thing you have to bear in mind is that it does not matter a brass farthing how big and hard your muscles are if your lungs are not properly developed and your heart is not properly trained. How much good are you in a race or a boxing bout when your wind goes? Very little. Make sure that your lungs are well developed, well exercised; when they are, your wind won't go wrong. So when you get up every morning—and it must be every morning, because occasional exercise is worth little or nothing—before you are fully dressed, throw your bed-room window open and give your lungs a bout of exercise—that is, deep breathing.

Success in games depends upon fitness—and it is easy to see who isn't fit in this picture!

Deep breathing does *not* mean gulping air into your lungs, puffing out your chest like a pouter pigeon, and then trying to see how long you can hold your breath. That's all

wrong. Beneficial deep breathing means taking in the fresh air naturally through the nose, slowly filling all of the lungs—not, as most people do, only just the top part—and being careful to get the air well down into the lowest part of the lungs. To do this, let the stomach come forward when you breathe in; tilt your chin a bit and, hands on hips, keep your shoulders from slinking forward. You know where your "wind" lies? Well, if you can feel that part of your chest coming forward when you breathe in, you'll know you are breathing correctly.

How much good are you in a boxing bout when your wind goes?

If you can't do this standing up—some can't at first—try it lying on your back, head slightly raised. In that position it is quite easy, and, after some practice, you'll find you can do it standing erect.

Having filled the lungs, breathe out through the mouth, not too quickly, and making breathing out a real effort to empty the lungs of as much used-up air as possible. That used-up air is poisonous; the less you leave inside you, the better.

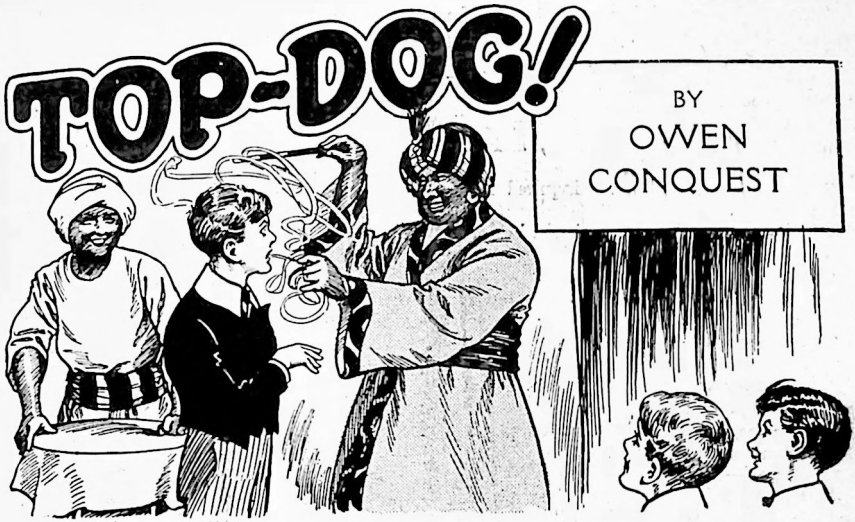
When you've taken ten such breaths you'll be ready for something more vigorous. Before you get on to it, drink half a pint of cold water. After that, get on to another lung-developing movement, which is good also for broadening your chest and strengthening its muscles.

Stand erect with one foot well forward—change feet when you have done half the number of movements—arms extended forward, fists level with mouth and clenched knuckles uppermost. Now take in a full breath, and, as you do so, carry your weight upon the forward foot; at the same time your arms go out sideways and then back as far as you can get them. Turn your hands over, palms up, as the arms are moving. Keep your arms still level with shoulders for a second, then lower the hands about a foot. Stay thus for two seconds, then, while you are breathing out, return to starting position. Make ten such movements.

Your middle-body muscles need exercise, and this also serves to keep the internal organs working properly. Feet well apart, knees stiff all the way through, bend as far forward as you can, then rise and bend back ten times each way. Then ten times from side to side, one arm up, the other thrust down towards the floor. Change arms as you bend over to the other side. Keeping hips square and firm, turn the body from right to left and back again at the waist, ten times each way. This last exercise will keep your liver right.

Now we'll deal with you below the waist. You know how important your lower back and abdominal muscles are—this next exercise will make them strong. Stand erect and, working the legs alternately, bring each knee close up to the body, then put down strongly. If you'll keep your back quite straight and do not allow it to bend forward every time the knees come up, your back muscles will improve. From ten to fifteen movements of each leg will be quite enough.

Last exercise. Rise on tiptoes twenty to forty times, having your arms stretched—make an effort of this stretching—and breathing quite slowly. After this bout of work, finish dressing, and you'll be hoping breakfast is ready.



A Lively Story of Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood, and their rivals of Bagshot School.

THE FIRST CHAPTER
Uncle James Has His Way

"WHAT shall we do this afternoon, you fellows?"

Jimmy Silver, of the Fourth Form on the Classical side at Rookwood, asked that question of his three chums, Lovell, Raby, and Newcome.

It was a half-holiday at Rookwood, and dinner was just over. The four chums, for once in a way at a loss for an occupation, had strolled up to the end study where, hands in pockets, they stood gazing out of the window.

In an ordinary way there would have been only one answer to Jimmy Silver's question if, indeed, he had asked it at all. That answer would have been the word "football," and it would have come from all three of Jimmy Silver's chums simultaneously.

But on this occasion the weather conditions made that reply out of the question.

"It's rotten!" said Raby, somewhat discontentedly, as he gazed out over the quad. "Too hard for footer—not hard enough for skating. Groo!"

Jimmy Silver wagged a reproving forefinger at him.

"Don't grouse now, Raby," he said, in his best avuncular manner—the manner that had gained for him the half-affectionate, half-derisive title of "Uncle James" throughout junior Rookwood. "There's lots of things to do besides footer and skating, ain't there?"

"What about a run?" said Lovell. "It's a topping day for a run!"

"Too strenuous," said Jimmy Silver.

"Or a visit to the cinema at Longford?" suggested Newcome.

"Not strenuous enough," said Uncle James, shaking his head.

His chums glared at him.

"Perhaps you've got a better suggestion, then, Jimmy Silver?" said Newcome, with heavy sarcasm.

"Of course I have," said Jimmy cheerfully. "We'll strike the happy medium, and go for a walk."

"Oh, will we!" growled Lovell. "Where to?"

"Coombe village."

"We're always walking down to Coombe village," growled Lovell. "Not much doing there, that I can see."

"Should like something a bit more exciting this afternoon myself," said Raby.

"Now, a good, long run——" began Lovell.

Jimmy Silver snorted—a loud, and emphatic snort.

"Anything the matter?" inquired Newcome politely.

"I was just wondering who is the leader of this study, that's all," said Jimmy Silver severely. "If I say we're going for a walk to Coombe this afternoon, there's no need for any more jaw that I can see."

"I don't see——" began Raby argumentatively.

"You never do, old man," said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "You don't see, for instance, that the Bagshot fellows won't be playing footer this afternoon, either."

"Yes, but——"

"Or that Pankley & Co., of Bagshot, will probably be out for a walk, also."

"Well, what if——"

"And will be going into Coombe, ten to one, where we shall probably meet them."

"H'm!"

"Ah!"

"Um!"

Jimmy Silver's chums began to see the drift of their leader's sapient remarks at last.

"And if we meet them—well, there'll probably be a scrap, won't there?" demanded Jimmy Silver, with the air of one producing an absolutely clinching argument. "Have you dummies got anything more to say now?"

The "dummies" apparently hadn't. The prospect of a scrap with Pankley & Co. of Bagshot—their deadly, if friendly, rivals—was one that appealed strongly to every member of the Fistical Four alike. When Bagshot and Rookwood juniors met there generally was a scrap. And just at present the Rookwooders were feeling rather sore against Pankley & Co. The astute Cecil Pankley had quite recently worked off a little joke on the Rookwooders in the matter of a looted hamper. He had a habit of playing these little jokes, and playing them successfully. In the last encounter the honours of war had undoubtedly been Pankley's, and the thought was gall to Jimmy Silver & Co. They were determined to get their own back, and an alliance had even been concluded with their rivals, Tommy Dodd & Co., of the Modern side, for the special purpose of "putting the kybosh"—as Jimmy Silver elegantly expressed it—on the common enemy. No plan of action had yet been agreed on, but any chance of meeting Pankley & Co. was to be welcomed.

And it was clear to the Co., now that Uncle James had pointed it out, that if they strolled down to Coombe village that afternoon, now that footer was "off," there would be quite a good chance of such a meeting.

So Jimmy Silver's plan was adopted unanimously—as it generally was—and the Fistical Four set out in blithe spirits.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

The Great Idea

JIMMY SILVER was a true prophet.

Directly the Fistical Four turned into the little village street of Coombe, they spied four figures walking along, arm-in-arm, whom they instantly recognised as Pankley, Poole, Putter, and Greene—the famous Pankley & Co., of Bagshot.

Jimmy Silver uttered an exclamation of satisfaction.

"There the bounders are!"

"Seen us, too!" said Lovell. "Hallo! What's that mean?"

Pankley & Co. waved to them, and bore down upon them with all speed.

"Look out for squalls, you fellows!" said Jimmy Silver, pushing back his cuffs.

Pankley & Co., who were quite near now, grinned when they noticed the action.

"It's all right, my infants," said Pankley, with a friendly wave of the hand. "We aren't going to strafe you this time. It's pax."

"I don't know about that, you cheeky Bagshot bounder!" said Jimmy Silver darkly. "If you think you could strafe us, perhaps you'd like to try it on."

"Pax, I tell you!" grinned Pankley. "Blessed if I ever saw such a quarrelsome set as you Rookwood fellows!"

"Look out for squalls, you fellows!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, pushing back his cuffs as Pankley & Co. came up. "It's all right, my infants!" said Pankley, with a friendly wave of the hand. "We aren't going to strafe you this time. It's pax!" (*See Chapter* 2.)

"Why, you cheeky villain!" hooted Raby.

"Shush!" said Pankley chidingly. "Just when we've come to hold out the olive branch to you, too!"

"What about that hamper you pinched from us last week?" growled Lovell.

Cecil Pankley raised his eyebrows with an air of pained surprise.

"Oh, come, you aren't going to rake up ancient history like that, surely?" he said. "We're willing to let bygones be bygones, you know."

Jimmy Silver burst into a laugh.

"Well, of all the nerve! You take the bun, Pankley!"

"Quite so, old man, but we're on the peace track this time, really," said Pankley. "We were looking out for you chaps——"

"And we were looking out for you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you listen?" shrieked Pankley. "I tell you we're giving you an invitation ——"

"Oh!"

"You see, it's like this," explained Pankley. "The Head is allowing a conjuring and ventriloquist chap to come and give a show at the school to-night, and we can ask friends in if we like."

"Oh!"

"So we naturally thought of you," said Poole solemnly.

"No gammon!" said Lovell suspiciously.

"Honour bright," said Pankley. "We want you fellows to come, and bring some other Rookwood chaps along. It'll be a good show, I think."

Jimmy Silver drew a deep breath.

"But—but we're after your scalps, you know!" he exclaimed.

Pankley laughed.

"That's all right. You'll have to postpone your little games till some other time, Jimmy

Silver. You won't be able to try any stunts to-night with all our fellows here. We'll give you a safe conduct while you're our guests, of course."

The Fistical Four thawed at once.

"It's jolly good of you, Pankley," Jimmy said cordially. "We're on, of course—eh, you fellows?"

"Rather!" said the Co. promptly.

"Good!" said Pankley, with satisfaction. "Professor Walla-Walla is very good, I believe."

"Professor whatter?"

"Professor Walla-Walla—that's the conjurer's name. He's a Hindoo, or something, I believe. He's a bit of a hypnotist as well as a conjurer and ventriloquist."

"My hat!"

"These Indian chaps are jolly clever, you know," said Putter. "We'll make him hypnotise someone this evening, if poss."

"Yes, rather!"

"What-ho!"

"Well, so-long, you chaps!" said Pankley. "See you up at the school this evening. Seven o'clock sharp!"

"Right-ho! And thanks very much," said Jimmy Silver & Co. cordially.

And Pankley & Co., still arm-in-arm, marched off.

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked at one another.

"Well, here's a go," said Jimmy. "We come down to Coombe to strafe Pankley & Co. ——"

"And accept their invitation to an entertainment instead," said Newcome. "Who'd have thought it!"

"Well, it's decent of Pankley to ask us, though he is a cheeky bounder," said Jimmy Silver. "We must take some of the other fellows along—Conroy and Mornington, and Tommy Dodd & Co."

"Yes, rather!"

"I think a visit to the bun-shop is the next item on the programme," said Jimmy. "Hallo! Wherefore that worried brow, Raby?"

Raby pushed his cap over his nose and scratched his head, while his chums watched him intently.

"I was just thinking——"

"What with, old man?" inquired Jimmy anxiously.

"You ass! I was thinking that it would be fun if we could get hold of this professor chappie before the show—"

"Professor Walla-Walla?"

"Yes; and stuff him up with a few things about Bagshot, you know. These chaps who give shows at schools always try to find out something about them first, to bring in on the stage."

Jimmy Silver slapped Raby on the back enthusiastically.

"Jolly good, old man!"

"Ow! You ass!"

"Jolly good!" repeated Jimmy, with a chuckle. "You don't often think of anything, Raby."

"What do you mean, you dummy?"

"But when you do, it's a corker," said Jimmy. "If we can get at the professor beforehand, we'll give him some local colour."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Something that will make Bagshot sit up. My hat! I believe I see a big joke in this!"

Jimmy Silver's eyes sparkled, and his chums looked at him eagerly. When Jimmy Silver looked like that, something usually came of it.

"If we could jape the whole crowd of them on their own ground, it would be topping," he said eagerly. I believe I see a way to do it, too!"

"My hat!"

"What is it, Jimmy?"

"Out with it!"

Jimmy Silver smiled and shook his head.

"No; mum's the word for the present. Let's go and look for the professor first. If he's down here yet, he's sure to be putting up at the Chequer's Inn. We'll buzz along there and ask the boots if he's got a professor on the hotel register."

"Ho, ho! There's never more than one guest there at a time!" grinned Newcome.

"Then here's for Professor Walla-Walla!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the chums hurried off in the direction of the Chequers Inn, the old hostelry in the village High Street.

Their luck was in.

The grinning boots at the Chequers informed them that the professor was in the commercial-room with his assistant.

"His assistant?" said Jimmy Silver. "Anyone else there?"

"No, sir. Only 'im and 'is assistant. 'E's the subjeck!"

"The—the what, Dobson?" said Jimmy Silver, puzzled.

"'Is assistant's 'is subjeck," explained Dobson confidentially. "The professor's a 'ypnertist, and he 'ypnertises 'is assistant."

"Oh, and what sort of a chap is the assistant?" asked Jimmy Silver, smiling.

"'E's just a boy, sir — a nigger boy about your size, sir."

"Good!" said Jimmy Silver coolly, slipping half-a-crown into Dobson's grubby hand. "Do you think I could have a chat with the professor and his assistant for a few minutes, Dobson?"

"'Old on 'arf a minute, sir, and I'll see," said the boots, grinning.

His chums looked at Jimmy Silver inquiringly.

"What idea have you got in your napper now?" whispered Newcome.

Jimmy Silver smiled serenely.

"We can't go into the pub, anyway," said the practical Raby. "It's out of bounds."

"We oughtn't to, of course," said Jimmy. "But if no one's looking—and just to interview a respectable professor in the commercial-room—I think I might risk it."

"We're coming, too, then!" said the Co. with one voice.

"You asses! We should get spotted for a certainly if we all went in!" said Jimmy.

"You must stand outside the bun-shop next door, and keep cave for me. I shan't be five minutes."

"Oh, all right!"

"The professor will see you, sir!" It was Dobson back again.

"So long, you chaps!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER
Interviewing the Professor

JIMMY SILVER slipped into the commercial-room where he found a dignified-looking Hindu gentleman, with a round, pleasant face, surmounted by a white turban.

"The sahib would speak with Professor Walla-Walla?" queried the dusky gentleman with a dignified bow.

Jimmy Silver bowed back, a little nervously.

"If you could spare me a few minutes, sir."

"But certainly." The professor spoke perfect English. "Will the young sahib be seated?"

With a wave of his hand he indicated a

"I've got a wheeze, professor!" said Jimmy Silver eagerly. "I mean, a jape—a little plan!" The professor leaned back in his chair and laughed heartily. "I thought as much—bust me if I didn't!" was his amazing exclamation. (*See Chapter* 3.)

chair, and Jimmy Silver sat down, his cap on his knees.

"I hear you are giving a show at Bagshot School this evening, professor."

"That is correct."

"I—I came to see if I could be of any assistance, in the way of giving you some tips about the school—sort of local colour, you know," said Jimmy Silver ingenuously. "You—you see, I know Bagshot pretty well."

"Are you, then, from Bagshot, young sir?"

"No jolly fear! I—I mean, not exactly," said Jimmy Silver hastily. "I'm from Rookwood School—near by, you know. But I know a lot of the Bagshot chaps very well."

"So! That is very interesting. You could doubtless give me some very useful information, and help me with my show?"

"Yes, I think so, sir."

The Hindu gentleman eyed the junior keenly for a moment.

Then he leaned forward with a smile, and tapped Jimmy Silver gently on the knee.

"And may I ask why the young sahib is anxious to be so helpful to the poor professor?" he asked softly.

Jimmy silver started.

The professor was evidently a cautious gentleman. Perhaps he had been "had" before. It was evident to the keen-witted junior that he would not "swallow whole," as it were, any information he chose to give him about Bagshot.

There was only one thing to do, and that was to take the professor into his confidence, and take the chance of his being a "sport."

And that was what Jimmy did.

"I thought, as a matter of fact, professor, that it would be a good opportunity to play off a joke on the Bagshot fellows," he said, with a disarming smile.

The professor nodded and smiled.

"Ha! Rivals—eh?" he chuckled. "It would be a good joke, no doubt; but I cannot afford to have my performance spoiled for a schoolboy joke, young gentleman."

"Certainly not, sir." said Jimmy eagerly. "But I have got a wheeze, professor—that is, a jape—I mean, a little plan."

The professor leaned back in his chair and laughed heartily.

"I thought as much," he exclaimed. "Bust me if I didn't see it in your eye when you came in! Fire ahead, my son, and let's hear this precious plan of yours!"

Jimmy Silver stared with all his eyes on hearing the dusky gentleman make use of such extremely colloquial English expressions. It struck him for the first time that Professor Walla-Walla might not be such a purely Eastern product as he appeared to be at first sight, But, in any case, he seemed to be a very pleasant fellow, with a keen sense of humour.

So Jimmy Silver "fired ahead."

For the next ten minutes, Dobson, lurking outside the door of the commercial-room, heard a rapid buzz of conversation, punctuated by many bursts of laughter.

At last there was the scrape of a chair on the floor, and Jimmy Silver opened the door.

"I'll be here at five-thirty sharp, then, professor," he said.

And there was a crackling sound as of a Treasury-note being transferred from one owner to another.

"Thank you, Master Silver. Yes, that will be in plenty of time."

"So-long, then, for the present, professor!"

"So-long, young sahib!"

Jimmy Silver chuckled.

"All serene, Dobby?"

"Yessir. Coast's quite clear."

"Good egg!"

Jimmy Silver slipped out of the Chequers almost into the arms of his chums lurking outside.

"All right?" queried Newcome, glancing at Jimmy's smiling face.

"O.K., my infants!"

"Tell us," demanded Raby and Lovell in a breath.

"All in good time. Let's get back to Rookwood, and I'll tell you on the way."

"Right-ho!"

And the four swung off down the village street, with their heads very close together, like a set of conspirators—as, indeed, they were.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER
Exit Pankley & Co.

THERE was a buzz of voices and an air of suppressed excitement in the big school-room at Bagshot. It was close on seven o'clock, and all the school, including the masters and a sprinkling of guests, were assembled to witness the performance of the famous Professor Walla-Walla.

Conspicuous in the front row were a number of Rookwood juniors, with their hosts of the Bagshot Fourth Form—Lovell and Raby and Newcome, and Controy and Grace and Rawson, and half a dozen others.

"Why isn't Silver here?" Pankley was saying to Lovell. "He said he was coming, didn't he?"

"So he is," replied Lovell. "You'll see him presently, old scout. He had to go down to Coombe about five o'clock, but he'll turn up here all right. I know he wouldn't miss the show at any price."

"Rather not!" cried Newcome solemnly. "He's been looking forward to it all day. So have all of us."

"Good!" said Putter, of Bagshot, with satisfaction. "It ought to be a pretty good show, I think. I hear the professor always gives his audiences a surprise or two before his show's over."

The members of the Rookwood Co. manfully suppressed their chuckles at this innocent remark of Putter's. In view of certain knowledge that they possessed it struck them as being distinctly funny. They confidently expected that Professor Walla-Walla's audience would experience a surprise or two before the evening was out.

There was a sudden hush as the professor noiselessly appeared on the stage, followed by his coffee-coloured boy assistant, who rejoiced in the name of Lal Ram.

The professor was dressed in a magnificent purple garment, somewhat resembling a dressing-gown, but richly embroidered in a curious Oriental design. He wore a turban, as did his assistant, who was a slim figure, dressed in loose white garments, which formed a startling contrast to his dusky skin.

The stage was furnished with Oriental screens and rugs, carefully arranged in advance, no doubt, by the astute professor. And in that setting the two dusky, curiously garbed figures perfectly presented the illusion of a corner of the mystic East, transported to the precincts of Bagshot School.

Without a moment's waste of time the professor plunged into a series of the most amazing conjuring tricks. A table on which were half a dozen tumblers full of water, was covered for a few seconds with a silken cloth. A wave of the professor's wand, and the cloth was whisked away, to reveal each tumbler filled with liquid of a different hue. The professor then proceeded to juggle first with two, then with all six of the tumblers, without spilling a drop of the liquid, which he then calmly poured off into a basin. The wonderful Indian plant trick, in which the professor, from a seed placed on the floor, produced, by easy stages, a plant a couple of feet high by simply covering it half a dozen times with a rush basket, was performed under the eyes of the staring audience. Articles of all sorts disappeared, to reappear instantly in another place, in bewildering succession.

The boy-assistant, Lal Ram, was kept busy removing out of the way the articles which the professor continually produced from nowhere. The professor worked with lightning rapidity. Once, when Lal was not quick enough for him, he became angry, and ordered the boy into a large rush basket. Lal stepped in and coiled himself up in it meekly enough. The professor slammed down the lid, seized a sword, and, with a grim expression, jabbed again and again through the rush basket, from which, to the horror of the audience, heart-rending groans and cries were heard. These finally died away, and the professor, his vengeance satisfied, opened the basket amidst a breathless silence. It was empty! And before Bagshot had recovered from this shock, Lal stepped on to the stage from the wings without the flicker of a smile on his impassive features.

"Well, I'm blessed!" gasped Poole. "I've heard of that trick before, but I'm blessed if I ever saw anything like it! It's marvellous!"

"I thought Jim—ahem!—young Lal was done for that time, I must say!" said Lovell, who

had been following this apparently gruesome drama with a fascinating gaze.

"He's a scorcher!" said Pankley enthusiastically. "Look at him now!"

The professor was nonchalantly producing fully-inflated toy balloons from an empty lemonade bottle and sending them floating over the heads of the audience, who scrambled wildly for them.

When the last toy balloon had been secured and the disturbance had somewhat subsided, the professor advanced to the footlights and held up his hand.

"Will one of the young sahibs from the front row kindly oblige by stepping up on to the stage? I require a member of the audience to assist me a few minutes."

The professor's eye rested upon Putter as he spoke, and Pankley and Poole nudged their chum, one on each side.

"Go it, Putty!"

"On the ball!"

Putter, with a sheepish grin, rose from his seat and scrambled up on the stage, amidst loud applause from the Bagshot Fourth.

"Salaam, sahib!" exclaimed Professor Walla-Walla, diving his hand into Putter's pocket the instant he set foot on the stage, and producing a live buck rabbit therefrom. "Allow me to relieve your pockets from the miscellaneous livestock you appear to carry round with you!"

In bewildering succession, amidst roars of laughter from the audience, the professor produced two guinea-pigs, a couple of pigeons, a white rat, and a whole colony of mice from various pockets in Putter's clothes; while, as a climax, which fairly brought down the house, he extricated a young alligator about four feet long from under the dismayed youth's jacket.

"Putty's a walking circus! Blessed if I knew he was so fond of pets as all that!" chuckled Pankley.

"You do look a silly ass, Putty!" yelled Poole's voice. "Why don't you get your hair cut?"

There was a roar of laughter at this sally, and every eye was turned upon Poole, who sat bolt upright in his chair, with a somewhat surprised grin on his face.

Putter turned crimson, and glared down at his chum from behind the footlights.

"Stow it, Poole, you ass!" he growled.

"But you do look an idiot, you know, old man!" came Poole's voice again.

Pankley and Greene turned their gaze upon Poole with looks of blank astonishment, while a fresh yell of laughter came from the now thoroughly interested Bagshot fellows.

"Chuck it, Poole, you dummy!" muttered Pankley.

"Don't rag your own pal in front of the whole school!" said Greene chidingly.

Poole had a look of bewilderment on his face.

"I—I——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bagshot.

Putter on the stage almost choked. He came to the edge of the platform with a furious expression on his crimson countenance, and glanced down at Poole. The professor, with a look of bewilderment on his dusky face, stood beside him.

"Shut up, Poole," hooted Putter furiously. "I'm getting fed up with this, you——"

"Keep your wool on, old dear! You're making a fearful exhibition of yourself, you know!"

Pankley and Greene sitting next to Poole, had no doubt at all that the voice came from their chum. And they gasped at him in blank astonishment. The audience, including the Rookwood contingent, gave a yell of delight. Putter and Poole were known to be close friends, and members of the famous Pankley & Co., the leaders of the Fourth Form at Bagshot. And this little family breeze, as it were, taking place in public, struck them as funny.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

Putter simply danced with rage.

"By Jove, I—I'll hammer you, Poole, if you say another word!" he foamed.

"You look like a stuffed dummy, old man!"

"M-my hat! I—I'll——"

"Does your mother know you're out?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

With a roar of wrath, Putter, now thoroughly enraged, leaped off the platform and made a bull-like rush at his old friend Poole.

Poole, who seemed to be in a dazed state, made no resistance.

In a moment the grasp of his furious chum was upon him, and he was yanked out of his chair, while Pankley and Greene sprang up in dismay.

The Bagshot fellows rose in their seats, and gave a delighted cheer. Everyone was roaring with laughter, and shouts of encouragement and chaff were hurled at the combatants from all sides.

"Go it, Putty!"

"On the ball!"

"Have it out on the stage, won't you?"

"Dot him one, Pooley!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Putter had got Poole's head in chancery, and was pommelling away as if for a wager. That treatment seemed to wake Poole up as if from a trance. He struggled furiously, and lashed out in all directions.

Pankley gave a roar as he caught one from his wildly threshing fists on his ear.

"Ow! Yow! You dummies!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the crowd.

"Stoppit, can't you!" roared Greene, who had just caught a lashing fist on the chin. "Stoppit, you idiots!"

Pankley and Greene rushed to separate their chums, who were trampling furiously about, and overturning chairs on all sides, in a wild and whirling combat.

The whole room was in an uproar. The junior members of the audience and many of the senior ones, and even the masters and visitors, were almost in hysterics. The incident was so unexpected, and the effect of it so obviously unrehearsed, so funny, that they could not help it.

One or two seniors, laughing, made a rush through the crowd towards the centre of the disturbance. Putter and Poole and Pankley and Greene now appeared to be locked in a tight embrace, swaying furiously about amongst the overturned chairs of the front rows.

There was a chorus of shouts and catcalls as the seniors forced their way over to the struggling group.

With a roar of wrath Putter, thoroughly enraged, leaped off the platform and made a bull-like rush at his old friend Poole. In a moment the two were going it, hammer and tongs. (*See Chapter* 4.)

"Hurrah!"

"Let 'em have it out!"

"Put 'em on the stage!"

"This is better than the conjuring!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The seniors reached Pankley & Co. at last and laid none too gentle hands upon them.

The indignant Putter was forcibly separated from the gasping Poole; Pankley and Greene were grasped with the others, and, amidst wild cheers from the audience, the whole four were bundled willy-nilly out of Big Hall through a convenient side-door into the passage.

Lovell turned to Newcome, wiping tears of merriment from his eyes.

"Worked like a charm!" he whispered. "The professor's ventriloquism, of course! Jimmy put him up to it!"

"Never saw anything so priceless in my life!" choked Newcome.

"Poor old Pankley & Co.!" gasped Raby. "Ha, ha, ha!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

Lal Ram Speaks

THE excitement occasioned by this incident had barely subsided when a fresh commotion arose, this time from a corner of the big school-room where the mighty men of the Bagshot Sixth Form were congregated.

A terrific hubbub of snarling and snapping and yapping arose, as of a full-sized dog-fight in progress.

Grrr! Grr! Bow-wow! Yap, yap!

Fellows craned their necks on all sides to see where the fight was, and the group of seniors broke up hastily as the snarling and yapping went on apparently under their very feet.

There was a roar of voices from all sides.

"Where are they?"

"Separate them!"

"Kick them out!"

Snarl, snarl! Yap, yap, yap!

Visitors, masters, and boys sprang to their feet and looked under their chairs and all around. No one actually saw the dogs, but several of the more excitable thought they did.

"There they are!"

"Where? Where?"

"Catch hold of 'em—quick!"

Yap, yap, yap!

The whole hall was in an uproar for the second time on that eventful night. The barking and snarling seemed to come from different parts of the room every minute. The masters shouted instructions, and several ladies among the visitors took refuge from the supposed fray by standing upon the chairs.

"Open the door!" roared someone. "Kick 'em out into the passage, after Pankley & Co.!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Several doors leading into the passage were flung open by willing hands, and immediately the snarling and snapping became fainter, and finally died away along the passage.

The doors were shut again and the audience began to settle down in their seats, in a heated and excited condition.

Comments on the mysterious dog-fight were heard on all sides.

"The beggars have sheered off at last!"

"Wonder how the brutes got in?"

"Sounded like the Head's dog, one of 'em."

"Thank goodness they've cleared off! Now we can get on with the show."

The Rookwood contingent resumed their seats with the others, almost hysterical with laughter. They were all in the secret, and knew that the dog-fight, the product entirely of Professor Walla-Walla's marvellous gift of ventriloquism, was all part of Jimmy Silver's plan for livening up the Bagshot entertainment.

As Newcome whispered to Raby, if they had not expected it they would have been as completely deceived as the rest of the audience, so realistic was the wily professor's imitation of a dog-fight.

As the attention of the audience was once more turned to the professor and his assistant on the stage, a further slight diversion was caused by the return of the luckless Pankley & Co., who slipped into their seats from the side-door as unobtrusively as possible.

They looked a very sheepish quartette, and they were received with universal chuckles and some cheering.

Pankley had a black eye, and Greene a very much swollen nose, while Putter, with a crimson countenance, kept dabbing viciously with his handkerchief at a cut on his lip.

The unfortunate Poole had come off the worst of the four. Putter had not spared him, while he had his head in chancery, and Poole

boasted a black eye, a swollen nose, and a cut lip as well!

Many were the chuckles and comments as they slipped quietly into their seats.

"Faith, an' here come the Kilkenny cats!" remarked a very Irish voice from somewhere in the back row.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Order! Order!"

On the stage the professor was waiting for his audience to settle down once more. His assistant was sitting in a chair at the back of the stage, with his head thrown back, motionless.

The professor held up his hand.

"If the sahibs will kindly give me their close attention for a time," he said, "I will endeavour to show them an amazing phenomenon of the East, which has never before been presented in this way upon the British stage!"

"Hear, hear!"

"By the power of my will, aided by his own voluntary effort, I will proceed to put my young assistant, Lal Ram, into a species of trance. His mind will then be free to absorb the thoughts of the audience, with the result that he will be able to answer questions put to him concerning past events connected with the great school here"—here the professor made a profound salaam, amidst loud cheers—"of which we can have no possible knowledge. Under favourable conditions, my young pupil can venture upon prophecies as to the future. When ever he has done this, sahibs, I may say that his prophecies have turned out to be correct in every detail."

The professor salaamed again, and a dead silence fell upon the deeply interested audience.

Bagshot was profoundly thrilled, and followed every movement of the dusky professor with intense concentration.

Only the Rookwood contingent, for some reason, seemed to be struggling to suppress grins.

Amidst a breathless hush the professor marched solemnly over to where Lal Ram was sitting motionless in the chair. He placed one fat hand upon the boy's dusky forehead, and passed the other up and down in front of his face, muttering strange incantations, whilst he gazed deeply into the boy's eyes.

Amidst a breathless hush, the professor made mysterious passes before the dusky features of his assistant, muttering strange incantations as he gazed deeply into the boy's eyes. (*See this page.*)

After a couple of minutes of this the professor appeared satisfied. He removed his hand from Lal Ram's forehead, and paced back to the footlights.

"Now, will any sahib kindly put a question to me about any event, connected with the school in some way, that has happened fairly recently?" said the pro-

fessor. "We will then see it my pupil can answer it."

There was a moment's silence.

Lovell leaned over towards Pankley.

"Ask him about our last footer-match!" he whispered. "What the score was, and anything else about it."

"Good!" said Pankley. "I will!"

And he put the question to the professor, amidst a buzz of approval from the audience. The match had been played in Bagshot, and practically every boy in the big schoolroom had witnessed it. It was generally considered, therefore, to be a good test for the Hindu seer.

The professor spoke to Lal Ram in a language that sounded like the rapid drawing of corks.

There was no reply for a moment, then Lal began to jerk out rapid sentences in a low voice.

"Ullamalloo ram jat kai wallah!" he exclaimed—at least that is what it sounded like to the thrilled audience. "Don, sahib, gunga lal din!"

The professor waved his hands in some excitement.

"Lal Ram speaks!" he exclaimed. And he hastily began to interpret the profound remark of his young assistant.

"Lal sees great playing-ground in front of noble building, sticks at one end, sticks at the other end, like so!"

And the professor indicated the construction of the ordinary goalposts with his expressive hands.

There was a murmur of applause from the Bagshot fellows. They evidently approved of the description of their football-ground, with Bagshot School in the background.

"When from a little house at one end of the ground came running one, two, six, eleven little boys, white-garbed for the fray!"

The professor waved his hands, and smiled an expansive smile, evidently well pleased with his descriptive powers in translating Lal's cork-popping mutterings into the English language.

The expressions on the faces of the Bagshot audience were somewhat puzzled. Some of the fellows grinned a little. The Bagshot team had been the first to leave the pavilion, so the Hindu's description of Pankley and his men as "little boys" was rather amusing to all those who were not in the team.

"Then follow a team of young stalwarts clothed in many colours!" continued the professor. He was evidently now speaking of the Rookwood team, who had played in colours, while Bagshot had sported white. "The fray is joined, the ball flies from foot to foot; but it is soon seen that the superiority rests all with one side.

Dead silence from the audience!

"The little white players are overmatched by the sturdier and more skilful team of many colours! Once, twice, thrice the ball is shot between the sticks! Then there is a pause, and the players cease for a time from striving!"

The professor had evidently reached half-time. The expressions on the faces of the Bagshot audience by this time were simply extraordinary. The professor was accurate in his description of the match, in so far as the score was concerned, which was three to nil in favour of Rookwood at half-time. But with the rest of his description Bagshot by no means agreed.

There were shouts and hoots from the juniors in the audience.

"Rats!"

"Rot!"

"He's talking rot."

"That black kid's dotty!"

The professor stepped forward, and waved his hands wildly, with an anxious expression on his fat, dusky face.

"Sahibs, sahibs, if you make noise it waken Lal! He does not know what he say!"

The noisy juniors quietened down, and there were voices raised from the seniors' seats.

"Order there!"

"Give the professor fair play!"

"Let the kid go on!"

With an anxious look, the professor bent over the motionless Lal. The boy began to talk again in his queer language, and the Hindu conjurer held up his hand for silence.

"After the pause the game is resumed, with the same result. The white players are feeble and unskilled, and two times more do they

of the coloured garments roll the ball between the sticks before the game ends itself. Does Lal speak truly, sahibs?" finished the professor anxiously.

There was a roar of rage from the Bagshot Fourth Form, and simultaneously a roar of uncontrollable laughter from the rest of the audience. It suddenly seemed to strike even the Bagshot fellows, all except those in the Fourth Form, as being an excruciatingly funny description of Pankley's team of Fourth-formers' vain struggle against Jimmy Silver's Rookwood team. Never had Pankley & Co. been so thoroughly and so publicly "roasted" as by this pair of seemingly quite innocent Hindus. In their apparently quite unsuspecting way they had done less than justice to the actual display that Pankley & Co. had given on the field, and had shown them up in front of the whole school—and some of the Rookwood fellows, too—as a pack of helpless duffers.

Pankley & Co. simply writhed, while the audience yelled with laughter.

"You fat black villain!" roared Pankley, shaking his fist up at the dismayed-looking Professor Walla-Walla. "You spoofer!"

The professor spread out his hands.

"But, sahib——"

"Your blessed Lal is talking piffle!" hooted Putter. "Piffle, do you hear?"

"Rats!" roared a dozen voices. "He was quite right! Go ahead, professor!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How do you like it, Pankley?"

"You can't play footer, old man!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Pankley & Co., and the rest of the Bagshot Fourth Form team turned red and furious faces to the yelling crowd. The redder and the more furious they got the more the crowd yelled!

"The—the howling dummies!" breathed Pankley wrathfully. "If I get hold of that black heathen of a Lal, I—I'll spifficate him!"

"The young rotter must be spoofing us!" gasped Poole. "I don't believe he was in a trance at all!"

"This is the limit, and no mistake!" snorted Greene.

"You fat black villain!" roared Pankley, shaking his fist angrily at the dismayed-looking professor. "You spoofer!" (*See this page.*)

"Made absolute fools of us, don't you know," said Putter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Rookwood fellows, of course, were almost in hysterics. It seemed funny enough to the Bagshot fellows to see their own Fourth-form footer team "roasted" in this manner. To the Rookwood fellows, who were in the know, the way Jimmy Silver's little plot was working out was excruciatingly humorous.

"Blessed if I can stand much more of this!" gasped Lovell, who was clinging helplessly to Newcome, and almost weeping with mirth. "I—I shall simply bust!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" cackled the Rookwooders, feeble with laughter.

"Look out!" stuttered Raby. "The professor's off again."

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

Who's Top Dog?

THE professor, who appeared mystified by the uproar his assistant's description of a football match had caused, was making an attempt to attract the attention of the audience from the unfortunate Pankley & Co. to himself once more.

"Will the sahibs ask some question concerning the future?" he bleated.

Then there came a roar from Lovell of Rookwood.

"Ask him who'll win the next junior football match with Rookwood, professor—whites or colours?"

"Hear, hear?"

"Bravo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The suggestion was received with cheers and yells of laughter. It just fitted in with the mood of the audience.

The professor blinked at Lovell a little doubtfully, then:

"I understand, sahib!" he said, and, with a little bow to the grinning audience, he went over to his boy assistant, who still lay back motionless in his chair.

He bent down, put a question to him in his strange language, at the same time putting his fat hand on the boy's brow.

There was an expectant hush as the audience, now thoroughly enjoying themselves, with the exception of Pankley & Co., listened for the gifted young seer's reply.

"Hi chum him rum!" came from Lal, in low but clear tones.

The professor, with an expression of portentous solemnity, walked back to the footlights with measured tread.

For a moment there was a breathless silence.

The professor appeared to hesitate. Immediately there were shouts of encouragement.

"Go it!"

"What does he say?"

"Out with it!"

The professor held up his hand.

"Lal Ram says that the sahibs of the many-coloured shirts will win, by seventeen goals to nil!"

There was a moment of stunned silence.

Then a great gust of laughter fairly shook the school-room, mingled with a roar of wrath from the junior members of the Bagshot audience.

Pankley & Co. sprang up in a body, and made a rush for the stage. Those of the Rookwooders who were not too helpless with laughter laid restraining hands upon them.

Amid a perfect pandemonium of shouts and laughter, a wild and whirling struggle commenced once more amidst the first few rows of chairs, this time on a much more extensive scale than before. Pankley & Co. were again the centre of it, and Pankley & Co. were driven almost to desperation by all that they had had to put up with on that eventful evening.

The Bagshot masters, convinced that this was the end of the evening's entertainment, left the school-room with their visitors, laughing loudly, leaving the seniors to deal with the uproar as best they could.

After a short struggle with Raby and Newcome, Pankley and Putter managed to scramble on to the stage, chiefly because the Rookwooders were too doubled up with laughter to cope with them effectively.

The two heroes of the Bagshot Fourth gazed wildly round the stage.

"Where are they?" hooted Pankley. "Where are the black villains?"

"We'll scalp 'em! Where are they?" echoed Putter ferociously.

But the Hindu professor and his hopeful assistant had departed. Pankley and Putter raged round the stage, looking behind all the screens, but no sign of them did they discover.

All the "props" had gone, too, only the screens and carpets, borrowed from various quarters in Bagshot School, remained.

"They can't have gone far, especially with all their props to carry," said Pankley sulphurously. "Let's run down to the gates!"

"Good egg!" cried Putter.

The two juniors left the stage by the back entrance, and bolted out of the big school-room, and down the passage. Poole and Greene were limping along the passage, fresh from the fray in the big school-room, and Pankley rallied them to his standard.

"Down to the gates, you fellows—quick!"

Poole and Greene, jaded as they were, pricked up their ears like a couple of war-horses at their leader's clarion call.

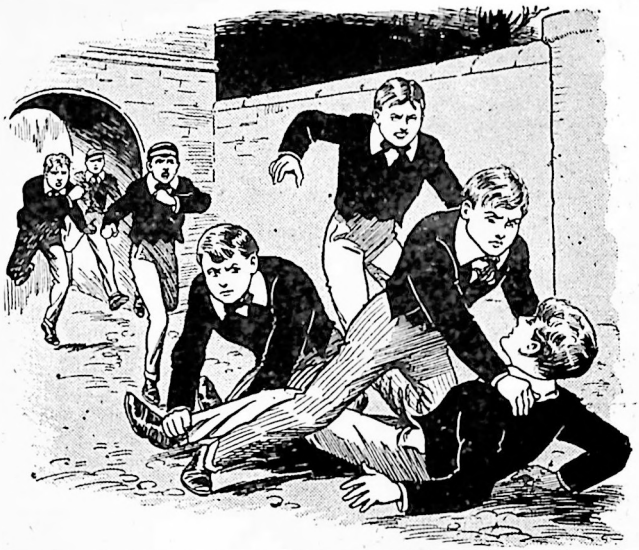
"Right-ho!" called Poole.

And they followed Pankley and Putter.

Pankley & Co. dashed out of the school-house door and across the playground towards the big school gates. In the glimmer of the starlight Pankley caught a glimpse of two figures moving in front of him in the direction of the gates. One was tall and bulky and the other shorter and slim, and between them they carried a bulky basket.

Pankley gave a yell of triumph.

"Here they are, you fellows! On to 'em!"



"Rescue, Rookwood!" shouted Jimmy Silver, before Pankley could stifle the cry. There was a rush of feet, and Lovell's voice sounded through the darkness: "This way, you chaps! Coming, Jimmy!" (*See Chapter* 6.)

The figures in front, evidently startled, stopped, and set down the basket with a bump.

"Mind your eye!" exclaimed a voice, and a voice that the Bagshot juniors knew well. "Here's Pankley & Co.! Run for it!"

Pankley gave a roar.

"Jimmy Silver! You—you spoofer! Collar him!"

"Run for it, professor!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

But the professor hesitated, and wrung his hands helplessly.

"My props!" he wailed. "I can't leave my props!"

Then Jimmy Silver, otherwise Lal Ram, hesitated, too, and was lost!

"Back up, then!" he gasped. "Ow! Grooh!"

Four pairs of hands were laid upon him almost at the same instant, as Pankley & Co. made a dash at him.

Then Jimmy Silver was down.

With Pankley sitting on his chest and Poole on his legs he could only gasp breathlessly.

"Groo-hoo! Gerroff!"

Pankley gasped, too.

"Got you!" he grunted victoriously.

"Gerroff me chest!"

"Some other time, Mr. Jimmy Lal Ram Silver!"

"Help! Help!" gasped Jimmy breathlessly.

There was a rush of feet, and the sound of Lovell's voice in the darkness.

"This way, you chaps!"

"Rescue, Rookwood!" shouted Jimmy Silver, before Pankley could stifle the cry.

"Coming, Jimmy!" shouted Lovell, recognising his chum's voice on the instant.

In a moment Pankley & Co. were surrounded by a dozen shadowy forms. The Rookwood juniors on their way down to the gates had arrived in the nick of time to rescue their leader.

Pankley & Co. turned to flee, but it was too late. They were surrounded, and grasped by many hands.

With the four Bagshot prisoners arraigned in front of him, surrounded by the grinning Rookwood juniors, Jimmy Silver held forth in the hour of his triumph.

"Now, you Bagshot bounders, listen to your Uncle James a moment!" he said, wagging an admonitory forefinger at the sulphurous Pankley & Co. "The hour has come when we must part! But before we do so, let us have a few moments' sweet converse!"

There was a cackle from the appreciative circle of Rookwooders. But Pankley & Co. replied only with glares.

If looks could wither, Jimmy Silver would undoubtedly have shrivelled up on the spot. As it was, he did not seem to be affected the least bit. He only grinned!

"And now, gentlemen," said Jimmy. "When I say 'gentlemen,' I mean you Rookwood chaps, of course——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I have one question to ask you, gentlemen. Who's top dog—Rookwood or Bagshot?"

He asked this question with the air of one propounding a point of the gravest importance. He was not kept waiting long for an answer.

There was a roar from a dozen voices.

"Rookwood!"

"Uncle James" smiled, and waved his hand airily. He was thoroughly enjoying himself.

"Exactly!" he said gently. "And now, what do the Bagshot bounders say in answer to the same question?"

"Bagshot!" shouted Pankley & Co., defiantly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy sighed and shook his head.

"It seems extraordinary!" he said, in a pained voice. "After all the trouble we have taken this evening, too!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Would it make any difference if I mentioned that there are miles of strong twine in the professor's prop-box, Pankley, to tie you four up with?"

"Oh!" said Pankley.

"And lots of make-up and feathers and things to decorate you with?"

"Ugh!"

"Groo!"

Pankley & Co. shuddered, and the Rookwood juniors yelled again.

Jimmy Silver went on with a serious face.

"We're a bit late as it is, but we don't mind being late and getting a few lines, as long as it's in a good cause, Pankley, old scout! If we tied you four up so you could just crawl back to the school——"

"Ugh!"

"And painted your faces——"

"Groo!"

"And jammed feathers in your hair——"

"Oh!"

"And put notices on your backs, just to let the fellows know who'd done it, you know——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Rookwooders.

"Would it alter your opinion on this important question, I wonder?"

Pankley & Co. fairly wriggled. After all they had been through that evening, and the way they had been held up to ridicule in their own school, they would have a sufficient

amount of chaff to put up with from their schoolmates as it was! But if they crawled in finally, rigged out in the manner Jimmy Silver so graphically described—well, it seemed to the unhappy Pankley & Co, that life would not be worth living!

"Of course," went on Jimmy Silver sweetly, "it wouldn't be necessary to proceed to these extreme measures."—and he waved his hand towards the prop-box—"if you would express a more reasonable opinion about which school is top dog! We should simply bid you good-night, and let you go, in that case."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Rookwooders.

The conflicting expressions upon the faces of the Bagshot fellows was almost too comic.

They were fairly in the toils, and they realised it.

"Well," said Jimmy Silver at last, in dulcet tones. "Which school is top-dog, gentlemen of Bagshot?"

Pankley & Co. looked at one another with sickly expressions. Pankley's lips moved, but no words came. Then, reluctantly, he nodded.

"Rookwood!" came almost in a whisper from four pairs of lips.

But Jimmy Silver was merciless.

"Louder!" he demanded. "Say it as if you meant it! Now, who is top dog?"

"Rookwood!" shouted the Bagshot bounders, goaded to desperation.

Jimmy Silver chortled loud and long.

"Let the beggars go!" he said. "They know who's top dog at last!"

"Hurrah!"

Laughing and cheering, the Rookwooders released the unhappy Pankley & Co. Then, with the comfortable feeling of fellows who deserved well of their country, they gathered up the big prop-basket, and with the professor, grinning broadly, in their midst, they marched off down the road towards Rookwood.

"Nighty-night!" sang out Jimmy Silver. "If he'll let us know when he wants it, we'll come along again some time, and remind him again!"

But answer came there none!

Greyfriars Champions

LORD MAULEVERER

(Champion Slacker)

"To sleep, perchance to dream;" I cite
The maxim of Mauleverer;
At slacking, morning, noon and night,
No fellow could be cleverer.
He loves to lie and take his ease
In fields where sheep-bells tinkle;
Sinking to slumber by degrees——
A modern Rip Van Winkle!

For taking part in sport or game,
Mauly shows no proclivity;
In fact, he hates the very name
Of action or activity!
When Cherry rouses him at dawn
With noisy animation,
His lordship gives a sleepy yawn,
And murmurs "Botheration!"

He finds it "too much fag" to swot
At Homer or at Plato;
While as for games, they make him hot,
And flushed as a tomato!
He loves to languish in the shade
Beside the waving willow;
Alone with pints of lemonade,
And the green sward for pillow!

Come, Mauly! Shake your noble leg!
And stagger each beholder;
I'll race you all the way to Pegg,
And swim you to the Shoulder!
To dream away youth's golden hours
Is folly most appalling;
Wake up and exercise your powers!
The briny deep's a-calling!

GLORIOUS GRUB!

By TUBBY MUFFIN

(of Rookwood).

TELL me not, in mournful numbers,
Life is but an empty dream:
If a pie your plate encumbers,
And there's strawberries and cream!

Life is lovely! Life is ripping!
If the tuckshop is your goal;
Don't despair! there's toast and dripping,
Saveloy and sau-age-roll!

Not privation, nor starvation,
Is our destined end or way;
But to eat, with jubilation,
Glorious grub the livelong day!

In the world's broad field of battle,
In the camping-ground of Life,
Do not chew the cud, like cattle,
Eat roast mutton, with a knife!

Trust no tabloids, howe'er pleasant,
Let your meals substantial be;
Dine on duckling or on pheasant,
Gobble doughnuts for your tea!

Lives of epicures remind us
We can make our lives first-rate;
And, departing, leave behind us
Not a crumb upon our plate!

Not a crumb to tell the story
Of our glorious feasts and feeds;
Of the glamour and the glory
Of our picnics in the meads.

Dull would be the world and dreary,
And I'd feel inclined to "blub"
If there were no tuckshop cheery,
Stocked and stacked with Glorious Grub!

Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate!
Munching, crunching, gaily chewing—
Learn to leave an empty plate!

The Rookwood Rat-Hunt!

By OWEN CONQUEST

Tubby Muffin's Latest Stunt creates a vast amount of excitement at Rookwood!

THE FIRST CHAPTER

Tubby Plans Revenge!

"TURNED out of my own study!" Reginald Muffin—christened "Tubby" on account of his barrel-like circumference—limped painfully along the Fourth-form passage at Rookwood.

The fat junior looked, and felt, as if he had just been put through a mangle. His collar was loose; his Eton jacket was torn; and he was dusty and dishevelled. Fellows who saw him limping along the passage grinned at him, and they surmised that their plump schoolfellow had been in the wars.

Tubby Muffin had just been "scragged" in his own study, by his own study-mates, and then ejected into the passage. And he had been warned that he could expect another dose if he returned to the study.

The "crime" for which Tubby had been ejected was simply this. He had partaken of an early tea, whilst his study-mates were on the football ground; and, his appetite being keener than usual, Tubby had scoffed the whole of the supplies. He had eaten his study-mates out of house and home, so to speak, and they had come on the scene just as the last slice of plum-cake was disappearing into Tubby's capacious interior.

Tubby Muffin had argued that a fellow can do what he likes in his own study. If he likes to help himself from the cupboard, he is at perfect liberty to do so. True, his study-mates were entitled to a share of the supplies; but if they chose to footle away their time on the football field, instead of coming in to tea at a respectable hour, it was their funeral. "First come, first served," was Tubby's motto.

Tubby's study-mates did not see eye to eye with him in the matter. They had come in to tea with keen appetites, only to find that there was no tea to be had. Whereupon, they had waxed exceeding wroth, and had ejected their fat study-mate with great violence.

"Beasts!" growled Tubby, as he limped along. "I wish I could change out of that study. I've wanted to, for a long time. But I can't get anybody to swop with me. If only I had a study of my own!"

But it was like crying for the moon, for a mere Fourth-former to expect a study all to himself. Such a thing was unheard-of at Rookwood. The majority of the junior studies had three occupants. Some had four. The fact was, there were not enough studies to

go round. The demand far exceeded the supply.

But Tubby Muffin, as he limped out into the quadrangle, looked very thoughtful. He was trying to devise ways and means of procuring a study to himself. And as he rolled to and fro under the old beeches, Tubby's brain was very busy.

"Peele's study would suit me best," he murmured. "It's a topping little den, and it's awfully nicely furnished. But the puzzle is, how can I get Peele and Lattrey and Gower out of it?"

That was, indeed, a puzzle which might well have baffled the Sphinx of old.

It would be no use approaching Cyril Peele, the "nut" of the Fourth, and asking him to vacate his study for Tubby Muffin's benefit. Such an impudent request would result in yet another painful ejection for Tubby.

But there are more ways than one of killing a cat, or procuring a study. Presently Tubby Muffin's face brightened up, and he gave vent to an unmusical chuckle.

"I've hit it!" he exclaimed. "I reckon that if there was a plague of rats in Peele's study, he'd jolly soon be scared out of it. And so would Lattrey and Gower. They simply hate rats; I heard 'em saying so the other day. And I know a fellow down in the village who will let me have as many rats as I want. I'll get about two dozen of them, and smuggle the beastly pests into Peele's study! He, he, he!"

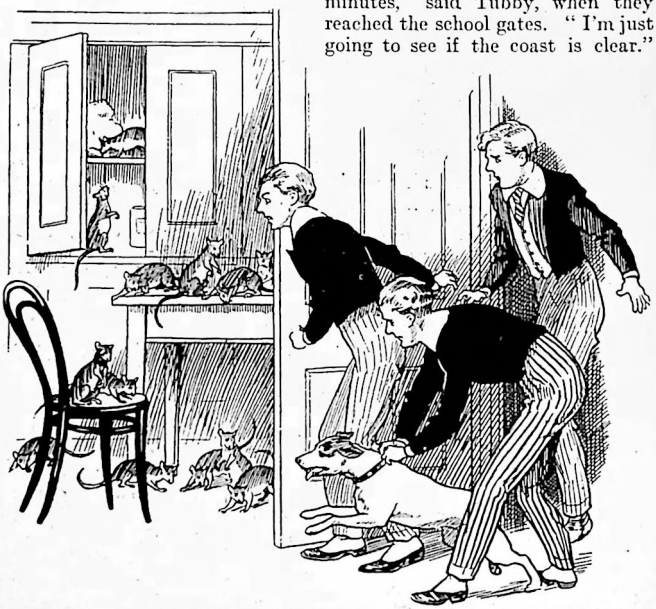
Shakespeare once said that conspiracies should no sooner be formed than executed; and Tubby Muffin did not allow the grass to grow under his feet. He coolly borrowed Jimmy Silver's bicycle from the shed, and pedalled down to Coombe in the gathering dusk.

On the outskirts of the village lived a man with a queer taste in hobbies. His particular hobby was rat-catching. For this purpose, he kept a large wire trap, into which the rats were enticed. They were captured alive, and after a brief spell of captivity they were liberated, only to be chased and killed by dogs.

Tubby Muffin's luck was in. There were two dozen live rats available, and they were placed in a special hamper, securely fastened, and handed over to Tubby for a small consideration.

Tubby persuaded the rat-catcher to carry the hamper up to the school, and the fat junior pedalled slowly beside him.

"Stay here with the hamper for a few minutes," said Tubby, when they reached the school gates. "I'm just going to see if the coast is clear."



Peele had only a brief glimpse of the interior of the study—but he saw all he wanted to see! The place was alive with rats! (*See Chapter* 2.)

An Unwelcome Intruder !

To face page 281

Drawn by E. E. Briscoe

A Knight of the Road, hard pressed, takes refuge in Rookwood School.

A HIGHWAYMAN AT ROOKWOOD

IN the year 1750 the roads of England were infested with highwaymen, and no traveller was safe from their unwelcome attentions. In the county of Hampshire the acknowledged king of the "high-tobymen" was one Jerry Swiveller, a most audacious fellow. In the month of September a determined effort was made to capture Swiveller. He was located in the Half Moon tavern upon the Winchester road, and the place was surrounded by the Bow Street runners—the policemen of those days. The highwayman, however, made a sudden dash from the house, seized a horse and spurred off across country, with the runners in hot pursuit.

Making straight for Rockwood School, Swiveller sprang from his horse, climbed over the wall and raced across the Quadrangle. The next minute he was swarming up the thick ivy towards the window of the Prefects' Room, which he entered, pistol in hand.

There were three fellows in the Prefects' Room, and their consternation at the sudden entry of this armed and desperate highwayman can be imagined.

"Not a sound, my pretty fellows," said Swiveller. "Do as I bid ye, or my barkers shall let daylight into ye!"

Caught thus at a disadvantage the three Rookwooders, whose names were Lacy, Grubb and Oldfield, hastened to do the highwayman's bidding.

Locking the door, they managed to keep all inquirers at bay for an hour or more, under the pretext that they were studying and refused to be disturbed.

The highwayman eventually took his departure by the way he had come, making the boys swear to say nothing of his visit until the morning—which promise they obeyed.

The result was that the highwayman made good his escape.

Two years later, after making himself the terror of Hampshire, Jerry Swiveller fell into the hands of the authorities and was hanged at Winchester.

Continued from page 280.

And he hurried into the building, and made his way to Peele's study.

The apartment was empty. Cyril Peele was taking part in a chess tournament in the junior common-room, and Lattrey and Gower, as well as practically the whole of the Fourth, had gone to see the game. The Fourth-form passage was deserted.

"Good!" ejaculated Tubby Muffin. "I couldn't have chosen a better time."

He sped back to the gates, and relieved the rat-catcher of the hamper. It was a weighty hamper, and there was quite a commotion going on inside it. Tubby shuddered a little as he carted the hamper through the dark quadrangle. He had no more love for rats than Peele & Co. had.

He reached Peele's study without being challenged; and he dumped the hamper on the floor, and switched on the light. Then he paused, panting from his exertions.

Now came the most ticklish part of the business. The hamper had to be emptied of the rodents. Tubby wished he had asked the rat-catcher to perform this gruesome task. But it was too late now. The rat-catching gentleman was on his way back to Coombe.

"It's got to be done!" muttered the fat junior. "But supposing the beastly things set on me? They might be hungry; and I've heard that a hungry rat will attack anything or anybody. Groo!"

Certainly it was an awkward business; but it had to be done. Every moment that Tubby Muffin lingered in Peele's study added to his danger.

The fat junior rolled over to the cupboard, and opened it wide. Then he saw that the window was securely fastened. And then, screwing his courage to the sticking-point, Tubby turned the hamper on its side, and wrenched off the lid. Before any of the rats could escape, he turned the hamper upside-down. For a brief moment he stood there, pressing it down over the struggling rats. Tubby was shaking from head to foot, and the perspiration was beaded on his brow.

The crucial moment had come! Tubby Muffin shut his eyes, and jerked the hamper away in a flash. Then he fairly hurled

himself through the open doorway, slamming the door behind him.

Quick as he was, however, a couple of the rats managed to escape from the study, and they scuttled away down the passage.

The remainder of the rats were prisoners in Peele's study. There would be ample supplies of food for them, for Peele intended to hold a little supper-party that evening, when the chess tournament was over, and lots of provisions had been laid in for the occasion. Tubby Muffin had thoughtfully left the cupboard door wide open, so that the rats could help themselves.

His task accomplished, the fat junior hurried away with the empty hamper, which he stowed in one of the box-rooms. Then he rolled away to the junior common-room.

"I've worked the oracle," murmured Tubby. "When Peele & Co. go to the study later on they'll find it over-run with rats, and they'll scoot away in a panic. They won't dream that the rats have been specially smuggled into the school. They'll think that a plague of rats has suddenly broken out in their study. The chances are that they'll refuse to stay there any longer. The study will be going begging, and I shall bag it. But I'll get that rat-catcher fellow to clear all the rats away first."

Tubby Muffin was serenely confident that his little scheme would succeed up to the hilt. And he rubbed his hands gleefully in anticipation of becoming the sole tenant of Peele's study. In that luxurious apartment, he would be able to spread himself, and do exactly as he pleased. So he thought, anyway. But the best laid schemes of mice and men—and rat importers—often go astray!

THE SECOND CHAPTER
Rats!

"Bow-wow-wow! Woof!"

The loud and incessant barking of a dog echoed through the Fourth-form passage at Rookwood. The barking was punctuated, at intervals, by a violent scratching noise.

Cyril Peele & Co., the "nuts" of the Fourth, were coming along the passage; an

Greyfriars Champions

DICKY NUGENT
(Champion Author)

You've heard of Dickens and of Scott,
Those mighty men of letters;
But Dicky Nugent says they're not,
Nor ever were his betters!
Among the scribes who wield the pen
A leading light he's reckoned;
We boast no literary men
Like Nugent of the Second!

He writes of heroes like Bill Hart,
And Deadshot Dick, the bandit;
Each plot is such a work of art
You marvel how he planned it!
Of pirates on the Spanish Main
He tells you tales in plenty;
You'll never wish to read again
Such lesser lights as Henty!

His spelling is a trifle queer,
He's shaky in his syntax;
And yet you grin from ear to ear
At Heads who sit on tintacks:
At masters who exclaim, "My hat!"
Or, "By my Sunday breeches!"
But Dicky's yarns would fall quite flat
Without such spicy speeches!

When Dicky comes to man's estate
He'll be sedate and solemn,
And scribble stories at the rate
Of twenty pounds per column.
But if his writing fails to show
Its present style and freedom,
I'm sure his yarns will never "go."
And few will care to read 'em!

Panic-stricken rats fairly poured into the passage, with Gyp snarling and yapping behind them. The terrier came bounding out of the study in hot pursuit. "Fetch your cricket stumps!" roared Jimmy Silver, "Old Gyp will want some help!" (*See Chapter 2.*)

they halted in astonishment on hearing that loud canine commotion.

"My only aunt!" exclaimed Peele. "What a rumpus! That sounds like Mack, the porter's, dog Gyp."

Gower nodded.

"There he is!" he exclaimed. "Seems to be trying to get into our study!"

The dog Gyp—an unusually large-sized terrier, which Mack the porter had recently bought for purposes of protection against "burglars"—was scraping and scratching furiously at the closed door of Peele's study. And he was barking and snarling in a truly ferocious manner.

The Fourth-form passage was strictly out of bounds to Gyp, and as a rule he observed the restriction. But wild horses would not have kept him from entering the Fourth-form passage on this occasion; for he was hot on the trail of his deadly enemies—rats. Only a few minutes before, Gyp had spotted a couple of rats in the quadrangle, and he had made short work of them. He had then picked up their scent, which led to Peele's study. He could both smell and hear the friends and relatives of the rats he had already slain; and he clamoured loudly for admittance to the study. Gyp's blood was up. He was in a war-like mood, and he would cheerfully have faced a whole army of rats at that moment.

"Wow-wow-wow! Woof! Woof!"

Scratch, scratch, scratch!

Peele & Co., having recovered in some measure from their astonishment, walked on to their study. The dog, on seeing them, became more noisy than ever. If his doggy language could have been interpreted, he would have been heard to say:

"Open this door, you goggling fools!

Can't you see that I'm simply dying to get at those rats ? "

Gower grasped the dog rather gingerly by the collar, and held him.

" Take a peep into the study, Peele," he said. " There's somethin' wrong, I'm thinkin'."

Gyp struggled furiously in Gower's grasp, as Peele cautiously opened the door of the study.

The next moment there was a startled yell from the leader of the " nuts." He jumped back into the passage as if something had hit him.

Peele had only had a brief glance at the interior of the study ; but he had seen all he wanted to see.

The room was infested with rats. There were rats on the table, and on the chairs, and in the fireplace ; and Peele had caught a fleeting glimpse of a big fat rat perched on one of the shelves of the cupboard, delicately toying with a cold sausage.

" What's up ? " asked Lattrey, in alarm.

" Rats ! " Peele managed to gasp. " There's a whole blessed swarm of 'em in the study. Reminds me of the Pied Piper of Hamelin. Goodness knows where they all sprung from ! "

At the mere mention of rats Lattrey turned quite pale.

" Shut the door—quick ! " he panted.

" No jolly fear ! I'm goin' to let old Gyp loose amongst them. Let him go, Gower."

Gower released his grasp of Gyp's collar, and with one tremendous bound the terrier was inside the study.

A perfect pandemonium ensued. Sounds of snarling and snapping were intermingled with loud squeals of terror. The commotion brought a dozen fellows hurrying to the spot.

" What the thump——" ejaculated Jimmy Silver, in amazement.

" Do you fellows care about a rat-hunt ? " inquired Peele, with a grin. " If so, now's your chance."

Even as Peele spoke a number of panic-stricken rats fairly poured out into the passage. Some of the juniors sprang away in alarm ; others stood their ground.

" After 'em, Gyp ! " roared Gower.

The dog needed no second bidding. With bared teeth, he came bounding out of the study, and dashed off in hot pursuit of the rats.

" Fetch your cricket-stumps, you fellows," exclaimed Jimmy Silver. " Old Gyp will want some help."

The juniors rushed into their studies, emerging a moment later with stumps. Then they sped down the dark quadrangle, whither the rats had fled.

Rookwood had not enjoyed a rat-hunt for many a long day, and it came as a welcome diversion.

The old quadrangle, usually still and peaceful at this hour of the evening, was now alive with running figures. The place was in an uproar ; and Gyp's loud barking fairly awakened the echoes.

" Pile in ! " roared Lovell. " We'll teach these blessed rats that they can't make Rookwood their headquarters ! "

" Yes, rather ! "

" Sock it into them ! "

Suddenly the light of an electric torch was flashed upon the scene, and the stern voice of Mr. Dalton, the master of the Fourth, became audible.

" Boys ! What is the meaning of this wild horseplay ? " he demanded.

" We're rat-hunting, sir," explained Jimmy Silver cheerily. " There were about two dozen rats in Peele's study, and Mack's dog chased them out into the quad. I think we've killed most of them."

" Bless my soul ! " ejaculated Mr. Dalton, in astonishment. " I had no idea that there were any rats in the school. You say there were two dozen of the rodents in Peele's study, Silver ? "

" That's so, sir," chimed in Peele.

Mr. Dalton looked grim.

" Then it is my belief that some wretched boy deliberately smuggled the rats into the school, for a practical joke ! " he said. " I will probe this matter to the bottom."

Tubby Muffin overheard this remark, and he fairly quaked at the knees. He remembered, with a shock of alarm, that he had left the lid of the hamper in Peele's study. And, with the intention of removing that incriminating piece of evidence, Tubby suddenly darted away towards the building.

Mr. Dalton's voice fairly boomed through the darkness :

"Stop! Come back at once, Muffin!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Every boy will remain where he is," continued Mr. Dalton, "until I have made an investigation of Peele's study. It is possible that I may find some evidence which may lead to the identification of the culprit."

Mr. Dalton rustled away into the building. He found the evidence all right. The hamper lid bore the address of the rat-catcher in Coombe; and, that gentleman being on the telephone, the Form-master lost no time in ringing him up, and asking him to whom the hamper was supplied.

"I dunno the name of the young gent, sir," said the rat-catcher. "But he was a very fat young feller. I could pick him out in a crowd."

"There will be no need," said Mr. Dalton grimly. "I know the boy to whom you refer. Why did you allow him to have the rats?"

"He told me he wanted them for a harmless joke, sir, an' I took his word for——"

"Enough!" said Mr. Dalton. "I am satisfied that you did not act in complicity with the young rascal. I am obliged to you for the information."

Mr. Dalton rang off, and sent for Tubby.

It was with a sinking heart that Tubby rolled along to the Form-master's study.

Those who happened to be standing below the lighted window of Mr. Dalton's study, could hear sounds of steady swishing. There were other sounds, too, resembling those of a wild beast in pain.

THE END

Rookwood had not enjoyed a rat-hunt for many a long day. The old quadrangle, usually still and peaceful in the evening, became alive with running figures. The place was in an uproar, while Gyp's barking woke the echoes. "Pile in!" yelled Lovell. "We'll teach these blessed rats that they can't make Rookwood their headquarters!"

(*See previous page.*)

THE NIGHT RAIDERS

By JIMMY SILVER
(of Rookwood)

HALF a stride,
Half a stride,
Half a stride,
Onward!
Into the rival dorm.
Marched the half hundred.
"Forward, the Night Brigade
In sleeping suits arrayed.
Keep near the balustrade!"
Into the rival dorm.
Marched the half hundred.

Forward, the Night Brigade!
Was there a boy dismayed?
Though the invaders knew
Someone had blundered.
Theirs not to reason whether
They should display the "White Feather.'
Theirs but to stand together!
Into the rival dorm.
Marched the half hundred.

Pillows to right of them,
Pillows to left of them,
Pillows behind them
Volleyed and thundered.
Loud rose the battle-cries:
"Classical chums, arise!
Down with the Modern guys!"
Into that whirling fray
Rushed the half hundred!

Fiercer the foray grew,
Routed, the foe withdrew.
Swiftly the tidings flew—
All the school wondered.
Moderns in wild retreat,
Writhing at their defeat:
Classicals' joy complete—
Noble half hundred!

When shall their glory fade?
O the brave show they made!
Foes on the floor were laid,
Scattered and sundered.
Honour the fight they made,
Honour the Night Brigade!
Toast them with lemonade—
Gallant half hundred!

SPORTING RECORDS OF ROOKWOOD

By GEORGE BULKELEY (*Captain of Rookwood.*)

CRICKET.

ROOKWOOD has not exactly "set the Thames on fire" during the past Cricket season. At the same time, some very noteworthy performances have been achieved.

* * *

THE Senior Eleven won exactly one-half of their matches, and the Junior Eleven fared very much better, winning seventy-five per cent. of their games. There is undoubtedly some fine cricketing talent amongst the smaller fry at Rookwood.

* * *

JIMMY SILVER scored three successive centuries—a very fine feat for a junior. The scores were as follows:

105 v. Latcham High School.
102 v. Coombe Comrades C.C.
124 v. Highcliffe School.

Bravo, Silver!

* * *

IN their match with Coombe Comrades, a local team, our juniors performed an extraordinary feat. Against the deadly bowling of Lovell and Grace, the "Comrades" were skittled out for a total of 7 runs! Their captain scored 5 not out, and the other two were byes!

* * *

ROOKWOOD'S most exciting match of the season was "Past v. Present." The Old Boys brought a very formidable side down to the school, and at one time it looked a "walk-over" for them, for they held a big lead on the first innings. However, a plucky and resolute partnership between Neville and Lonsdale, in our second venture, pulled the game round, and we got the better of a thrilling finish by 3 runs. The Old Boys spent the evening at the school, and were our guests at a bumper banquet.

It is very unlikely that Rugby will ever displace "Soccer" at Rookwood; "Soccer" has been played here from time immemorial, and recent efforts to popularise the Rugby code have brought very little result.

FOOTBALL.

WE have had a glorious football season. The First Eleven set up a record by playing fifteen consecutive matches without defeat. The "brains" of our attack is a fellow whose name, appropriately enough, is Brayne! His clever scheming and manœuvring led up to a large number of goals. Our biggest win was against Lantham Argyle. We ran up ten goals without response.

* * *

THE Junior Eleven also fared well, under the capable leadership of Jimmy Silver. He was their most prolific goal-getter, though Tommy Dodd, of the Modern Side, ran him very close. The juniors won most of their matches in convincing style. But they have yet to win the Public Schools' Football Championship. Their boldest bid was when they got into the Final against Greyfriars, only to be beaten "on the post."

* * *

THERE is a movement on foot to popularise the Rugby code at Rookwood. Personally, I do not think it will succeed. "Soccer" has been played at Rookwood from time immemorial, and it is no easy matter to abolish a deep-rooted custom. I have no quarrel with the Rugby code; indeed, I consider there is room for both types of game at Rookwood. But "Soccer" will never die out, that is certain.

* * *

YOUNG Algy Silver tells me that the fags have had a very successful season; but he complains of the rough and uneven nature of the fags' ground, which becomes a quagmire in bad weather. He wishes to know if the Senior Eleven would be prepared to "swop" grounds. What cheek! Our answer is, of course, a positive negative!

* * *

GENERAL NOTES.

THE senior boxing championship of Rookwood was won by the writer of these notes. Spare my blushes!

* * *

THE Junior Championship has not yet been decided. It has gone as far as the semi-final. The four juniors who remain "in the running" are Jimmy Silver, Kit Erroll, Tommy Dodd, and Dick Oswald. May the best man win!

* * *

TUBBY MUFFIN deplores the fact that there is no annual eating contest at Rookwood. He would be a certain starter—and a certain winner!

* * *

THE Ludo Championship, which is confined to members of the fag fraternity, has been won for the third time in succession by Algy Silver.

Tubby Muffin thinks there ought to be an Annual Eating Contest at Rookwood—he would be a certain winner!

Nugent Minor's Bad Start!

By FRANK RICHARDS

The boy who is thoroughly spoiled at home is likely to have a somewhat rough time when first he goes to a big Public School—and so it was with young Dicky Nugent.

THE FIRST CHAPTER
The Expected Minor

"NUGENT!"

"Hallo!"

"You're coming down to footer?"

Bob Cherry was looking in at the door of No. 1 Study. Bob was in football garb, with a coat thrown round him, and a considerable length of bare leg showing under the coat. He had a football under his arm.

Frank Nugent, who was sitting on the table in the study, with a letter in his hand, looked round and shook his head. Bob stared at him.

"Can't!"

"Rats!" said Bob Cherry warmly. "What do you mean by can't? We're playing the Upper Fourth this afternoon, and I suppose you don't want the Remove to be licked? We want you at outside-right, and you've got to play. Come on!"

"Can't!"

"You can moon over your blessed billets-doux another time," said Bob wrathfully. "Get off that table, before I yank you off!"

"Can't! This is a letter from home——"

"Oh!" said Bob, his expression changing. "Not bad news, I hope?"

Nugent grinned.

"That's according. I've got a minor coming to Greyfriars. You've heard me speak about young Dicky. He's coming here."

"Well, let him come. Let 'em all come. I don't see that that's any reason for missing the footer."

"He's coming this afternoon. The mater wants me to make much of the young noodle, so that he won't miss home, you know. I shall have to give up the afternoon to it. No good doing these things by halves."

"Look here," said Bob thoughtfully. "I'll tell you what. Sit him down on the footer ground to watch the match. How could he want anything better than that for a half-holiday?"

"I don't know when he's coming, either." Nugent shook his head. "He may be along

"I should be very pleased to stand him a feed, Wharton," said Billy Bunter, "but I have been disappointed about a postal order. I'm stony!" (*See Chapter* 1.)

any time in the afternoon. There's one thing you can always be sure of about young Dicky—he will turn up in the wrong place, at the wrong time, and get into mischief of some sort."

"Nice for his major. Well, if you won't come, you won't."

And Bob Cherry marched off down the passage. Frank Nugent looked at the letter again. It had arrived at Greyfriars that morning, and that was the first intimation he had received that his young brother was coming to the school. The matter had been mooted at home, before, he knew; but his mother had been loth to part with little Dicky. Dicky was a spoiled lad, wilful and troublesome, and his mother's darling. He caused Frank all sorts of bother during the holidays; but Frank was very fond of him all the same. But Dicky at Greyfriars—that was another matter!

A dark-complexioned face glimmered in at the doorway, and a dark-complexioned finger beckoned to Nugent.

"The esteemed Wharton wishes you to arrivefully appear upon the footer ground, my worthy chum," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur. "And you have not yet changefully donned your honourable football shorts and esteemed boots."

"Tell Wharton I'm sorry I'm not playing."

The ratfulness is great," said Hurree Singh. "The esteemed Wharton told me to bring you dragfully by the ears if you did not come walkfully."

Nugent laughed.

"Tell him I'm sorry——"

"Sorry be hanged!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, bursting into the study. "Come on, you young ass! We want you!"

"I've got a minor——"

"I don't care whether you've got a minor, a major, or a whole chromatic scale!" exclaimed Harry. "Bless your minor! Come down to footer!"

"But——"

"We can't spare you. Temple, Dabney & Co. are turning out in force, and they're in good form. I can't spare you. Now, don't argue with your football captain. Get into your things and come down."

"I can't," said Nugent, with a troubled look. "I must wait for Dicky. If he arrived, and I wasn't ready to look after him, he wouldn't like it."

"Well, suppose he didn't?"

"Well, you see——" Nugent hesitated. "Dicky expects to be looked after. He's rather—er—rather exacting. I don't want him to have the sulks the first day he comes to Greyfriars. I expect he will be a bit ratty at my not meeting the train, though, of course, the mater never mentioned which train it was, and it might be anything between half-past two and six o'clock."

"Now, look here, Frank, you can't waste a whole afternoon, and mess up a Form match, on account of your minor. Why, by your own

showing, he may not be here till an hour after the match is finished."

"I know; but he might——"

"Well, I must say you're a soft ass," said Harry. "Your minor wouldn't think of spoiling your half-holiday that way, unless he was a selfish worm, and I suppose he isn't that. Now, look here, I'll ask Bunter to look out for your minor, and you can come and play. Bunter will be hanging about doing nothing, and he can look after the kid, and explain to him, stand him a feed at the tuck-shop, and bring him down to see the footer. Your minor will be all right."

Nugent hesitated.

"Well, I suppose you're right," he remarked.

"Of course I am. It really isn't fair, Frank, to leave us in the lurch like this. I could play Russell in your place, but he wouldn't be nearly as good. And the Upper Fourth are going to give us a good fight this afternoon, too."

Nugent slipped off the table. He seemed to be relieved at having his mind made up for him.

"Right you are!" he exclaimed. "Of course, I want to play—you know that. You speak to Bunter while I get into my things."

And Nugent ran upstairs. Harry Wharton and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh went down to the Close. There was a thoughtful frown upon Harry's brow.

"I don't quite understand Nugent," he said at last. "He seems to worry a lot over his minor. Of course, he ought to look after the kid, but——"

"From what I have heard our esteemed chum remark at varying times, I fancy that the worthy Dick is a spoiled darling of his respected mamma," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur. "He displays the sulkfulness if he thinks he is neglected."

"Then he wants licking," growled Harry, naturally wrathful at the idea of one of his best wingers cutting the match for fear of sulky looks from a spoiled boy. "Frank's too jolly good-natured."

"I say, you fellows——"

Wharton halted, as Billy Bunter came up. Bunter was blinking through his big spectacles with an expression of unusual seriousness on his fat face.

"Good! I was looking for you, Billy."

"Oh, really! I suppose the same idea has occurred to you, then," said the fat junior, with an expression of great satisfaction.

"The same what?"

"The same idea. I hear that Nugent isn't playing. I shall be quite willing to take the position of outside-right for the match this afternoon."

Wharton stared at him, and then burst into a laugh. The idea of the little fat unwieldy Owl of the Remove in a Form match was distinctly amusing. Billy Bunter blinked at him with an irritated air.

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at!" he exclaimed. "I suppose that's what you were thinking of?"

"Ha, ha! No!"

"What was it, then?"

"Nugent is playing. We shall have to deprive ourselves of your valuable services, Billy. Of course, we know the use you would be in the match."

"Well, I rather fancy myself as a winger, you know."

"The fancifulness of the honourable Bunter

Nugent tapped Bunter on the shoulder. "Mind you don't miss my minor," he said, then added: "And if you blue the cash without him, I'll give you the licking of your life!" (*See Chapter* 1.)

is terrific. We should certainly win, because our worthy opponents would suffer too much from the laughfulness to be able to kick the ball."

"Oh, really, Inky——"

"No, I'm not looking for recruits, Billy," said Wharton, with a laugh. "I was looking for you, though. Nugent has a minor coming this afternoon. Now, will you wait for the kid, look out for him, you know, and——"

"Really, Wharton, I'm afraid I shall be too busy this afternoon to look after kids," said Bunter, with dignity.

"And take him to the tuckshop——"

"Eh?" said Bunter, showing a keener interest in the matter.

"And stand him a feed——"

"Ah!"

"And then bring him down to watch the footer."

"I should be very pleased to stand him a feed, Wharton, but I've been disappointed about a postal-order, you know. I'm stony."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"You young ass! Of course we're standing the tin."

"Now you're talking," said Bunter. "Of course, I shall be sincerely pleased to look after Nugent minor. Nugent's a chap I like, though he never can understand that a chap with a healthy appetite requires enough grub to eat. I'll take charge of Nugent minor, with pleasure. Hand me over a pound, and——"

"I'll hand you half-a-crown."

"Oh, really, Wharton! It's no good being mean, you know. Besides, the kid will be feeling lonely, the first day he's at Greyfriars, and there's nothing like a good feed to cure that lonely feeling. Better make it a pound."

"Do you think I'm made of money, you young duffer? Half-a-crown will stand a very good feed for two, and if you don't like to take it on, I'll look for somebody else."

"Of course, I shall be glad to oblige you, Wharton."

"Well, here's the half-crown," said Wharton, tossing the coin to Billy Bunter. "Mind, you're to wait for Nugent minor, and not blue the tin till he comes."

Bunter blinked at him indignantly.

"If you think I'm not to be trusted with half-a-crown, Wharton——"

"Well, do as I tell you. Hallo, here's Frank!"

Nugent came out of the house. He tapped Bunter on the shoulder.

"Mind you don't miss my minor," he said. "He's a chap just like me in looks, only younger—nearly thirteen. He'll be going into the Second Form here. Wait about the gate, and you're bound not to miss him."

"All right."

"And mind you don't blue the cash without him."

"Oh, really, Nugent!"

"If you do, I'll give you the licking of your life—remember that," said Nugent impressively; and he walked on with Wharton and Hurree Singh, leaving the fat junior blinking indignantly.

THE SECOND CHAPTER
Bulstrode is Left Out

"WHARTON!"

Bulstrode, of the Remove, came up as Harry reached the football ground. There was a hard and dogged expression upon Bulstrode's face, and a glance was sufficient to warn Harry that the bully of the Remove was looking for trouble.

Harry faced him quietly.

"Well?" he said.

"You're not playing me to-day?"

"The list of players was posted up this morning," said Harry. "I'm not playing you."

"Why not?"

"Because there are better players in the Form," said Harry quietly

The young captain of the Remove was not given to mincing his words.

Bulstrode gritted his teeth.

"Better players!" he said. with a sneer. "Mark Linley, I suppose—a factory hand. He's a better player, is he—that scholarship fellow?"

"Much better."

"And that worm Hazeldene?"

Wharton was silent.

"Hazeldene's better, eh?" said Bulstrode savagely. "A fellow that dare not stand up

to a charge. You know he's nothing like my form. I know jolly well why you're playing him instead of me, too!"

"I may as well be plain about it, Bulstrode," said Harry. "You can play better footer than Hazeldene—when you like. But Hazel is a trier all the time, and you're not. If you think you're neglected in the field, and don't get chances enough, you play carelessly, and let the game go. I've noticed it lots of times."

"And so have I," said Nugent. "You practically gave a game away to Friardale Rovers last week, Bulstrode, and you can't deny it!"

Bulstrode flushed darkly.

"Wharton and Cherry were keeping the ball, and never gave me a chance!" he exclaimed. "What was the good of my slogging away when I never got a chance at the leather?"

"That's just it," said Harry. "You fancy you're being passed over unless you get the ball all the time. You're never content unless you're playing to the gallery. A player's business is to back up his team all the time, and not to think of himself. Hazel does that, though his form isn't as good as yours, and he's worth more in the team in consequence."

"Then I'm out—for good?"

"I don't say that. I'll give you another chance later, but not in a Form match. If you g t an attack of the sulks, and threw the game away, the Upper Fourth would be crowing over a victory."

"Well, I suppose it wouldn't be much good my playing, as you fellows are in a conspiracy to keep me in the shade all the time!" said Bulstrode furiously.

"If that's how you look at it, can you possibly expect me to put you in the team? You're as good as asking me to let you in to wreck the match."

"Oh, you can't take me in!" said Bulstrode. "Do you think I don't know why you're playing Hazeldne? It's not because he's any good."

Wharton's eyes glittered.

"Then why is it?"

"It's because of his sister Marjorie," said Bulstrode savagely. "Because——"

"That's enough, Bulstrode!"

Harry Wharton walked on to the field. He did not want to row with Bulstrode, but it was as much as he could do to keep his hands off the bully of the Remove.

Bulstrode glared after him with a savage scowl.

Before Harry Wharton came to Greyfriars Bulstrode had been captain of the Remove, and his fall always rankled in his breast—sometimes more, sometimes less. But now the smart was keener than ever. His uncertain temper made it impossible to play him in a match of any importance; but Bulstrode was far from recognising that fact.

"By George," he muttered, "I'll make them sorry for shoving me out like this somehow! The cads! They all follow Wharton now; they used to follow me. They think more of that factory fellow than they do of me now. By George!"

"I expect they'll get licked, Bulstrode," said Snoop, the sneak of the Form. "I'm

Bunter blinked at the lad in a friendly way. "I suppose you're Nugent minor," he said. (*See Chapter* 3.)

pretty certain they'll get licked. Temple, Dabney & Co. are out for scalps."

Bulstrode scowled at him.

"Who wants them to be licked?"

"Why, I—I thought——"

"Well, you're a worm!" growled Bulstrode. "I want the Form to win, of course. But you know jolly well I ought to be playing."

"Of course you ought," agreed Snoop—who knew very well that Bulstrode oughtn't. "Wharton knows that very well, and so does Nugent."

"I'll make them sit up for it somehow!" said Bulstrode.

He stood gloomily by the ropes, looking upon the level space of the football-field.

The two teams were turning out there, the Remove in red shirts, and the Upper Fourth in blue. Both teams looked very fit. The Upper Fourth, of course, were an older team, and on the whole larger and heavier; but the Remove were hard as iron, and in splendid form from incessant playing.

Mark Linley, Bob Cherry, Nugent, Tom Brown, of New Zealand, Harry Wharton, and Hurree Singh made a half-dozen it would have been hard to beat. Then there were Hazeldene, Micky Desmond, Ogilvy, Morgan, and Treluce.

Harry Wharton glanced over his eleven with a pride that was quite justified.

Blundell, of the Fifth, a big, good-natured fellow, was refereeing the match. The whistle went, and the Upper Fourth kicked off.

The football match started with plenty of "go."

Bulstrode stood watching it for some time, his heart with the players, and a scowl on his face. He longed to be playing, and his eyes hardly left the ball. Then presently he turned away.

Snoop, who was still beside him, yawned.

"Gets a bore, doesn't it?"

"No!" grunted Bulstrode.

"Well, it's not much good watching a game you can't play in." said Skinner. "Who's coming for a trot in the woods?"

"I'm not!" said Bulstrode.

"Nice cheerful chap you are this afternoon!" said Skinner.

"Oh, rats!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Oh, clear out, Bunter!"

"Yes, but I say, you know—"

Billy Bunter blinked doubtfully at Bulstrode, keeping out of the reach of his arm.

"I—I say—it's important."

"Oh, buzz off! I've no money to lend you——"

"You see, Nugent is—is going to give me a licking——"

"Serve you right, I dare say!"

"I think you ought to stand by me, Bulstrode," said Billy Bunter. "You know, you used to be captain of the Remove. You ought to—to put down bullying, you know."

Skinner burst into a laugh. The idea of Bulstrode putting down bullying struck him as funny. But a new gleam was in Bulstrode's eyes.

For Bunter and his woes he did not care a rap; but if he could use him as a weapon against the chums of No. 1 Study, Bunter would be useful.

"What's the row, Bunter?" he asked more amiably.

"You see, Nugent minor's coming this afternoon——"

Bulstrode started.

"Nugent minor? Never heard of him!"

"Frank Nugent's young brother, you know. They left me to wait for him, and—and take him to the tuckshop; and advanced a half-crown to stand him a feed——"

Bulstrode burst into a laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha! I can guess what has become of the half-crown!"

"Oh, really, Bulstrode——"

"You've blued it; and you want me to lend you another to make it up," said the bully of the Remove contemptuously. "Well, you can ask somebody else!"

"But—but, I say——"

"I've got nothing to give away!"

"Oh, really, Bulstrode, I hope you don't think that I'm the sort of chap who would take money gifts from anyone, even if they were offered. I don't want you to give me half-a-crown, of course. I hope I've got sufficient pride to refuse it even if you offered it."

Bulstrode looked puzzled.

Snoop lit his cigarette from Bulstrode's, and Dicky Nugent followed his example. The smell of cooking, raised by Bunter from the fire, mingled with the odour of tobacco; to the boys the agreeable smell of cooking was by far the more pleasant, but they would not have confessed it for worlds. (*See Chapter* 4.)

"What on earth do you want, then?"

"I want you to lend me half-a-crown," said Bunter, with a dignified accent on the word "lend." "I'm expecting a postal-order to-night——"

"Same old postal-order?" asked Skinner sarcastically.

"No; another one," said Bunter obtusely. "I've been disappointed about several of them lately; but this is a dead cert to-night, you know. I was thinking you might lend me half-a-crown off it, or else give me the five shillings—it will be for five shillings—and then take the postal-order when it comes. That will be simply cashing it in advance."

"Sure to come to-night, of course?" said Snoop.

"Well, there might be a little delay—but to-morrow morning, at latest."

"Oh, all right!" said Bulstrode.

Bunter's eyes glistened.

"You'll cash it?"

"Certainly!"

"Good! Hand it over——"

"Oh, I didn't say when!"

"Eh?"

"It's certain to come to-morrow morning at latest?"

"Yes, certain!"

"By the eight o'clock delivery, I suppose?"

"Exactly!"

"Then you're sure to have it by—say, a quarter past eight?"

"Absolutely!"

"Good! Bring it to me at a quarter-past eight to-morrow morning, then, and I'll give you the tin."

Skinner and Snoop chuckled, and Bunter blinked at the Remove bully in dismay.

"But I want the money now, Bulstrode, to treat young Nugent when he comes."

"Rats!"

"Look here, I'll pay you a shilling interest on the loan——"

"Shut up!"

"Eighteenpence——"

"Get out!"

"I—I must have the money, you know!" said Bunter, pulling at Bulstrode's sleeve, as the burly Removite turned to watch the game again. "Nugent will lick me——"

"Serve you jolly well right!"

"Well, I think you ought to interfere, you know."

"Rubbish!"

"You see, it's rather important about meeting Nugent minor, as Nugent is playing footer, and I——"

Bulstrode started, and a new gleam came into his eyes.

"By George! What sort of a kid is Nugent minor?"

"I don't know—I haven't seen him."

"Look here!" said Bulstrode. "If he comes before the game is over, bring him to me—or, rather, come and tell me, and I'll look after him."

"You'll stand him a feed?"

"Yes!"

Bunter looked relieved.

"Good! If you feed him, I don't see that Nugent can complain. I'll wait for him, and come and tell you at once."

And Bunter, much relieved in his mind, sauntered away.

Bulstrode broke into a chuckle. Both Skinner and Snoop looked at him curiously.

"Blessed if I see the joke!" said Snoop.

"You will later," said Bulstrode. "I'll make those rotters sorry they left me out of the match before I'm done with them—and Nugent minor!"

"Phew! Nugent minor!"

Bulstrode grinned.

"Yes, rather! A kid coming strange to the school, you know—he needs looking after. I'm going to look after him. Perhaps Nugent will wish I had played footer instead!"

"Oh, hang!" said Skinner. "You're not going to begin ragging a new kid—a Second or Third Form fag, Bulstrode?"

Bulstrode gave him a savage look.

"Are you going to stop me?" he demanded.

Skinner made a hasty step back.

"Oh, no, I shan't interfere! But——"

"Who said I was going to bully him?"

"Oh, I thought——"

"Well, I'm not. I shan't touch him. I'm going to look after him, that's all."

"Oh, I see! It's a jape."

"That's it!" Bulstrode snapped his teeth. "A jape—and about the best jape we could work off on that set of plaster saints in No. 1 Study. You'll see!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER

Nugent Minor Arrives at Greyfriars

"THAT must be Nugent minor!"

It was Billy Bunter who uttered the words. He was standing at the gates of Greyfriars, looking out into the road, and slowly munching milk-chocolate—the remnant of the feed he had spent the half-crown upon.

A boy was coming up the road; but the short-sighted junior did not see him until he was quite close at hand.

Then even the Owl of the Remove could not fail to recognise the likeness to Frank Nugent.

The lad was a couple of years or so younger than Nugent, and he had the same handsome face, the same blue eyes; but the face was both weaker and more wilful in expression. A stranger could have seen at a glance that the boy was the spoiled child of a fond mother, and that he was accustomed to having his own way, and very petulant when he did not get it.

He looked a little tired, doubtless owing to the walk from the village after a long railway journey, as he halted at the gates of Greyfriars.

"I say, is this Greyfriars?" he asked, speaking to Bunter, in a voice that was very like Frank Nugent's, but softer and more musical.

Bunter blinked at him in a friendly way.

"Yes!" he said. "I suppose you're Nugent minor?"

"I'm Dick Nugent."

"Nugent's young brother. Good! I was looking for you."

The new boy looked at Bunter. He did not seem particularly impressed by the Ow of the Remove.

"Oh!" he said.

"Yes, rather! Nugent asked me to. I'm Nugent's chum, you know."

"Oh!"

"We're great friends," said Bunter.

"Oh! Where's my brother?"

"He's playing footer, and he asked me to meet you, as he had something else to do."

A flash came into Dick Nugent's eyes. Bunter's way of putting it was certainly rather unfortunate.

"I thought somebody would be at the station," said Dick.

"Yes. I dare say it was too much trouble for Nugent to come," said Bunter agreeably. "I would have come if I'd known your train. Have you walked?"

"Yes."

"Where's your box?"

"They're going to send it on."

"Oh!" Bunter's interest in the box ceased. There might, or might not be eatables in it, but in any case the box was out of reach for the present. "I suppose you're tired?"

"Yes."

"And hungry?"

"Yes," said Dick Nugent sullenly.

"Good! I mean, a friend of mine wants to stand you a feed, you see. By the way—ahem—I can be frank under the circumstances—I've been disappointed about a postal-order, or I should jump at standing you a feed myself."

"I don't want a feed."

"Ahem! Well, I'm a bit short of cash, but I've got a postal-order coming by the first post in the morning. Could you lend me a few bob off it?"

"No."

"Oh, really—"

"I'd better see my brother. Where's the footer field?"

"Come this way," said Bunter.

Dick Nugent gave him a dubious glance, and then followed him into the Close. Bunter led the way to the tuck-shop, and Dick followed him in. He looked about him in surprise.

"I want to see my brother!" he exclaimed.

"All right. You sit down here and have a lemon-squash, and I'll tell him.

"Oh, all right!"

Dick Nugent sat down on one of the little chairs, and Mrs. Mimble provided the lemon-squash, and Billy Bunter hurried away.

A minute later he was pulling at Bulstrode's sleeve. The second half of the football match

Nugent minor glared up at his brother, who stared at him across the table. "Why can't you leave me alone?" asked Dicky irritably. (*See Chapter* 4.)

had long commenced, and Bulstrode was watching it keenly.

He glanced down irritably at Bunter.

"Let me alone, confound you!"

"Oh, really, Bulstrode! You told me——"

Bulstrode's expression changed.

"Has young Nugent come?"

"Yes."

"Oh! Where is he?"

"In the tuckshop."

"Good! Come on, Snoopey."

And Bulstrode and Snoop walked away from the football-field. Bunter hurried after them, his little, fat legs going like clockwork to keep pace with Bulstrode's stride.

"I say, you fellows——"

"You buzz off!" said Bulstrode angrily. "You're not wanted!"

"Oh, really——"

"Get out!"

"Under the circumstances, Bulstrode, I shall refuse to come to the tuckshop with you," said Bunter, with dignity.

Bulstrode grunted, and strode on with Snoop. They reached Mrs. Mimble's little shop, and found the new junior finishing his lemon squash.

Dick Nugent looked up eagerly as they came in.

He was feeling a natural sense of loneliness on his first day at the big school, and the very number of the boys he saw in all directions only made him feel more solitary himself. He was anxious to see his brother, and he was disappointed when he saw that the newcomers were strangers.

But Bulstrode came up to him at once with a friendly air. Snoop did not exactly know what Bulstrode's game was, but he was willing to follow the bully's lead in everything. That the Remove bully meant to be really kind to the new boy was impossible, and Snoop would have smiled at the idea.

"Hallo! You're young Nugent, I suppose?" said Bulstrode genially.

"Yes," said Dick.

"Your brother's busy—playing footer," said Bulstrode. "I'm going to look after you a bit. Of course, you can't expect a chap in the Remove to cut a footer match because he's got a minor coming to the school."

Nugent minor's eyes gleamed resentfully.

"I think he might have spared me a minute," he said.

"Oh, I'm going to look after you!"

"Are you a friend of my brother's?"

Bulstrode chuckled.

"Yes, rather! We're awfully close chums—ain't we, Snoop?"

"What-ho!" said Snoop.

"You come along with me, young 'un," said Bulstrode, slipping his arm through Dicky Nugent's. "I'll show you round a bit. I dare say you're tired?"

"Yes, a little."

"Then come up to my study, and we'll have tea and a jaw—and something else. Smoke?"

Nugent minor looked at him in surprise.

"Smoke! No."

"Oh, I see! You're a ninny, eh?"

"No, I'm not. My father said I mustn't smoke here. He said boys got into rows for it at Greyfriars."

"So they do, if they tell the masters," grinned Bulstrode; "but we keep mum, you see. Bless your soul, Loder, the prefect, smokes in his study himself, and makes the fags fetch him cigarettes from Friardale."

Dick's eyes opened wide.

"Does he really!"

"Yes, rather! Come along and don't be a chump."

Nugent minor accompanied Bulstrode from the shop. As they crossed the Close towards the School House, Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, met them. He stopped.

"A new boy, Bulstrode?"

"Yes, sir," said Bulstrode, very civilly. "It's Nugent's young brother, sir. I'm looking after him a bit, as Nugent's playing footer this afternoon."

"Very good," said Mr. Quelch. "That is very kind of you, Bulstrode." And he passed on.

Bulstrode exchanged a wink with Snoop, and they went into the School House. In a couple of minutes they were in Bulstrode's study, and the Remove bully closed the door, Bulstrode shared that study with Hazeldene and Tom Brown of New Zealand, and as both of them were playing in the Form match there was no danger of interruption.

"Now, then, Snoop, get tea!" said Bulstrode.

"Right you are," said Snoop.

The door opened, and a pair of spectacles glimmered in.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Get out!" roared Bulstrode.

"But—but I say, Bulstrode, if you're going to have a feed, you'll want me to help, you know! I'll do the cooking——"

"Rats!"

"And light the fire. I like lighting fires."

Bulstrode hesitated a moment.

"Oh, all right!" he said. "You can make yourself useful for your grub, if you like."

"Oh, really, Bulstrode! That's not a nice way of putting it, you know."

"Oh, shut up!"

"It's only your little joke, I know——"

"Will you light that fire?"

"Oh, certainly with pleasure!" And the Owl of the Remove set to work.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER
A Dangerous Acquaintance

NUGENT minor sat in Bulstrode's armchair, with a decidedly discontented expression upon his face.

He was receiving an amount of attention unheard of in the case of any boy coming into the Second Form at Greyfriars—a Form considered as infants by the Remove, and with whom the Remove as a rule had nothing to do.

He did not suspect, so far, that Bulstrode had any ulterior purpose to serve—he was not likely to suspect that yet.

But the unusual attention he was receiving made no impression upon him. He was new to public schools, and did not fully understand what it meant to be chummed up with like this on his first day by fellows in a higher form. And he was so accustomed to being made much of wherever he went, that he would have taken it all for granted in any case.

His manner implied so plainly, as he looked round the study, that he expected to be looked after and waited on, that Bulstrode hardly had the patience to go through with the little game he was playing. He was greatly inclined to box the new junior's ears and kick him out into the passage to shift for himself. He would have done so, too, but for the knowledge that his original plan would cause more discomfort in Study No. 1. He could not strike a harder blow at Harry Wharton & Co. than by leading Nugent minor into his own ways and manners. For that reason, there was an agreeable smile on his face whenever he looked at the new boy.

"You can see the footer field from the window here," he remarked. "Like to look? I'll point your brother out to you."

Dick Nugent rose, and crossed to the window.

It was an inspiriting sight, the active figures on the football-field in stern struggle for the mastery, amid a cheering crowd.

But it only brought a dark look to Dick Nugent's face.

"There's your brother, kid—he's on the ball now."

"Yes, I can see him."

"He seems to be having a good time, eh? He's great at footer!"

"Mother said he would meet me this afternoon, and look after me my first day here," said the boy, his lower lip quivering a little.

Bulstrode laughed.

"Oh, he's too busy, you know!"

"He oughtn't to be too busy," said Dick passionately; "and I'll jolly well tell him so when I see him!"

"Well, you're a kid with spirit, anyway!" said Bulstrode. "But I suppose you'll be pretty well under the thumb of your major."

Nugent minor's eyes flashed.

"You will see that I'm not."

"Good for you!" said Bulstrode. "Tea will be ready in a few minutes now. Have a cigarette while you're waiting?"

Dick Nugent hesitated for a moment.

"Of course, if you're afraid of what your major will say, don't do it," said Bulstrode. "I don't want to get you into a row with your brother."

Dick bit his lip.

"My brother's got nothing to do with it—he's not my master. I'll have the smoke with pleasure."

"Here you are, then."

Bunter strove to tear himself away from his chair, only to find that he was stuck fast! (*See Chapter* 5.)

Bulstrode unlocked his desk and took out a cigarette-case. He opened it, and displayed a row of cigarettes, and selected one himself.

"Smoke, Snoopey?"

"Thanks, I will!"

Snoop selected a cigarette, and lighted up with Bulstrode. Dick Nugent followed his example.

"Smoke, Bunter?"

Billy Bunter blinked round from the fire.

"Er—no, thanks, Bulstrode."

"Oh, don't be a spooney!"

"Oh, really, Bulstrode, it isn't that, you know! But, you see, I don't want to do anything to spoil my appetite, you know," Billy Bunter hastened to explain. "Smoking spoils the appetite, and I want to keep mine all right on an occasion like this."

"Oh, get on with the cooking, porpoise!"

A smell of poaching eggs mingled with the odour of tobacco. To the nostrils of the boys, it was by far the pleasanter smell of the two; but they would not have confessed to that for worlds.

"Like the smokes?" asked Bulstrode.

"Ripping!" said Snoop.

"Oh, jolly good!" said Nugent minor, puffing away. "Spiffing!"

"Hallo, the game's over!" said Snoop, glancing out of the window a little later. "The Remove are yelling like mad, so I suppose Wharton's lot have won."

"I don't care much."

"Nor I. Pass the cigarettes."

"Here you are. How long is that grub going to be, Bunter?"

"Five minutes longer, Bulstrode," said the fat junior, turning a red and perspiring face from the fire. "The eggs are getting on a treat. Did you say you would like me to cut down to the tuckshop and get some jam tarts?"

"No, I didn't."

"Or some more cake? The seed cake's all right, but it occurred to me that Nugent minor might like some sultana cake. Mrs. Mimble has a new sultana cake going to-day, and I shouldn't mind the trouble of going to the tuckshop at all. I'd do more than that for a fellow I like."

"Shut up, then!"

"Oh, really, Bulstrode——"

"Scat!"

"I say, you fellows, there isn't much jam in the jar——"

"Do you want a thick ear, Bunter?"

"Eh? Certainly not!"

"Then get on with the cooking, and hold your jaw!"

Bulstrode had his eyes on the door now. Now that the football match was over, he expected Nugent to look for his minor, and as many had seen the new boy with Bulstrode, he would not be long in getting directed to Bulstrode's study.

At any moment, in fact, he might enter the study, and Bulstrode was quite ready for him.

The Remove bully particularly wished Nugent minor to be smoking when Frank came, and he tried to get the junior to accept another cigarette. But Dick declined.

"One's enough," he remarked, throwing the stump of the first one into the grate.

"Try one of this kind."

Nugent minor shook his head. As a matter of fact, the cigarette had made him feel a little uncomfortable inwardly, and the fumes in the study made his head ache. He would not

have confessed as much for anything; but he firmly declined to smoke further. The Remove bully had to give in.

"Tea's ready!" announced Billy Bunter.

"All right!"

Tap!

It was a knock at the door.

"Come in!" said Bulstrode, with a grin.

The door opened, and Frank Nugent entered. He sniffed a little quickly as he caught the odour of tobacco, and looked round.

"Russell says he saw my young brother come here," he said. "Oh, here you are, Dicky! I'm glad to see you at Greyfriars."

"So glad that you left it to somebody else to meet him," sneered Bulstrode.

Nugent coloured.

"That's not your business, Bulstrode. Come on, Dicky. I was playing footer. I asked Bunter to explain to you. It was an important match——"

"Oh, it's all right!" said Nugent minor. "I'm comfy enough."

"You're coming with me?"

"Nugent minor's going to have tea with me," said Bulstrode.

And Dick Nugent nodded.

"I'm going to have tea here," he said.

Nugent looked perplexed.

"I want you to meet my friends," he said. "We were going to get up a bit of a feed in our study to celebrate your coming."

"We're doing that," said Bulstrode.

Nugent turned upon him hotly.

"Hang you, Bulstrode! What's your little game?"

"I haven't any little game," said the Remove bully airily. "I saw the chap come in, and I thought his major might have looked after him a bit——"

"You know I had to play!"

"Lots of fellows would have taken your place."

"I shan't argue that with you, Bulstrode. There's one thing I know jolly well, and that is that you don't mean my minor any good."

Bulstrode shrugged his shoulders.

"If your minor likes to be ordered out of the study by you, I don't care," he said. "But if he's got the spirit of a mouse he'll stay."

"I'm going to stay!" said Nugent minor.

"Dick, old chap, I want you to come," said Nugent.

"Why can't you leave me alone?" said Dick irritably. "I'm all right here, I suppose. They are standing me a feed, and I'm hungry!"

"We've got a feed going on in No. 1."

"Well, I've promised."

Nugent stood perplexed. He fully understood Bulstrode's motives in chumming up with a Second-form fag like this, but he felt it was useless to attempt to explain to his minor. At a hint that he was being taken care of, Nugent minor would have flamed up at once.

"I wish you'd come, Dick."

"He won't come!" said Bulstrode. "You can go back to Wharton. If you couldn't cut a footer match for your minor, you can't expect him to cut his friends for you."

"I'm not speaking to you!"

"Well, this is my study, and I suppose I can say what I like in it!" said Bulstrode. "Serve up that grub, Bunter!"

"I'm serving it up, Bulstrode. These eggs are done to a turn——"

Bulstrode reeled back as Tom Brown's fist caught him full on the jaw. Hazeldene and Dick Nugent looked on calmly. (*See Chapter 6.*)

"So you're feeding here, too!" exclaimed Nugent scornfully.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Oh, really, Nugent! I suppose you don't expect me to refuse when a chap offers to stand me a feed?"

"Hardly!"

"I never really get enough to eat. I've got a delicate constitution, and I have to keep it up with plenty of good grub. I'm not likely to refuse Bulstrode's invite."

"And leave us to have ours," drawled Bulstrode. "I'm looking after Nugent minor at present. You can't force him to leave my study if he doesn't want to. He's not the kind of kid to be bullied, I take it."

Dick Nugent's eyes flashed.

"I won't go!" he said. "Look here, Frank, you've left me alone long enough—you can keep it up a bit longer!"

"I couldn't get away, Dick."

Dick's lip curled.

"You couldn't, or you wouldn't," he said. "I don't care! I didn't want you to. I only want to be left alone. Bulstrode has been very decent to me, anyway."

"He doesn't mean you well. This——"

"Oh, rats!"

Frank's eyes gleamed for a moment.

"Look here, kid, you'd better come with me!" he exclaimed. "These fellows have been smoking here, and that's against the rules of the coll."

"I've been smoking myself," said Nugent minor coolly.

His major gave a start.

"You've been smoking!"

"Yes. Why shouldn't I?"

"You did this, Bulstrode, you cad!" exclaimed Frank, turning furiously on the bully of the Remove.

Bulstrode shrugged his shoulders.

"Are you the kid's nurse?" he asked.

"Tea's ready!" said Billy Bunter.

Dick Nugent pulled his chair up to the table. Bunter had lighted the gas, and the tea-table looked very cheerful, the whole study bright and cosy in the firelight. Nugent stood in the doorway with gloomy face.

"Are you coming, Dick?" he said at last.

Dick shook his head irritably.

"No; I'm not!"

Nugent said no more. He shut the door and walked away, his brows wrinkled gloomily, and his hands thrust deep and hard into his pockets.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

Billy Bunter Sticks to His Own Study

"Anything up?"

"What's wrong?"

"Wherefore the extreme worryfulness of the honourable Nugent's esteemed brow?"

The three questions were fired at Frank Nugent as he came into No. 1 Study in the Remove passage.

There was a decidedly worried look upon Frank Nugent's face and his three chums looked at him in some surprise. He had left them in good spirits enough ten minutes before.

"Found your minor?" asked Wharton.

Nugent nodded.

"He's all right, I suppose?"

"No."

"Phew! What's the trouble?"

"I don't know that there's anything to bother about," said Nugent slowly. "But—well, young Dick's chummed up with Bulstrode."

"Bulstrode!"

"Yes; and he's having tea in his study now. They've been smoking, too."

Harry Wharton frowned.

"What is Bulstrode's little game, then?" he exclaimed. "What does he mean by chumming up with a Second-form fag? He was far more likely to bully him."

Nugent smiled bitterly.

"Oh, it's one up against us, of course!"

"But why not speak to him, and tell him to come here?" asked Bob Cherry, who had come into No. 1 to tea, and to make the acquaintance of Nugent minor. "I suppose your minor will do as you tell him, or take your advice, anyway."

Nugent shook his head.

"He won't."

"Have you asked him?"

"Yes."

"And he won't come?"

"That's it."

Bob Cherry whistled.

"'If I had a minor who wouldn't go, do you think I'd wallop him—yes, what-ho!'" he murmured, in parody of an old song.

"The wallopfulness should be terrific!"

"No good," said Nugent. "Dicky expected me to be waiting round for him—and I didn't even know what train he was coming by. I might have cut the footer match for nothing. I wish I had cut it now."

"Nonsense!" said Wharton quickly. "You're wrong; you couldn't cut it. Your minor ought to understand; if he won't understand, make him."

"I can't start his career at Greyfriars with a licking on the first afternoon, I suppose," said Nugent. "Besides, you don't know Dicky. He's a spoiled kid. He's always been looked after and made much of. He expects the same here."

"He'll be disappointed, then."

"Yes; but Bulstrode is fooling him, and making much of him, just as he expected, you see, and filling his silly head up with false ideas. I'm afraid there was trouble in store for Dick in any case, but with Bulstrode making a fool of him, he's bound to run up against rocks. Well, I suppose it can't be helped; I've done all I can."

"Let's have tea," said Bob Cherry, as the only practical suggestion to be made under the circumstances.

Nugent minor grasped Bunter's fat hands and gave a tremendous tug. Again and again he tried, and finally there was a rending sound as Bunter's garments parted. He was free at last! (*See Chapter 7.*)

And Nugent grinned, and jammed the kettle on the fire.

It was not so cheery a tea as the juniors had intended it to be, although they had laid in an unusual supply of good things in honour of Nugent's minor.

Nugent was worried, and his chums sympathised with him; and then, there was the prospect of trouble ahead for Dick Nugent. From what they had heard of him, so far, the juniors could not help thinking that a few lickings would do him good; but they felt concerned on Frank's account. Frank Nugent was the kindest-hearted and best-natured boy at Greyfriars, and he felt a thing of this kind more keenly than any of the others would have done.

The chums of the Remove had almost finished tea when the door was cautiously opened, and a fat face and a pair of spectacles glimmered in.

"I say, you fellows——" began Billy Bunter, in an ingratiating voice.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Tubby!"

"You haven't finished tea, have you?" said Bunter. "I felt that I ought to come and have tea with you, you know."

"Oh, rats!"

"It's the fact, Bob Cherry. I'm sincerely sorry to see you doubting a chap's word like this. Look here, as Nugent made so much fuss about my having tea with Bulstrode, I decided to come——"

Nugent stared at him.

"Eh? I don't care where you have tea!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, really, Nugent, you seemed very annoyed about it——"

"Ass!"

"So I decided to come and have tea with you fellows," said Bunter, blinking at the chums. "I hope you've left something for me."

"Has Bulstrode finished tea?"

"Oh, yes!"

"And you decided to come and have tea with us as soon as there wasn't anything left to eat in Bulstrode's study?" suggested Bob Cherry sarcastically.

"Oh, really, Cherry! I think a chap should stand by his chums, you know. I thought you would be feeling lonely without me."

"You needn't have worried."

"Well, you see——"

"If that was your only reason for coming, you may as well get back!" remarked Nugent. "We don't feel at all lonely."

"Scat!"

Bunter did not "scat." He came into the study and closed the door.

"I believe in a chap sticking to his chums," he remarked, taking a seat at the table.

"Especially at meal-times, eh?"

"I say, you fellows, I hope you haven't absolutely cleared the table," said Bunter, blinking round discontentedly. "I might as well have stayed with Bulstrode."

"Quite as well."

"Are they jam tarts your side of the table, Bob Cherry?"

"See!" said Bob. "Shall I pass them over?"

"Yes, please. Ow! Wow!"

Bob Cherry passed over the jam-tarts, deftly planting one on Bunter's nose and another on his chin.

"Any more?" he asked.

"Ow! Beast!"

"Well, you asked me to pass them!"

Bunter mopped the jam off his fat face.

"I think you're a beast, Cherry. I think Wharton ought to kick you out of the study."

"My dear Bunty, if I kick anybody out of the study, it will be a certain fat porpoise!" said Wharton.

"Oh, really, you know——"

"Well, I think I'll get along," said Bob Cherry, as Bunter started on ham and bread-and-butter. "I've paid in my time to see the animals fed at the Zoo, but it isn't a thing you want to see twice!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Bob Cherry crossed to the door. There, he paused, and taking a tube of seccotine from the shelf, he squeezed out the whole of its contents upon the seat of the arm-chair. It was Bunter's habit to slide into that chair after a meal, and keep possession of it.

The chair had been purchased by a whip-round among the chums, so perhaps the fat junior thought it was a fair division for Harry Wharton & Co. to purchase the arm-chair and himself to use it. At all events, it never seemed to cross his mind that anybody else might like it.

Nugent grinned faintly as he saw Bob's action. It was too late to stop him, for the sake of the chair, so he said nothing.

Billy Bunter cleared off all that was left eatable on the table, and it was with a somewhat slow and heavy motion that he finally rose. He had travelled through a very good meal in Bulstrode's study before coming to No. 1.

"You haven't had enough!" said Wharton anxiously. "There's still the crockery, and then you might start on the tablecloth!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Or the coals, or the coke!"

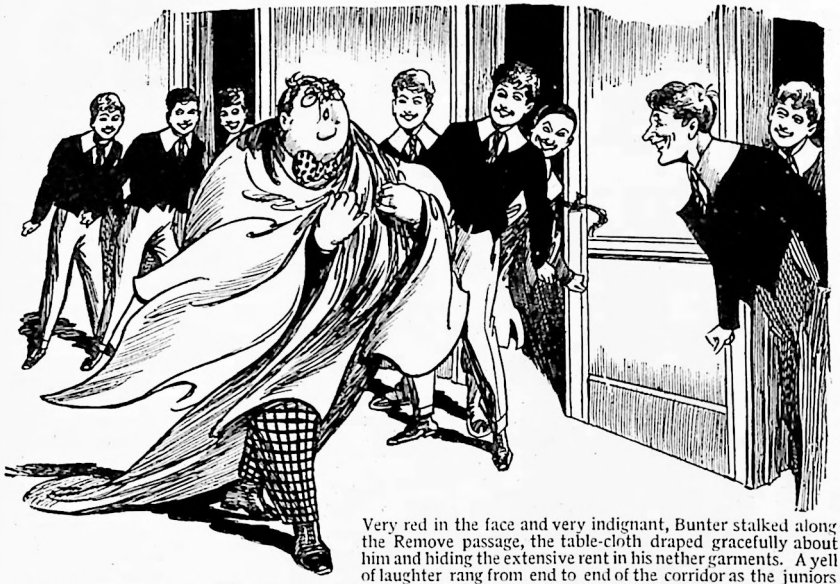
"I don't see why you fellows should always be joking about my appetite," said Bunter. "I don't eat much, as a rule! I'm not greedy, but I like enough! I always think that enough's as good as a feast! I think I'll take a rest now!"

And he sank into the arm-chair.

The juniors grinned and quitted the study.

Billy Bunter soon dropped off to sleep; indeed, some of the Removites said that he always went into a comatose state like a boa-constrictor after a meal.

How long he slept he did not know, but he was awakened at last by the sound of a door



Very red in the face and very indignant, Bunter stalked along the Remove passage, the table-cloth draped gracefully about him and hiding the extensive rent in his nether garments. A yell of laughter rang from end to end of the corridor as the juniors sighted him. "Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "Is this the ghost of Greyfriars!" (*See Chapter* 7.)

opening. The study was in darkness. Bunter blinked at the faint, red glow of the dying fire, and tried to rise from the chair.

But he could not rise.

The seccotine had quite hardened by this time, and the seat of his nether garments was stuck fast to the seat of the chair.

In amazement in finding himself, as it were, held down by an unseen hand, Billy Bunter strove to tear himself away from his chair; but in vain—he could not rise, and his efforts only resulted in dragging the big chair off the rear castors for a moment. Then it crashed down again, and Bunter collapsed into it, gasping.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER
A Row in Bulstrode's Study

NUGENT minor smoked another cigarette after tea in Bulstrode's study, to the secret amusement of the Remove bully. He was just finishing when Hazeldene came in. Hazeldene and Tom Brown, the New Zealander, shared that study with Bulstrode. Hazeldene sniffed at the smoke, and grunted.

"What the dickens are you up to?" he exclaimed. "What do you mean by turning this study into a blessed tavern?"

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

"Who's this kid?"

"That's Nugent minor."

Hazeldene stared at the new fag.

"Oh! I didn't know he had a minor. Pity the kid's major doesn't look after him better, then. He'll make himself sick."

"It isn't so long since you used to cadge cigarettes from me," said Bulstrode, with a sneer.

Hazeldene reddened.

"Perhaps; but I don't do it now, and I object to this rotten smoke in my study! How can I do my prep. with my head in a fog like this?"

"Oh, don't ask me conundrums!"

" Brown will make a row when he comes in."

" Oh, bother Brown ! "

At that moment the sturdy young New Zealand junior came in. He sniffed, or rather, snorted, as he scented the smoke.

" Hallo ! Who's bothering me ? " he asked cheerily. " And who's making this mess in the study ? Really, Bulstrode, you ought to have more sense ! "

" Mind your own business ! "

" I think it is my business, when you're turning my study into a tap-room ! " exclaimed the New Zealander indignantly. " If you want to play the giddy goat, go into one of the box-rooms, or sneak out into the tool-shed ! "

" I'll smoke where I like ! "

" What's this kid doing here ? "

" He's my guest."

" Smoking, too ! "

" Why shouldn't he ? "

" It's Nugent's young brother," said Hazeldene. " Bulstrode is——"

" Mind your own business, Vaseline ! "

" I was going to say——"

" Shut up ! "

" Look here, Nugent minor," said Tom Brown seriously, " you're playing a mug's game ! That will make you ill, and you'll get into a row if you're found out ! "

" Shut up, Brown ! "

" Rats, Bulstrode ! Do you understand, kid ? The prefects here are awfully down on kids smoking, and you'll be called up before the Head if you're caught."

" I don't care ! " said Dick Nugent.

Brown stared.

" You'll jolly well care when you're up before the beaks," he said drily. " You'd better chuck that cigarette into the fire ! "

" I won't ! "

" You won't smoke in my study," said Tom Brown quietly. " If a prefect came along at this minute we should all be in it, and all get into a row."

" My guest will do as he likes in my quarters," said Bulstrode.

" They're not your quarters ; they're mine and Hazel's, too—and this silly young ass shan't smoke here ! " said Tom Brown firmly. " Put that cigarette on the fire, Nugent minor ! "

" Rats ! "

Tom Brown did not waste any more time in words. He dropped his hand upon Nugent's shoulder. Bulstrode immediately grasped him by the arm and whirled him away.

For a moment the two juniors faced one another with blazing eyes.

Nugent minor rose to his feet. Snoop quietly stole out of the study. Hazeldene looked on, with his hands in his pockets.

" Let him alone," said Bulstrode.

" I tell you he shan't smoke here."

" And I say he shall."

" Then it's between us."

" As you like."

Tom Brown pushed back his cuffs.

" Come on, then ! "

Nothing loth, Bulstrode " came on."

In a moment the two sturdy juniors were hammering away furiously, while Nugent minor and Hazeldene looked on.

Bulstrode reeled back from a sweeping right-hander, and muttered something between his teeth. He rushed savagely forward, received without heeding a couple of smart blows, and closed with the boy from Taranaki.

He fully expected to overbear the New Zealander by superior strength, but in this he did not succeed. Tom Brown was slighter than Bulstrode, but he was more active, and he seemed to be made of iron.

He gripped his arms round the bully of the Remove, and they staggered to and fro in straining effort, but the New Zealander did not go down.

Gasping and panting, they reeled to and fro in the study.

" Go it ! " said Hazeldene. " Two to one on Frozen Mutton ! "

Tramp—tramp—tramp !

The two juniors had now forgotten everything but the contest, and they struggled on with flushed faces and flashing eyes, heedless of the noise they were making, and of the fact that there was a senior's study below their tramping feet.

It was Bulstrode who reeled back the first under the grip of the New Zealander. He struggled furiously to recover his ground, and hurled Tom Brown back against the table.

There was a terrific crash.

The table went flying, and the load of crockery crashed on the floor, smashing right and left.

"My hat!" ejaculated Hazeldene.

Tramp—tramp—tramp;

Thm Brown's boots tramped in the fallen crockery.

There was a sound of hurried footsteps in the passage, and the door of the study was flung open.

Wingate of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars, burst into the room, with an angry face.

"You young sweeps!" he roared. "What's the meaning of this row?"

He stared in amazement at the broken crockery and the overturned table. Then, seizing the two juniors in his strong hands, he wrenched them apart.

He hurled Tom Brown upon one side and Bulstrode upon the other. The Remove bully went spinning against the wall.

"Now, what does this mean?" said Wingate.

Tom Brown gasped.

"It's all right——"

"All right, is it? By Jove, it won't be all right for you!"

"I—I mean we were only fighting."

"Only!" said Wingate, grinning in spite of himself. "Is that really all? You weren't making enough noise to waken the Seven Sleepers as well, I suppose?" He broke off, as he sniffed the smoke in the air. "Who's been smoking?"

Wingate looked round angrily. His brow contracted darkly as he caught sight of the half-smoked cigarette in the hands of Nugent minor.

"You! Who are you?" he exclaimed.

"I'm Dick Nugent."

"Oh! Nugent minor? And you're smoking, eh?"

Nugent minor was silent.

"Throw that cigarette into the fire."

It was on the tip of Dick's tongue to refuse, but something in Wingate's manner made him obey in spite of himself. The offending cigarette fizzed in the fire.

"You're a new boy here, and perhaps you don't know the ropes," said Wingate sternly. "I'll let you off this time. If you are caught smoking again I'll give you the licking of your life, so remember. What do you Lower Fourth fellows mean by allowing a fag to smoke in your study?"

The Removites were silent. Bulstrode was not likely to state that he alone was to blame, and the others did not care to throw all the blame upon him, though it would have been only the truth.

"You'll take a hundred lines each," said Wingate, "and I shall keep an eye on this study. You'll show the lines before bed-time to-night."

Frank Nugent sent Gatty and Myers and Todd reeling aside. "Hands off my young brother!" he said grimly. (*See Chapter 9.*)

The juniors exchanged lugubrious glances.

"You get out, Nugent minor. You'd better go and find your brother, and get him to explain to you some of the customs here, or you'll soon be in hot water," said Wingate.

And he quitted the study.

Bulstrode burst into a laugh.

"Well, you've got off best, young Nugent," he remarked. "You'd better go. That chap is Wingate, the captain of the school, and he's not to be argued with."

And Dick Nugent nodded, and went.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER
Rough on Bunter

NUGENT MINOR paused in the corridor after leaving Bulstrode's study. He was feeling a little dismayed and uneasy.

In the first place, the smoking had made him feel a little uncomfortable inside. Then he had been turned out of the study without a friend to lean upon. He was in a strange place, and Bulstrode apparently did not mean to trouble his head about him further. The boy felt despondent, and he would gladly have seen his brother at that moment, but he did not know where to look for Nugent major.

He glanced up and down the passage in search of someone who could direct him. A junior was coming down from No. 13 Study, at the end, and he was a junior of such a peculiar appearance that Dick Nugent looked at him with great interest. His curious complexion, his pigtail, and his clothes showed that he was a native of the Flowery Land.

He looked at Nugent minor, and smiled a bland smile as he passed, and Dick was encouraged to speak to him.

"I say," he exclaimed, "you speak English, I suppose?"

The little Chinee stopped, and grinned.

"Me speakee lipping," he said.

"Blessed if I know what that means."

"Me Wun Lung."

"Wun Lung," said Nugent minor. "You don't mean to say that's your name?"

Wun Lung nodded.

"That my name, allee light. Velly good name in China."

"Do you know my major?"

"No savvy."

"His name's Nugent—Frank Nugent."

Wun Lung smiled intelligently.

"Me, savvy. Flank Nugent—velly good chap. You blother?"

"Yes, he's my major. Where's his study?"

Wun Lung pointed to the next to Bulstrode's.

"That studee," he said. "No. 1 Studee. You savvy?"

"Thanks!"

Wun Lung nodded, and went on his way, and Nugent minor knocked at the door of No. 1 Study. It was next door to Bulstrode's, and Dick wondered if the noise of the conflict had been heard by Frank and his friends through the wall. There was no answer to his tap, and he opened the door. All was dark within.

Nugent minor made an irritable movement. His brother was evidently absent from his room, but as the boy turned away he heard a noise in the study, which showed that someone was there.

It was a crash as of a chair falling down, and then a voice followed, in gasping tones.

"Ow—ow! I say, you fellows——"

Nugent minor stared into the gloom of the study. All the light he could see was a faint red glow from the dying fire in the grate.

"Hallo!" he said. "Who's there?"

"I—I say, you fellows—— Oh! I—I don't know what's the matter! I can't get up—I'm stuck to the chair, or else my spine is fractured. Light the gas, will you?"

Nugent minor groped his way into the study. He felt in his pockets for a match, and scratched it on the wall and lighted the gas.

The light shone upon a most curious scene.

Billy Bunter was sprawling in the arm-chair, gasping like a newly-landed fish, and blinking in blank amazement through his big spectacles. Nugent minor stared at him.

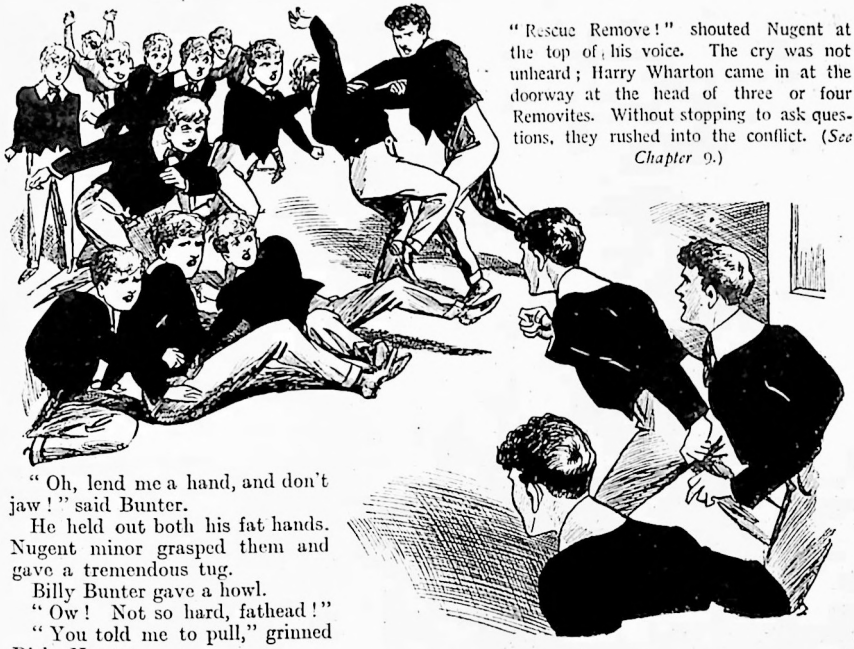
"What on earth are you doing?" he exclaimed, recognising Bunter.

"I—I can't get up!"

"Why not?"

"I—I don't know!" gasped Bunter. "Something's wrong, somehow! Gimme a hand, will you, and tug hard, and perhaps I can get out?"

"Blessed if I can see why you can't get up!"



"Rescue Remove!" shouted Nugent at the top of his voice. The cry was not unheard; Harry Wharton came in at the doorway at the head of three or four Removites. Without stopping to ask questions, they rushed into the conflict. (*See Chapter* 9.)

"Oh, lend me a hand, and don't jaw!" said Bunter.

He held out both his fat hands. Nugent minor grasped them and gave a tremendous tug.

Billy Bunter gave a howl.

"Ow! Not so hard, fathead!"

"You told me to pull," grinned Dick Nugent.

"Ow!"

Bunter's feet were on the floor, and Nugent minor was dragging him forward. The armchair jerked off the floor again, hanging on to Bunter.

"Ow—ow—ow!"

There was a rending sound, and Bunter's garments parted, and the chair crashed on the floor.

"Oh! Oh, dear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Nugent minor. "You were stuck to the chair."

Bunter blinked round at the big fragment of cloth adhering to the seat of the armchair.

"Oh—oh, really, so I was. I—I don't know how it came about. I——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at!"

"Ha, ha, ha! You'd better go and change your things," chuckled Dick Nugent, "You'll find it rather draughty going about like that."

"Oh, dear! Somebody will have to pay for these trousers!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter twisted round to get a view of the torn place. It was very extensive. The fat junior blinked indignantly at the chuckling fag.

"I say, Nugent minor, go and get me some other trucks from the dormitory."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll give you a licking if you don't stop that row!" roared Bunter. "You confoundedly cheeky fag!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter swung his hand round to box Dick Nugent's ears. Nugent minor easily knocked it aside, and quitted the study, still laughing almost hysterically.

"Here, I say, come back! Beast! How on earth am I to get to the dormitory to change?" gasped Bunter in dismay. "Hang it! I wonder who played that trick on me? I—I shall have to get changed. Anybody might come in."

He went to the door, and paused. Suppose he met Mrs. Kebble, or—horrors of horrors!—the Head's wife?

It would never do.

He looked round the study in the wild hope that a coat or a covering of some sort might have been left there, which he could don to hide that patch of tell-tale white.

But there was nothing—nothing but the tablecloth.

There was no help for it. Bunter took the tablecloth, and wrapped it round him, a good deal like a Red Indian wrapping himself in his blanket, and left the study.

He hoped to steal quietly up to the dormitory unobserved; but he had no such good fortune. The hysterical laughter of Nugent minor had attracted attention, and a dozen fellows were looking out of their studies.

The effect can be imagined when the fat junior came stalking along in the tablecloth, gracefully draped round his stout person.

One wild yell of laughter rang from end to end of the Remove passage.

Billy Bunter, very red and very indignant, stalked on, the end of the tablecloth trailing on the linoleum behind him.

Bob Cherry, Mark Linley and Wun Lung looked out of the end study, and yelled at the sight.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "Is it the ghost of Greyfriars?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Or the White Chief of the Blackneck Indians."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Velly funnee. What you tinkee? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts!" growled Bunter. "Get out of the way. Why can't you let a chap pass, Skinner, eh? I want to get up to the dormitory."

"But what's the matter?" exclaimed Snoop. "What are you trotting round in a blessed tablecloth for?"

"Mind your own business."

And Billy Bunter mounted upon the dormitory stairs. Ogilvy stepped behind him, and jerked at the tablecloth.

It unrolled, and came away from the fat person of Billy Bunter—and the secret was revealed. There was a fresh roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter bolted up the stairs, followed by fresh yells. He came down in ten minutes and a new pair of trousers, looking very red and indignant, and was greeted with shrieks of merriment.

"Well, Bunter does take the cake!" grinned Bob Cherry, in No. 12. "He told a yarn about sticking to his own study, and I thought I'd help him stick to the arm-chair, at least. Ha, ha, ha!"

And the whole of the Remove roared over it with the exception of Billy Bunter. Bunter glowered and sulked. But nobody minded Bunter.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER
In the Second Form

GATTY, of the Second Form, came into the Second Form-room with a portentous frown upon his face. The Second Form at Greyfriars had no studies, and they did their prep. in the Form-room under the eye of a master. The Form-room was also their common-room, for in the junior common-room Second Form fags did not receive much consideration. Now, George Gatty might have frowned portentously anywhere else, and no one would have noticed it. The frowns of a fag would not have been observed in the slightest degree in any other part of Greyfriars. But in the Second Form-room it was a different matter. For Gatty was the biggest fellow in the Form—big enough and old enough to be in the Third, if not past it—and so his frowns were of great consequence in his Form. And when he came in frowning, a good many fags looked anxious.

"Anything wrong, Gatty?" asked Myers.

"No!" grunted Gatty.

"Oh!"

Gatty pushed a small fag out of a chair by the Form-room fire, and sat down himself. His frown grew more portentous, and the

dispossessed Second-Former did not venture to make the slightest objection to that tyrannical and high-handed proceeding. He was only too glad to escape getting a cuff in exchange for his chair.

"There's a new kid here!" said Gatty.

"Haven't seen him," said Myers. "Not in our Form?"

"Yes."

"Name?"

"Nugent."

"Nugent minor?" asked Myers, with interest. "I've heard that Nugent of the Remove had a young brother at home."

"Nugent minor."

"Then it's Nugent's brother?"

"That's it."

"When did he come?"

"This afternoon, during the footer match between the Remove and the Upper Fourth."

"Odd that we haven't seen him," said Todd.

Gatty smote his knee with his open palm with a crack like a pistol-shot.

"It's easy enough to explain that," he said. "Young Nugent has been toadying to the Remove—crawling to the Lower Fourth."

"The cad!"

"The worm!"

"He doesn't seem to know that the Second Form at Greyfriars exists," said Gatty, with growing wrath. "He doesn't know that we don't allow fags to crawl to the Lower Fourth. My hat! We shall have the Remove fagging us soon."

"He ought to be taught a lesson," said Myers, solemnly.

"Let's look at him!" suggested Todd.

"Well, that's a good idea," said Gatty, rising again. "He was having tea, and smoking in Bulstrode's study when I heard of him, and he can't be there all this time, I should think. Let's go and scout for him, and bring him here, and explain to him the proper position of a new boy in the Second Form."

"What-ho!"

The Second-formers, ripe enough for mischief, and accustomed to following the lead of Gatty, entered into the plan with great zest.

A dozen of them followed Gatty and Myers and Todd from the Form-room in search of the delinquent who had been guilty of the heinous sin of crawling to fellows in a higher Form.

As luck would have it, they came upon Nugent minor as he came away from the Remove passage to look for his brother. Nugent, as it happened, was in the gym. with Harry Wharton, and Dick had not yet succeeded in finding him.

The fags surrounded the new boy in a twinkling. They knew at once, of course, that this must be Nugent minor.

The new boy glanced at them without alarm. He did not know the intention of Gatty & Co. yet.

"I say," he exclaimed, "have you seen Nugent of the Remove?"

"Yes," said Gatty, grimly.

"Do you know where he is?"

"Yes."

"Where, then?"

"In the gym."

"Where is that?"

"Come along!" said Gatty sweetly, linking his arm in Nugent minor's. "I'll show you where you're to go."

"Thanks," said Nugent minor, wondering a little at Gatty's effusiveness, and at the chuckles of the other fellows. "Is that the way?"

"Come on."

And the grinning fags marched the new boy straight to the Second Form-room. Nugent minor looked round him in amazement as he entered it. He did not know much about Form-rooms, but he knew that this could not be a gymnasium.

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed. "Is this a joke? I——"

He made for the door. Gatty slammed it shut, and put his foot against it. Then he grinned in the face of Nugent minor.

"Not just yet," he remarked.

"Let me get out!"

"Not much."

Nugent minor looked round wonderingly upon the grinning faces. Some of them were quite cruel in expression, too, especially Gatty's. It dawned upon Dick Nugent's mind that he had fallen among foes.

Bunter opened the door of Mr. Quelch's bed-room; Dick Nugent looked round the well-furnished apartment. "Good!" he exclaimed. "I shall be comfortable here, I think!" Billy Bunter grinned.
(*See Chapter* 10.)

But he was not afraid. A passionate anger rose in his breast—the anger of one who had always been petted and coaxed, and had had hitherto no experience of bullying.

"What's the game?" he exclaimed hotly. "What do you mean?"

"Don't you ask questions," said Gatty, loftily. "I'm the captain of the Form—the Second Form at Greyfriars—and I'm boss here. You understand that?"

"I don't understand anything of the sort!"

Gatty's brow lowered.

"Well, I shall have to teach you, then. It's for me to ask questions, Nugent minor, not for you. Your name's Nugent?"

"Yes," said Dick gloweringly.

"You're coming into the Second Form here?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"We're the Second Form."

"I don't care who you are."

"Cheeky young cub," said Myers. "Punch his head."

Nugent minor clenched his hands.

"You'd better not!" he exclaimed.

Gatty laughed.

"I suppose you would lick me?" he remarked, towering over the new boy. And the Second Form shouted with merriment.

Nugent minor cast a longing glance towards the door.

"No, you can't get out yet," said Gatty. "You've got to go through it first. You've been crawling to upper form fellows, and currying favour with Bulstrode, the worst bully in the Remove—a form we don't approve of, anyway."

"Hear, hear!"

"I haven't. Bulstrode asked me to tea."

"It's all the same. Now, you've got to go down on your knees and beg the pardon of the Second Form for having had tea with the Remove."

"I won't!"

"You won't! Do you know who you are talking to?"

"I don't know, and I don't care. I won't beg anybody's pardon. Let me out of this room. You're a set of cads!"

"Phew!" said Todd.

"Good!" said Gatty, unmoved. "Collar him!"

"Look here——"

"'Nuff said. Collar the young cad!"

A dozen hands seized Nugent minor. He struggled desperately, but he was powerless against so many. He struck out furiously, and kicked and scratched in his passionate rage, and Todd staggered away with a swelling nose, and Myers wore a red streak down his cheek.

Myers jammed his handkerchief to the scratch.

"Blessed wildcat!" he exclaimed. "Look at this!"

"Down him!"

"Sit on him!"

Nugent minor was borne to the floor under the weight of a dozen juniors. He still struggled wildly under them.

"Nice boy!" said Gatty. "His people must love to have him with them in the family circle—I don't think! Got him tight!"

"Yes, rather."

"Yank him up."

Nugent minor was yanked up in the grip of so many hands that he could not move a

limb. Angry faces were looking at him, and he returned their looks with defiant anger.

"You cads!" he yelled. "Lemme alone."

"The frog's-march first," said Gatty meditatively. "After that, we'll see. Give it him twice round the room."

"Hear, hear!"

And round the long Form-room went Nugent minor.

He still struggled, but feebly, in the grasp of half a dozen pairs of hands.

Right round the room he went—once, and twice, and then the Second-formers halted with him, and bumped him on the floor. He was looking decidedly dishevelled by this time, with his hair untidy and his collar torn out.

"Now then," said Gatty, "to your knees."

"Go and eat coke!"

Gatty chuckled.

"You've got to beg the pardon of the Second Form for cheek, and for sucking up to the Remove. Are you going to do it?"

"No!"

"All right! Round you go again."

"Help!" yelled Dick Nugent.

The fags laughed and hooted, but as it happened the cry was heard—and answered.

Mr. Quelch's heart beat quickly. From the direction of the bed he heard the sound of steady breathing. A burglar! (*See Chapter* 12.)

"Prav do not point that gun in my direction!" said the Remove master, as he led the way towards his bed-room. (*See Chapter* 12.)

There was a slam as the door was thrown open, and Frank Nugent looked into the Form-room.

The fags halted in dismay

"Nugent major!"

THE NINTH CHAPTER

Foes with the Form

FRANK NUGENT took in the scene at a glance.

He stode into the midst of the startled fags, and gave Gatty a shove that sent him reeling to one side, and Myers a push that sent him reeling to the other.

Then he dropped Todd with a thump on the chest.

The other fags released Nugent minor so quickly that he bumped forcibly on the floor, and crowded back.

Nugent stood over his young brother with flashing eyes.

"Hands off!" he said grimly.

Dick Nugent staggered to his feet. He looked ragged and torn and dusty. Frank stepped closer to his side.

"Keep with me, young 'un!" he said softly.

And Dick nodded.

There was a threatening howl from the fags. For an upper form fellow to interfere in the private quarrels of the Second Form was absolutely intolerable. It was as if a Fifth-former had interfered in the disputes of the Remove. The whole Remove would have risen as one man against it. Nugent did not look at the matter quite in that light just now, as was only natural, as it was his young brother who was being frog's-marched.

The fags came crowding round with hoots and yells.

"Get out of our quarters!"

"Yah! Remove cad!"

"Outside!"

"Kick him out!"

"Yah!"

Nugent's eyes gleamed upon the fags.

"Stand back!" he said peremptorily.

"Rats!" exclaimed Gatty hotly. "What are you doing in our Form-room, you Remove cad? Get out, or we'll throw you out!"

"Better come with me, Dick."

"All right," said Dick sulkily.

There was a roar.

"You're not going to take him away."

"Yah! Down with the Remove!"

"Rush them!"

"Give them socks!"

And the fags came crowding on. Nugent clenched his fist hard.

"You'll get hurt if you don't keep off," he said warningly.

"Yah!"

"Stand back!"

"Yah! Rats!"

Nugent hit out as Myers and Todd hustled him. Todd went down again, and this time he stayed on the floor, and Myers fell across him.

Nugent caught his young brother by the arm and dragged him to the door.

"Come on, Dicky—quick!"

"Collar them!" shrieked Gatty.

And he led a furious rush.

The Second Form crowded round Nugent like locusts. He hit out in earnest now, and three or four fags rolled over, but they were too many.

Fighting desperately, Nugent was borne down by the rush, and Dick went down with him, and over both of them swarmed the victorious Second Form.

"Sit on them!" roared Gatty.

"Rescue Remove!" shouted Nugent, at the top of his voice. "Wharton! Inky! Remove! Rescue!"

The cry was not unheard.

Three or four Removites, among them Harry Wharton and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, came in at the doorway, and, without stopping to ask questions, rushed into the conflict.

Then the tables were turned.

The fags were hurled right and left before the doughty blows of the Removites, and Nugent and Dick were promptly rescued.

But Gatty & Co. rallied, and Harry Wharton thought it only prudent to hurry the rescued ones to the passage and get them away.

A volley of yells and mocking jeers followed them from the Second Form-room.

"Yah!"

"Cad!"

"Worm!"

Most of the remarks seemed to be hurled at Nugent minor, though he hardly realised it at the moment. He was too breathless and confused to realise anything clearly.

The rescuers hurried them down the passage, and halted out of sight of the door of the Form-room, which was crammed with jeering fags.

"What on earth have you been rowing with the babes for, Frank?" exclaimed Harry Wharton, in astonishment.

Nugent gasped for breath, and mopped his damaged nose with his handkerchief.

"They were ragging young Dick."

"Oh, I see!"

"Have they hurt you, Dicky?" said Nugent, turning anxiously to his young brother.

"Yes," said Dick sullenly. "It doesn't matter."

"I came in the instant I heard you calling."

"It's all right."

"How did you come to fall foul of them?" asked Nugent, with a worried look. He realised what a bad beginning his minor had made in getting on with his Form.

"They accused me of crawling to the Remove."

"Oh! On account of that feed with Bulstrode, I suppose?"

"I suppose so."

"It's awkward," said Frank, after a pause. "You see, they're your Form; you've got to live with them—sleep in their dormitory to-night."

Nugent minor looked alarmed.

"Have I? Can't I sleep somewhere else?"

"No; it's impossible."

"I suppose I could come with you?"

Nugent shook his head.

"No; the Forms have separate dormitories."

"Look here, I'm jolly well not going to be shut up with that crew!" exclaimed Nugent minor hotly. "I haven't come here to be bullied."

"Well, it's not my fault. They all hate Bulstrode, because he's such a beastly bully, and your chumming up with him was very unfortunate. They naturally think that you're going to sneak to Bulstrode. You shouldn't have done it."

"How was I to know?"

"Well, I asked you to come away from his study."

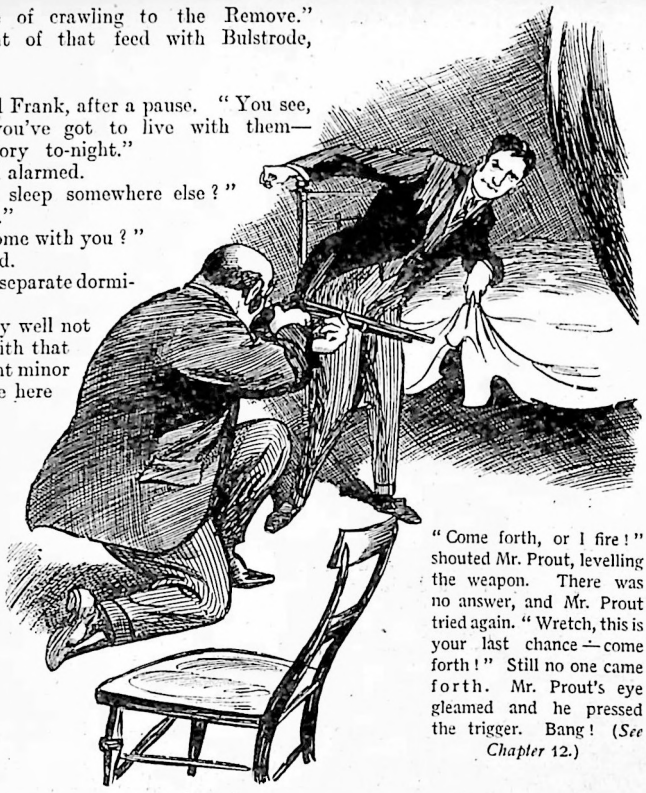
"If you had met me when I came I shouldn't have gone there. But I'll go there if I like! Bulstrode is the only fellow here who has treated me decently, anyhow," exclaimed Dick Nugent passionately.

"Bulstrode can't protect you from the Second Form, and he wouldn't take the trouble if he could," said Nugent quietly.

"I shall speak to the Head."

"What do you mean? That's sneaking."

"Well, I'm not going to be frog's-marched in the dormitory to-night, as well as in the Form-room this evening," said Dick hotly. "I don't see why I should stand it."



"Come forth, or I fire!" shouted Mr. Prout, levelling the weapon. There was no answer, and Mr. Prout tried again. "Wretch, this is your last chance—come forth!" Still no one came forth. Mr. Prout's eye gleamed and he pressed the trigger. Bang! (*See Chapter* 12.)

"You must make it up with the Second Form somehow," said Nugent slowly. "You can let them know that you're not going to toady to Bulstrode, you see; and—and I suppose you have something to eat in your box? Mother will have shoved in something good."

"Yes, there's a good feed."

"Good! You can stand a feed to all the Second Form, after lights out, and make your peace with them that way. They'll chum up to anybody for a feed."

"I don't want to make my peace with them," said Dick Nugent, between his teeth.

" They've jumped on me like this for nothing. I won't go an inch out of my way to get into their good graces."

" Now, don't be a young ass——"

" If that's all you've got to say to me——"

" Do you want to be cut by your Form ? "

" I don't care ! "

" Don't you understand, Dick ? I can't always be at hand to protect you. I——"

Dick flushed crimson.

" I jolly well don't want you to protect me. I can take care of myself."

And he thrust his hands deep into his trousers' pockets, and walked down the passage. Nugent called after him.

" Dick ! "

But Nugent minor did not turn his head.

THE TENTH CHAPTER
Bunter the Catspaw

HARRY WHARTON pressed his chum's arm as Dick Nugent disappeared round a corner of the passage. Nugent glanced at him miserably.

" Don't bother, Frank. It can't be helped."

" He's been spoiled at home, you know," said Frank wretchedly. " He can't understand. If he begins with the Second Form like this, why, they'll make his life a misery to him. A fellow can't live on fighting terms with his Form."

" He'll come to his senses in time," said Mark Linley.

Nugent nodded, and strolled slowly away. He was feeling very despondent. It seemed impossible to get on good terms with his younger brother, or to make Dick Nugent understand what was necessary at Greyfriars.

Skinner, who had been one of the rescuing party, and had listened silently to the talk, burst into a chuckle. Skinner was the practical joker of the Remove, and his chuckle showed that some new " jape " had entered his head. Harry Wharton looked at him quickly and suspiciously.

" What's the joke ? " he asked.

" Nothing ! " said Skinner.

He laughed and walked away. He went to Bulstrode's study, and found the bully of the Remove alone there. Tom Brown and Hazeldene were gone out. Bulstrode was not looking very good-tempered, and he glared rather than looked at Skinner as he came in.

" Hallo ! Been having accidents ? " asked Skinner, glancing at the pile of broken crockery still on the floor.

" Yes ! " growled Bulstrode.

" I say, I've got a good wheeze on——"

" Go and boil it ! "

" It's up against No. 1 Study——"

" Oh ! Go ahead ! " said Bulstrode.

Skinner grinned at the sudden change of tone. He lowered his voice as he went on :

" You know there's that new kid, Nugent minor——"

" Yes," said Bulstrode, grinning.

" What do you think of him ? "

" Oh, he's a cough-drop ! "

" He's at daggers drawn with all the Second, and he's afraid to go into the Second dorm. to-night to go to bed," said Skinner.

" I'm not surprised. Judging by what I've seen of him, he's about the last fellow in the world to have an enjoyable time in the Second Form."

" Well, he swears he'll sleep somewhere else, and not in the dorm. at all."

" He can sleep on the roof, for all I care," said Bulstrode, with a yawn. " Blessed if I care anything about his sleeping quarters."

" That's where the jape comes in. Suppose you suggested to him—I hear you're on good terms with him—suppose you suggested to that he should sleep somewhere else ? You remember a little trick like that I played on Harry Wharton when he first came to Greyfriars ? Well, it would be a howling joke to get Nugent minor planted in the Head's bed."

Bulstrode gave a roar.

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

" You'll do it, then ? " said Skinner eagerly.

" No, I won't," said Bulstrode coolly. " You know jolly well that Nugent minor is just the chap to blurt out the whole story to the Head, and I should get a licking then. Set him at it yourself."

" Well, you see——"

" There's Bunter," said Bulstrode. " Take Bunter. Give him something to feed on and flatter him, and you can make him do

Mr. Quelch and Monsieur Charpentier bent and peered beneath the bed, while the war-like Mr. Prout remained kneeling, his rifle at the ready! (*See Chapter* 13.)

anything for you. He'll jape Nugent minor."

"Jolly good idea!" agreed Skinner; and he immediately hurried off in search of Billy Bunter.

Bunter was not hard to find. Skinner discovered him looking dolefully into the little window of Mrs. Mimble's tuckshop. He clapped the fat junior on the shoulder, and Bunter blinked round at him.

"Oh, really, Russell——"

"Hallo, Bunter! Like some tarts?"

"Oh, is it you, Skinner? Yes, I was just thinking I should. Mrs. Mimble has some new tarts in, and she won't let me have any till my postal-order comes. If there's a delay in the post, I shan't get it till to-morrow morning. I'll have some tarts with you with a great deal of pleasure!"

And they went into the tuckshop.

Skinner stood half a dozen tarts, which disappeared at a wonderful speed down Bunter's capacious throat.

"I say, this is awfully decent of you, you know!" said Bunter, blinking at Skinner, as he masticated jam tarts.

"Oh, that's all right!" said Skinner. "I was awfully tickled by that new idea of yours!"

"Which one?" asked Bunter. "I'm simply full of new ideas. The fellows in my study are awfully jealous of me on that account, as I daresay you've observed."

"Of course I have! I mean your idea of japing Nugent minor. It is your idea, isn't it? It's so funny that I thought it must be!"

"Oh, yes, of course!" assented Bunter.

"Nugent minor swears he won't sleep in the Second dorm. to-night," remarked

"It is zat he is in ze bed !" exclaimed the French master. "Ciel ! It is a garcon !" (*See Chapter* 13.)

Skinner, as he helped himself to ginger-pop. "That makes it easy for you. If you told him the Remove-master's room, for instance, was a private room prepared for him by order of the Head, he's quite gull enough to believe it."

Bunter chuckled and attacked his last tart.

"You're such a keen chap, Bunter, that it would be easy for you to take anybody in," Skinner went on. "It's really hardly fair on Nugent's minor ; but, after all, a jape is a jape."

"That's it," assented Bunter. "A jape's a jape."

"And the cocky young rotter deserves to be taken down a peg."

"Yes, rather ! He had the cheek to laugh at me when I was stuck to the chair in my study," said Bunter. "He stood there cackling."

"Then I should jolly well jape him, especially as you've thought of such a ripping wheeze for doing it !" urged Skinner.

"And I jolly well will !" said Bunter. "Did you say another tart, Skinner ?"

Skinner did not appear to hear the question. He strolled out of the tuckshop, and Billy Bunter followed more slowly.

Bunter prided himself upon his keenness, and, as he had no particular regard for the truth, he naturally sometimes succeeded in deceiving people. But he was, as a matter of fact, one of the easiest of fellows to deceive. His conceit was too great for him to see when he was being fooled. Added to that, his love of flattery was great, and he liked to appear in the public eye. If he could get the credit of any other fellow's ideas, he never hesitated. It was the easiest thing possible for Skinner to pull the wool over his eyes.

Billy Bunter strolled thoughtfully out of the tuckshop, looking for Nugent minor. By this time the fat junior really thought that it was his idea to play that jape upon Dick Nugent, and he was chuckling over it at a great rate when he ran into the very person he was seeking in the passage.

Dick Nugent had been up to the Remove dormitory to wash off the stains of his tussle in the Form-room. He had not cared to venture to the Second Form dorm. in case the enemy should be there. It was getting very near bed time now for the junior forms, and Dick was feeling nervous.

He was keeping a wary eye open for Second Form fellows when Bunter ran into him.

"Oh, really, Ogilvy !" exclaimed Bunter peevishly.

"You fat ass !" growled Dick.

"Is that you, Nugent minor ?"

"Yes, you owl ! What did you run into me for ?"

"I'm sincerely sorry," said Bunter smoothly. "I was looking for you. I hear that you are to have a separate room to-night, as the Head does not want you to be ragged by the Second Form in the dormitory."

Dick Nugent drew a deep breath of relief.

"Good !" he exclaimed. "I hadn't heard of it, but I shall be jolly glad of it ! Where's the room ?"

"I'll show you, if you'll come with me," said Bunter. "Of course, you'd better not go there now, or the fags may come routing you out. Better wait till the Second Form

have gone to bed, and then sneak in. See? The prefects don't all know you've joined the Second yet, and they won't be looking out for you. This is the place. Look in."

He opened the door of Mr. Quelch's bedroom.

The Remove-master's room was a very comfortable and cosy apartment, with a bed in an alcove in the wall, and very well furnished. Dick Nugent looked round the room with great satisfaction.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "I shall be comfortable here, I think."

Billy Bunter grinned as he thought of the scene that would ensue when the master of the Remove came up to bed and found a Second Form fag asleep in his room.

"Yes, it's a decent room," he said. "Of course, this isn't permanent, you know; you'll just have this room for the present."

"Yes, I understand."

"You'll have to bunk with the Second Form later, of course."

"I jolly well shan't, unless they treat me decently!" said Dick Nugent, frowning. "I'll write home to my mother to take me away!"

Bunter chuckled.

"Jolly good idea!" he agreed readily, as Dicky looked at him suspiciously. "Don't you be put upon; I wouldn't."

"I don't mean to be."

Bunter closed the door and led the new fag away.

"Don't tell any of the Second where you're going to sleep," he said. "They'll rout you out, as sure as a gun, if you do."

"I'll be careful."

"Don't tell anybody, in fact. It's safer."

Nugent minor nodded, and Bunter left him in the passage. As soon as he turned the first corner, Billy Bunter stopped to chuckle explosively. He was still engaged in emitting mysterious gurgles and guggles when a heavy hand fell upon his shoulder, and he jumped.

"Oh, really, Bulstrode——"

"What are you snortling about?" asked the voice of Tom Brown.

"Oh, is it you, young Mutton? It's all right; I was thinking of a joke, that's all. You can mind your own business, you know."

"You've been playing some mean trick on somebody," said the New Zealand junior.

"Oh, really, Brown——"

Tom Brown shook his head and passed on. He knew that it would be quite useless to attempt to get any truth out of Bunter. The fat junior burst into renewed chuckles, and he was still cachinnating when the Remove went up to bed and he joined them.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

Nugent Minor Makes Himself Comfortable

BED-TIME was looked forward to with great keenness by Gatty, Myers, Todd, and the rest of the Second Form. As a rule, they hated bed-time, and would gladly have risen in revolt against the laws that sent them to bed half an hour earlier than the Remove and the Upper Fourth, and abolished them. But as that was impossible, the fags generally went to bed grumbling, with the worst grace, and indemnified themselves by lighting candle-ends after lights-out and pillow-fighting in the dormitory, or reading by the light of bicycle lanterns. And when they were caught in these playful occupations by watchful prefects, there was

Mr. Quelch grabbed the boy by the shoulders and heaved him out of the bed. Nugent minor yelled as he struck the floor. (*See Chapter* 14.)

weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth in the Second-form dorm. But their ways remained unaltered, and probably would remain so for ever. But the reluctance with which the fags usually went up to bed was conspicuously absent this evening. They were keen on getting to the dormitory.

And it was all on account of Nugent minor.

The Remove had snatched Nugent minor from the wrath of his Form like a brand from the burning, but it had served the new boy ill. For if there was anything the fags could not possibly forgive, it was interference in their rights and liberties by members of a higher Form.

For the Remove to venture to interfere in their internal disputes was outrageous, and as they couldn't make the Lower Fourth "sit up" for it, they meant to take it out of Nugent minor.

Had the boy been a little more sensible and reasonable, and been willing to profit by the advice and experience of his elder brother, he might yet have made his peace with the Second. But the spoiled son of fond parents was only likely to make matters worse by every word he uttered and everything that he did.

And the Second Form greeted the prefect who announced bed-time without the suppressed groans and growls that usually greeted him. It was Loder of the Sixth, and Loder, being a bully by nature, rather liked cuffing and kicking reluctant fags who hesitated to go to the dorm. on the very instant.

But even Loder had no excuse for bullying to-night.

The Second were quite ready for bed, and they marched up to the dormitory without a word, without a murmur.

Loder stared at them in surprise, but he was glad to be saved trouble, and he herded the fags off to bed, turned out the lights, and left them, without thinking or caring what the reason of their unusual tractability could be.

Loder had never even noticed that there was a new boy in the Second that day; or, if it had been brought to his attention, he had forgotten it. He had more important things to think of—a game of poker with his worthy chums Carne and Walker in his study, for instance. Walker and Carne were waiting for him, and Loder wasn't likely to waste much time on the Second Form. The privileges of a prefect were very useful to him, but the duties of the post were not much to his taste. He performed them just well enough to keep up appearances, and that was all.

But in the Second-form dormitory the strange peacefulness was broken as soon as Loder had turned his back and closed the door.

Gatty sat up in bed and struck a match, and lighted a candle. Half a dozen other fellows followed his example.

Gatty glared up and down the dormitory.

"Where's that new chap?" he demanded.

"Blessed if I know!" Myers remarked. "He never came up to bed."

"He's not here, Gatty."

"His bed's ready," said Gatty, "and he's not here. What on earth does it mean? I was going to speak to Loder about it, but I knew he would guess there was something on if I did."

"The kid's hiding away somewhere," said Todd. "He knows what's in store for him."

"But he can't stay up all night."

"Oh, no! Depend upon it, he's hanging about waiting for us to go to sleep, so that he can sneak in quietly without our noticing him."

Gatty chuckled. The explanation seemed to him a very probable one.

"Good!" he said. "That's it, and no error. Put the lights out and keep quiet, and he'll come in."

And the dormitory was plunged into darkness again.

It was very cold, sitting up in the winter night, and the Second-formers lay down again and covered themselves up, with the natural result that they dropped off to sleep, one by one, Gatty being one of the first.

Meanwhile, Nugent minor, as we know, had no intention of coming to the Second dormitory at all, if he could help it. He knew very well that a ragging awaited him there, and even if Bunter had not so kindly come to the rescue,

he would have tried to avoid going up with the Second.

He remained quietly out of sight while the Second Form went to bed, and then he made his way to Mr. Quelch's room.

He lighted the gas, and closed the door, and looked round him with an air of great satisfaction and relief.

The room was very cosy and the bed looked inviting to the fatigued jnuior.

Dicky Nugent had been through a great deal of excitement and exertion that day, and he was very tired.

He undressed, and tumbled into bed, turning out the gas, and in about five seconds after his head had touched the pillow he was asleep.

He slept the sleep of fatigue and healthy youth, and a gun fired within a yard of him would probably not have awakened him.

While he was sleeping soundly in Mr. Quelch's bed, his major was thinking about him, and wondering how he was getting on in the Second dormitory. Nugent was playing chess with Hurree Jamset Ram Singh in the junior common-room, with Harry Wharton looking on, when the Second went up to bed. Nugent saw Loder come down, and after that his mind seemed to wander from the game. He left his king in check two or three times in succession, and was finally checkmated with ease, and was still going on to move after the mate. It was evident that his mind was not in the game.

"The esteemed wits of my worthy chum are wandering," said the Nabob of Bhanipur, in his soft, purring voice. "What is he thinkfully reflecting upon?"

"If—if you please, sir, it wasn't me," stammered Bunter—before Mr. Quelch had a chance to speak. (*See Chapter* 14.)

Nugent grinned faintly.

"I was thinking about my young brother," he said. "He's gone off with the Second, and I'm afraid there will be a row in the dorm."

"I was thinking the same," said Wharton, with a nod; "but I don't know about interfering, Frank. It's better to leave a chap to fight his own battles, except in the case of bullying. Your minor has put up the backs of the Second by chumming up with Bulstrode, and they won't rest till they've ragged him."

"I know, but——"

"You can't always save him. If they let him alone while you're there, they'll start again as soon as you're gone. It depends upon Dick to make his peace with the Form. It's up to him to do it, you know."

Nugent looked worried.

"Yes, I know; but he won't do it. You don't know Dick. He wants to be looked after, and made a fuss of; and they won't do that in the Second."

"Ha, ha! I should say not. But they will knock some of the nonsense out of him, Frank, and that will do him a lot more good in the long run."

"Yes; but—but I can't bear to think of his being ragged by those rough young rascals, after what he's been used to at home," said Nugent, with a troubled look. "He's a decent kid enough, you know, if—if he weren't such a young ass. You'll like him when you get to know him, Harry."

Wharton had his doubts about that, but he did not say so.

"He hasn't really had a chance," said Nugent, "and he's as obstinate as a mule. He'll kick, you know, and that'll make things harder for him. I suppose it might be better in

the long run for him to fight his battles out, but—but I think I'll go——"

He rose from the chess-table.

"Well, have a look and see if there's anything going on before you go into the dorm," said Wharton. "Call us if you want help."

"Right-ho!"

And Frank Nugent ascended the stairs. He stopped outside the door of the Second Form dormitory.

All was quiet within. There was no gleam of light from under the door.

The fags were evidently quietly in bed. Nugent drew a deep breath of relief. He returned to the junior common-room, and met the inquiring looks of his chums with a nod.

"All serene!" he said. "There's not a sound, except a snore."

"Good!"

And when the Remove went up to bed it was still "all serene."

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER
On the War-path.

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, opened his bedroom door at half-past ten that night. He knew where to find the matches—or he usually did. But as he put his hand to the table beside the door for them, he did not find them in their usual place. He regretted then that he had not brought up a candle with him.

"Dear me!" he murmured. "This is most annoying. Someone has taken my matches."

He groped into the room, and groped over the table. He murmured something under his breath as he heard the inkpot fall over, and some papers go rustling to the floor. Then he went out of the room, descended the stairs again, and came up with a lighted candle.

By that time Mr. Quelch was not in the best of tempers. He had reached a time of life when ascending stairs was no light matter to him.

He was looking pink as he came into his room again. He wished very much to know who had taken away his matches. He did not guess yet that the person who had moved them was sleeping within a few paces of him.

Mr. Quelch lighted the gas, and proceeded to divest himself of his coat.

The bed, as we have said, was in an alcove in the wall, and partly hidden by a curtain.

The master of the Remove did not observe that it was occupied, nor was he likely to observe it till he went to step in.

But suddenly, as he took off his coat, he stopped, and gave a start.

A sound of deep and steady breathing had struck upon his ears.

Mr. Quelch stood quite still, the coat in his hands, his heart beating. He could scarcely believe his ears for a moment, and he listened intently to make sure that he was not mistaken.

But there was no mistake about it!

There was a steady breathing in the room, and it came from the direction of the bed.

In a moment Mr. Quelch saw it all.

His matches had been moved by the same person whose breathing he could now hear—a burglar, who had hidden himself under the bed!

There was no doubt about it. From where he stood Mr. Quelch could detect that the breathing came from the bed, but whether above or below it he could not tell; but he naturally thought at once of somebody under the bed. That anybody belonging to Greyfriars might be sleeping in his bed never occurred to him for a moment. That was far more improbable than a burglar.

Mr. Quelch stood quite still, listening, for several moments. Then he quietly put on his coat again.

The deep, steady breathing showed two things. First, that the burglar had lost all caution, and was not careful to conceal his presence; second, and consequently, that the wretch had fallen asleep under the bed.

Mr. Quelch smiled grimly.

A burglar under the bed might be a dangerous customer to tackle, especially if he were armed; but by falling asleep he had thrown himself into the hands of the law, as it were.

Mr. Quelch quietly extinguished the gas, so as not to alarm the burglar by a light if he should awaken, and stepped softly from the room.

In the passage he paused a few moments to consider.

The point now was to capture the burglar, and it was necessary to bring such a force

Dick Nugent struggled furiously: the perspiration ran down his face, making streaks in the black of the burnt cork. But, despite his efforts, he was hoisted high and marched forward, the Second-formers swarming round him, yelling and hooting. (*See Chapter* 16.)

against him that he would not venture to struggle, or to use his revolver, if he had one.

Mr. Quelch thought of Gosling, the porter, but shook his head. Gosling was a long way off, and he was not brave. Then he thought of Mr. Prout. Mr. Prout was master of the Fifth, and a great sportsman, and always kept two or three guns in his study. He occupied a great deal of his spare time in cleaning his guns, and at the same time would relate stories of big game to anybody who would listen. Fellows in the Fifth who wanted passes, or who hadn't done their impositions, or wanted to get into favour for any reason, would listen hypocritically to these yarns of danger by flood and field, and would be awfully impressed by the bravery of Mr. Prout.

Mr. Prout, as a man of war and an owner of deadly weapons, was just the man to deal with the burglar. Mr. Quelch descended at once to his study, and tapped at the door. He entered, and found Mr. Prout there, reading a book dealing with big game in America. The Fifth-form master glanced up with a nod.

"Sorry to disturb you, Prout, but——"

"Not at all," said Mr. Prout, waving the Remove-master to a chair. "On the contrary, I shall be delighted to have a chat. I am just reading in this volume——"

"Yes, but——"

"That the number of buffaloes shot in the Rocky Mountains——"

"My dear Prout——"

"Excuse me, Quelch, but this is a deeply

interesting subject. When I was in the Rockies in '95——"

"There is a burglar in my room!" said Mr. Quelch hastily. When Mr. Prout started with "When I was in the Rockies in '95," the Remove-master knew from experience that only a sudden shock would stop him.

Mr. Prout started.

"A burglar?"

"Yes."

"In your room?"

"Yes, under the bed."

"Good heavens! Did you see him?"

"No, but I heard him breathing. He must, I think, have fallen asleep there. As I was alone and unarmed, you may be sure that I did not try to get to close quarters with him," said the Remove-master drily.

"Quite so, quite so!" exclaimed Mr. Prout jumping up, forgetting all about when he was in the Rocky Mountains in 1895. "I am glad you came to me. I will load my rifle——"

"Ahem! I was thinking that a firearm might frighten the ruffian into surrender," said Mr. Quelch. "Unloaded, however, in case of accidents."

Mr. Prout smiled superior.

"My dear Quelch, suppose he has a revolver? Suppose he fires? It will be necessary in that case to wing him."

"To—to what?"

"Wing him," said Mr. Prout, with quite a bloodthirsty look. "I have never shot a man yet——"

"Dear me!"

"Of course, I should not kill him," said Mr. Prout. "Not if it could be avoided, at all events. I might wing him in the arm or leg."

"You—you are sure of your aim?"

"I have shot buffaloes on the plains of Texas, grizzly bears in the Rockies, lions in South Africa——"

"Yes, yes; but——"

"Rely upon me, Quelch; I will make sure of the villain."

Mr. Prout was all excitement now. Whether he was really as great a hunter as his stories on the subject would imply, or not, there was no doubt that he was keen enough. He took down a rifle from the wall, and unlocked a drawer for cartridges. Mr. Quelch watched him in some uneasiness as he loaded.

"There," said Mr. Prout, "I am ready now. Lead on."

"Pray do not point that gun in my direction," said the Remove-master.

Mr. Prout laughed.

"I assure you, Quelch, that I am not likely to have an accident with firearms. You would be quite safe if I levelled the rifle point-blank at you."

"I—I would rather you did not, however. Pray come on."

They quitted the study.

Mr. Quelch dropped behind the Fifth Form-master in going upstairs. He wasn't afraid of the burglar, but he was decidedly afraid of Mr. Prout's rifle. If the Fifth Form-master had stumbled, he might have killed the Remove-master; and Mr. Quelch did not desire to end his days in that manner.

They reached the door of the Remove-master's bedroom, and Mr. Quelch stepped in quietly and relighted the gas.

"Good!" said Mr. Prout. "He cannot escape now."

Mr. Prout dropped on one knee, and levelled the rifle with depressed muzzle to command the space under the bed.

"I shall have him covered now," he remarked. "You may wake him up and drive him forth. If he will not come, I will fire."

"But—but—but——"

"It's all right," said Mr. Prout, with a smile. "This is a magazine rifle, and the first cartridge is blank."

"But—but if there should be some mistake——"

"Stuff! I never make mistakes with firearms. If I made mistakes with firearms, my dear Quelch, I should not be here to tell the tale. When I was in the Rockies in '95——"

"I will arouse the villain, then."

"At once."

Mr. Quelch bent beside the bed and raised the edge of the coverlet. His heart was beating hard, and he was very excited; otherwise, he would probably have noticed that the sound of breathing did not come from underneath. But his mind was full of thoughts of the burglar now.

"Come out!" he exclaimed.

"Come forth!" said Mr. Prout threateningly. "Come forth, scoundrel! Mind, I have you covered, and my finger is on the trigger. Come forth!"

There was no reply from the burglar.

"Come forth, or I fire!" shouted Mr. Prout.

No answer!

"Then——"

"Pray do not fire, Prout. You see——"

"It is the only way. He must be awake now, and you cannot venture under the bed to drag him out. He probably has a knife."

"Yes; but——"

"I had better fire. Wretch, your last chance—come forth!"

And still no one came forth.

Mr. Prout's eye gleamed along the barrel, and he pressed the trigger.

Bang!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER

Not a Burglar

BANG!

The report rang through the house, and rolled back in a thousand echoes. The room seemed full of stunning noise, and the smell of gunpowder. Mr. Quelch jumped almost clear of the floor.

"Oh, dear!" he gasped.

In spite of Mr. Prout's assurance, he could not help having a lurking fear that the cartridge might not be a blank one. Mistakes do happen.

The Fifth Form-master smiled the grim smile of a great huntsman.

"Come forth!" he shouted.

The sound of breathing had suddenly ceased. As a matter of fact, the bang of the rifle had awakened Nugent minor, and he had become aware of the fact that there was a light in the room, and two men there, and a smell of gunpowder.

Startled and terrified, the new boy held his breath, not daring to move, or make the faintest sound, as he lay in the bed.

"Come forth!" shouted Mr. Prout triumphantly.

He clicked the rifle in a business-like manner. The next cartridge in the magazine was loaded, and Mr. Prout was ready for the burglar.

But still the burglar did not come forth.

"Good heavens!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Listen!"

"What?"

"I cannot hear him breathing now."

"Oh, he is keeping quiet on purpose, of course."

Mr. Quelch was quite pale.

"I only hope that you did not make a mistake with the cartridges," he murmured. "Heaven forbid that you have killed the wretched man!"

"Good heavens, Mr. Quelch!"

"I can hear no sound."

"I never make mistakes with firearms. When I was in the Rockies——"

"We must look."

"Undoubtedly. I——"

"Ciel! Vat is it zat is ze mattair?" asked a voice at the door, as Monsieur Charpentier, the French-master, looked in. "Vat has happen viz itself?"

"There's a burglar under the bed!"

"Ciel!"

"Mr. Prout has fired a blank cartridge to frighten him out," said the Remove-master. "He refuses to stir, however."

"I zink zat you pokes him viz ze poker."

"Ah! A good idea!"

Mr. Quelch stepped to the grate and took up the poker.

He poked under the bed. He was half afraid of finding a dead body there, in spite of Mr. Prout's assurance that he never made mistakes with firearms.

But to his surprise the lunges of the poker encountered only space.

He lowered his head at last, at the risk of damage from the hidden burglar if he should be waiting with a bludgeon for such a chance, and peered under the bed. It was very dark and shadowy there; he could see nothing, but it certainly seemed to him that the space was vacant.

Mr. Quelch was amazed.

"Monsieur Charpentier, pray bring the candle here," he said.

"Oui, oui! Viz ze pleasure!"

And Mossoo brought the candle, and lowered it to the floor, and both of them

peered under the bed, while the war-like Fifth Form-master remained kneeling, with levelled rifle, ready for eventualities.

"Ciel!"

"Dear me!"

Monsieur Charpentier and Mr. Quelch uttered those exclamations simultaneously. For the space under the bed was vacant; there was no burglar there.

Mr. Quelch and Monsieur Charpentier rose, staring blankly at one another.

"Well?" said Mr. Prout.

"There—there is no one there!"

"What!"

"I can see no one."

"But—but——"

"Ciel!"

"What is it, Monsieur Charpentier?"

"It is zat he is in ze bed!" exclaimed the French-master, springing away from it. "Look!"

"Good gracious!"

Mr. Quelch dragged aside the curtain. Nugent minor was revealed sitting up in bed, with a pale and scared face, and startled eyes.

He stared at Mr. Quelch, and Mr. Quelch stared at him. Monsieur Charpentier gave a sort of crow of astonishment.

"Ciel! It is a garcon!"

"Dear me! Who—what——"

"It is a boy. It is not a burglar. It is zat zere has been a mistake. Ciel!"

Monsieur Charpentier's face relaxed into a grin. Crimson was slowly covering the countenance of Mr. Quelch.

He understood now what an egregious blunder he had made. Monsieur Charpentier, grinning, slipped quietly from the room, many smothered chuckles proceeding from him as he went down the passage. Mr. Prout sprang up, and rushed towards the bed. His face was a study as he saw Nugent minor.

"Gr-gr-great Scott!" he gasped.

"Boy!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, in a voice of thunder.

"This is the burglar, Mr. Quelch?"

"There—there appears to have been some mistake," said the unhappy Remove-master. "I—I certainly thought there was a burglar under the bed."

Mr. Prout grunted. He put his gun under his arm, and stalked away. A great many fellows had gathered in the passage, attracted by the report of the firearm. They looked curiously at Mr. Prout, who was very pink as he strode away, without vouchsafing a word to anyone. Mr. Prout was a great sportsman, and had a keen hankering after adventures; but they never seemed to come his way. From the time when he had shot Wun Lung's kite, to the present, he had never found an occasion worthy of his great abilities as a man of war.

Mr. Quelch remained alone with the new junior. His face was crimson, his eyes sparkling with anger. He felt that he had made himself look absurd, though really he could not blame himself for the mistake. How was he to have guessed that a fag of the Second Form would have the amazing impudence to go to sleep in his bed?

And Nugent minor had not simply lain down there, either—he had gone to bed. Mr. Quelch now observed his clothes, and saw the collar of his pyjamas round the junior's neck. And he had certainly been fast asleep.

Nugent minor had evidently settled there for the night.

Mr. Quelch stood looking at the boy for some time in silence. He really did not know what to say.

Dick Nugent was recovering from his astonishment now.

He was not pleased at being awakened and frightened in the middle of the night, and his look was growing as angry as Mr. Quelch's.

"Boy," said the Remove-master at last, "what are you doing here?"

"I'm sleeping—or was, till I was woke up," growled Dick. "What's all this row about?"

"Boy!"

"I want to go to sleep."

And Dick settled down again, with his head on the pillow, and drew the bedclothes up round his neck.

Mr. Quelch was almost petrified as he viewed this proceeding.

"Boy," he gasped—"boy! Who—who are you?"

"I'm Nugent minor."

"What Form do you belong to?"

"Second," said Dick sleepily.

"You—you—— How dare you go to sleep in my room?" roared Mr. Quelch. "You—you are a new boy at this school, I presume?"

"Yes."

"It is customary here to address a master as 'sir,'" said Mr. Quelch, with a dangerous gleam in his eye.

"I'm sleepy."

"Get out of that bed."

"I want to go to sleep."

"Why are you not in the dormitory with the rest of your Form?" asked Mr. Quelch, as much perplexed as annoyed.

"I don't like them. I'm not going to sleep in the dormitory."

"Eh?" said Mr. Quelch, scarcely able to believe his ears. "What?"

"I wish you'd let me go to sleep," said Dick irritably.

"Boy!"

"Oh, don't bother!"

"Boy, boy, are you mad? Get out of that bed at once!"

"Shan't!"

Mr. Quelch simply staggered.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

Bunter is Given Away

NUGENT minor settled his head more comfortably on the pillow, and closed his eyes. Mr. Quelch stared at him speechlessly for a full minute. He was too astounded to do anything else. Then he woke to action.

With one stride he reached the bed. He grasped the bedclothes with both hands and dragged them off the junior. Then he grasped Dick Nugent by the shoulders, and dragged him off the bed.

Nugent minor rolled on the floor with a yell.

"You rotter!" he roared. "Lemme alone! What d'ye mean?"

"I never came across such a boy in my life before!" exclaimed the Remove-master. "Dress yourself at once, and leave this room!"

"I won't!"

"Go at once to the Second Form dormitory."

"Shan't!"

Mr. Quelch gasped.

"The boy must be mad!" he murmured—"absolutely mad! Nugent minor, do you know who I am? I am a Form-master!"

"I don't care!"

"You have never been to school before, I suppose?" said Mr. Quelch, controlling his temper admirably.

"I've had a tutor," growled Dick Nugent; "and I jolly well won't stay here, either! I don't like the place. I'm going to sleep in that bed!"

"Boy, this is my room!"

"I was told I was to sleep here."

"Oh," exclaimed the Form-master, scenting a junior joke, "you were told so! Who told you?"

"I forget his name—a fat chap in spectacles. He said that the Head had arranged it," said Dick. "Why shouldn't I sleep here if I want to?"

"It is my room. I will speak to Bunter about this in the morning. You must go to the Second Form dormitory at once. Put on your clothes, and I will take you there."

Dick Nugent looked at the Remove-master, and met his grim eye. It occurred to him then that he had better obey.

Slowly and sulkily he put on his clothes, and then Mr. Quelch took up the candle, and led the way to the Second Form dormitory. Dick followed with reluctant steps, and a scowling, sullen face.

Mr. Quelch opened the door of the dormitory.

"This is the place," he said. "I will show you a light to bed. Mind, I shall overlook your outrageous conduct this evening, because you are a foolish and inexperienced new boy, and have evidently been the victim of a trick. But nothing of the sort must occur again. There is your bed. Get in."

And Nugent minor got in.

Mr. Quelch closed the door and returned to his room. Nugent minor grunted, and settled down. A sleepy voice came from Gatty's bed:

"Is that you, young Nugent?"

"Yes!" growled Dick.

"You're jolly late!"

"That's not your business"

Gatty snorted.

Wingate gasped as he saw the black-complexioned stranger. "Wh—who are you? What are you rigged up like this for?" (*See Chapter 16.*)

"You young cad! We were going to put you through it to-night, but I'm too jolly sleepy to get up now. It must be past eleven. What on earth have you been doing all the time?"

No reply.

"Was that Mr. Quelch brought you in?"

"Find out!"

"Have you been licked?"

"Oh, don't bother!"

"Very good!" said Gatty grimly. "I won't bother—I'm too sleepy at this time of night. I'll talk to you in the morning, Nugent minor."

And he went to sleep. Dick Nugent followed his example.

He had been saved, after all, from the ragging prepared for him by the Second Form, though only for the time. On the morrow the fags were likely to make up for lost time.

On the morrow, too, a humorous youth in the Remove was to be called to account. When the Lower Fourth came down that morning Mr. Quelch beckoned to Billy Bunter to follow him to his study. Bunter did so, in some alarm, which increased when he saw the Remove-master take up a cane.

"If—if you please, sir, it wasn't me," stammered Bunter—a little previously, so to speak.

"Bunter, what was not you?"

"I—I mean, sir, I didn't do it."

"You did not do what?"

"I—I——"

"The fact is, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch severely, "I have learned of the trick you played a new boy yesterday. You induced Nugent minor to go to bed in my room, under the impression that the Head had so ordered it."

Billy Bunter's jaw dropped.

"Oh, sir! You see——"

"Did you, or did you not, tell Nugent minor that the Head had arranged for him to sleep in my room?" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"You see, sir——"

"Do you deny it, Bunter?"

"No-o-o-o; not exactly, sir."

"Then you admit it?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Bunter, you must do one or the other. If you tell me a falsehood, Bunter, I shall send you to the Head to be severely punished. Now, did you play this trick on Nugent minor?"

"I—I suppose I did, sir."

"Ha, I thought so! Hold out your hand!"

"If you please, sir——"

"Hold out your hand. I shall give you six cuts. Not so much for a joke upon a new boy, though that is very reprehensible, but for your impertinence in using my room for the carrying out of a joke."

And Bunter had three on each hand, and he went out of the Remove-master's study wrigging like an eel.

"I—I say, you fellows," he gasped, as he joined Harry Wharton & Co., "I'm hurt! That beast Quelch can lay it on! I say,

that young Nugent is a worm—a sneak—a mean rotter!"

Frank Nugent coloured angrily, and took hold of the fat junior by the collar and shook him.

"Ow! Oh, really, Wharton! Chuck it! If you make my glasses fall off, they'll get broken, and you will jolly well have to pay for them!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, is it you, Nugent! Stop it!"

"Then shut up about my minor!" said Frank angrily.

"Well, it's true," said Bunter, jerking himself away. "I've just had three on each hand from Quelch, and it hurts."

"What's that got to do with my minor?"

"He sneaked to Quelch!"

"It's not true!" exclaimed Frank angrily.

"He's a beastly little sneak!" said Bunter. "My hands hurt like anything, and all through that young rotter. I really told him to go and sleep in Quelch's room from kindness of heart, because I know that the Second would rag him."

"What!"

"I dare say Quelch made it warm for him when he found him there, but that wasn't my fault. Besides, he ought not to have sneaked."

"Serve you jolly well right for playing such a trick on my minor," said Frank. "I've a jolly good mind to give you a licking myself!"

Billy Bunter retreated in alarm.

"Here, hold on! I'm hurt!"

"Oh, get away!"

And Nugent looked so angry that Bunter promptly got away. Frank's face was overclouded, and his lips were tightened.

"It's rotten!" said Harry. "I suppose the kid blurted it out, you know. He couldn't have meant to sneak."

Nugent nodded without speaking, and went slowly into the dining-room. His minor was likely to prove a thorn in his side at Greyfriars, that was growing pretty clear. Billy Bunter was in a state of flaming indignation, and he was not likely to make a secret of the delinquency of Nugent minor.

"Hallo, Fatty," said Gatty of the Second, disrespectfully, as he came upon Bunter in the passage, twisting his fat hands. "Been catching it?"

Bunter glared at him through his spectacles.

"Go and eat coke, you young beast! Nice set of sneaks you fags are! Yah!

Nugent minor kicked out furiously at Wingate's shins. The Captain of Greyfriars staggered back in pain, and Dick Nugent broke away, darting off at top speed. (*See Chapter* 16.)

If Nugent minor were in our Form we'd squash him!"

"Eh?" said Gatty quickly. "What's that about Nugent?"

"He's sneaked to Quelch."

"My hat!"

"He gave me away to our Form-master, and I've just had eight on each hand," said Bunter pathetically. "You ought to make it warm for him."

"Well, you're such a liar, you know!" said Gatty.

"Oh, really, Gatty——"

"But I'll jolly well look into it!" said Gatty, wrinkling his brows. "If the young cad's a sneak as well as all the rest of what he is, we'll make the Second Form too hot to hold him!"

Whereat Billy Bunter was comforted.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER
Called to Account

NUGENT major looked out for his minor after morning school. He was very worried about Dick, and he did not quite know what to do with him. Dick's business was to make his peace with the Second Form; but Frank felt that he would not succeed in doing it. He had only succeeded in setting the Second against him. The "sneaking" of which Billy Bunter accused the new boy, would make matters worse, too. Nugent found his young brother in the Close alone, looking decidedly downcast and moody.

Dick glanced at him, not very amiably, as he came up. He was lonely, and glad to see his brother, as a matter of fact, but he was in a bad temper, and full of irritation.

"How are you getting on?" asked Frank, assuming a cheerful manner.

"Rotten!"

"Any more rows?"

"No!"

"I hear that there was trouble last night. I thought you were in your dorm., and it seems you had gone to Quelch's room."

Dick's brow darkened.

"I was sent there by a fat cad playing a trick."

"You told Mr. Quelch who it was?"

"Yes; he asked me."

Nugent looked worried.

"Bunter was caned for it this morning," he said.

"Serve him right!"

"Yes; it serves him right, true enough," assented Nugent, "but it won't do, you know. You oughtn't to have told the Form-master that it was Bunter sent you there."

"Why not?"

"Because it was sneaking."

"He asked me."

"I can't help that. You mustn't give a chap away to a master, whatever he's done; it's called sneaking here, and it makes the fellows wild."

"I don't care whether they're wild or not."

"What I mean is the Second will be more down on you than ever if they know; and Bunter isn't likely to keep it dark."

"I don't care."

"I wish I could make you understand things better, Dick. You won't get on at a school like this till you try to be a little more reasonable."

"I don't want to get on here," said Dick bitterly. "I don't like the place. I don't like the people. I'd rather go home."

"It's rough on you at first; but you'll get to like it."

"I don't think so."

"Anyway, as you've got to stick it, you'd better make up your mind to make the best of it," urged Nugent.

Dick shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

"I'm going to write to mother to be taken away."

"What's the good of worrying her?" demanded Frank hotly. "You're sent here for your good. You don't want to worry mother with your rotten little troubles. You'll find it all right if you only try to be a little reasonable."

Dick's lips set obstinately.

"I'm going to do as I like," he said.

"Oh, very well, please yourself; it's acting like a coward, that's all!"

"That's enough," said Nugent minor, thrusting his hands deep into his pockets.

"Quite enough. I don't want you to stand by me. Let me alone."

Nugent breathed hard.

"I will let you alone," he said. "If you want anything of me after this, you can come and ask for it."

"I shan't come, I promise you."

Nugent walked away. His face was clouded as he joined Harry Wharton & Co. for footer practice. His chums knew what was troubling his mind, but they did not speak on the subject. They could say nothing that would be of any comfort.

After his major had left him, Nugent minor remained alone. He was feeling miserable and depressed, and he could hardly restrain his tears as he thought of home and the comforts there, and contrasted them with his present surroundings. The first days at school are rough enough to many boys, but Dick Nugent's ways made them rougher to him than was usually the case; and his unconciliatory spirit made it probable that matters would become worse instead of better.

He was leaning against the wall, moodily enough, with his hands in his pockets, the shouts from the distant football field jarring on his ears, when he was spotted by Gatty & Co., of the Second.

The crowd of Second fags came up with a rush and surrounded him. Dick drew his hands from his pockets and looked at them in alarm.

"What do you want?" he demanded.

"Here he is!"

"Here's the cad!"

"Sneak!"

"Rat!"

"Look here," exclaimed Dick fiercely, "you let me alone! I don't want to have anything to do with you! I'm jolly sorry I ever came to this rotten school."

"Hark at the cad!"

"Collar him!"

Gatty and Todd, and two or three more seized the new boy. He was hurried and hustled away in spite of his struggles. Whither they were taking him he had no idea, or for what; but he guessed that it was for something decidedly unpleasant to himself.

The Second-formers crowded into the tool-shed with their helpless victim, and jammed him down upon a wooden bench, two or three of them holding him there.

"Now, keep still," said Gatty threateningly.

"Shan't!"

"You cheeky young cub, you want a lesson!" said the chief of the Second Form. "Some of you get a rope."

"Good."

"Let me go!"

"Rats!"

"I tell you I won't stay here!" shouted Dick Nugent, struggling furiously. "You cads! Let me go! I'm not going to stay here."

"Your mistake—you are."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tie his legs to the bench."

And in spite of Dick's resistance, his legs were tied to the wooden bench, and he was a helpless prisoner. He gasped with rage.

"Now, where's that chap, Bunter?" demanded Gatty.

"He's not here."

"I told you to fetch him, Todd."

"He said he couldn't come unless there was something to eat."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The fat porpoise—he—why, here he is!"

The fat, spectacled face of Billy Bunter, of the Remove, looked in at the door of the tool-shed. He blinked at the excited Second-formers.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Come in!"

"But I say, is it a feed? If it is, I'll join you with pleasure. I never get enough dinner, as you know. If you want any shopping done, I'm not too proud to lend a hand, though you're only inky little Second Form fags. I——"

Todd and Myers seized him by the arms and ran him into the shed, and slammed the door. Billy Bunter blinked at them in something like alarm.

"I—I say, you fellows——"

"It's all right," said Gatty, "we only want you as a witness. There's nothing to eat——"

"Then I'm sincerely sorry, but I'm afraid I can't stop——"

"You've got to stop. Hold him!"

"What-ho!"

"Oh! I—say, you fellows, you know——"

"Did you send this young ass to bed in Quelch's room last night?" demanded Gatty, putting on a ferocious frown.

"Certainly not. I—I——"

"You told me you did."

"Well, as a matter of fact, perhaps I—I did."

"You did. Remember, witness, to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; as what you say will be taken down to be used in evidence against—against Nugent minor."

"It was only a jape."

"We're not going to bother about that. You've accused Nugent minor of sneaking. That's what we're getting at."

"Oh, I see!" said Bunter, greatly relieved to find that he could not be accused of anything. "Yes, it was a jolly good jape, and my idea from start to finish. I thought it would be a lark to send him to snooze in old Quelch's bed."

"And he gave you away to Quelch?"

"Yes — told tales like — like — like a beast."

"Do you admit it, Nugent minor?"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Finished with me?" asked Billy Bunter anxiously. "I want to see a chap who was going to lend me sixpence. He might forget it."

"Yes; kick that rotten Remove animal out."

"Ow! Ow! Ow!"

Billy Bunter was promptly kicked out.

"Now, Nugent minor, do you admit your guilt?"

"Rats!"

"Do you own up?"

"More rats."

"Look here, you young cub——"

"Let me go!"

Gatty held up his hand.

"Guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty!" chorused the fags.

"Good! Fasten the door, so that none of those Remove cads can interfere, and we'll sentence him and execute him," said Gatty.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER
Nugent Minor's Punishment.

DICK NUGENT wriggled in the bonds that held him to the wooden bench. But it was in vain that he strove to loosen himself. He was tied too tightly, and he could only sit there and await the judgment of the curious court established by the Second Form.

He was alarmed, but less alarmed than enraged. His face was perfectly white with anger, and his eyes were blazing. He was helpless in the hands of the fags, and they clearly meant to show him no mercy.

"Prisoner," said Gatty, "you are found guilty of crawling to upper form fellows, cheeking your form, and sneaking to a master. You're going to be put through it."

"Rats!"

"Where's the burnt cork?"

"Here you are."

"Good! Hold his hands!"

Myers and Todd hung on to Nugent minor's arms. Gatty, with a chunk of burnt cork, proceeded to blacken the unfortunate prisoner's face all over.

This done—with startling results in the way of changing Nugent minor's appearance—they dragged off his jacket and waistcoat, and substituted a ragged old coat in their place. The old coat was one worn by Gosling, the porter, when he was doing rough work in the wood shed. It was about a dozen sizes larger than was necessary for Dick Nugent, and full of holes and smothered with dirt and grease.

Dick's eyes burned through the black on his face.

"You beasts!" he gasped. "You cowards!"

Gatty laughed.

"Think that will do, you kids?"

"Well, he looks very pretty."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nugent minor, are you ready to go down on your knees and beg the pardon of the Second Form for being a rotten outsider and a tale-bearer."

"Rats!"

"Very good. Open the door and yank him out. He's going round the buildings in a procession, to show the School

A struggling form was projected through the doorway of Wingate's study—it was Nugent minor. The doorway was crammed with triumphant fags, and Wingate addressed them quietly. "Thank you! You can clear out!" he said. Then he turned to the boy on the floor. "I want to speak to you, kid," and Wingate's tone was not unkindly. (*See Chapter* 17.)

how the Second Form deals with sneaks."

"Hear, hear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Dick gasped with rage at the thought of being marched round the Close with a blackened face, wearing Gosling's old coat. But there was no help for it. He had put the backs up of the Second Form, and they were merciless.

The shed door was opened, and Dick was cast loose from the rope, and dragged out into the open air.

The winter sunlight was falling upon the close, and nearly everybody was out of doors.

The Second Form was on the spot almost to a man—or, rather, to a boy—and they crowded round Dick with shouts and gusts of laughter.

"This way!" shouted Gatty.

"March!"

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

Dick Nugent struggled furiously. The perspiration ran down his face, making streaks in the black of the burnt cork.

But many hands grasped him, and he was hoisted upon the shoulders of Gatty and Todd, and marched forward, his wrists and ankles held by strong hands.

A yell of laughter greeted his appearance on all sides.

" My hat ! " gasped Temple, of the Upper Fourth. " Who—what is that ? "

" Looks like a nigger," remarked Fry.

" Or a Christy minstrel."

" Oh, rather ! " said Dabney.

" My word ! " shrieked Tom Brown. " It's young Nugent ! "

" Nugent minor ! Ha, ha, ha ! "

One of the Second-formers had pinned a card across the breast of the old coat Dick Nugent was wearing. It bore in large letters the single word " SNEAK ! "

It was sufficient explanation to the onlookers as to what his punishment was due.

" No business of ours," remarked Temple. " And if he's been sneaking, serve him jolly well right ! "

" Oh, rather ! "

But Tom Brown thought differently. He had not taken a liking to Dick by any means. But he was thinking of Nugent, with whom he was very chummy. He ran off towards the footer-field to apprise the chums of the Remove of what was going on.

The Second Form procession, avoiding the masters' windows, marched on, and as it happened, they skirted the football ground, and arrived there soon after the New Zealand junior.

Tom Brown ran on the field, where Harry Wharton and Co. were practising passing and kicking at goal.

" Hallo, hallo, hallo ! " exclaimed Bob Cherry. " What's the row ? "

" Young Nugent—the Second are ragging him ! " exclaimed Brown breathlessly. " I came to tell you, Frank ! "

Frank Nugent looked worried.

" What are they doing to him ? "

" Look—there they come ! "

The footballers looked at the procession as it came swarming towards them.

Nugent's eyes seemed almost to start from his head as he saw the figure with the blackened face, and in the absurd coat, borne on high before the uproarious procession.

" Great Scott ! " gasped Harry Wharton. " That's not Dick Nugent, surely ! "

" Yes, it is ! "

" My hat ! "

" The hatfulness it terrific ! "

Nugent cast an appealing glance at his chums.

" Stand by me, chaps ! " he exclaimed. " I know Dick has brought all this on himself ; by I can't stand by and see it. I'm going to stop them."

" Right you are, Franky. Come on."

" The readyfulness of our esteemed selves is terrific to back up our worthy chum."

And the Removites, leaving their footer, rushed towards the procession, in football-shorts, just as they were. Tom Brown, Linley and several others of the Lower Fourth joined them, always ready to back up Harry Wharton.

" Put that kid down ! " roared Nugent.

There was a yell of defiance from the Second Form, strong in numbers.

" Rats ! "

" Go home ! "

" He's a sneak ! "

" Go and eat coke ! "

And the procession swayed on.

" Come on ! " said Nugent between his teeth.

And the Removites rushed to the attack.

The procession was broken up at the first rush.

It was not particularly agreeable to Nugent minor, however ; for, as the fellows who were carrying him staggered and reeled, he came to the ground with an unpleasant bump.

Then the swaying and struggling juniors trampled over him, and he was rolled over and over, and a dozen or more fellows sprawled across him.

The uproar was, as Hurree Singh would have said, terrific.

The Second Form, though they had the advantage of numbers, had no real chance against the fighting men of the Remove ; and after a brief scramble they were scattered to

right and left—all who were not scrambling upon the ground.

But the tussle was hardly over when Wingate, of the Sixth, came up, with a face pink with anger, and cuffing right and left.

"What do you mean by making this row?" he roared.

"Ow! Oh!"

"Chuck it!"

"Yah!"

Removites and Second Formers promptly scattered. Nugent minor sat up, dazed and bewildered. He was so confused that he hardly knew what was happening.

Wingate uttered a gasp as he saw the black-complexioned stranger.

"Wh-wh-who are you?" he gasped.

Nugent minor scrambled to his feet.

"Who—who are you? What does this mean? What are you rigged up like this for?" exclaimed Wingate, grasping the new boy by the shoulder.

Nugent minor struggled savagely.

"Let me go!"

"You are Nugent minor!"

"Yes! Leggo!"

"Then what do you mean by this?"

"Leggo!" yelled Nugent minor furiously.

"Are you mad?" exclaimed Wingate angrily. "Do you know whom I am?"

"I don't care who you are! Let me alone."

Wingate's grip tightened. His face was very angry now.

Dick Nugent kicked and fought and yelled, but he was helpless in the grasp of the senior. Wingate had said that it should be a good thrashing, and he made it so. (*See Chapter* 17.)

"You will learn to care who I am in time, I think, if you're not kicked out of Greyfriars too soon," he said quietly. "I am the captain of the school."

"Let go!"

"You young fool, I——"

Nugent minor kicked out furiously.

"Oh!" gasped Wingate.

He staggered back in pain. The savage kick had taken effect upon his shin, and for the moment he was helpless, and he released the junior.

Dick Nugent took advantage of the opportunity.

He darted away at top speed.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER
Licked!

WINGATE compressed his lips hard. He was in great pain. The kick had been a hard one in a tender place. His face went quite pale for a moment.

But he was as much amazed as hurt. He had come in contact with all sorts and conditions of boys at Greyfrairs, but no one just like Nugent minor before. For a Second Form fag to kick the captain of the school! Wingate could hardly believe it, though his leg was aching with pain.

The Removites had witnessed the scene from a distance, and Frank Nugent's face was a study.

"He's done it now!" he said.

And the Nabob of Bhanipur murmured that the donefulness was terrible.

"Come back, Nugent minor!" shouted Wingate.

But the junior did not heed.

Wingate limped after him for a few paces, and then stopped, and called to the fags, who were looking on from a distance with scared expressions.

"Fetch that young fool back!" he said. "Bring him to my study!"

"Yes, Wingate!"

"Right-ho!"

"We'll get him!"

So chorused the fags, eagerly enough.

Wingate, the rugged but kind-hearted captain of Greyfriars, was the idol of the Lower Forms. The fags felt more incensed against Nugent minor for his treatment of Wingate than for anything else.

They entered into the chase with zest.

"Your minor is in for it this time," Gatty leered to Nugent as he passed him.

Frank made no reply, only looking worried. But Bob Cherry put out a foot, over which Gatty promptly tumbled, rolling on the ground.

He jumped up in a fury; but, seeing Bob Cherry's fists doubled, he thought it more prudent to dash on after the other fags.

Wingate signed to Nugent to come to him; and the Removite, with a deeply overcast face, obeyed. The captain of Greyfriars looked at him curiously.

"You seem to have a queer fish for a minor, Nugent," said Wingate.

Nugent nodded gloomily.

"I hope you won't be hard on him, Wingate," he said. "He's not a bad sort really. He can't understand that he's not at home, that's all. This sort of place is new to him. He had a tutor at home, and did what he liked."

"Yes, I guessed as much. But we can't have fags kicking the shins of the head of the Sixth," said Wingate grimly.

"Of course, he ought to be licked."

"And he will be. You ought to take him in hand a little, Nugent, and try to show him the ropes. I found him smoking in Bulstrode's study yesterday. It seems to me that he wants a lot of looking after, and, as his major, you ought to do it."

"I—I've tried——"

"He's in trouble with the rest of his Form, too. They haven't treated a new kid in this outrageous way for nothing."

"I—I know they haven't."

"What has he done?"

"He—he let out to Mr. Quelch the name of a chap who played a trick on him. He didn't mean to sneak, of course," said Nugent hastily.

Wingate's brow contracted.

"Well, it was very unfortunate, that's all," he said. "You'd better keep an eye on him; or Greyfriars will be too hot to hold him soon."

And Wingate went into the House.

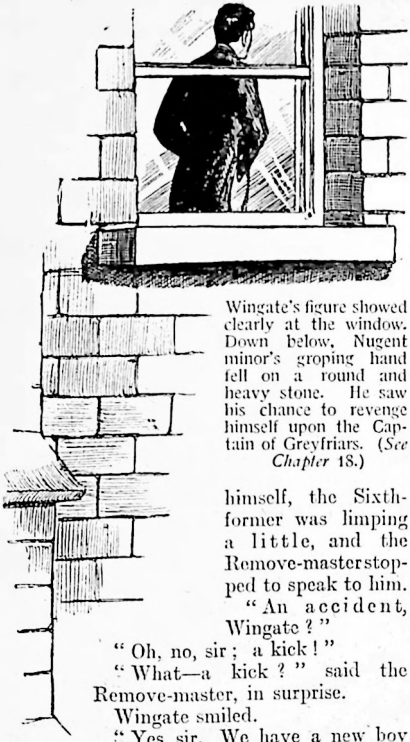
Meanwhile, the fags were hunting down Nugent minor with a great deal of relish. Not knowing the ground well, he had little chance of escaping, even for a time. He was soon cornered, and the fags surrounded him, and dragged him back towards the School House, vainly struggling.

This time the Remove chums did not interfere.

It was impossible to "kick" against the authority of Wingate, the captain of the school.

Nugent minor had to face the music.

Meanwhile, Wingate had met Mr. Quelch as he entered the School House. In spite of



Wingate's figure showed clearly at the window. Down below, Nugent minor's groping hand fell on a round and heavy stone. He saw his chance to revenge himself upon the Captain of Greyfriars. (*See Chapter* 18.)

himself, the Sixth-former was limping a little, and the Remove-master stopped to speak to him.

"An accident, Wingate?"

"Oh, no, sir; a kick!"

"What—a kick?" said the Remove-master, in surprise.

Wingate smiled.

"Yes, sir. We have a new boy here who is something new in that line. He does not know that the head of the Sixth must not have his shins kicked."

"Dear me! Is it possible? I suppose you are alluding to Nugent minor?"

"Yes; the new kid in the Second."

"A most peculiar boy," said Mr. Quelch. "He slept in my room last night, and caused me a great deal of trouble in getting rid of him." The Remove-master coloured at the recollection of the ridiculous burglar alarm—an alarm that seemed more ridiculous than ever in the broad daylight now. "I hope, Wingate, that you will make it clear to him that such outrageous insubordination cannot be allowed."

"Yes, sir."

Wingate went into his study, where he rubbed the bruise on his leg—and a big bruise it was, too.

He was still so engaged when a crowd of fags came tramping along the passage, with a struggling prisoner in their midst.

Gatty threw open the door of the study, and put an untidy head and red, triumphant face into the room.

"Got him!" he ejaculated.

"Here he is!"

"Here's the cad!"

"Shove him in!"

A struggling form was projected through the doorway.

Nugent minor staggered in, and fell upon his hands and knees on the carpet, gasping for breath. The doorway was crammed with triumphant fags, many of whom had smears of black upon their faces from Dick Nugent's burnt-cork complexion.

"Thank you!" said Wingate quietly. "You can clear out."

Rather reluctantly Gatty & Co withdrew. They wanted to see the interview. They crowded back into the passage, but Gatty kept the door an inch ajar, his eye to the aperture.

"Close the door!" rapped out Wingate.

Gatty reluctantly obeyed.

Nugent minor scrambled to his feet. He looked a pitiable object. His blackened face, and the old ragged coat reaching below his knees, made him look utterly absurd. Wingate fixed his eyes upon him.

"I want to speak to you, kid," he said, not unkindly. "You are on the worst of terms with your Form. You have kicked my shins; but you don't understand yet what that might mean to you if I were hard. You seem to be a wilful and obstinate young rascal, and amenable to only one kind of persuasion—a licking. I'm going to give you a licking, not on account of this big bruise, but for your own good."

Dick eyed him warily and sullenly.

"I won't be licked," he said.

"Your opinion won't be asked," said Wingate, taking up a cane. "Hold out your hand."

Dick put his hands behind him.

"Will you obey me, Nugent minor?"

"No!"

Wingate breathed hard through his nose.

"Very well," he said. "You only make it harder for yourself. You will have the licking all the same in a more painful way."

He stepped towards the junior to take him by the collar. Dick Nugent promptly dodged round the table.

"Come here!"

"Shan't!"

Wingate paused. It was extremely undignified in a big Sixth-former, captain of the school, too, to chase a nimble fag round a table. Wingate's temper was rising again. He had been very patient with Nugent minor, and it was not surprising that his patience was failing at last.

"Nugent minor, come here."

"I won't be licked."

"I give you one more chance. If you put me to the trouble of catching you, I'll make this a licking that you won't get over for weeks."

Nugent minor made no reply, but he stood warily watching. It was evidently not his intention to give in.

"Very well," said Wingate. "You will have only yourself to thank for what you get."

"I won't be licked. I don't want to stay at this school," said Dick. "I'm going to write to my people to take me away. I hate the place, and everybody in it."

"Will you come here?"

"No!"

Wingate said no more. He ran round the table after the fag. Dick Nugent dodged again, and Wingate, reaching across to seize him, bumped against the table and sent it flying.

There was a crash as a heap of books and paper, accompanied by an inkpot, went to the floor. The table rocked wildly.

But Wingate's grasp was upon the fag now.

Dick Nugent struggled desperately. He kicked and fought and yelled, while Wingate fastened a strong grip upon his collar, and lashed him with the cane.

Wingate laid it on well, and every blow brought a fresh yell from Nugent minor, who was helpless in the powerful grasp of the senior.

Wingate had said that it should be a good thrashing, and he made it so.

He gave Nugent minor a dozen powerful lashes across the back, and then he jerked him to the door of the study, and opened it.

"I hope that will be a lesson to you," he said. "You will get it worse next time."

And he tossed the yelling fag out into the passage and closed the door.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER
Struck Down

DICK NUGENT staggered to his feet.

He was hurt—very much hurt—and the Second Form fags, who had intended to give him a further ragging when he emerged from the captain's study, felt that he had had enough. He stood for some minutes leaning against the wall, his whole form shaken with dry gasping. They looked at him, and let him alone.

"Come on," said Todd. "The poor beggar's had enough this time."

"Right-ho!" said Gatty.

And the Second Formers streamed away.

Nugent minor was left alone in the passage, quivering from head to foot, as much with passion as with pain, and trying hard to keep back the tears.

He glanced up savagely at the sound of a footstep.

It was his major.

"I'm sorry for this, Dick," said Frank Nugent softly. "It's awfully rough. Come along, old fellow, and——"

"Let me alone."

"Dick!"

"Can't you leave me alone?"

Nugent bit his lip.

"Oh, very well," he said. And he walked away. Dick Nugent looked after him with sullen, glowering eyes.

The fag's heart was burning with hatred and malice and all uncharitableness. Towards Wingate he felt a furious hatred.

All his thoughts were directed towards revenge upon the senior who had given him that severe, but well-deserved thrashing.

He went slowly down the passage, and the

grins and chuckles which greeted his appearance reminded him of the absurd figure he was cutting.

He tore off the old coat, and threw it upon the floor, and hurried away to a bath-room to get the burnt cork washed off his face.

In the streaming hot-water he rubbed and rubbed, but it was long before the black was off his face, and then some traces of it still lingered round his ears.

When he had finished, and looked into the glass, he saw a face dark and sullen, with the eyes glinting, the brows contracted.

He was aching all over from the thrashing and the rough handling he had received from the Second Form fags.

He left the bath-room, and went out into the Close; and to his relief the fags took no further notice of him.

They were not done with him yet, but they realised that it would be only decent to let him alone after the licking he had had in Wingate's study. If they had known what was working in his mind, however, probably they would have acted differently. The thrashing Wingate had given him had been far from reducing Nugent minor to a state of subordination.

He glanced up at Wingate's window as he went into the Close. The captain of the school stood at the window, which was open, watching some football practice, his window commanding a view of the football field.

Nugent minor's eyes glittered.

His eyes fell upon a big round heavy stone, and he glanced from it to Wingate, and from Wingate back to the stone again.

He stooped, and his fingers closed convulsively on the stone.

The spoiled, passionate boy was not given to calculating the consequence of his actions. At home, he had done what he liked and generally his elders had taken great trouble to placate him if he were annoyed. Now he was thinking only of his revenge upon the captain of Greyfriars.

He stood under the leafless elms, looking up at Wingate, who was quite unconscious of the fag below his window, stone in hand.

Harry Wharton, who had come off the football field, and was walking towards the House, caught sight of Nugent minor, saw the stone in his hand and the look on his face, and guessed his intention. He gave a shout of warning.

"Look out, Wingate!"

Wingate started, and looked downward. At the same moment Nugent minor's hand swept through the air, and the stone flew.

Wingate gave a sharp cry, and disappeared into the room.

"Good heavens!" cried Wharton. "You mad young fool!"

He ran into the house, and up to Wingate's study. The captain of Greyfriars had staggered away from the window, and sunk into a chair. There was a dazed look on his face. A dark, bruised mark was forming on his temple.

"Wingate! You're hurt!"

"I—I—yes!" stammered the senior,

Loder loosened Wingate's collar and tie; Wharton bathed his face. Other fellows came crowding into the study; then a deep voice sounded from the door. "What is the matter here?" It was the Head! (*See Chapter* 18.)

rubbing his forehead with his hand. "I—I feel stunned. Did that young fool throw a stone at me?"

Wharton did not reply.

But no reply was needed; the stone was lying on the floor, where it had crashed down after striking Wingate. The captain of Greyfriars essayed to rise from his chair, but sank back again. The concussion had almost stunned him, and the effort to rise made his senses whirl.

"I—I—oh!"

Wingate lay limp in the chair.

Wharton's face went white. He dashed to the washstand in the alcove at the foot of the bed, and seized the water-jug. He dashed cold water into the captain's face. Wingate gave a shuddering breath, but did not open his eyes.

"What on earth's the matter?" exclaimed Loder, looking in at the open door. "What are you doing, Wharton?"

"Wingate's been hurt."

"Phew! Who did that?"

"Somebody threw a stone."

"Great Scott!"

Loder loosened Wingate's collar and tie. Wharton bathed his face as he lay limp in the arm-chair. Other fellows came crowding into the study, alarmed and curious. The prefect waved them back.

"Don't crowd round," he said. "He wants air. Some mad idiot has been throwing stones from the Close, and he's stunned."

"My hat!" said Loder. "I shouldn't care to be the chap who did it."

"Hardly."

"Who was it, Wharton?"

"I think Wingate knows," said Harry.

"What is the matter here?" said a deep voice at the door.

The fellows turned round in surprise and some dismay. A form in cap and gown stood there. A pair of searching eyes looked into the study.

"The Head!"

Dr. Locke looked into the room.

"What has happened?"

"Wingate's hurt, sir," said Loder respectfully.

"Bless my soul!" The Head came into the study, the seniors, respectfully making way for him, and stood looking down in horror at the pale face of the captain of the school, with the big bruise on the temple. "Who—what has done this?"

"It was a stone from the Close, sir."

The Head glanced at the big round stone on the floor.

"Who threw it?"

"Wharton says Wingate knows, sir."

"He's coming to," said Harry quietly.

Wingate's eyes opened. He blinked wildly about him, and tried to sit upright. Harry gently detained him.

"Don't try to get up," he whispered. "Stay as you are. You'll feel better."

"The young rascal!" muttered Wingate faintly. "He threw it because I licked him, you know. He must be mad!"

"Who was it, Wingate?" said Loder.

"The new kid in the Second—Nugent minor."

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

Wingate started. He had not observed the doctor at his side. He glanced round at the Head with startled eyes.

"Some of you find Nugent minor, and bring him to my study, please," said the Head. "I am sorry to see you like this Wingate. Such an outrage is unprecedented—unheard of. There shall be no chance of its repetition at Greyfriars. The boy shall leave the school this afternoon.

And the Head strode from the room.

Loder and another Sixth-former went to look for Nugent minor. Wharton brought a towel, and Wingate mopped his face dry. He was very pale, and felt sick and dazed.

"Thank you, Wharton," he said, with a faint smile. "I feel better now. You can cut. Tell Nugent I'm sorry his brother's going to be kicked out; but it can't be helped. We couldn't allow this sort of thing at Greyfriars."

Harry nodded sadly.

"I suppose not, Wingate. It will be rough on old Nugent."

"Tell him I'm sorry. But the kid will be better away from the school; after the beginning he's made here, he would have an uphill time of it."

Harry nodded, and left the study.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER
Expelled !

DR. LOCKE sat, with a hard, stern brow, waiting for the delinquent to be brought before him. It was seldom that the Head was angry; but he was angry now, and very angry, indeed. The assault on the captain of the school had been too outrageous for pardon. It was not as if Wingate had been of a bullying disposition, like Loder, for instance. The captain of Greyfriars was rugged enough in some ways, and he never minced his words, but he had a heart of gold. The fags worshipped Wingate; he was even more popular with the "Babes" of the First and Second Forms than with the seniors.

Nugent minor's act would set the whole of Greyfriars against him, from the prefects to the youngest fag. And it had set the Head against him, too. Dr. Locke's procedure was to be short and sharp.

He intended to send a telegram to Nugent minor's parents, followed by a letter of explanation, which, however, would be preceded by the arrival of the boy himself at home.

Nugent minor was to shake the dust of Greyfriars from his feet that afternoon, and take the next train home.

Upon that the Head had already resolved. It remained only to pass the sentence upon the rebellious fag.

A tap at the door interrupted the Head's grim reverie.

"Come in!" he said quietly.

Carne and Loder entered, bringing in Dick Nugent between them.

The boy was not resisting. In the first place resistance would have been useless and painful to himself. At the first sign of it, Carne and Loder had twisted his arms till he screamed with pain. He found them very different from Wingate. And after that sharp lesson, he had come quietly. But, besides that, Dick was a little scared now. Even his passionate and wilful temper was not proof against the contempt and condemnation he saw in every face.

He realised that he had gone too far, and he was inwardly decidedly uneasy.

His brow was sullen as he was brought in, and stood face to face with the doctor, who had risen to his feet.

Dr. Locke looked at the boy searchingly.

The lad looked handsome enough, more handsome, perhaps, because of the flush in his cheeks and the sparkle in his eyes. But all his good looks were marred by the sullen frown on his face.

There was regret in the doctor's face for a moment. The lad might have been so very different, had his training been different.

But it was no time to think of that now.

"Nugent minor," said the Head quietly—that quiet voice of his that was more impressive than the loudest tones from anyone else—"I have only a few words to say to you. Loder and Carne, you may go!"

"Yes, sir."

The two seniors left the study. Dick Nugent cast a glance towards the door, but he did not stir. He was not held, but there was something in the Head's stern glance that chained him to the floor.

"Nugent minor, I hope you realise the seriousness of what you have done? You hurled a heavy stone at Wingate——"

"He licked me!"

"It was a cowardly and cruel act of revenge, even if your previous punishment had been undeserved," said the Head, raising his voice little. "I am assured, however, that what punishment Wingate may have meted out to you, it was fully deserved."

Dick was sullenly silent.

"Your action will be viewed with abhorrence by every boy at Greyfriars," said Dr. Locke. "It will probably be for your own comfort to leave the school. Because you are so young, and because I can guess that you have not had certain advantages of training which fall to other boys, I shall not flog you before you go!"

Nugent minor started.

"Before I go!" he faltered.

"Certainly! You are expelled from Greyfriars!"

Dick started again. He had wanted to leave the school—passionately desired to be sent home, to quit the place, and never see it again.

But now that his wish was granted——

It seemed different somehow. It was one thing to be taken away at his own request, another to be turned out in disgrace.

There were the people at home to be faced. What was he to say to them ? If he had written to his mother, and she had persuaded his father to take him away, that would have been all right.

But now he would have to admit that he was kicked out—that he was sent home because he was not considered fit to remain at the school. The thought made the colour burn in his cheeks.

He fancied he could already see the pitying and contemptuous looks, and hear the remarks of those who had said always that he was a spoiled boy, and would never get on at a public school.

The Head watched the boy's face, which was like a mirror to the thoughts that thronged within.

"Have you anything to say, Nugent minor ? " he said at last.

"I—I——"

The boy broke off. What could he say ? He would not beg for mercy, that was certain. He knew, too, that if he did, he would beg in vain.

There was no respite for him.

Anything he could say would not alter what he had done, and he knew that there was no rescinding of his sentence. He relapsed into silence.

"I am sorry for this, Nugent minor," said the Head. "A term or two at a public school would do you more good than you can imagine —if you had not made it impossible for you to remain at Greyfriars. You have been guilty of a cruel, cowardly act. I hope that, on reflection, you will be sorry for what you have done."

Dick was silent.

"Have you anything to say ? "

"I—I'm sorry I threw the stone," said Nugent minor, with an effort. "I—I didn't mean to hurt him so much."

"You do not deny throwing it ? "

"No, sir."

"Why did you do it ? "

"Because he licked me."

"You know that the captain of the school has authority to punish the younger boys ? "

"I—I suppose so."

'Then I am to conclude that you might have acted in the same way if it had been a master who had punished you ! " exclaimed the Head.

Nugent minor was silent.

"You are certainly not fit to be at this school," said Dr. Locke. "I am only sorry, for your own sake, that I do not think that a flogging would meet the case. You will go at once and pack your box, and Gosling will take you to the station for the three o'clock train. I shall wire to your parents, and write a letter of full explanation. Your father will understand that I cannot have the responsibility of a boy of your nature upon my hands."

Dick Nugent shivered a little.

His mother, he knew, would greet him on his return with boundless confidence and affection, but his father——

It was his father who had insisted upon his going to Greyfriars, because his mother was spoiling him. What would he say when the boy returned on only the second day—in deep disgrace ?

But it was too late to think of that now.

"I repeat that I am sorry, Nugent minor," said Dr. Locke. "You may go up now and pack your box ! "

"Yes, sir," said the junior heavily.

And he left the Head's study.

Dr. Locke remained with a troubled look upon his face.

"There is good in that lad, with proper training," he murmured to himself; "but he has come to Greyfriars too late. In any case, I cannot pardon him now; he must leave the school. I only hope he will have better fortune elsewhere."

Dick Nugent went slowly upstairs to the Second Form dormitory to pack his box. He opened the box, and then sat down on the edge of it to think, and forgot all about packing. His thoughts were gloomy enough.

After all, he might have had a good time at Greyfriars—if he had started there in a different spirit. How was it that everybody and everything had gone against him ? Was it all his own fault ?

Home in disgrace !

"Dick ! "

Frank Nugent entered the dormitory.

Dick looked up at him with a dull, dogged expression. Frank came over quickly towards him, with an anxious face.

"What are you doing, Dick?"

"Packing."

"What for?"

"I'm leaving the school!"

Nugent's face lengthened with dismay.

"You don't mean to say you're expelled, Dick?"

Nugent minor shook himself irritably.

"Well, I am," he said. "There's no help for it now. I biffed Wingate with a stone, and he seems to be hurt more than I intended. It can't be helped."

"It was a beastly cowardly thing to do, Dick!"

The boy clenched his fists.

"What's that?"

"It was cowardly and rotten," said Frank, without mincing his words now. "Wingate is one of the best fellows breathing. If he had been one of the worst, stone-throwing is a dirty, cowardly trick, anyway! Do you know what I'd do if you weren't punished enough already? I'd give you such a licking that you wouldn't be able to stand!"

Nugent minor stared at his brother, too amazed to be angry. Frank had never to his recollection taken that tone with him before.

"But it's no good talking about that!" said Nugent. "You're expelled, and that's an end of it! I hope you're satisfied now. You'll worry dad, and make mother miserable. All because you had to act like a silly kid of eight instead of a fellow of twelve, who ought to have had more sense."

"Oh, pile it on!" said Dick bitterly. "I admit I've been rather a fool! But everybody has been against me from the start"

"I wasn't against you, but you wouldn't let me help you. The fags didn't want to be against you. Why should they? You put their backs up at the beginning, and wouldn't try to make your peace, though you could have done it. Did you think the fellows at a school like this were going to pet and coax you as mother and Aunt Ada do at home?"

"Because you are so young, I shall not flog you before you go," said the Head. Nugent minor started "Before I go?" he faltered. "Certainly! You are expelled from Greyfriars!" came the stern answer. (*See Chapter* 19.)

said Nugent hotly. "You must be a fool!"

Dick reddened.

"Well, it's no good jawing me now!" he said. "I dare say I'd act differently if I had it over again. Now I'm expelled!"

"It's rough—rotten rough!"

"I can stand it!"

"I wasn't thinking of you," said Frank savagely; "I was thinking of mother!"

"Oh!"

"She thinks a lot of you—why, I'm blessed if I can make out! It will be a blow to her to

have you kicked out of school on the second day. I—I wonder if it could be stopped ? "

" The Head's as hard as a rock ! "

" Yes ; but Wingate. It's worth trying, though it seems an awful cheek to think of speaking to him, but I'll try ! "

Before Dick could speak again, Nugent hurried from the dormitory.

CHAPTER TWENTY
Good for Evil

WINGATE was sitting in his study, a cushion behind his head, his face very pale, and with an expression of pain upon it. His head was aching terribly, and he was fit for nothing, either work or play. To a fellow who never passed an hour indoors if he could help it the inaction alone was torment, and he could not even read now. He grunted as a tap came at his door, and frowned as Nugent of the Remove entered.

Frank Nugent was looking very red and uncomfortable, but he had resolved to go through with the thing. After all, it could do little harm, if it did little good.

Wingate fixed his eyes on him.

" I don't want to be disturbed," he said grimly.

" I'm sorry, Wingate."

" All right—get out ! "

Nugent hesitated, with his hand on the door.

" Won't—won't you let me speak to you for a minute ? " he said.

" Oh, come in, and get on, then ! "

Nugent closed the door.

" It's about my minor."

" I guessed as much."

" The Head has expelled him."

" Good ! "

" He's leaving Greyfriars this afternoon."

" All the better for Greyfriars ! "

" I—I dare say it is, Wingate. But it's rough on his people at home—my people. But—but I suppose I was a cheeky ass to come here. I'll go."

And the boy, with a miserable face, turned to the door again.

Wingate's expression changed.

" Stay here ! " he said.

Nugent turned back.

" Now, what did you come here to say ? " asked the captain of Greyfriars. " It won't do any harm to say it, at all events."

" It's an awful cheek, under the circumstances——"

" Oh, get on ! "

" It's about young Dick—my minor. I—I I—I was going to ask you if—if you'd overlook it," stammered Nugent. " I know it's an awful cheek. I know what he's done—he ought to be skinned for it. I think I should like him to have a flogging. But—but—— Of course, I suppose it doesn't matter to you, but my mother——"

Wingate smiled slightly.

" But perhaps it does matter to me," he said. " Go on."

" It will come very rough on the mater if he goes home, that's all," said Frank. " You see, he's been spoiled——"

" Yes, that's pretty clear."

" Mother is awfully fond of him, but he's a fearful worry to her all the time, all the same ; and he puts the dad into bad tempers, too," said Frank. " I know jolly well that they'll be happier at home if Dick is at Greyfriars ; but, besides that, they take a lot of pride in him, and if he's sent home in disgrace—— They—they'd feel it less if I were expelled."

Wingate nodded.

" If you could lick him instead, Wingate, and let him off——"

" But the Head has sentenced the young fool ! "

" Yes, I know, but—but if you were to speak to the Head——"

Nugent's voice trailed away. It dawned upon him what a colossal nerve he was displaying in asking this of Wingate. If the captain of Greyfriars had risen and bundled him neck and crop out of the study Nugent would not have been surprised or offended. He felt that he deserved it for his cheek.

But Wingate did not do anything of the sort.

He sat quite still and silent for a full minute, looking at Nugent with a curious expression on his face. Then he rose to his feet.

The motion brought a throb of pain through

his head, and he had to grasp the table for support, and his face went paler for a moment.

"Oh, I'm a brute to disturb you now," said Nugent remorsefully, "and it's all that young cad's fault; but in an hour it will be too late."

"I'll see what I can do."

"Oh, Wingate!"

"I'll go to the Head. Wait here."

Nugent burst into incoherent thanks, but Wingate did not stay to listen to them. With slow and uncertain steps the captain of Greyfriars made his way to the doctor's study.

Dr. Locke was still there. He had laid down his pen, and was thinking, with a very pensive expression on his face. Wingate tapped and entered, and the Head looked at him in surprise.

"Wingate! You ought not to be getting about yet. I wish you would lie down for the afternoon."

"Yes, sir. But I wanted to speak to you on an important subject."

"Go on. Take a chair."

"It's about Nugent minor, sir," said Wingate, sitting down. "As I am the injured party, sir, you may think I have a right to speak."

"Go on."

"Could you possibly let him off, sir?"

The Head started.

"Let him off, Wingate—after what he has done?"

Dick looked up at Frank, a dull, dogged expression on his features. "I'm packing," he said. "I'm leaving the school!" Nugent's face lengthened with dismay. (*See Chapter* 19.)

"I don't mean to let him off entirely," said Wingate hastily. "I mean, let him off being expelled. Of course, he ought to be flogged."

The doctor's face was very serious.

"It is generous of you to intercede for him like this, Wingate, when you have suffered such a brutal assault at his hands. If you think that the boy may become in time amenable to discipline——"

"I think he might have another chance, sir, if you are agreeable. I shouldn't like any kid to be expelled on my account, and—and there's his brother, who's one of the best lads in the Remove, and his people, too. If he doesn't amend in a week or so, sir, he could leave Greyfriars."

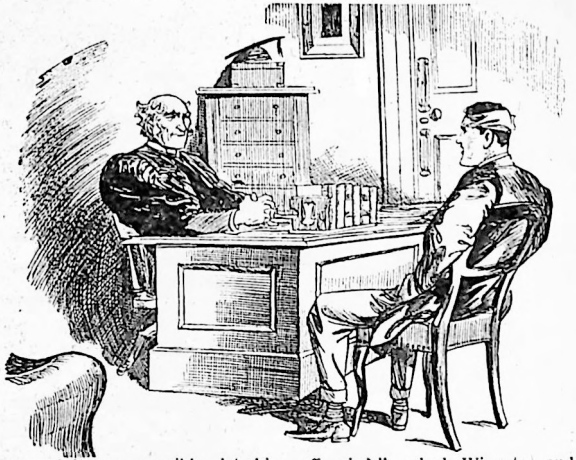
"Ah, yes, we might arrange that—a term of probation," said the Head slowly. "I will say, Wingate, that I am glad you have spoken like this. I could not do otherwise than as I have done, yet I shall not be sorry to give the boy another chance. I think his faults are rather due to his home training than to any inherent evil in his nature."

"Then you will let him stay, sir?"

"For the present, yes, and we will watch the result. You will let me know what you think of the boy in a week's time."

"Thank you very much, sir!"

"Not at all. It is Nugent minor who should thank you; and sooner or later, I



"Couldn't you possibly let him off, sir?" asked Wingate, and the Head started. "Let Nugent minor off, Wingate—after what he has done!" (*See Chapter* 20.)

hope, he will come to see and feel how much he owes you."

And the captain of Greyfriars quitted the Head's study.

He returned to his room, where Nugent was waiting with a clouded face and a heavy heart.

The junior looked up eagerly.

Wingate smiled as he clapped him on the shoulder.

"It's all right, my lad!"

Nugent drew a deep breath.

"Wingate, have you got him off?"

"Yes."

"He's to stay at Greyfriars?"

"Yes, on probation. According to how he shapes his conduct for the next week or two, so the Head will decide. You had better let him know it, and warn him to mind his p.'s and q.'s."

"Wingate, you are awfully good! I—I don't know how to thank you!" stammered Nugent.

Wingate laughed.

"Don't try! Get out now—my head aches."

And Nugent got out.

THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER
A New Start

"EXPELLED!" said Gatty. "Well, you jolly well deserve it, I must say! If you hadn't been expelled we'd have ragged you bald-headed!"

"What-ho!" said Todd.

"You'd learn that you couldn't biff old Wingate on the napper with things," said Myers. "Why, you young cad, you ought to be ashamed of yourself! I've a jolly good mind to give you a licking now myself!"

"Oh, let him alone," said Todd. "He'll get enough."

"Yes, that's so."

Dick Nugent made no reply to the remarks of the crowd of Second Form fellows in the dormitory.

He went on packing his box with a heavy heart.

The fags had tracked him to the Second Form dormitory with the intention of renewing their ragging, but they had learned that he was expelled, and that news stopped them. It was not "cricket" to rag a fellow under sentence of expulsion.

Nugent major came into the dormitory, pushing his way through the fags. Gatty & Co. walked away, leaving the brothers alone.

Dick looked up. There were tears in his eyes now. The unaffected satisfaction of the Second Form at the prospect of getting rid of him had wounded him deeply. It was not pleasant to be told that his departure was as good as a whole holiday to the Form he belonged to.

"It's all right, kid!" said Frank abruptly. "Wingate has got you off!"

"Wingate?"

"Yes. He interceded with the Head."

Nugent minor stood motionless.

"Wingate?" he repeated again. "After the way I treated him! He asked the Head to let me off?"

"Yes."

"Blessed if I understand it!"

"You'll get to understand Wingate better if you stay at Greyfriars," said Frank. "He's the best fellow here. Of course, you're going to be punished. You'll be flogged, and you'll have to stand it."

"Flogged?" said Nugent minor slowly.

"Yes. But anything's better than being expelled. You've got a chance to get out of this way you've got into. After a flogging the fags will let you alone for a bit, and you will have a chance to pull round. Keep a stiff upper lip, and try to be a man!"

Dick coloured.

"I'm sorry I threw that stone at Wingate," he said. "I—I never expected him to speak for me. He must be awfully decent."

"I'm glad you can see that, at any rate."

"And—and I'm not to leave Greyfriars?"

"Not if you behave yourself, and show that you're worth being given a chance."

Nugent minor nodded without speaking.

The bell rang for afternoon lessons, and Frank Nugent left his brother and went into the Remove room as usual, but Nugent minor did not go to the Second. He was taken into the Head's study by Gosling.

Dr. Locke looked sternly at the junior.

"Little as you deserve it, Nugent minor," he said, "Wingate, the victim of your brutality, has interceded for you. I have commuted your punishment to a flogging. Gosling, you will take him up."

And Gosling hoisted Nugent minor. The boy did not speak a word. He took his flogging—and a severe one it was—almost in silence.

When it was over he left the Head's study, and, to the great surprise of the Second-formers, made his appearance in the class-room, but his uneasiness on the form, and the desire he showed to stand up on every possible occasion, showed them what had taken place—that Nugent minor had been flogged after all, instead of being expelled from Greyfriars.

After lessons, Dick Nugent hung about the passages for a chance of seeing Wingate. The captain of Greyfriars had missed lessons with the Sixth that afternoon, but he came out of his study later, and Nugent minor met him in the Sixth-form passage. Wingate looked down grimly at the fag.

"I—I want to speak to you," faltered Dick. "I—I want to say I'm sorry. I—I'm very sorry I did that. I hope you'll believe me. It was a cad's trick."

Wingate's face softened a little.

"All right," he said. "You needn't bother."

And he passed on. Harry Wharton & Co. came along, and carted off the new fag to tea in No. 1 Study, and that afternoon marked a new starting-point in the career of Nugent minor.

A Jingle of the Jungle!

By

Mr. Paul Prout

(Master of the Fifth at Grey Friars)

I sing the praise of ancient days,
When I was fit and forty;
And won a name, and boundless fame,
For being skilled and sporty!

When shooting bears within their lairs
I never used to bungle;
I was the lord of sand and sward,
And monarch of the jungle!

Bold Robin Hood was not so good
A shot as "Yours sincerely";
And William Tell did wondrous well,
But I should beat him—nearly!

My trusty gun has slaughter done
By Afric's sunny fountains;
On India's plains, in wild domains,
And in the Rocky Mountains.

I've captured elks, I've fished for whelks,
Shot rapids—also rabbits;
I've "bagged" both seals and conger-eels,
I know their tricks and habits.

In rain or fine, in storm or shine,
In every sort of weather,
I've sallied forth, east, south, and north,
In quest of fur and feather.

The spoils of war (at least a score)
Are stuffed, for me to treasure;
Skin, scalp, and horn my walls adorn—
Inspect them at your leisure!

Though past my prime, I still find time
To roam with my repeater;
But now slay hares instead of bears—
What pastime could be sweeter?

The boys exclaim, "He's lost his aim!"
It makes me most contrary;
I'm just as skilled as when I killed
The prowlers of the prairie!

Bunter the Palmist!

A PLAY IN VERSE FOR AMATEUR ACTORS

[*NOTE.—This play may be performed by readers of the* HOLIDAY ANNUAL, *without fee or licence, on condition that the words "By permission of the Editor of the* HOLIDAY ANNUAL," *appear on each programme.*]

CHARACTERS:

BILLY BUNTER .. The famous Fat Boy of Greyfriars.

HARRY WHARTON, BOB CHERRY, FRANK NUGENT, JOHNNY BULL, HURREE SINGH — The Famous Five of the Greyfriars Remove.

DOCTOR LOCKE..Headmaster of Greyfriars.

WILLIAM GOSLING..School Porter.

P.C. TOZER..Of the Friardale Police Force.

ACT I.

SCENE.—*No. 1 Study in the Remove Passage.* (THE FAMOUS FIVE *are seated round the table, finishing tea.*)

WHARTON:

A topping tea, and no mistake!

NUGENT:

Yes! I enjoyed Dame Mimble's cake.

BULL:

I was as hungry as a hunter.

CHERRY:

You mean, as hungry as a Bunter!

(*Enter* BILLY BUNTER. *He comes in slowly, blinking through his spectacles at* THE FAMOUS FIVE, *as if doubtful of the reception he will get.*)

NUGENT:

Talk of prize porpoises, old bean,
And they come rolling on the scene!

BUNTER:

I say, you chaps! I just looked in——

CHERRY:

We're short of tuck, and short of tin!

BUNTER:

Oh, really, Cherry—you're a beast!
I'm wanting neither funds nor feast.

"With soap, this hand which shocks my sight
May be transformed from black to white."

Cadging is far from my designs:
I came along to read your lines.
(*All stare at* BUNTER.)

WHARTON:
We've none for you to read, you owl!

BUNTER:
Nonsense! You needn't growl and scowl.

CHERRY:
We've had no impots, Bunty dear——

BUNTER:
And yet you've "lines" in plenty, here!
(*So saying,* BUNTER *takes hold of* BOB'S *hand.*)

CHERRY:
I've lines upon my palm, all right,
But *you* can't read them, silly kite!

BUNTER:
That's where I beg to differ, Cherry.
I am an expert palmist—very!
I've taken lessons at the art,
And now I mean to make a start.
For a small fee—a modest tanner,
I'll read your lines in expert manner!

WHARTON:
The porpoise fairly takes the cake!
It's palpable he's on the make.

BULL:
This is a money-making stunt.
There's nothing doing; buzz off, Bunt.!

BUNTER:
A tanner each is all I ask
For tackling such a brainy task!

CHERRY:
He wants a tanner — silly chump!
I'll tan him—with a cricket stump!
(BUNTER *backs away in alarm.*)

HURREE SINGH:
My worthy chums, I'm rather curious
To have my hand read. Don't be furious!
Though Bunter's far from scientific!
The funfulness will be terrific!

BUNTER (*eagerly*):
I'll read your hand, old chap, with pleasure,
And you can pay me at your leisure.
That's what I call a sporting offer,
Enough to silence every scoffer!.

HURREE SINGH:
Here is my worthy palm, friend Bunter.
Now set to work, my merry stunter!
(HURREE SINGH *extends his palm to* BUNTER, *who examines it carefully and thoughtfully.*)

BUNTER:
My words can't make a nigger blush!
First, you require a scrubbing-brush
And several bars of Sunlight Soap,
And lots of other cleansing dope,
So that this hand, which shocks my sight,
May be transformed from black to white!
(*Loud laughter.*)

HURREE SINGH (*wrathfully*):
If you are rude, my chumpful chump,
I shall impart the clumpful clump!

BUNTER:
Now, don't get hot and bothered, Hurree,
Or in a ferment, fret, or flurry.

Let me proceed to read your palm.
Alas! 'Twill cause you many a qualm.
The line of life is very short,
You're going to peg out soon, old sport!
No fellow with a line like that
Can hope to live, I tell you flat.
Maybe, you'll catch a fatal chill,
So mind you leave me in your will!

HURREE SINGH:
The tommy-rotfulness you speak
Makes me desire your nose to tweak!

BUNTER (*resuming his reading*):
The line of health is very bad.
There's something wrong with you, my lad!
You'll get the flu, or else a fit.
And instantly chuck in your mitt.
Or p'r'aps you'll die of underfeeding,
Six meals a day is what you're needing!
There seems a chance that sleepy-sickness
Will finish you off with fearful quickness!
Already I detect the phases:
You'll soon be pushing up the daisies!

HURREE SINGH (*snatching his hand away*):
Stop! Or I'll lose my self-control;
Into the passage you will roll.

BUNTER:
Inky, you are a trying youth,
You cannot bear to hear the truth.
Because I say you're doomed to die,
You glare at me with glinting eye.
Now, Wharton, let me see your fist,
And tell your future—I insist!

(WHARTON *good-humouredly holds out his hand for* BUNTER *to read.*)

BUNTER:
A splendid life-line I descry.
You'll go on living——

WHARTON:
Till I die?

BUNTER:
That's so; you'll live to ninety-six;
But doesn't Fate play funny tricks?
Fancy a useless, worthless fellow
Living to reach the sere and yellow!
For eighty weary years (or more)
You'll be a nuisance and a bore
To all the folk you live among.
Why do the good alone die young?

WHARTON (*angrily*):
How dare you say such things, you worm?
I've a good mind to make you squirm!

"Don't dare to lay your paws on me! I am an expert palmist, see?"

BUNTER:
Keep cool, and note the line of health,
It's jolly good; but as for wealth,
You'll never be a millionaire
With costly cars, fine clothes to wear,
And all the other boons and mercies
Which come to those with well-stocked purses.
You'll be a pauper, poor and humble,
And Fate will give you many a tumble.
Within the workhouse you will spend
The evening of your days, my friend.
Now, coming to the line of heart——

WHARTON :

Dry up, or else I'll make you smart !

CHERRY :

He's talking utter rot, of course :
He wants ejecting, chaps, with force !

(THE FAMOUS FIVE *move menacingly towards* BUNTER.)

BUNTER :

Don't dare to lay your paws on me.
I am an expert palmist, see ?
And expert palmists can't be bumped,
Neither can they be clumped or thumped.

BULL :

That's where you make a big mistake.

WHARTON :

Oh, pitch him out, for goodness' sake.

(BUNTER *is seized in the grasp of his schoolfellows, and whirled towards the exit, roaring threats and protests. Exit* BUNTER.)

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE—*The Head's Study.*

(DR. LOCKE *is busy at his writing table. Presently there is a tap on the door.*)

"Wharton! I want a word with you. 'Twill be a painful interview."

THE HEAD :

Upon my soul ! Another knock !
It really gave me quite a shock.
These interruptions and intrusions
Prevent me penning my effusions.
(*The tapping is repeated.*)
It is a most distracting din,
And makes me most annoyed. *Come in !*
(*Enter* HARRY WHARTON.)

THE HEAD (*tartly*) :

This is a most untimely visit.

WHARTON :

Sir, that is hardly my fault, is it ?

THE HEAD :

To talk like that is very wrong——

WHARTON :

You told me, sir, to come along.

THE HEAD :

I told you nothing of the kind.
Boy ! Are you wandering in your mind ?

WHARTON (*looking very perplexed*) :

Just now, sir, when I'd finished tea,
I heard your voice addressing me
From just outside my study door.
You thundered, in an angry roar :
"Wharton ! I want a word with you.
'Twill be a painful interview.
Pray cease to gorge on tarts and cake,
And follow promptly in my wake."
I therefore came without delay :
I hurried here, sir, right away.

THE HEAD (*looking as perplexed as* WHARTON) :

There is an error, that is clear,
I did not bid you to come here.
The voice that hailed you was not mine,
It was some joker's, I opine.
So leave my study, if you please.
Intrusions make me ill at ease.

(*Exit* WHARTON. THE HEAD *resumes his writing, but after a brief interval there is another tap on the door.*)

THE HEAD :

When *will* these interruptions cease,
That I may do my work in peace ?

These visitations are a scandal.
Come in! Don't fumble with the handle!

(*Enter* Bob Cherry.)

The Head (*snappily*):

Why have you come to see me, Cherry?

Cherry:

Well, that's a funny question, very.

The Head (*frowning*):

Cherry! Be careful what you say!

Cherry:

You told me, sir, to step this way.

The Head:

Boy, I assure you I did not!
What quaint delusions have you got?

Cherry:

You called for Wharton first; and then, sir,
Your voice grew fiercer and intenser.
"Cherry!" you thundered. "Follow me!"
And so, sir, here I am, you see.

The Head:

My anger, Cherry, how intense it is!
Some boy, with humorous propensities
Mimicked the voice of his headmaster,
Hoping thereby to cause disaster.
I do not want you; you may go.
Too bad to interrupt me so.

(*Exit* Bob Cherry. The Head *makes a further effort to resume his writing, but soon there is a thunderous knock on the door.*)

The Head (*rising to his feet, and pacing to and fro in wrath*):

This really is beyond a joke.
With anger I could almost choke.

"Cherry! Be careful what you say!"

These endless knockings, I declare,
Are really more than I can bear.
Such interruptions I abhor:
Who dares to hammer at my door?

(*Enter* Johnny Bull):

The Head:

Retire at once, vexatious boy!
How dare you pester and annoy?

Bull:

My only aunt—I mean, Great Scott!
You sent for me, sir, did you not?

The Head:

Bull, I did nothing of the sort!

Bull (*taken aback*):

You didn't tell me to report?

The Head:

I have not said a single word.

Bull:

Whose was the voice then that I heard?

The Head:

The voice of an impersonator,
A base, misguided imitator!

Bull (*aside*):

I fancy Bunter is to blame.
Ventriloquism's just his game!
We chucked him out of Number One,
And, for revenge, this trick he's done!

The Head:

Bull! What was that remark you made?

Bull:

Oh, crumbs! He heard me, I'm afraid!

The Head:

I heard you mention Bunter's name.
You said that Bunter was to blame!

"Your life-line, sir, is jolly fine,
You ought to live to ninety-nine!"

'Twas he who tricked you all—and me.
I'll thrash him soundly—when I'm free!
I mean to make that boy desist
From being a ventriloquist!
And now, pray leave my study, Bull.
Bunter shall pay for this in full!

(*Exit* BULL. THE HEAD *resumes his seat, frowning grimly as he bends over his papers.*)

THE HEAD:

So *Bunter* caused all these intrusions,
These consternations and confusions!
I'll speak to him with great asperity,
And then chastise him with severity!

(*Enter* BUNTER, *without knocking. Smiling cheerfully, the fat junior advances to* THE HEAD'S *table.* DR. LOCKE *stares at him speechlessly.*)

BUNTER:

Ahem! Good-evening, Dr. Locke!
I planned to call at six o'clock
And read the lines upon your palm.
Don't get excited, sir, keep calm!

(THE HEAD *glares at* BUNTER, *his face working convulsively. He tries to speak, but words fail him.* BUNTER *calmly takes* THE HEAD *by his left wrist and proceeds to examine his palm.*)

BUNTER:

Your life-line, sir, is jolly fine,
You ought to live to ninety-nine.
But there are signs of imbecility,
You show the symptoms of senility,
Your second childhood will commence,
Depriving you of all your sense.
Your line of wealth is rather short;
I'm very sorry to report
That when you get to eighty-three
They'll put you on a pension, see?
No longer will you reign and rule
Over the boys of Greyfriars School.
You'll take a humble country cottage,
And there, sir, you will spend your dotage.

THE HEAD (*aside*):

Good gracious! Can the boy be mad?
Has sunstroke smitten him, poor lad?

BUNTER (*resuming his examination*):

Your line of character is weak,
It's just a faint and narrow streak.
You're far too fond of caning fellows,
And revelling in their roars and bellows
In fact, sir, you are not a hero;
You have the tyrant strain of Nero.
You love to wield the birch and cane
And give your victims pangs of pain.
Your tyranny, dear sir, is such
That schoolboys tremble at your touch.
These revelations, Doctor Locke,
Will doubtless give you quite a shock:
But palmists always speak the truth,
And I'm a most veracious youth.

(THE HEAD *snatches his hand away from* BUNTER'S *grasp and jumps to his feet, his face red with anger.*)

THE HEAD:

BUNTER! I scarce know what to say.
Your conduct takes my breath away!
Such insolence is truly shocking!
You dared to enter without knocking.
Forgetful of my high position,
You seized my hand without permission,
Then uttered insults reprehensible.
Such conduct, boy, is indefensible!

BUNTER:

Oh, really, sir——! I didn't mean
To raise your anger, fierce and keen.
I merely told your fortune truly,
Calmly, collectedly, and coolly.
And now, instead of being grateful,
Your attitude is simply hateful!

THE HEAD (*pointing to the door*):

Go! Do not speak another word!
Sufficient insults I have heard.
To-morrow morning, in Big Hall,
The Sword of Damocles shall fall.
A flogging I will then impart
Such as will make you squirm and smart!
I'll punish your cupidity
Your rudeness and stupidity,
With such severity and force
That you will suffer keen remorse!

BUNTER (*aside*):

Oh, lor'! A public execution
Won't suit my feeble constitution!

THE HEAD:

Depart! Go quickly! Disappear!
Or I will flog you, now and here!

(*Exit* BUNTER *in a panic, with the* HEAD *striding after him.*)

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE.—*The Platform in Big Hall.*

(THE HEAD *stands majestically at the dais—or at a table—and frowns upon the assembled school, i.e., the audience. He is in the act of calling the roll.* GOSLING, *the porter, is also present on the platform.*)

THE HEAD:

WHARTON! Nugent major! Brown!

VOICES (*off*):

Adsum!

Adsum!

Gone to town!

THE HEAD:

Penfold! Russell! Hazeldene!

VOICES (*off*):

Adsum!

Adsum!

Here, old bean!

THE HEAD (*frowning*):

Some boy, feeling gay and gladsome,
Dares to say, instead of "Adsum!"
Words of grossest disrespect.
The rascal's voice I can't detect.
'Tis disgraceful, 'pon my soul!
I'll proceed to call the roll.
BUNTER MAJOR!

(*There is no reply.* THE HEAD'S *frown deepens, and he repeats the name several times. Still there is no response.*)

THE HEAD:

The wretched boy declines to answer!

GOSLING:

I really don't see 'ow 'e can, sir.

THE HEAD:

Why, Gosling? Is not Bunter here?

"Depart! Go quickly! Disappear!
Or I will flog you now and here!"

GOSLING :

'E wandered out of gates, I fear.

THE HEAD :

For Bunter, a sound flogging waits !

GOSLING :

I know, sir ; but 'e ain't in gates.

THE HEAD :

That boy has much to answer for !
He tries my patience more and more.
The way he chooses to behave
Will bring my grey hairs to the grave !
Wherever can the rascal be ?

GOSLING :

Dunno, sir. 'E's a habsentee !

(*Enter* POLICE-CONSTABLE TOZER, *marching* BILLY BUNTER *on to the platform.* TOZER *looks very pompous and important ;* BUNTER *is squirming and protesting in the constable's grasp.*)

THE HEAD :

Good gracious ! What does *this* mean, Tozer ?

" I caught 'im, sir, when on my beat,
A-tellin' fortunes in the street ! "

TOZER :

I think as 'ow you oughter know, sir.

THE HEAD :

What has this reckless boy been doing ?
What pranks has Bunter been pursuing ?

TOZER :

I caught 'im, sir, when on my beat,
A-tellin' fortunes in the street !
Upon the kerb I see 'im stand,
A-holdin' people by the 'and.
'E says to one old gent, says 'e,
" You'll die when you are fifty-three."
The old gent larfs, an' says, " Here, steady !
I'm seventy years of age already ! "
Then Bunter says to some smart dame,
" Some day, ma'am, you will rise to fame."
She says to 'im, " You ignoramus !
Why, all my life I 'ave been famous !
I'm Lady Vere de Vere, you see,
The ' big noise ' in Society."
Then Bunter says to some old chappie,
" Your life, 'enceforth, will not be 'appy.
Misfortunes grim will mar your bliss——"

THE HEAD :

Stop ! I will hear no more of this !

TOZER :

I says to 'im, I says, " Desist ! "
Then clicks the 'and-cuffs on 'is wrist.
I never took 'im to the station,
But made this school 'is destination.
I thought you wouldn't want a scandal
Because of this 'ere blessed vandal.

THE HEAD :

You did quite right to bring him here.

TOZER (*piously*) :

My dooty, sir, was plain an' clear.
Not even, sir, the lure of Beauty,
Can ever drag me from my dooty.

THE HEAD:
Would you—a h e m—accept a shilling?

TOZER:
P.C.'s should never be unwillin'!

(THE HEAD *hands* TOZER *a coin, which the constable slips into his pocket with a grunt of satisfaction.*)

THE HEAD:
Pray leave this rascal in my hands!

TOZER:
So be it, sir; I h u n d e r stands!

(*Exit* TOZER.)

"Yaroooo! That beastly birch-rod hurts!"

THE HEAD (*addressing the audience*):
This boy has acted in a fashion
That forfeits mercy or compassion.
No need for me to keep on dwelling
Upon his feats of fortune-telling.
He is a humbug and a cheat,
A fraud, a charlatan complete!

BUNTER:
Oh, really, sir—that's rather strong!

THE HEAD:
Your conduct, boy, was base and wrong!

BUNTER:
I am a palmist, smart and clever——

THE HEAD:
Your palmistry must end for ever!

GOSLING:
The school's good name, sir, 'e's been smirchin',
The rascal wants a thorough birchin'!

THE HEAD:
Now, in the sight of all beholders,
I'll flog him! Take him on your shoulders.

(BUNTER *is hoisted on to* GOSLING'S *shoulders, whilst* THE HEAD *takes up a birch-rod. For purposes of the Play, the victim's back will be suitably "barricaded."*)

BUNTER:
Ow! Let me off, sir! I appeal!

GOSLING:
Before 'e's 'urt, 'e starts to squeal!

BUNTER:
I won't tell fortunes any more!

THE HEAD (*grimly*):
You should have thought of that before!

BUNTER:
Oh, dear! I feel I'm going to faint!

THE HEAD:
Coward! Pray exercise restraint!

BUNTER:
I'd rather, sir, that *you* did that!
I don't mind taking one slight pat;
But if you flog with all your might,
I'll write and tell my dad to-night!

THE HEAD:
You shall receive your just deserts!

BUNTER:
Yaroooo! That beastly birch-rod hurts!

GOSLING:
'E 'asn't felt it yet at all,
An' yet 'e starts to bawl an' squall!

THE HEAD:
The flogging I will now administer!

BUNTER:
Help! He's a tyrant, cruel and sinister!

(THE HEAD *administers six strokes with the birch.* BUNTER'S *yells of anguish are piercing and penetrating. He struggles and kicks, but* GOSLING *holds him tightly. Finally, when the last stroke has been dealt,* BUNTER *rolls off the porter's shoulders, and grovels on the platform.*)

THE HEAD (*laying aside the birch*):
Bunter! I trust this castigation
Will put a sudden termination
To all your fortune-telling folly
Which caused this scene so melancholy!

BUNTER :

Oh, dear! Oh, crumbs! Yow-ow! Yaroooo!

I'm sure my back is black and blue!

THE HEAD :

Your conduct has been base and baneful.
The sequel has been grim and painful!

GOSLING :

"The way of the transgressor's 'ard,"
Says Shakespeare—or some brother bard.

BUNTER (*blinking at the audience*) :

Though smarting in a dozen places,
I see no sympathetic faces!
I hear no cries of "Poor old chap!"
I don't believe you care a scrap!
You've all got hearts as hard as Pharaoh.
This pain is more than I can bear. Oh!

THE HEAD :

I won't prolong a scene like this.
The school will instantly dismiss!

(*Exit* THE HEAD *and* GOSLING. BUNTER *pauses on his way to the exit, and blinks pathetically at the audience.*)

BUNTER :

Take this advice, you chaps, from me.
Never go in for Palmistry!

CURTAIN.

A REMINDER!

Every year the cheery schoolboy characters who play such a prominent part in each volume of the "Holiday Annual" automatically make hosts of new friends. The great majority of these are keen to follow the trend of events at Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood from week to week throughout the year—as many thousands of enthusiastic readers have been doing for years past.

It is my custom, then, to mention here, for the benefit of all whom it may concern, that every Monday throughout the year Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars School, disport themselves in the pages of the "Magnet" Library, which publication is also graced, of course, by the weighty presence of Billy Bunter!

Each Tuesday brings "The Popular," a great feature of which is a complete story of Jimmy Silver & Co., the lively chums of Rookwood School; while most of the other favourites find a place in its pages.

Wednesday brings the "Gem," with its extra-long yarn of famous Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's. The pranks and adventures, grave and gay, of these evergreen favourites—among whom Arthur Augustus D'Arcy holds a high place—have been faithfully chronicled in the "Gem" every week for nearly twenty years by Mr. Martin Clifford—and they are now more popular than ever!

The price of each of the above-mentioned weeklies is twopence. In addition to these, book-length stories of the three famous schools are issued each month, in the "Schoolboys' Own Library," at the price of fourpence per volume. Thus is every need of the enthusiastic school-story lover adequately catered for by the Companion Papers, from which the "Holiday Annual" originally sprang.

THE EDITOR.

INDEX

A

PAGE

Aircraft at Sea. (*Article*) 80
Among the Tree-Tops. *Story by Clive R. Fenn* 75
A Tragic Episode of King Charles' Reign. (*Article*) 121
Annual. Billy Bunter's 191
Atlantic Liners. Some Famous (*Article*) 33
Authors. Rival. *Story by Martin Clifford* 20

B

Before the Driver Comes. (*Article*) .. 18
Billy Bunter's Annual 191
Birds' Eggs. How to Collect (*Article*) 189
Britannia's Greyhounds 36
Bunter the Cricketer. *Story by Tom Brown* 9
Bunter the Palmist. *A Play in Verse* .. 349
Bunter. What Happened to *Story by Frank Richards* 83

C

Calling! Greyfriars 3
Cartoons:
Arthur Augustus D'Arcy 202
Baggy Trimble 255
Bunter the Boxer 108
Last—but not Least 138
The Old, Old Story.. 7
Visions of the Future 148
Cowboy Life 152
Cricketer. Bunter the *Story by Tom Brown* 9

D

Day at the Zoo. My *By Billy Bunter* 8
Devon. Sons o' *Story by Philip Hardy* 199

E

Empire. Schoolboys of the *Poem and Song* 149

F

PAGE

Famous Public Schools. Some .. 49, 231
Famous Schoolboy Fights. (*Article*) .. 78
Far West. When the Red Man roamed the 32
Fitness. Health, Strength and (*Article*).. 259
Frontiersmen. Old-time 15

G

Gone Away (*Article*) 166
Greyfriars Calling! 3
Greyfriars Champions (*Verse*):
Billy Bunter 119
Dicky Nugent 282
Horace Coker 242
Lord Mauleverer 277
William Wibley 80
Greyfriars Sporting Records 81
Greyhounds. Britannia's 36

H

Headmaster. The Smuggling (*Article*).. 240
Health, Strength, and Fitness. (*Article*).. 259
Heavy Odds. *Story by Cecil Fanshawe*.. 153
Highwayman at Rookwood. A (*Article*) 281
How to be Happy Though Harried .. 79
How to Collect Birds' Eggs. (*Article*) .. 189

K

King Charles' Reign. A Tragic Episode of (*Article*) 121

L

Liners. Some Famous Atlantic (*Article*) 33
Lord Eastwood's Experiment. *Story by Martin Clifford* 203

M

Model Railway. Planning a (*Article*) .. 46
My Day at the Zoo. *By Billy Bunter*.. 8

N

PAGE

Nugent Minor's Bad Start. *Story by Frank Richards* 289

O

Odds. Heavy *Story by Cecil Fanshawe* 153
Old-Time Frontiersmen 15
Out of Bounds! *Story by P. G. Wodehouse* 50

P

Palmist. Bunter the *A Play in Verse* .. 349
Planning a Model Railway. (*Article*) .. 46
Plates (*Coloured*):
At the Cross-Roads! *Frontispiece*
Fighting Against Time! *Facing page* 40
Ambushed! .. .. *Facing page* 160
One Against Fifty-Three! .. .. *Facing page* 201
Plates (*Photogravure*):
The "Eyes of the Fleet" at Sea. *Facing page* 80
Greyfriars to the Rescue! .. .. *Facing page* 121
A Romantic Episode in the History of St. Jim's. .. .. *Facing page* 240
An Unwelcome Intruder. .. .. *Facing page* 281
Planning a Model Railway. (*Article*) .. 46
Poems:
A Hero of St. Jim's. *By Bagley Trimble* 248
A Jingle of the Jungle. *By Mr. Paul Prout* 348
Glorious Grub. *By Tubby Muffin* 278
My Towser. *By George Herries* .. 225
The Night Raiders *By Jimmy Silver* 286
The Ballad of the "Holiday Annual" 16
The Song of the Birch. *By Dick Penfold* 45
Puzzle Corner. The St. Jim's 258

R

Railway. Planning a Model. (*Article*).. 46
Rival Authors. *Story by Martin Clifford* 20
Robin Hood Turns the Tables. *Story by Morton Pike* 169
Rookwood. A Highwayman at (*Article*) 281
Rookwood Rat Hunt. The *Story by Owen Conquest* 279

S

Schoolboy Fights. Famous (*Article*).. 78
Schoolboys of the Empire. *Poem and Song* 149
Schools. Some Famous Public .. 49, 231
Sea. Aircraft at (*Article*) 80
Smuggling Headmaster. The (*Article*) 240
Sons o' Devon. *Story by Philip Hardy* 199
Sporting Records of St Jim's 256
Sporting Records of Rookwood.. .. 287

T

The Twins' Twin Twins. *Story by Elmer K. Arter* 37
Top Dog! *Story by Owen Conquest* .. 261
Tree-Tops. Among the *Story by Clive R. Fenn* 75

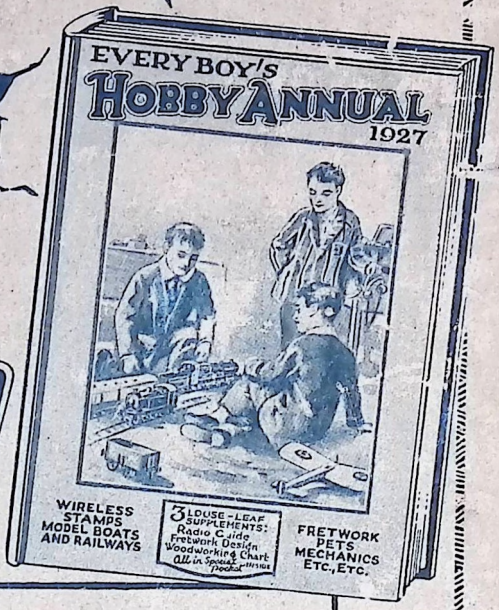
W

What Happened to Bunter. *Story by Frank Richards* 83
When the Red Man Roamed the Far West 32

Z

Zoo. My Day at the *By Billy Bunter* .. 8

The BOOK for YOU!



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