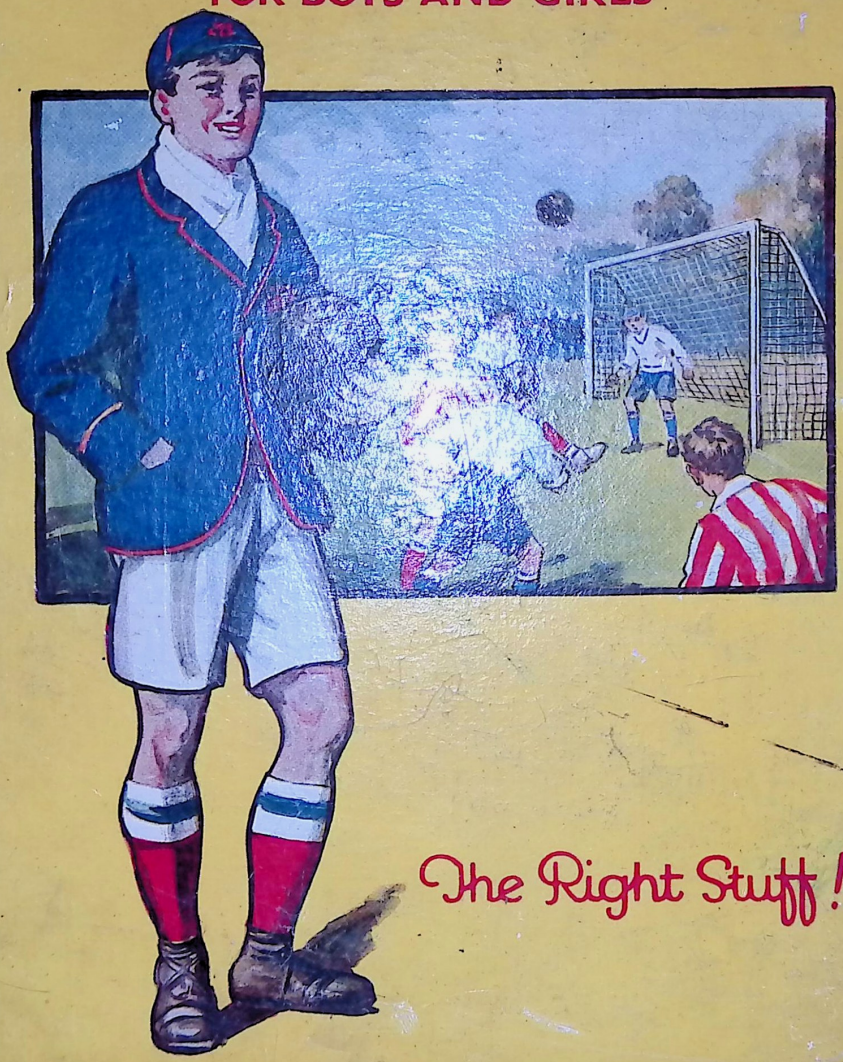
THE GREYFRIARS

HOLIDAY

1930 ANNUAL 1930

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS



The Right Stuff!



Frontispiece OFF! H. A.

The Greyfriars HOLIDAY ANNUAL

1930



This Book Belongs To KENNETH CURTIS

The Editor to his Friends

ONCE again it is my pleasure to place before you in this the eleventh successive HOLIDAY ANNUAL a compact volume of school and adventure stories, brightened by attractive colour and photogravure plates and black and white illustrations by the best artists obtainable.

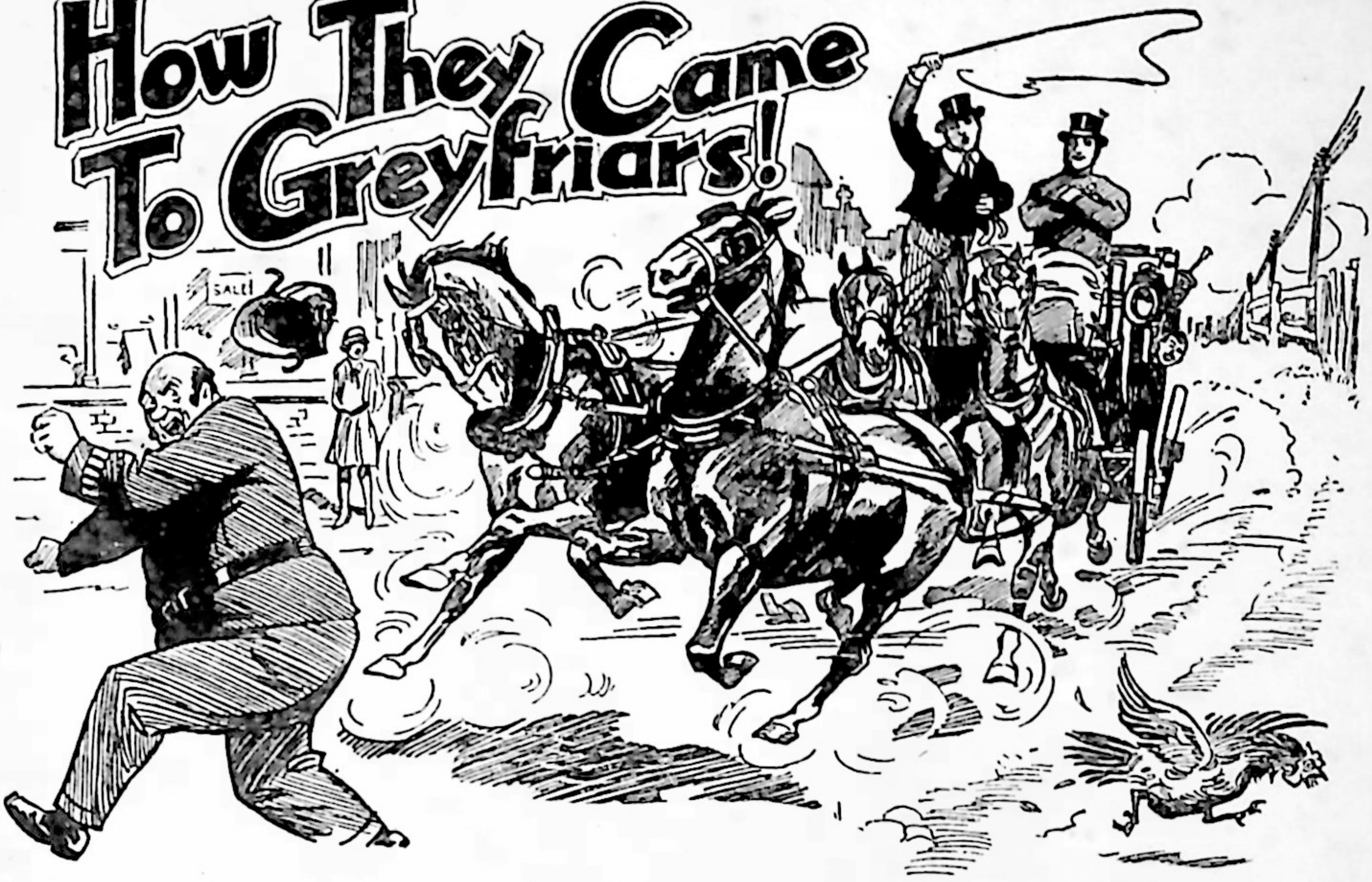
In the ensuing pages you will meet old favourites from Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Rookwood schools. I say "old favourites" and yet, despite the passing of the years, they never do grow old. To them it would seem has been given the power of immortality, for the adventures of Harry Wharton & Co., Tom Merry & Co., and "Uncle James" Silver and his merry men are as lively and as interesting now as when those celebrated authors Messrs. Richards, Clifford and Owen Conquest first took it into their heads to write stories. To this trio of brilliant writers our thanks are due, for once having set their own standard at an inimitable level they have kept to it with commendable consistency.

Celebrities in the world of fiction such as Cecil Fanshaw, Geo. E. Rochester, Gilbert Chester, the "Greyfriars Rhymester," Clive Fenn, and others too numerous to mention, have all contributed their share to make 1930—and THE GREYFRIARS HOLIDAY ANNUAL—a landmark to be remembered by all who take delight in reading the clean and manly type of schoolboy and adventure stories so long and successfully specialised in by your old friend

THE EDITOR.

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

How They Came To Greyfriars!



Few members of that irrepressible band of lively young spirits, the Remove Form at Greyfriars, have been content for their arrival at the school to pass unnoticed. Here the Editor recalls some of the ways—amusing and amazing—in which newcomers to the Remove made their bow!

EVERY Form at Greyfriars has had new boys, of course, but on looking back we find that the most peculiar ways of arriving seem to have been chosen by newcomers to the Remove. How many new boys, we wonder, have dashed through the school gates driving a coach and four? If there have been any, Lord Mauleverer, who for once belied his title of the Slacker of the Remove, must be added to the select band. It happened like this.

Bob Cherry and Harry Wharton were waiting outside Friardale Station for some other Remove fellows who were in the village, one blazing hot summer's afternoon, when they heard a high-pitched, drawling voice proceeding from the station platform. The speaker, a handsome, well-dressed youth in Etons, was evidently a new boy for Greyfriars.

He was demanding of the sleepy porter the whereabouts of the coach and four which he said he had ordered to meet him at the station. Noticing that the two Removites were watching him interestedly, he walked over to them. Did they belong to Greyfriars? he asked. They did. Had they seen such a thing as a coach and four? The Greyfriars juniors grinned. The humorous Bob asked whether it was a pink one with yellow spots and crimson bars, while Wharton told the languid youth to "draw it mild."

It was certainly hard to believe that a boy of fifteen would order a coach and four to convey him the quarter of an hour's walk to the school, even if he had the money. However, the arrival of the coach and four fine horses put an end to all doubts as to their existence. Having introduced himself, Lord Mauleverer soon showed that there was

no swank in his make-up by offering them a lift back to Greyfriars.

Just then, Johnny Bull, Frank Nugent, Mark Linley, and Fisher T. Fish came along, and the six tired and dusty juniors accepted his lordship's invitation with alacrity, piling into the cool and shady interior of the carriage. When the new fellow relieved his coachman of the reins and whip and expressed his intention of driving, however, there were some dubious exclamations.

This slim and languid youth did not strike them as being able to manage four high-spirited horses, and, as Bob Cherry remarked, they were not tired of life. Crack! The words were hardly out of his mouth when the horses started. It was too late to back out now. The Removites could only hope that they would reach Greyfriars without broken bones. If Lord Mauleverer seemed too tired to live when on terra-firma, he was a different fellow on the driver's box.

The team dashed down the village High Street at a furious pace. P.-c. Tozer jumped into the road and waved his hand pompously for them to stop; but he might just as well have tried to stop the wind. Narrowly escaping being run over, he jumped back on to the path quicker than he had left it, purple with indignation. Suddenly a wheel of the coach caught a barrow laden with vegetables, and, to the owner's wrath, sent both the barrow and its load flying.

Harry Wharton & Co. soon saw that Mauly knew how to handle his team, reckless as he was, and began to enjoy the sensation of speed. On they sped up the crowded village street, chickens squawking, dogs barking, boys waving their caps and hands, to meet their next obstacle in the shape of a baker's cart. Crash! The cart was flung on the pavement, and the loaves bumped in the road, to the accompaniment of roars from the baker.

They were soon out of the village and careering along the rough country lane towards the school. The delighted juniors were now urging Mauly to "go it," and he "went it!"

Suddenly there was a yell of warning from the Removites. A lumbering wagon had appeared round a bend in the lane. But his lordship was equal to the occasion. The lighter vehicle swept by the wagon with about an inch to spare, and although the off wheels slid over into a ditch by the side of the road, the coach, carried on by its own impetus, swept on unharmed. The gates of Greyfriars now appeared in sight, but, instead of the horses showing signs of slackening speed, the whip cracked, and they seemed to go faster than ever.

Would the new fellow be ass enough to drive right up to the schoolhouse? It looked like it. At full gallop through the gates went the thundering team, narrowly missing Gosling, the porter, up the drive, through the Close, crowded with fellows coming in from the playing fields, to stop at last before Dr. Locke, the astounded Head of Greyfriars!

Enter Tom Brown!

THERE were two Tom Browns due to arrive one Wednesday afternoon. One was the genuine article, so to speak, all the way from Taranaki, New Zealand, while the other was specially manufactured by Skinner & Co. for Billy Bunter's benefit.

The rotter's brigade had "stuffed" the Owl of the Remove that the new fellow was a Maori, "as black as the ace of spades," that his father owned gold and diamond mines by the dozen in Poppa-Galla-Gogga-Wallah, and, most important of all to Bunter, had £2 a week pocket-money. The fat junior swallowed it all, and, with the idea of being the close chum of a millionaire's son to spur him on, he resolved to be on the spot when this remarkable New Zealander's train came in at Friardale Station.

With the object of worming his way into the new junior's good graces, Bunter decided to stand him a stunning feed at Uncle Clegg's, a feed which Skinner and Stott did not intend to miss. By selling Bob Cherry's penknife and Wharton's cricket-bat, he soon had enough money for his purpose, and he set off at a run for the station,



The coach, driven by Lord Mauleverer, swept by the wagon with about an inch to spare. It was a near thing for the Removites and for his lordship, who was not in the least perturbed by the incident. (*See previous page.*)

leaving the japers in hysterics. Meanwhile, the Famous Five, who had been asked to meet the new boy's train, had decided upon a jape of their own, with the Upper Fourth as victims.

The great Cecil Reginald Temple and his chums were "airing" a new football that half-holiday, when a crowd of Removites, led by Harry Wharton & Co., bore down on them. To the Upper Fourth skipper's surprise and wrath, Wharton hooked the ball away from him and darted off. A battle royal was soon raging, the Fourth-Formers making desperate but vain attempts to regain possession of their footer, the Removites passing it swiftly backwards and forwards.

A gleam of fun came into Harry Wharton's eyes. They had to go to the station to meet the new fellow, so why not take Temple's ball with them? The word was passed quickly round among the Remove, and they were soon dashing down the country road, still on the ball, with the Upper Fourth streaming after them in furious pursuit. At the end of the long chase the Removites had not been robbed of their prize, and outside the little station the struggle for the leather was waged so fiercely that nobody heeded the arrival of the four o'clock train, the one by which Brown—the real Brown—was expected.

It was not until the train shrieked its way out of the station that the chums of the Remove remembered the new boy they had come to meet, and they made a rush for the platform, only to find their way blocked by



The footer rebounded from the wall and caught Bunter full in the chest, sending him flying backwards into a box of eggs. Squelch! (*See this page.*)

the Fourth-Formers. Temple, Dabney & Co. were deaf to all arguments. They wanted their ball back, and until they got it no cheeky Remove fags would pass.

Things were at a deadlock, as it were, when a sunburnt boy of about fifteen years of age stepped towards the struggling crowd and introduced himself as Tom Brown. One glance was sufficient to tell Harry Wharton that there was a promising recruit for the Remove, and Brown was quick to accept the invitation to " pile in " and help his Form to take Temple's footer back to Greyfriars.

Away they went again, with the Upper Fourth in full cry after them. Temple robbed Nugent, but he had hardly gone three yards when a lithe form took the ball from his very toes and sped away like an arrow, to the cries of " Bravo, Maori!" It was the New Zealander. At that moment a farm cart blocked the way close by the village tuck-shop, and Tom Brown was quickly surrounded by Fourth-Formers. Quick as a flash he let the leather drop, and as it bounced he kicked for safety, taking the door of Uncle Clegg's shop as goal.

The ball went true to its aim, flew like a bullet through the doorway, and bounced on a wall, the juniors rushing after it. From within the shop came a fearful yell. We are told that every bullet has its billet, and this one had certainly not missed its mark. Uncle Clegg's customers were William George Bunter, Skinner, and Stott, together with Bunter's black chum, who, strange to say, talked like a nigger minstrel as well as looked like one, and they had just finished the feed so generously provided by the Owl of the Remove.

Bunter was sitting on a high cane stool when the ball came in, and behind him there was a big box of eggs. The footer rebounded from the wall and caught him full on the chest, sending him flying backwards. Squelch! When the Removites in the doorway saw Bunter's plight they yelled, and when the fat junior was yanked out of the box they roared. He was smothered with eggs from neck to knees. To Bunter, however, as he squelched and gasped and spluttered, it was far from being a laughing matter, and the discovery that his black but comely friend was none other than Snoop, of the Remove, was the last straw!

It was gall and wormwood to him to think that he had spent all the money he could rake together in order to stand the three japers a feed. But he received no sympathy from Harry Wharton & Co. To quote Nugent, " it served the greedy young rotter right for sucking up to a rich chap, as he supposed." The ball had now been recovered from the corner it had rolled into, and, having paid Uncle Clegg for the smashed eggs, Tom Brown's idea of showing Temple & Co. a Rugby three-quarter's run instantly caught on. The Removites rushed the clamouring Fourth-Formers outside the tuck-shop and

fought their way clear to the street, Tom Brown with the ball under his arm.

He went up the High Street as if he were on the Rugger field, flooring his opponents right and left. He swiftly reached the lane leading to the school, and there he dropped the ball and raced down the lane. Not many had survived the rushing and racing about, but those who had, resolved to see it out to the finish, followed my leader valiantly. The Removites reached the gates of Greyfriars first, passing in fine style, and flushed with victory.

Wildly excited, they rushed the ball across the Close with the object of getting it into the schoolhouse and up into the Remove passage. Of all the gallant company that had started out from Greyfriars, there remained of the Remove only Wharton, Bob Cherry, and Tom Brown, and of the Upper Fourth, Temple and Dabney. Bob Cherry was charged over by Temple, and Wharton, tackled by Dabney, passed to the boy from Taranaki. The New Zealander rushed it towards the School House and kicked.

The leather rose in the air and sailed in at the wide doorway just as Mr. Quelch, the Remove Formmaster, came out to see the cause of the disturbance. The result was inevitable. Biff! Bump! It was Tom Brown's second goal!

Fisher T. Fish from "Over There"

THE first thing that struck Fisher T. Fish as he came out of Friardale Station was a muddy football, hot from the foot of Harry Wharton. It descended like a bolt from the blue and bowled him over like a ninepin. As soon as he had recovered from the shock and removed some of the mud from his features, however, his natural transatlantic "bounce" asserted itself.

He endeavoured to show the Famous Five, who were there to meet him, how things were done "over there," in the great "Yewnited States," by challenging them to a walking match to the school, with a strong belief in his ability to walk them off their legs.

"Jevver get left?" he sang out as he put on speed down the village High Street, his long legs going like clockwork; but when he arrived at Greyfriars a good five hundred yards behind the chums of the Remove, he had to admit that it was Fisher T. Fish, of "Noo York," who, to use his own phrase, "came out at the little end of the horn."



Alonzo Todd reached Greyfriars in a top hat and perspiring under the burden of a weird parcel, gaping wide at three different places, which shed boots, socks, and underwear in his trail. (*See next page.*)

The arrival of Harry Wharton was unique in its way. The captain of the Remove rescued Frank Nugent from a watery grave in the Sark, and was carried into the school unconscious after his terrible ordeal.

Alonzo Theophilus Todd.

And then there is Alonzo Theophilus Todd. A fellow with a name like that was surely born to be japed! His nickname of the Duffer has stuck to him since his first day at Greyfriars. When Skinner met him at the station and told him that a new chap was always expected to arrive with his things in a brown-paper parcel, and that it was absolutely forbidden for juniors to arrive in the station hack, he hardly expected to take Todd in; but he succeeded beyond his wildest hopes.

The result of the meeting with the japer of the Remove was that Alonzo reached Greyfriars in a top hat, and perspiring under the burden of a weird and wonderful parcel, which was tied round with yards and yards of string. Nevertheless, it was gaping wide in three different places, and shed boots, socks, slippers, and underwear about the Close.

The gentle Lonzy was shocked when he discovered that Skinner had not told him the truth, but it was soon evident that his previous experience had not made him any wiser. His trusting nature was destined to lead him into further trouble. While the Duffer removed some of the dust he had gathered during his walk to the school, the merry japers proceeded to tell him what he must do to get on the right side of his Form-master.

He gratefully received the helpful information, and hurried off to Mr. Quelch's study to keep his appointment. Without knocking on the door of the study, he flung it open unceremoniously, and strode up to the amazed Mr. Quelch.

"How do you do, cocky?" he asked. "I hope your mother is well. Is your father out of prison yet?"

Todd had carried out Skinner & Co.'s instructions to the letter, so he was hardly prepared for Mr. Quelch's subsequent actions. We will draw a veil over the painful scene that followed.

Conjurer and Juggler!

"No larks, mind, you young rascal!" was Mr. Kipps' parting admonition to his hopeful son, Oliver, before the latter took the train for Friardale—and Greyfriars. "Don't perform the disappearing trick with the headmaster's gown or your Form-master's books, or bring out rabbits and ribbons from the porter's neck!"

But who could expect a cheerful humorist to refrain from using his peculiar gifts to get a little harmless amusement out of life? It certainly could not be expected of Oliver Kipps.

The first person he encountered on entering the quad at Greyfriars was William Gosling, the crusty old guardian of the gates. Gossy soon discovered that this was something very new in new boys when Kipps gently removed the porter's ancient high hat, and, together with his own topper, sent it spinning round and round in the air in the fashion of a professional juggler.

The strange sight drew wondering fellows from all directions. Horace Coker was the first on the scene, and before the great man of the Fifth knew what was happening, his hat had been jerked off to join the others. Kipps kept three going as easily as two. Potter's hat was soon added to the rest—then Bob Cherry's. Five hats spun in the air with wonderful accuracy, while the crowd roared.

How long Oliver Kipps' display might have gone on will never be known. It was terminated abruptly, however, when, forgetful of everything but his performance, he laid sacrilegious hands on Mr. Henry Samuel Quelch's mortar-board.

Luckily, the amazing new fellow escaped the vials of his Form-master's wrath. He explained to Mr. Quelch that he hadn't meant to be disrespectful. Conjuring and juggling were born in him, and for the moment he had forgotten where he was.

"An extraordinary boy!" opined the master of the Remove, and the rest of the school agreed with him.



Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars, is generally in trouble—mostly of his own making. Skinner & Co., the black sheep of the Remove, provide some for him, by way of a change, in this very amusing school yarn.

THE FIRST CHAPTER
Skinner's Little Scheme !

"Yow-ow-ow !"

"Groogh !"

"Oh, dear ! The rotter !"

The remarks emanated from Skinner, Snoop, and Stott, of the Remove Form, at Greyfriars. The black sheep of the Remove did not appear to be enjoying life.

They were reposing on the grass at a quiet spot behind the chapel, in various attitudes of discomfort. Skinner was tenderly nursing an injured jaw, Snoop was caressing with much affection his not particularly beautiful nose, and Stott was doubled up in a position that seemed to suggest he had recently been kicked by a mule.

Round the corner of the chapel, the hefty figure of a senior was walking away from the scene with a somewhat jaunty air that conveyed an impression of something having been attempted, something done. The hefty senior was Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form.

Horace Coker had a little habit of butting in. From the point of view of Coker, the whole wide world was waiting to be put right in various ways, and the one person in the world who possessed the qualifications for putting it to rights was Horace Coker. Consequently he had a little habit of butting in.

He had just butted in on a friendly little game of nap which the gay dogs of the Remove had been playing. Most of the Remove were playing cricket on that bright summer afternoon. Skinner & Co. preferred nap. Coker happened to walk round the chapel in the middle of the game, and as Coker disapproved of nap, Skinner & Co.'s game had come to a sudden termination.

"Well, of all the rotters——" gasped Snoop, staggering to his feet.

"Interfering brute !" hissed Harold Skinner, also getting up.

"I'd like to smash the cad!" was Stott's amiable comment as he rose painfully and joined his fellow "blades."

For gay dogs and men of the world, Skinner & Co. presented a decidedly woe-begone appearance at that moment.

"That's the second time he's gone for us this week," remarked Stott as they brushed themselves down.

"About time somebody put a stop to him I should think," said Snoop. "He's becoming a public nuisance here!"

"Somebody is going to put a stop to him before long," said Skinner darkly. "I've had enough of Coker, and I don't intend to put up with the meddlin' fool much longer!"

"Well, if you can think of a way of keeping his hands off us, I'm with you," said Stott. "What do you say, Snoopy?"

"Rather! That is, provided there's not much risk in it," added Snoop hurriedly. "Personally, I'd like to see the rotter bunked from the school!"

With that, the matter was dropped for the moment, but as the three black sheep strolled away from the scene of their discomfiture, there was a glint in Skinner's eyes that boded ill for Horace Coker, of the Fifth.

It was several days later before the subject of Coker cropped up again with Skinner & Co. Skinner, however, had by no means forgotten the cheerful Fifth-Former. The leader of the Remove "blades" had rather a long memory for injuries inflicted on his important person.

The three were having a surreptitious smoke in Study No. 11 just before bed-time one evening, when Coker was introduced into the conversation by Skinner suddenly exclaiming:

"Eureka!"

Snoop and Stott looked surprised.

"Eureka!" repeated Skinner, with a grin. "Got it! The very idea!"

"Eh?"

"Just the thing!" went on Skinner enthusiastically. "I've thought of a way to fix that idiot Coker at last."

"Oh, good!"

Snoop and Stott waited with great interest. They were as keen as Skinner on "fixing" Coker, not only because they had many old scores to wipe off, but also because Coker's interfering habits had begun to render their "sporting" proclivities decidedly dangerous at Greyfriars.

"You know how Walker, of the Sixth, and Coker love one another?" said Skinner.

Snoop and Stott chuckled. The relations of Walker and Coker, as everybody knew, were the reverse of affectionate. James Walker was a prefect, and consequently a person of importance at Greyfriars. Coker, on the other hand, though a very great man in his own estimation, was of no importance whatever in the eyes of the school, and Walker took every opportunity of making that fact clear to Coker—hence the total absence of affection between Walker and Coker.

"Well, what about it?" asked Stott.

"I'll tell you," grinned Skinner. "As we all know, Walker would certainly step in and bag Coker if he knew Coker was at the Cross Keys, down in Friardale. He'd be only too glad of the chance."

"I suppose he would," admitted Stott, staring. "But what the dickens——"

"Coker never goes near the Cross Keys, you ass!" said Snoop. "What are you getting at, Skinney?"

"Coker would jolly soon go to the Cross Keys if he thought some Greyfriars fellows were there," remarked Skinner. "He thinks it's his mission in life to go round lammin' fellows, and puttin' them on the straight and narrow path."

"But——"

"I'll explain," said Skinner, interrupting the mystified Snoop. "My idea is this: we'll let Coker overhear us plannin' to go down to the Cross Keys. The silly ass is bound to fall for it and go down there after us, but, of course, we shall take jolly good care not to go anywhere near the place."

"Oh!"

"As soon as he sets off, we'll give the wire to Walker somehow or other, and Walker will be on it like a bird. He's not the kind to inquire too deeply into a thing so long as it suits his book, and he'll be quite

satisfied to catch Coker in the place without worryin' about Coker's motives."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Coker will be caught, and brought up before the Head," went on Skinner thoughtfully. "There will be a first-class row for him, and he'll be lucky to get off with a floggin'. And, of course, if anythin' is mentioned about us, we shall be able to prove an alibi. I'll see to that all right!"

"Great Scott!"

"Well, what do you think of it?" asked Skinner. "Jolly good, don't you think?"

"Oh, rather!" gasped Stott. quite faintly. "What a fine criminal you'll make when you're a little older, old man!"

"Rats!" replied the leader of the blades cheerfully. "I think it's a stunnin' idea. I'm quite keen on it, anyway. What do you think, Snoopy?"



Skinner & Co., from behind the hedge, watched Coker tramping down Friardale Lane, wearing a heavy frown on his rugged face. (*See Chapter* 1.)

"I'm on!" said Snoop, after a little hesitation. "There's not much risk, as far as I can see, and I'm keen enough on getting Coker into trouble. Serves him right if he's sacked!"

"Hear, hear!" agreed Stott. "Count on me, Skinney!"

The three rascals of the Remove then began to discuss details of Skinner's remarkable scheme, and by bed-time everything was arranged.

The following day was Wednesday—a half-holiday at Greyfriars—and just as it happened, everything was favourable to the execution of the plan. Coker's chums, Potter and Greene, being engaged at cricket, Coker wandered idly down to the school gates, and it was while he was standing

there that Skinner, Snoop, and Stott passed, discussing in unusually loud tones the prospects of a game of billiards at the Cross Keys that afternoon.

Had Coker been of a supicious nature, he would have thought the circumstance of their discussing such shady matters aloud somewhat remarkable. But he was not, and after a few minutes' hesitation while he turned the matter over in his slow-working mind, he set out after them.

Skinner & Co., from behind a hedge, watched him tramping down Friardale Lane, wearing a heavy frown on his rugged face.

It was the work of a few minutes for Skinner & Co. to run back to Greyfriars. Luck was with them. Walker, of the Sixth, was just wheeling his bicycle across the quad. as they returned.

Skinner very quickly communicated to him the surprising news of Coker's intended visit to the Cross Keys, and Walker grinned as he listened. Walker knew well enough that Coker was not the kind of fellow to indulge in that sort of thing, and it was quite obvious to him that some "frame-up" had been arranged.

But Skinner had correctly judged the mentality of the Sixth-Former. Walker, as Skinner had guessed, was only too glad of a chance to "down" his old enemy, and within ten minutes of Coker's exit, he was cycling down Friardale Lane, in the direction of the Cross Keys.

THE SECOND CHAPTER
Coker at the Cross Keys!

"My dear Coker——"

Coker frowned.

He had just reached the Cross Keys, at Friardale, and was about to enter that dingy inn, when the thin voice of Alonzo Todd, of the Remove at Greyfriars, fell on his ears.

The benevolent Alonzo had spotted him from the other side of the road, and had hastened across, his lean face wearing an expression of dismay.

"My dear Coker!" repeated the duffer of Greyfriars, laying a gentle hand on Coker's arm. "My dear, dear Coker! Thank Heaven I am not too late!"

"What the thump——"

Coker stared at Alonzo in surprise.

"I am shocked to think that you, Coker, should be taking the broad way that leads to destruction," said Alonzo, in tones of deep concern. "Pause, Coker—pause and consider, I beg of you, before you take one step farther!"

"M-my hat!" stuttered Coker, turning quite red. "You—you cheeky fag! What the dickens do you mean?"

"Think of your home, your innocent youth!" urged the duffer, quite dramatically. "Think of your dear schoolfellows, playing with the bat and ball, and perchance such thoughts will drive from you the desire to enter this place!"

"Why, you fatheaded chump, do you think I am going in here on the razzle?" Coker asked.

"I had thought, my dear Coker——"

"Well, have another think, then!" suggested Coker. "In any case, I don't want fags like you giving me pi-jaw; but, as a matter of fact, I'm going in here after some of your inky Remove pals who are acting the goat. And when I get 'em, I'm going to knock their silly young heads together as they've never been knocked before!"

"Dear me!" said the duffer, greatly shocked. "I am grieved beyond measure to know that schoolfellows of mine should be guilty of such a misdemeanour. Pray do not use violence, Coker. When you find them, urge them to come to my study. I will hasten to pass on some excellent advice my Uncle Benjamin has sent me for their benefit."

Shaking his head very gravely, Alonzo Todd moved off in the direction of Greyfriars, while Coker, with a chuckle, entered the Cross Keys.

A few minutes later, Walker, of the Sixth, dismounted from his bicycle and followed in the track of Coker.

The first person Coker met in the Cross Keys was Mr. Cobb, the landlord of the place. That bloated gentleman looked at him with a good deal of surprise. Horace Coker was not one of the select circle that went to the Cross Keys, and Mr. Cobb had

not previously had the pleasure of his acquaintance.

"'Afternoon, sir," remarked Mr. Cobb civilly.

"Are you the landlord of this dingy den?" asked Coker, without wasting time on formalities.

Mr. Cobb bristled.

"If you're referring to this 'ere 'ouse ——" he began.

"Cut it out!" snapped Coker, with scant politeness. "I haven't come here to talk about the rotten place, anyway. I've come here for three silly young idiots from the school who are playing billiards here. Show me where they are!"

"Ho! So that's it, is it?" growled Mr. Cobb, eyeing Coker truculently. "Well, you can take it from me I don't allow any schoolboys on these 'ere premises, Mister Nosey Parker, and there ain't any from the school 'ere now! Hop it!"

"I don't believe you!" declared Coker, ignoring the hint. "I'm going to see your billiards-room before I leave this place! Where is it?"

Mr. Cobb considered for a moment. Coker was big and authoritative in his manner. He might be a prefect, in which case it would be wise to keep on the right side of him. As it happened, nobody from Greyfriars had come along for a surreptitious game of billiards that day, and there was therefore an opportunity for Mr. Cobb to earn an official reputation as one who did not encourage schoolboys in his billiards-room. Mr. Cobb came to the conclusion that it would be wisest to let Coker have his way.

"You can 'ave a look round, then, if you won't take my word for it," he grunted at last. "There's the billiards-room over there, and you can search the rest of the house, too, if you want to!"

"That's better!" said Coker, and he crossed over to the door which Mr. Cobb had indicated, and flung it open, fully expecting, in spite of the innkeeper's statement, that Skinner & Co. would be there.

To his surprise, however, the "blades" of the Remove were conspicuous only by their absence. The billiards-room, in fact, was completely deserted.

"Well, I'm dashed!" exclaimed Coker, very much taken aback. "I—I could have been sure they would have been here. I distinctly heard them say——"

Coker did not complete that sentence. While he was talking a hand was placed on his broad shoulder, and, swinging round, he found himself staring into the mocking face of James Walker, of the Sixth.

"Neat capture, what?" remarked Walker, with a sneering grin. "I didn't suspect you spent your half-holidays here, Coker. Having a merry old time, what?"

"What do you mean?" growled Coker, jerking himself free, and bestowing a glare on his old enemy. "What the dickens are you doing here, Walker?"

"I rather fancy that's the question you'll have to answer when I report this to the Head," replied Walker. "I saw you enter this place as I was cycling past, and, being a prefect, I naturally came in after you."

"Oh, you did, did you?" snorted Coker. "Well, now that you've come in, you'd better get out again. I can get on very well without you!"

Prefects held no terrors for Coker, of the Fifth, and Coker had no intention of humiliating himself by explaining the position to Walker.

"Better come along now," advised Walker, still grinning mockingly. "I hate to do it, of course, but I shall have to report a matter like this to the Head without delay. I suppose you've got no excuse?"

"That's my business," grunted Coker. "Don't think because you're a prefect that you can question me, Walker, because you can't! Any cheek from you, and I'll jolly soon punch you on the nose!"

"Oh!" gasped Walker.

That was about all Walker could say in the circumstances.

During the little dialogue between Walker and Coker, Mr. Cobb stood by, with a sour smile on his face. Walker was not unknown to him, although, of course, he had to conceal that fact while Coker was present.

"I hope you young gents are not goin'

to bring my name into any row that's on," he said as Walker, with a shrug, moved towards the entrance again.

Walker reassuringly closed one eye, and Mr. Cobb grinned, more or less satisfied.

"Follow on when you like, Coker!" called out Walker as he departed. "I warn you I'm going to report this matter to the Head at once, anyway."

"Report—and be blowed!" said Coker cheerfully. "If you're idiot enough to think I'm a visitor at this dingy hole, you deserve a dressing-down from the Head—and that's all you'll get for your trouble!"

Walker quitted the inn, and a few minutes later Coker, on considering the turn things had taken, decided to follow him back to Greyfriars, in order to straighten things out with the Head.

THE THIRD CHAPTER
A Shock for Coker!

COKER, with his customary self-confidence, did not imagine that it would be a very difficult task to straighten things out with the Head.

As it happened, it was not so easy a matter as Coker had imagined.

Walker, on reaching Greyfriars, walked straight up to the Head's study, and, assuming an air of grave perturbation, went in to report his discovery of a Fifth-Former entering premises that were strictly out of bounds.

The Head did not, as Coker had indicated, give Walker a dressing-down. Dr. Locke, as a matter of fact, knew far less about Coker than that self-important individual thought, and, although it was a shock to the worthy old gentleman to learn of Coker visiting the Cross Keys, it was only the same kind of shock as he would have felt had it been anyone else at Greyfriars—no more, no less. Walker was a prefect, and the Head accepted his version of the affair almost without question.

When Coker came back to Greyfriars, he soon learned that Walker had done as he had threatened.

"Which the 'Ead wants you at once, Master Coker!" called out Gosling as Coker strode through the gate. "And wot I say is this 'ere——"

Coker didn't wait to hear what Gosling had to say. He was half-way across the quad. before Gosling had finished his sentence.

Walker was in the Head's study as Coker entered. Coker gave the black sheep of the Sixth a glare, which Walker received with the same expression of owl-like gravity which he had chosen to assume when he first entered the study.

"Ah! You have come, Coker!" said the Head, his glance dwelling sternly on the truculent-looking Fifth-Former. "Doubtless you have guessed the reason for my sending for you. Walker has reported ——"

"Walker is a silly ass, sir!"

"Coker!" exclaimed the Head, quite shocked.

"Walker knows jolly well I wasn't in the Cross Keys, playing the fool!" said Coker warmly. "I didn't choose to explain things to him. I don't think much of Walker, as a matter of fact——"

"Coker! How dare you!" gasped Dr. Locke.

"But now that the idiot has seen fit to bring it before you, I don't mind explaining," said Coker generously.

"Dear me!" said the Head, gazing at Coker in perplexity.

"As a matter of fact, I went in there to turf out some juniors I thought were playing billiards there," explained Coker.

"Indeed! And since when have you taken on the duties of a prefect?" demanded Dr. Locke, frowning at Coker, in evident doubt. "If what you tell me is correct, why did you not report the matter to a prefect?"

"I thought I could manage a matter like that quite as well as Walker, sir—probably better," explained Coker, bestowing another glare on Walker.

"That is not for you to say, Coker!" retorted the Head. "And whom, may I ask, did you expect to find at the Cross Keys this afternoon?"

"H'm!"

Coker hesitated. Officious and interfering he might be, but he was not a sneak, and he did not feel particularly like divulging the names of the juniors for whom he had been searching at the Cross Keys—more especially in view of the fact that he had not succeeded in finding them.

Besides, for the first time, Coker began to have doubts. Possibly he had misunderstood what they were saying. They had certainly mentioned billiards and the Cross Keys, but there was just a chance—a bare possibility—that he had not heard aright, and that Skinner & Co. had been talking about someone else. Certainly it was curious that there had been no sign of them when he arrived.

If they were innocent of any intention of breaking bounds, then they would very quickly establish their innocence. And if they were guilty, but had somehow slipped away in time, they would certainly deny all Coker's allegations, and probably come forward with a complete alibi.

As Coker stood there pondering, he started. It was all very strange—Skinner & Co.'s disappearance and Walker's sudden entry. He remembered two recent occasions when he had expressed his disapproval of Skinner & Co. in no uncertain fashion, and felt sure that if they could find a way of paying him out they would. Was it possible that it was all a "frame-up"?

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Coker as that dreadful thought entered his head.

"Well, Coker, I am waiting," said the Head, eyeing Coker with deep suspicion.

"I—I——" Coker's voice had become quite thick.

The thought that he might have fallen into a trap laid by his enemies overwhelmed him for a moment. Considerations of schoolboy honour had to go now.

"I expected to see Skinner, Snoop, and Stott," he muttered.

"And did you see them?"



"My dear Coker!" exclaimed Alonzo Todd, laying a gentle hand on Coker's arms
"My dear, dear Coker! Thank Heaven, I am not too late!" (*See Chapter* 2.)

"No, sir."

The Head compressed his lips grimly. and rang the bell for Trotter, the page.

"Find Skinner, Snoop, and Stott, of the Remove Form, and send them to me, Trotter!" he ordered when Trotter appeared.

Trotter withdrew, and there was silence in the room for several minutes, the Head gazing gravely out of the window, Walker looking calm and serious, and Coker fidgeting uncomfortably, and trying to analyse with his slow brain exactly what his present position was.

Very soon the three rascals of the Remove came in, Skinner looking meek and respectful, and Snoop and Stott doing their best to appear a little surprised and extremely innocent.

The Head did not beat about the bush.

"Coker here informs me that it was your intention this afternoon to play billiards on premises which everybody knows to be out of bounds. I refer to the Cross Keys," he said.

"The Cross Keys!" echoed Skinner, his eyes opening wide in well-acted surprise. "Coker must be dreaming, sir! We've been watching the cricket all the afternoon —haven't we, you chaps?"

The "chaps" appealed to confirmed that statement with vigorous nods.

"What were you talking about, then, when you went out of the school gates this afternoon?" demanded Coker angrily.

"We haven't been out of gates!" said Skinner, without turning a hair. "Anyone who's been on Little Side will tell you that."

Coker realised, with a fresh shock, that there had been nobody else about when Skinner & Co. went out. The cads of the school had chosen their time well. Even Gosling had been nowhere to be seen.

Coker gave a growl like an angry mastiff.

"Why, you——"

"Silence, Coker!" broke in Dr. Locke sternly. "All your bluster is merely adding to the profound suspicion I feel in regard to your statements. I demand silence while I go into this matter thoroughly."

Dr. Locke duly obtained silence, and duly went into the matter. But the result was the reverse of what Coker had confidently anticipated.

Within two hours of his visit to the Cross Keys, Horace Coker, of the Fifth, was pacing the punishment-room, awaiting the verdict of the Head. And by that time the realisation had been forced on him that he was booked for one of two things—expulsion from Greyfriars, or a flogging and a long period of detention—neither of which appealed in any way whatsoever to Coker. Coker had been in many scrapes in the course of his stormy career at Greyfriars, but it was doubtful whether he had ever before been in such a scrape as this!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER
Alonzo Comes In Useful!

"THE footling chump!"

"The idiot!"

Potter and Greene were sitting in Study No. 4 of the Fifth-Form passage, discussing, in those uncomplimentary terms, their leader and study-mate, Horace Coker.

The news of Coker's downfall had spread through Greyfriars like wildfire, and the whole school had been staggered to hear that Coker stood convicted of frequenting the Cross Keys. All sorts of remarkable rumours were flying about. Potter and Greene, however, were in possession of authentic news, Potter having been up to the punishment room and listened to Coker shouting his version of the affair through the thickness of the stout oak door.

Most of the school, though surprised, were willing to admit that what was good enough for the Head was good enough for them. If Dr. Locke believed that Coker had been "blagging" down at the Cross Keys, then Coker had been "blagging," and there was nothing further to be said. It was regrettable and surprising. but there could be no douht about its being true.

Potter and Greene, on the other hand, accepted Coker's story without question. As Greene said, they knew that Coker was

several sorts of an ass, but he wasn't that sort.

"If only he wouldn't be so keen on minding other people's business——" said Potter.

"If only he had one grain of savvy——" said Greene.

"But he won't, and he hasn't!" finished Potter. "And I suppose it's up to us to save the old duffer if we can!"

"Hear, hear!" agreed Greene cordially. "We should miss him, you know, if he were bunked."

Potter nodded.

"It would be a good miss in some ways," he said, with a faint smile. "But in others ——"

"In the grub he buys, for instance, and the treats he stands," murmured Greene thoughtfully.

"Exactly! I really think we ought to do our best for him."

"Quite! The question is, what the dickens are we to do, and how the thump are we going to do it? Come in, fathead!"

The polite invitation at the end of Greene's speech was in answer to a tap on the study door.

The two Fifth-Formers looked round in surprise as the door opened, and Alonzo Todd, of the Remove, walked in. Alonzo was the last person in Greyfriars they expected to see in Study No. 4.

The duffer of Greyfriars advanced to the study table, and relieved himself of the burden of a pile of little pamphlets he was carrying.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed. "I expected to find Coker here. Can you, by any chance, inform me of his present whereabouts?"

Potter and Greene grinned.

"Mean to say you haven't heard?" asked Potter. "I imagined they knew all about it even in Timbuctoo by this time!"

"I fear that I do not altogether comprehend——"



"Which the 'Ead wants you at once, Master Coker!" called out Gosling. "And wot I says is this 'ere-—— " (*See Chapter* 3.)

"Here, cut it short!" interrupted Greene. "No need to make a speech about it, you know. Where have you been for the last two hours that you haven't heard?"

"I have been up in the box-room, inspecting my stock of uplifting literature," explained Alonzo. "But what——"

"And you've brought it to Coker?" asked Potter, staring.

"No; I desired Coker to indicate the names of some misguided schoolfellows of ours whom he was endeavouring to lead back to the path of rectitude this afternoon. I am not aware whether Coker mentioned the matter to you——"

"Great Scott, Greeney! Here's a clue!" exclaimed Potter. "Look here, young Todd, do you really know nothing about what has happened to Coker?"

"I do not comprehend the precise nature of your interrogation," said Alonzo, a little puzzled. "I saw Coker in Friardale this afternoon——"

"Did you, by Jove? Where was he?"

"He was about to enter a house of alcoholic refreshment," replied Alonzo guilelessly. "He appeared to be in a state of righteous indignation, and he indicated to me that he suspected some Form-mates of mine of being within the house, and intended to apply physical violence to them."

"My hat! Just what we wanted!" gasped Greene.

"The very thing!" agreed Potter excitedly. "Coker must have forgotten running into this walking dictionary, or he'd have had him before the beak to give evidence!"

"My dear Greene——"

"Did you happen to spot Walker, of the Sixth?" asked Potter as a sudden idea occurred to him.

"Yes. On my journey back to Greyfriars, I passed him, cycling in Friardale Lane. But pray tell me——"

"And that was after Coker had gone into the Cross Keys?" pursued Potter.

"About three or four minutes after, I should think," said Alonzo, completely mystified by all these questions.

"Proof conclusive that Walker's an untruther," grinned Potter, with great satisfaction. "Walker's yarn is that he spotted Coker going in."

"That's true," said Greene, getting to his feet. "Great pip! It strikes me Coker is as good as cleared. "Let's yank this chap along to the Head, and see how he takes it!"

"My dear fellows—— Ow! Ooch!" yelled Alonzo as the two hefty Fifth-Formers seized him. "Pray release me! Grooogh!"

Potter and Greene were too excited to take any notice of Alonzo's protests. They bundled him out of the study, and rushed him along the Fifth-Form passage towards the stairs leading to the lower floors, attracting quite a lot of attention by their wild career.

They did not pause until the Head's study was reached, by which time Alonzo hardly knew whether he was on his head or his heels.

Dr. Locke was very much surprised and disturbed when he heard Alonzo's account of his meeting with Coker. Alonzo Todd was the last fellow in Greyfriars who could be suspected of deceit, and the Head was willing to believe his story.

The fact that Coker had told Todd that he was after suspected Remove fellows threw rather a different light on the whole affair. Evidently Coker had not invented that yarn for the Head's benefit. And Todd's insistence on the righteous wrath of Coker rather impressed Dr. Locke. That worthy gentleman began to think he had acted a little hastily. Obviously the case was not so simple as he had imagined. If Coker's version was true, then Skinner & Co. had not been altogether truthful, and Walker had either been misrepresenting the facts or else had been mistaken. Dr. Locke felt very concerned about the matter.

Before bed-time that night the whole thing had been gone into afresh, and Walker, Skinner, Snoop, and Stott spent a very uncomfortabe hour in the Head's study, doing their best to make out a case for themselves, while Coker, silent for once under the stern scrutiny of the Head, smiled grimly to himself.

"A very unsatisfactory state of affairs," was the Head's comment in the end. "Certainly there is not sufficient evidence to prove it, but it looks very much as though you Remove boys deliberately plotted the entire thing. I hope I am wrong. The circumstances are so uncertain that I cannot very well punish you, but I warn you that

I shall watch you very carefully for the future. You may go!"

Skinner & Co., looking quite scared, went.

"As to you, Coker," said the Head when Walker also had departed, "sorry as I am to have been unjust to you this afternoon, I must say that your behaviour is such that I can hardly wonder at any trouble that comes to you."

"Oh, sir!"

"It is quite obvious to me, from the attitude taken up both by Walker and the Remove boys, that you are officious and interfering in your ways!" said the Head severely. "It would seem that you consider yourself to be of the same standing as a prefect. Naturally, such behaviour arouses resentment in other boys."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Kindly remember for the future that, although you enjoy naturally the privileges of the seniority associated with membership of the Fifth Form, you have no official control over any other boys in the school," said the Head sharply. "If ever a case is brought to my notice where you seek to assume such control, I shall deal with you most severely, Coker!"

"But, sir——"

"Silence! I do not think this unsavoury business needs any further discussion! You may go, Coker!"

The Head's warnings had three effects. In the first place, Skinner & Co. for some time after were very careful to keep out of the way of Dr. Locke. Secondly, Walker dropped his shady ways for a while, and endeavoured, by a great show of studiousness, to retain the Head's good opinion. Thirdly—and possibly most important—for a short period Coker kept surprisingly quiet, and for once in his life stopped making a habit of trying to put the world to rights!



Heedless of Alonzo Todd's protests, Potter and Greene bundled him out of the study, and rushed him along the Fifth-Form passage, attracting quite a lot of attention by their wild career.

However regrettable the affair had been in some ways, it had had the very gratifying result of providing a lesson for Coker.

But it was demanding too much of Horace Coker to expect that the lesson would be a lasting one. It wasn't, by any means; for three weeks later the great Horace was again "butting" into matters that did not concern him in the least—with results that were distinctly painful for Coker!

Still, as Potter remarked to Greene, "Coker would always be Coker as long as the world turned round"—a remark with which Greene fully agreed.

THE END



Dr. HOLMES



MONTY LOWTHER



ERIC KILDARE



GEORGE FIGGINS



TOM MERRY



ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY.



JACK BLAKE



HARRY MANNERS



BAGGY TRIMBLE

"Leading Lights" AT ST. JIM'S SCHOOL



MR. SELBY OF THE THIRD



DICK REDFERN



MARTHA TAGGLES (TUCK-SHOP KEEPER.)



PERCY MELLISH



RALPH CARDEW



AUBREY RACKE



HARRY NOBLE

MR. RATCLIFF

ERNEST LEVISON

FATTY WYNN

GERALD KNOX



Famous Fights at St. Jim's!

By George Darrell

Details of Fights of Bygone Days, that live in the Memory of Old Boys, have been Garnered and Set Down here by a St. Jim's Sixth-Former.

In the historic walls of the school gymnasium could speak, what a host of thrilling stories they would relate! Stories of grim glove-fights between bitter foes; stories of gruelling boxing-bouts for cups and championships; stories of courage, and endurance, and endeavour—qualities which have been possessed and demonstrated by St. Jim's fellows throughout the generations.

The gymnasium walls cannot speak; but I can speak for them by proxy, as it were. I can tell of some of the famous fights that have been fought in the gym.—and in less public places. For my information on this subject I am indebted to many Old Boys who were either eye-witnesses of the fights, or participants in them, and who love to talk over old times when they revisit St. Jim's.

An Epic Struggle!

None of the present masters at St. Jim's is old enough to remember the fight between Ransome and Raikes, of the Sixth; and the present generation of pupils was unborn. But the fight is still fresh in the memories of some of the older Old Boys, who never tire of describing it. Truly it was a terrific business.

We find Roderick Ransome, Captain of St. Jim's, tall as a Viking, handsome in a manly way, and the idol of the fags, challenging Peter Raikes, six feet of strength and sinew, and a blustering bully into the bargain, to a fight in the gym. Raikes had long been the terror of the smaller fry at St. Jim's; indeed, he was feared and hated throughout the school because of his uncurbed brutality. Ransome saw that the fellow would have to be put in his place; and in order to do this he must choose between reporting him to the Head or making him suffer the humiliation of a public thrashing in the gym.

Ransome chose the latter course. He threw down the gauntlet, and Raikes accepted the challenge with alacrity. He had such confidence in his giant's strength

that he foresaw no difficulty in trouncing the captain of the school; and he rather gloried in the prospect, having some old scores to settle with Ransome.

The fight was governed by two conditions. It was to be fought with bare fists, and also to a finish, there being no limit to the number of rounds. Such an encounter smacks of the old Corinthian days; certainly it would not be permitted to take place to-day. Perhaps we have grown "softer"; but I prefer to think we have grown more civilised.

The gym. was packed to suffocation, and Ransome was cheered to the echo when he stepped into the ring. Not so Raikes, who was received in chilling silence. Grenfell of the Sixth was referee; and it was expected that he would have to caution Raikes for employing unfair tactics. To do the bully justice, however, he fought fairly and cleanly throughout, albeit very fiercely.

Ransome was a fine boxer, quick on his feet, and possessed of a powerful punch. But he had need of all his skill and resource in the earlier rounds, when he was hard pressed, and withstood any amount of punishment. His chums were very anxious as to the issue, for Raikes was fighting like a giant. His energy seemed dynamic, his powers of endurance inexhaustible. He was impatient of the intervals between the rounds, whereas Ransome could not have carried on without them. Six rounds were fought out, and the captain of St. Jim's was getting much the worst of the argument. But his pluck was indomitable.

In the seventh round, Ransome whipped up his flagging energies, and fought like a fellow inspired. Raikes, astonished by this unexpected revival on the part of his opponent, was driven round the ring under a relentless rain of blows. The tide had turned, now, in Ransome's favour, and he gave his man no quarter. A powerful drive between the eyes caused Raikes to rock on his feet; but before Ransome could deliver the upper-cut which was to have followed the bell rang to signify the end of the round —and Raikes was saved.

The next two rounds saw plenty of give-and-take fighting. Raikes had rallied from his bad spell, and was holding his own again. Both combatants were considerably the worse for wear. Ransome's lip was cut and swollen, and an ominous bruise was forming on his forehead. Raikes had temporarily lost the use of his left eye, besides suffering other facial injuries. The referee seriously debated whether he ought to stop the fight. He decided to give it one more round, and it was fortunate that he did so, for the tenth round brought matters to a climax.

Ransome fought magnificently. He saw that Raikes was tiring, and he hammered home his advantage. First he pummelled his opponent severely about the body; and then, after brief reprisals by Raikes, the captain of St. Jim's sailed right in, and floored his man with a terrific drive to the jaw. Raikes went down, and stayed down, and the Homeric tussle was over.

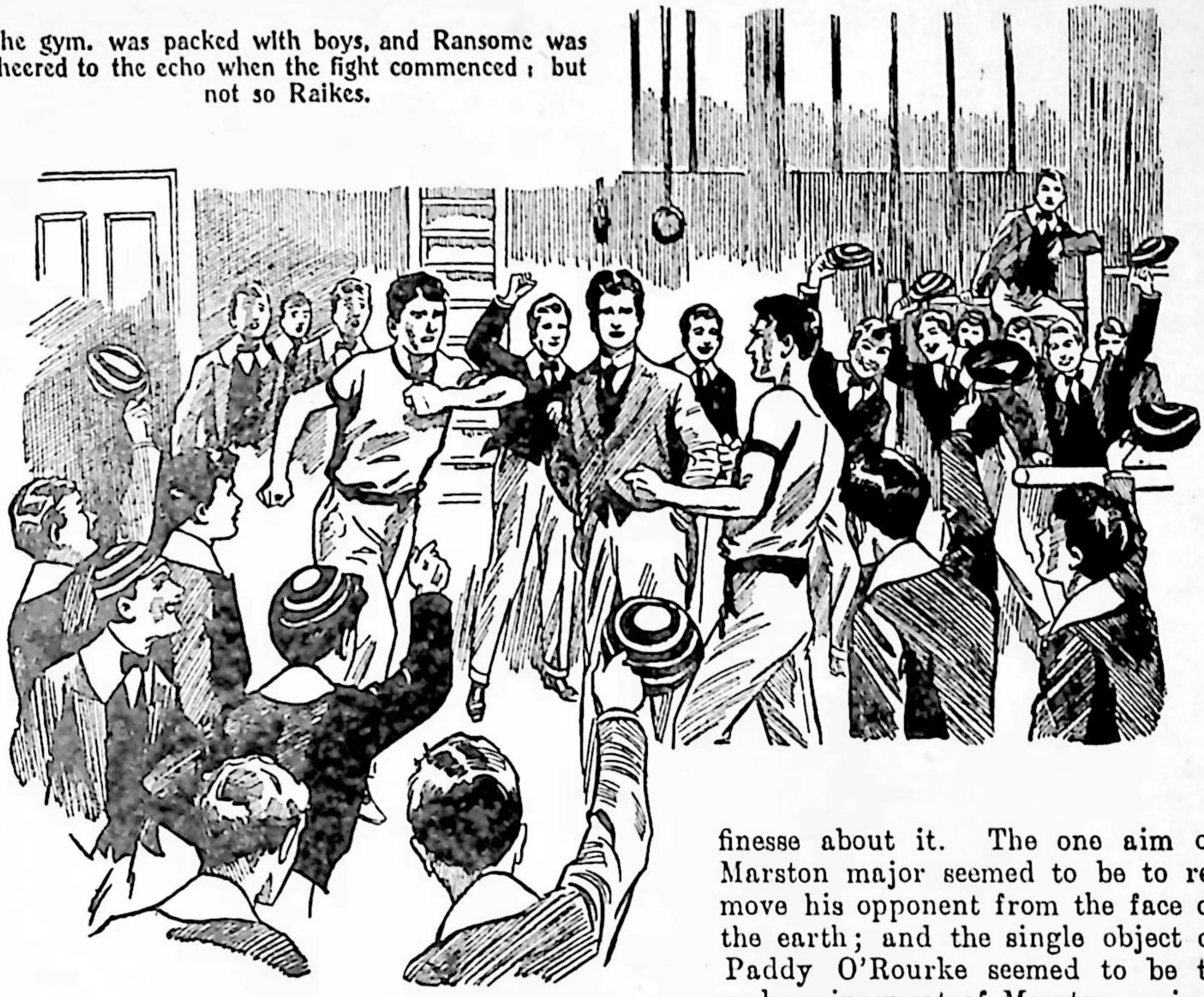
The result of the fight was to inspire Raikes with a wholesome respect for his conqueror. He dropped his bullying ways, and was agreeably surprised to find that the school held him in higher esteem than it had previously done. He backed up the captain in matters of administration, and in time became almost as popular as Ransome himself.

The Pluck of Paddy O'Rourke!

SIX-FORMERS were again the belligerents in a great fight which took place some years after the Ransome-Raikes affair. It must not be supposed that members of the Sixth, which is the Palladium of a Public-school, are always "scrapping." On the contrary, tussles between Sixth Form men are so infrequent that the few which have occurred stand out in the memory. There have been hundreds of junior fights, but these were everyday occurrences, and therefore attracted little notice.

Paddy O'Rourke was a big, loose-limbed, good-humoured son of Erin—quite a charming fellow, but a very demon when roused. The exact cause of his quarrel with Marston

The gym. was packed with boys, and Ransome was cheered to the echo when the fight commenced ; but not so Raikes.



major is not definitely known. It was a long time ago, and the event is wrapped in obscurity. But, although the cause of the fight has been forgotten, the fight itself remains fresh in the memory of Old Boys. It took place, not in the gym., but behind the chapel—a spot where St. Jim's fellows have settled their differences from time immemorial.

Marston major was even more burly than Paddy O'Rourke. He was a great hulk of a fellow, and his reputation as a fighting-man was unique. When a Fifth-Former, he had fought twelve fights in one term, and had won the lot with consummate ease. His fight with Paddy O'Rourke was the first and last in which he engaged since his promotion to the Sixth.

It was a wild and whirling scrap. Science was thrown to the winds and there was no finesse about it. The one aim of Marston major seemed to be to remove his opponent from the face of the earth; and the single object of Paddy O'Rourke seemed to be to make mincemeat of Marston major!

Jove, how they fought! The crowd watched as if spellbound. It was indeed a battle of giants, and sledge-hammer blows were dealt out by each of the combatants. It lasted twenty minutes; and there is no knowing how long it might have lasted had not Authority, in the person of the Head, put in a timely appearance. After ten minutes' fierce fighting, O'Rourke's right arm was rendered limp and useless; but despite this handicap he fought on, as only a fiery Irishman can fight, and the crowd roared its approval of his pluck.

It was probably their roar which brought the headmaster on the scene. Marston major ceased fighting at once; but it took a moment or two to subdue Paddy O'Rourke, whose fighting spirit was roused to concert-pitch.

The Head held an inquiry into the matter, and the two seniors were deposed from their

prefectship. Perhaps they were fortunate to escape a more severe punishment. Old Boys still talk of that terrific scrap; and the expression, "As plucky as Paddy O'Rourke," has been handed down through the generations, and is still sometimes heard at St. Jim's.

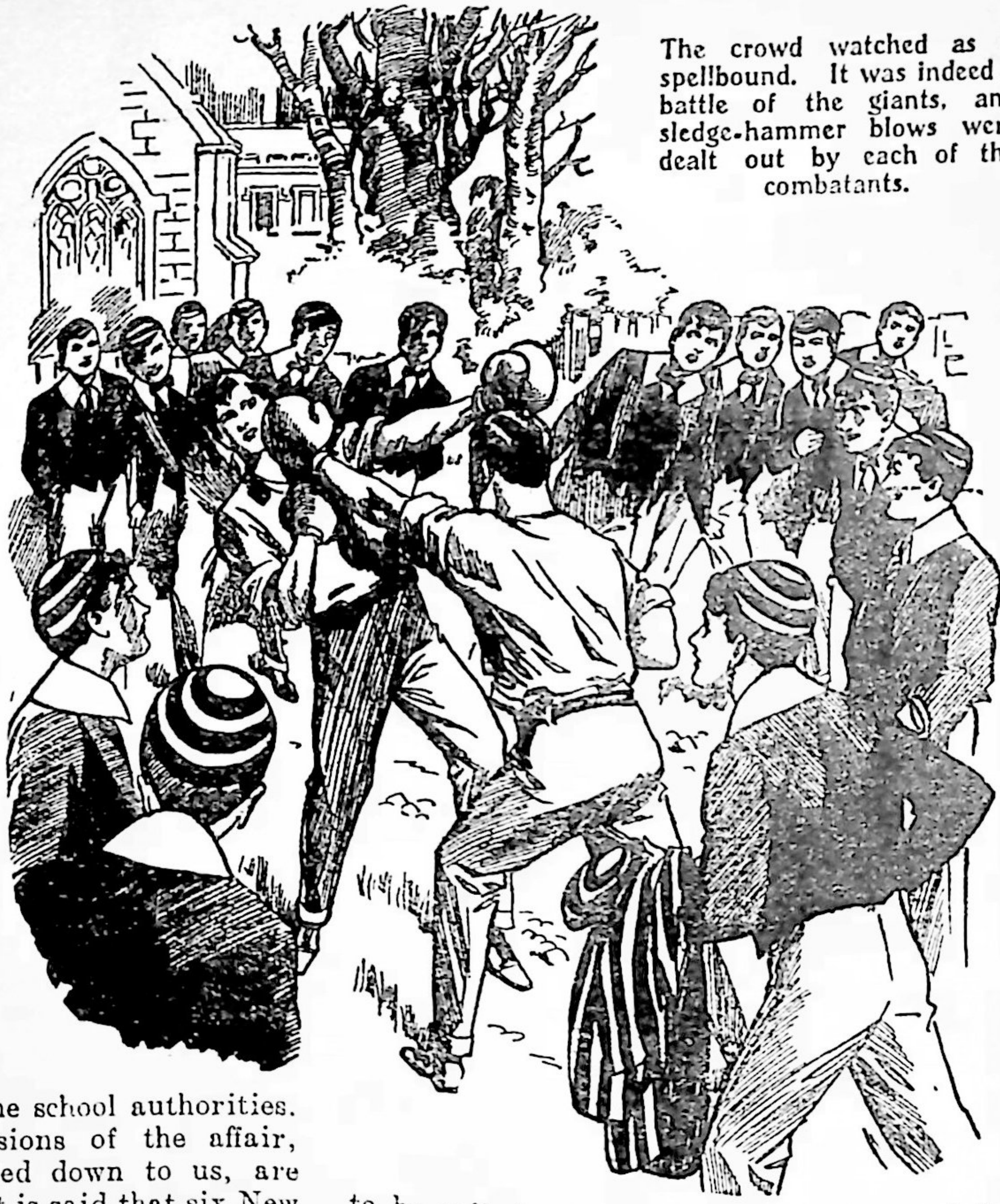
The Battle of Wayland Wood!

THIS historic event took place in 1901, when the New House at St. Jim's had only just been built.

Many are the legends which have gathered about this episode. It was a battle royal between the juniors of both Houses; and it was a very fierce and determined battle, fought in the heart of the wood, with no risk of interference from the school authorities. But some of the versions of the affair, which have been handed down to us, are grossly exaggerated. It is said that six New House fellows, and four School House juniors, were so badly injured in the affray that they had to be taken to hospital. Another account insists that sticks were used in the fray.

This is sheer nonsense. Of course, there were injuries on both sides, but nothing more serious than blackened eyes and swollen noses—the inevitable sequel to schoolboy warfare. Nobody was conveyed to hospital, or even to the school "sanny." As for sticks being used, such a display of ruffianism would have been quite foreign to the natures of St. Jim's fellows.

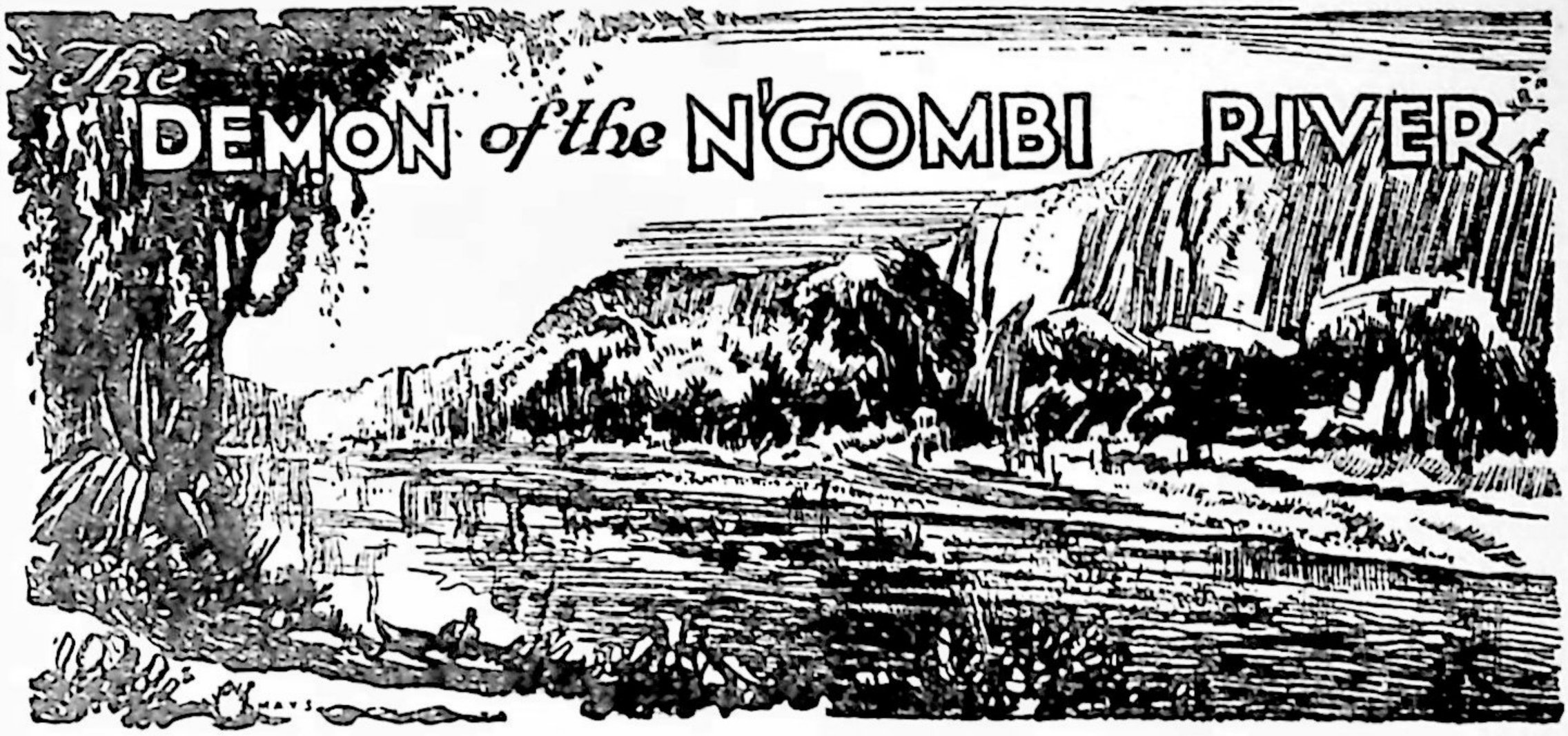
The Battle of Wayland Wood, as it came



The crowd watched as if spellbound. It was indeed a battle of the giants, and sledge-hammer blows were dealt out by each of the combatants.

to be called, lasted about an hour; and it was the climax to a long and deadly feud between the rival Houses. The School House challenged the New House to a pitched battle in the wood; the challenge was taken up; and on the next half-holiday everybody wondered where the juniors of both Houses had got to! The young rascals were fighting hammer-and-tongs, and the School House, by virtue of superior numbers, won the day.

A description of all the famous schoolboy fights associated with St. Jim's would fill a good-sized volume. I have only been able to touch upon one or two; but I feel sure these accounts will be of interest to readers of HOLIDAY ANNUAL.



A Thrilling Adventure Story Staged in the Wilds of East Africa

By CECIL FANSHAW

THE FIRST CHAPTER
A Shock for Piet Merwe !

"I WONDER what the dickens is wrong with that river, Harry, that makes coast natives scared to row up here?" Sid Gibson frowned thoughtfully as he stared at the broad N'gombi River, which flowed slowly between bush-clad banks. "If we could scotch the mystery, I bet uncle's trading-store would double its profits in no time."

Harry Gibson, tall Sid's younger brother, let out a laugh. Round-faced and cheeky-looking, young Harry made light of mysteries, even in East Africa.

"We'll scotch it, Sid!" he grinned. "Sharks are the trouble, I'll bet."

"Sharks can't empty canoes, you chump!" Sid snorted. "But natives say they've found their friends' canoes floating empty, so they won't come up here any more. It's the deuce!"

"Crocs or hippos, then?" suggested the younger lad.

"There are no crocs near the mouth of the N'gombi and no hippos either!" retorted Sid. "And we've never seen anything queer when we run down to sea in the trading-schooner. The coast natives yarn about a demon."

"Native mumbo jumbo!" Harry grinned.

"I'm not so sure."

"Well," exclaimed Harry, "I vote we take the schooner directly we can find time and go demon hunting! Show the black fellows there's really nothing to be scared of, and they'll fairly flock up to trade. I'm game to tackle any sort of demon to help Uncle George," he added warmly.

"Same here!" said Sid, and he gazed from the river to the boulder-strewn kopjes, towering up amongst the bush on the farther bank. What on earth was wrong? he wondered.

All around the two brothers, who wore shirts, shorts, and puttees, and floppy felt sun-hats, was a sea of flat-topped mimosa bush, with red sand under foot. Above the thorny mimosas, vivid green after recent rains, thrust steep rocky kopjes, where baboons barked by day and lions and leopards hunted by night.

It was a brilliant scene, with gorgeous flowers in the rocky crevices, and the sun flaming in a cloudless blue sky. There was no sound except the droning hum of the

N'gombi River, the bark of a baboon, and the scream of an eagle wheeling overhead. All seemed peaceful, but the two brothers frowned in bewilderment. The success of the sisal plantation and trading-store owned by their uncle, old George Gibson, was threatened by the mystery terror of the river.

Situated on the bank of the N'gombi River, the plantation was about ten miles inland from the rocky East African coast.

Annually the small crop of sisal, a cactus-like plant from which fibre rope is made, was run down to the sea in old Gibson's schooner, to be sold at coast towns down south. But there were few native kraals near the plantation, and, since coast natives feared to row up the N'gombi, the store was doing very little trade.

"We must get at the mystery, or we'll all go broke," remarked Sid. "The sooner the——"

"Getting in the sisal crop could wait a day or two," Harry cried eagerly. "Hallo!" He broke off. "What's all that row about?"

To the ears of both lads came the sound of voices raised in anger from the direction of the homestead, mingled with the furious barking of a dog. They distinguished their uncle's crisp tones, the hoarse, guttural voice of a stranger, and the chatter of several natives.

"Come on, Harry!" snapped Sid. "It sounds to me like a Boer butting in and getting nasty about something."

"Then we'll jolly soon shift the bounder!" cried Harry.

The brothers raced through the thorny green mimosa, red dust flying from their heels, and burst out into a big clearing to see the homestead, where they lived with their uncle.

The clearing was planted with long rows of sisal shrubs; a stone-walled, iron-roofed bungalow stood in the centre, with the domed thatched huts of the native workers in the background. In front of the bungalow the two lads saw their uncle, old George Gibson, bony, grizzled, and sun-bronzed. They saw he was confronted by a burly white man, who wore long trousers thrust into knee-boots, a battered sombrero, and a pistol on his hip, and who had a following of four natives in savage war-paint. Angrily the voices rose on the heat-laden air.

"What's wrong, uncle?" yelled Sid.

At the lad's shout the befeathered natives, who were bronzed, muscular Masai, armed with spears and shields, spun round abruptly. The huge, bearded white man also swung round, and the fact that he was a Boer was revealed by his first words.

"Machtig!" He exploded, his little eyes flaming. "You cubs clear out quick, or I vos set der Masai to beat you off. Ja! I haf come to talk business. Footsack!"

"Footsack yourself!" Sid retorted. "What's the fellow want, uncle?"

"The schooner, my lad." Old Gibson laughed shortly.

"Our trading-schooner?" cried Harry. "What a nerve!"

"He won't have it, my boy!" said old Gibson firmly, his lean face red with anger. "I won't take his money, and I'm not scared of his threats."

Round on old Gibson whirled the hefty Boer.

"Und I vos say I will haf the schooner!" he bellowed, his black beard bristling. "Not another can be bought for three hundred miles! I offer you sixty pounds!"

"It's not for sale!" snapped old Gibson. "That's final!"

"One hundred pounds!" roared the Boer.

"No; not at any price!"

"One hundred and fifty!"

"Get out!" barked old Gibson as Sid and Harry stood by with fists clenched. "I don't know why you offer twice its value, but——"

"Ja! I go!" The Boer gulped maliciously. "But I go with der schooner! Run, you black dogs!" he barked fiercely at his Masai followers. "Get aboard der schooner while I drive these 'rooineks' indoors!" And out came his heavy pistol.

Then things happened at racing speed.

With whoops of glee, the feathered Masai made to dash off to the trading-schooner,



Teeth clashing as he bounded in and out, Buster was like a streak of lightning. Furiously but vainly the savages lunged at the whirling hound as they skipped and hopped, with dust rising in clouds.
(*See Chapter* 1.)

which was moored to the river bank at the far end of the sisal plantation. The grinning Boer held up old Gibson and motioned him into the bungalow.

Plainly the ruffian ignored the two lads, also he ignored Sid's great hound, a tawny beast of African breed as big as a mastiff, which was again barking furiously. But forward leapt Sid and Harry, to unleash the hound in a twinkling, send him at the whooping Masai, then hurl themselves at the bearded Boer.

"Round 'em up, Buster!" Sid yelled at his hound.

From the Masai burst shouts of anger, and their great spears flashed in the sunlight; but Buster was amongst them with a booming bay, teeth clashing as he bounded in and out like a streak of lightning. Furiously but vainly the savages lunged at the whirling hound as they skipped and hopped, with the red dust rising in clouds. The same instant the big Boer sent Sid reeling against Harry with a round-arm swipe, then his pistol glinted as the hammer came up.

"No, you don't, you bearded bounder! You don't shoot my dog!" Sid roared.

With an effort Sid recovered his balance, brushed past Harry, and dived into the Boer's legs. He got a hold round the ruffian's ankles, heaved mightily, and brought him crashing down. Bang went the pistol, but the bullet whistled harmlessly

skywards; then Sid and the Boer were rolling on the ground, fighting furiously.

"Grab his pistol!" Sid gasped. "Quick, Harry! He's too strong for me!"

With a shout of anger, young Harry plunged forward, but a flying shield, hurled by a Masai warrior, caught the lad across his knees and he pitched headlong. It was old George Gibson who pounced on the Boer's thick wrist, to wrestle for the loaded weapon.

Pandemonium raged outside the bungalow, with the roars of the Boer, the howls of the Masai, and Buster's frenzied baying, as he leapt and tore blankets and slashed at brown legs. The racket brought the plantation "boys" running to the scene. But directly the "boys" saw the plumed Masai warriors, dreaded by all the other tribes, they all took to their heels except the head boy, a strapping Swahili, by name Sixpence.

"Me fight um, bwana!" Sixpence bellowed, and waded in with a heavy hoe.

That very moment, old George Gibson wrenched free the Boer's pistol and scrambled to his feet. Instantly Sid bounded up, but the Boer rose, too, to fall upon the lad with a hurricane of blows.

Crack! Smack! In vain Sid let drive at the ruffian's bearded face, getting home a couple of straight lefts that shook the fellow but didn't stop him. Borne back by the gnarled, whirling fists, Sid was vaguely aware of the tumult all about him, the fierce baying of his hound, the howls of the Masai, and the shouts of Sixpence as his hoe thudded on stout shields of buffalo hide.

For a few seconds more there was a wild mix-up, spears and brown faces dim-seen through the swirling dust-clouds. But, leaping to his brother's help, Harry brought the Boer down again by diving for his ankles. With a couple of shots over their heads, grizzled old Gibson sent the Masai scattering, with Buster bounding after them, Sixpence whooping and brandishing his hoe.

"Well done, my lads! Sixpence and Buster will see those savages off," old Gibson laughed delightedly. "Let that Boer up, and we'll send him trekking, too."

Panting, dishevelled, but triumphant, the two brothers rose to their feet, and up scrambled the big, dust-grimed Boer. One glance he shot at the spears dropped by his routed followers, another at his own pistol, firmly gripped by old Gibson, and shook his fist in the latter's face.

"Ja! You und der cubs win now, rooinek!" he breathed thickly. "But you don't beat Piet Merwe so easy as that! I don't offer to buy der schooner again—I take it!"

With that the huge ruffian spun on his heel, then tramped off, to vanish in the bush. Sid and Harry sent defiant laughter echoing after him, and more loudly they laughed seeing Sixpence returning with a broad grin and Buster with his tail up.

"I bet that outfit won't come back in a hurry!" Harry whooped. "They've left us some jolly fine spears and quite a good pistol, uncle. Who the dickens is that Piet Merwe?"

"I never saw him before, my lad, and I don't expect to see him again," smiled old Gibson. "You and Sid were too quick for him."

"But what d'you suppose he wants the schooner for?" exclaimed Sid, the keener-witted of the two brothers. "It's a queer thing for a fellow to offer a heap more for a thing than it's worth, and to get so fighting mad when he's refused that he lugs out a pistol. He must want it mighty badly for some funny game!"

But none of the trio could solve the problem. All laughed at the furious Merwe's threats, but decided to sleep on the schooner for a few nights in case the ruffian did try to steal it stealthily. A second thrashing would certainly dishearten his savage followers.

Then Sid switched off to the mystery of the N'gombi River, suggesting that they ran down to the mouth of the ill-omened river in the schooner, to make a determined effort to clear up the mystery.

"Let Merwe go to hang! We aren't running from him," laughed the sinewy lad. "But we'd double the store trade if we could scotch that mystery, uncle. We'd

have all the coast natives paddling up here in canoes."

"Yes," frowned old Gibson. "Later, perhaps! But that new bush clearing can't wait, lads. Take half the boys, and get at it at once. I'll want Sixpence and the rest here."

Both lads were a trifle disappointed, for they were longing to probe the mystery of the supposed demon, which was said by terrified natives to haunt the mouth of the N'gombi.

After the rout of the Boer and his Masai, however, the plantation boys had plucked up enough courage to emerge from their huts. Off went Sid and Harry with half a dozen of them, and with tawny Buster trotting at their heels.

The lads were making for the new bush clearing over a mile away, where old Gibson had discovered a patch of excellent black soil, which he urgently wanted to plant with sisal. The lads' job was to clear the ground of tree-stumps and every boulder. Little did either dream in what strange surroundings they would next see their uncle, nor did they dream of the hair-raising experience awaiting them!

THE SECOND CHAPTER

The Raid!

"EVERYTHING sounds jolly quiet, Sid," laughed Harry. "D'you think uncle's pushed off to scotch that river mystery without us? I shouldn't half be fed up if he did!"

Sid frowned anxiously.

Dusk was at hand, the flaming red sun sinking rapidly behind the towering rocky kopjes, and both lads were returning homewards from the new bush clearing with the six boys and tawny Buster. The only sound in their ears was the droning hum of the N'gombi River, and the occasional coughing bark of some hunting leopard, already astir in the darkening bush. Sid thought the silence mighty suspicious.

"I can't hear any boys whooping round their huts, Harry," he said slowly. "They usually kick up no end of a racket when they've finished work. It seems something's wrong. Come on!"

Both lads broke into a run, with Buster bounding beside them, the black boys running at their heels and glancing at each other uneasily. Suddenly the little party burst from the bush into the sisal plantation and pulled up with gasps of dismay.

In the fast-fading light they saw the iron-roofed bungalow, with the thatched huts of the boys beyond. And they saw that nearly every window was broken, the front door of the bungalow smashed and wrenched from its hinges, and saw wrecked furniture strewn in the veranda.

"Great Scott! The place has been looted!" yelled Harry.

"There's been the deuce of a scrap!" snapped Sid. "Uncle, where are you?"

Twice Sid shouted, even as he leapt forward furiously, but there was no reply to his ringing hails. Even the thatched huts seemed deserted, and there was no sound except the sullen hum of the broad N'gombi.

Filled with dismay and fury, the two brothers dashed into the littered veranda, to see smashed boxes and chairs lying everywhere. A glance through a broken window-pane showed a scene of ruin indoors also, but it was plain that the invaders had not stopped to steal much.

"They've just smashed the place up," said Sid. "Uncle!" he roared again. "Sixpence! Sixpence!"

No voice made reply. The six boys, who had been with the brothers, bunched together, chattering in terror. Buster growled threateningly and showed his white teeth as he sniffed around. Fearful for their uncle's fate, Sid and Harry tore through the bungalow, searching frantically, and Sid almost went head-foremost over a dark shape lying huddled in the back doorway.

"It's Sixpence!" he gasped.

Sixpence it was. The strapping Swahili was not dead, but he was unconscious and breathing heavily. The two lads' shouts roused him, however, and he looked up, blinking and rolling his white eyeballs.

"What happened, Sixpence?" Sid barked, on his knees.

"The Boer, bwana!"

"That big scoundrel who came here with four Masai!" Both brothers gasped with fury.

Sixpence nodded. It was plain the Swahili had had a crack on his skull which would have killed a white man, but Sixpence had only been stunned, and was fast recovering his scattered wits.

"Boer came back with ten Masai, masters, and rushed suddenly from the bush with spears," he groaned, trying to rise. "Plantation boys run plenty fast, but Masai catch two and spear them, same time Boer and the rest attack me and the big master."

"Where is he—the big master?" asked Sid, knowing that Sixpence meant old George Gibson.

"Taken away, bwana," came the hoarse reply. "In um schooner."

"In the schooner!" Sid and Harry roared together.

Fury gripped them both. After all, the villainous Piet Merwe had made good his threat to seize the trading schooner. In addition, he had kidnapped old Gibson, and his savage fellowers had wantonly wrecked the bungalow to avenge the morning's defeat. How Merwe had so quickly gathered more Masai warriors bewildered Sid.

"The Masai country's miles from here, away across dense jungle," he gasped.

"Boer left um hiding back in bush when he come here this morning," said Sixpence.

"Ah!" barked Sid. "Then where's he taken the big master?" he shouted, excitedly shaking the Swahili's shoulder. "Do you know what his game is?"

Fortunately Sixpence had learnt something of Merwe's plans. After being struck down by a Masai war-club, he had heard the Boer and the savages roaring triumphantly before unconsciousness swept over him. And now he flung out an ebony forearm, pointing away across the N'gombi River the rocky, bush-clad hills beyond.

"Boer go take big master to um Masai kraal," he cried, trembling with fury. "He will go down to sea in schooner, then up Kipia River. Large Masai kraal up along that Kipia River, and Boer go leave big master with um chief."

"Why? Why?" yelled Sid and Harry.

"Sell um guns!"

"To the Masai chief?"

"Yes, bwana. I heard. Boer want um schooner to fetch guns for Masai plenty times. Make big trade in guns along Masai!"

Gasps of fury and dismay escaped from both brothers.

Merwe's fiendish game was at last plain. He meant to run rifles to the war-like Masai, buying the weapons and ammunition from Arab coasting dhows, then running his villainous cargo up the Kipia River to a powerful Masai chief there. For his gun-running schemes, he had determined to secure the Gibsons' trading schooner at any cost.

"The bounder will plant uncle with the Masai as a hostage," yelled Harry, "to prevent anyone stopping his game! We'll jolly well have to rescue uncle before Merwe starts his gun-running. But how the deuce can we?"

Sid said nothing, but his eyes flamed.

Obviously once Merwe had got guns aboard the trading schooner and started to arm the Masai, both he and his savage allies would be too powerful to tackle. And already he had slipped away down the N'gombi River with old George Gibson in the schooner, and he would swiftly dash round the coast, then up the Kipia River into Masai country. How could he be caught?

"I've got it!" Sid shouted, in sudden triumph. "The Wezi tribe will help us. Wezis fear the Masai, and directly they know that a Boer means to trade guns to the Masai, they won't lose a second in helping us! We'll surround that Masai kraal on the Kipia River with Wezi warriors just as soon as Merwe's landed uncle there. We'll catch that ruffian of a Boer before he's got time to get away, and we'll rescue uncle and get back our schooner."

"But the Wezi tribe live miles off, bwana," exclaimed Sixpence, "beyond the Masai country!"

"We'd never be in time!" gasped Harry. "Through all that jungle——"

"We're not going through jungle!" whooped Sid. "We'll go down the N'gombi River in the schooner's old boat, then run up the coast to the Wezi country. We'll land and collect Wezi warriors, and bring them down on Piet Merwe's allies in no time! Come on! We'll beat that blackguard Boer after all!"

With a whoop of glee, Harry leapt after his brother, but Sixpence stopped them.

"Not go down the N'gombi River in um small boat, master!" he cried fearfully. "The demon lives there! No canoe can——"

"Blow that mystery now!" bawled Harry. "We jolly well must! Come on, Sixpence!"

Frantically, Sixpence protested that it would be worse than useless to attempt to rush up the coast by way of the mouth of the ill-omened N'gombi River. He vowed that the occupants of a small boat could never survive. But Sid and Harry meant to rescue their uncle at any cost, and knew they would have no chance to be in time if they went across country. Merwe would shortly be off for rifles in the stolen schooner, and the Masai would hide old George Gibson where no one could find him!

"We've got to surround the Masai kraal with Wezis before that Boer's left it!" Sid cried. "A boat down the N'gombi is the only way."

Still Sixpence hesitated. The strapping Swahili would face a charging lion or a spear-armed Masai, but greatly he feared the mystery terror of N'gombi River. Seeing that Sid and Harry were determined, however, he screwed up his courage, though his teeth chattered.

"Good for you, Sixpence!" cried Harry. "Now to find weapons. I bet we're likely to need some."

In the wrecked bungalow, however, they could only find an axe and a boathook, for the ruffian Merwe had stolen all the rifles when he rushed the place. Nothing daunted, the plucky lads and black Sixpence rushed down to the river, to find their old boat, which was luckily moored some distance up-stream from the schooner, so the raiders had missed it.

"I'm not going to risk Buster," said Sid.



"What happened, Sixpence?" Sid barked, on his knees beside the half-consclous Swahili. "Boer came back with ten Masai, masters, and rushed suddenly from the bush with spears," he groaned, trying to rise. (*See Chapter* 2.)

"He might get speared if there's a big scrap."

And he left his protesting tawny hound in the charge of the six boys who had worked with the lads in the new clearing.

Two minutes later the boat was rushing down the N'gombi River, its anxious crew of three tugging at the oars.

Caught by the current, the small craft made excellent speed, and Harry saw the bush-clad banks reel past, dim-seen in the falling dusk. At last the thunder of breakers on rocks reached the ears of the trio. They were nearing the sea, and all three were keyed up with triumph and excitement.

Wide now was the Ngombi River, running between gigantic beetling cliffs whose frowning crests were outlined sharply against the sky. Harry heard the scream of gulls whirling overhead. He glanced up at the mountainous cliffs, then let out a whoop.

"We'll raise the Wezis!" he exclaimed triumphantly. "Won't that bounder Merwe get a shock when we round him up in the Masai kraal! We've got him beat!"

"Not yet!" Sid laughed shortly.

"Well, I bet the mystery demon doesn't stop us now!" Harry hooted. "We're quite close to the river-mouth. I bet it's all a yarn——"

That very instant the lad felt something grip the blade of his oar. He felt a violent tug, then the oar was whipped from his hands and pulled under water!

THE THIRD CHAPTER
A Fight for Life!

"GREAT smoke!" roared Harry. "What the deuce did that?"

The boat rocked violently as the lad sprawled backwards, but nimbly he recovered his balance, shouting in surprise and anger. From Sid burst a shout of dismay as the boat spun round, partly out of control. As for Sixpence, the black face of the muscular Swahili went grey with fear and his eyes bulged.

"The demon, masters!" he yelled. "I warned——"

"Demon be hanged!" bawled Harry. "Where's the spare oar?"

The shout died on his lips, for something like a black snake shot up out of the water, to grip the gunwale of the boat like a vice. Followed another and another, snaky arms that waved like the trunks of elephants, seeming to search for prey. In a second the horrified occupants of the boat saw half a dozen menacing arms, studded with deadly suckers.

"It's an octopus!" roared Sid. "That axe—quick!"

Plain it was that the lads' boat was attacked by an octopus, and a perfect monster at that, with tentacles many feet long. Before Sid could reach the axe, two more thick tentacles were thrown on to the gunwale to grip it, and cause the boat to careen wildly.

There burst from Sixpence a howl of horror, for the black fellow felt a snaky arm like a steel cable flung round his naked waist, felt a ferocious heave that almost dragged him overboard, felt the sting of the deadly suckers.

"Save me, bwana!" he shrieked, clinging to the boat for dear life. "The demon! Chop um!"

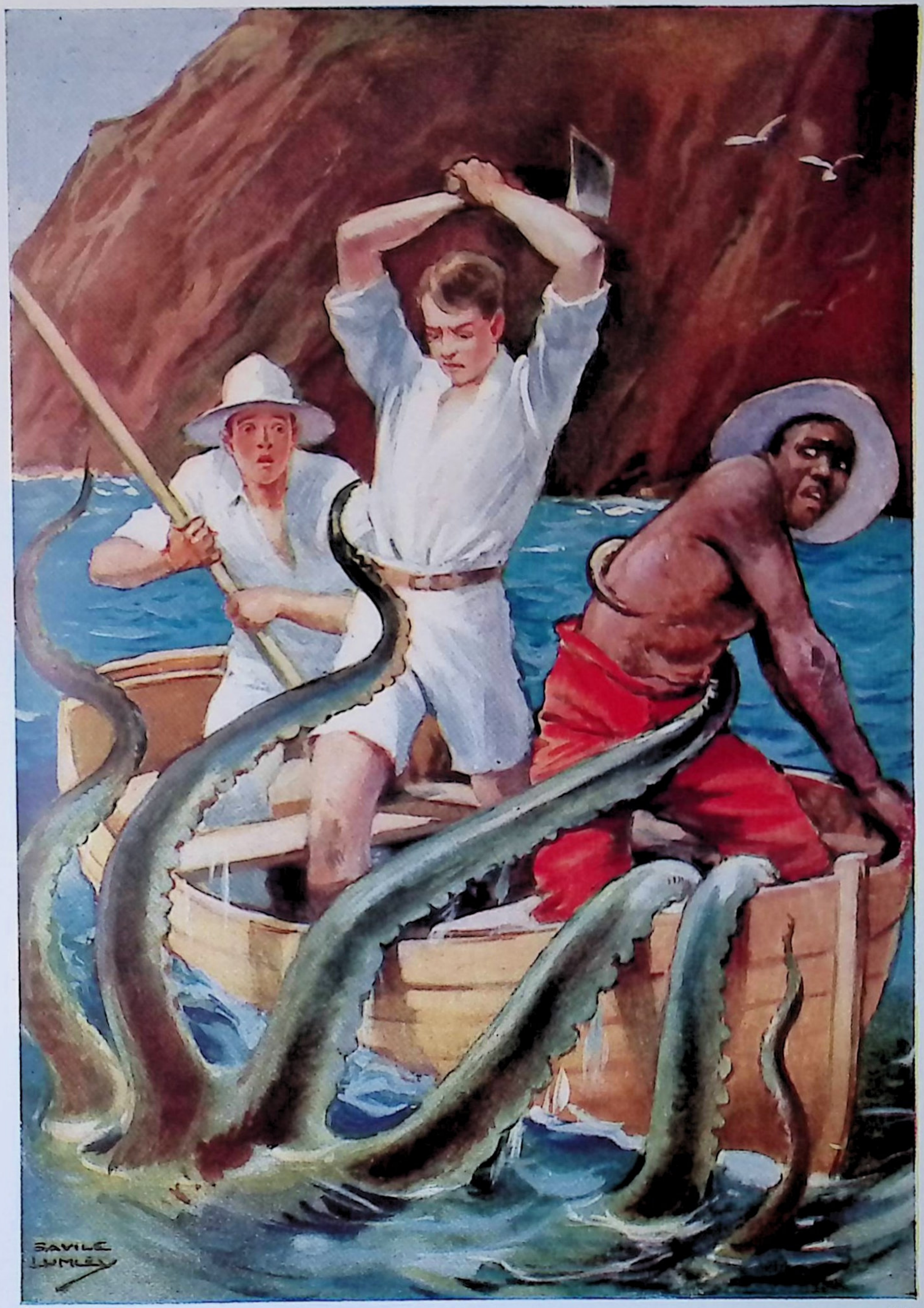
Wildly and terribly rocked the boat as Sixpence struggled in the monster's grip. But Sid was on his feet with a yell and a bound, his jaws clenched, the heavy axe swung above his head.

Thud!

Down smashed the blade, to sever the horrid tentacle and bite deep into the gunwale. The severed arm writhed like a snake on the boat's bottom, but even as Sid gave a roar of triumph, more of the brute's tentacles came lashing at the lads. The air seemed filled with them.

Quick as lightning one wrapped round Sid, and the lad felt as though circled by fire. Again Sixpence was gripped. Harry felt himself seized by the leg. Followed a fight to the death that was like a nightmare.

Thud! Crash! went the axe, lopping off another arm of the sea monster. Slashing at the tentacle that was tugging at Harry's leg, Sid almost lost his balance.



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H.A.

AT GRIPS WITH THE DEVIL-FISH

The increasing darkness added to the horror of the moment. None knew whence another arm would rise and strike, and vainly Harry roared and slashed the water with an oar. All the time the boat rocked and heaved, threatening to spill the fighting occupants into the water, and Sixpence's howls of terror re-echoed from the frowning cliffs.

"Pull, Harry! Grab an oar, Sixpence!" roared Sid, sweat running down his face as he braced himself, swinging the axe. "Pull away from the brute!"

"Can't! It's got us anchored!" yelled Harry.

In fact, the giant squid, the biggest of all octopi, had got a grip on a boulder under water with three of its arms; with others it was trying to overturn the boat, which could not be pulled away from it. Once in the water, not one of the trio would have a chance for their lives.

For seconds that seemed hours the wild fight raged. In vain Sid lopped off three arms, saving himself and Sixpence by a hair's-breadth. The monster grimly continued its attacks, and its grip on the boat was not relaxed.

"We done finished!" moaned Sixpence.

"Not yet, by thunder!" Harry shouted.

Just as Sid tugged furiously to release his axe, of which the blade was stuck fast in the gunwale, following a mighty blow, Harry spotted the boathook and whipped it up with a mighty shout. All seemed up, for Sid's weapon was stuck and a tentacle whipped round his thigh, but Harry flung himself forward with the boathook.

In deadly peril, the lad glared over the side down into the dark water. He could see the squid's horrid head, with pale eyes like great saucers, could see its horny beak, and could make out its gigantic body and anchoring tentacles.

Another arm waved in the air about his head, but he ground his teeth and drove the boathook between the baleful eyes.

Followed appalling convulsions, the water boiled and bubbled, and the squid's arms lashed and writhed in the air. Harry felt a jar as the hook's sharp spike drove home, but he wrenched his weapon free. Then downwards he plunged it again and again, stabbing at eyes and beak.

"Boat going!" howled Sixpence.

In fact, it seemed that the boat was in the grip of a whirlpool as it spun and rocked. Undaunted, however, Harry lunged more fiercely than ever, and the same moment Sid wrenched free his axe, to lop off the arms gripping the gunwale. A last stab Harry gave, then a roar of triumph left his lips as he saw the monster fall away, to sink rapidly. The sharp spike of the boathook had inflicted mortal blows, also the defeated brute had lost most of its ferocious sucker-armed tentacles.

"It'll die!" Harry forced out a whoop as he reeled backwards. "We've killed your demon, Sixpence! So we've scotched the mystery of N'gombi River, after all! But who'd have thought of an octopus?"

Sid was too breathless to speak for a minute, and Sixpence was gulping down air like a man recovering from drowning. All three collapsed on to seats, then they took stock of each other, to find each was bleeding where the deadly tentacles had got a hold.

"You save life of Sixpence, masters!" panted the muscular Swahili. "And you kill um demon!"

"It was a mighty close call, by Jove!" Sid gasped, glancing at the gashed gunwale, and the severed portions of tentacles lying on the boat's bottom. "But we're through, and I reckon we'll be in time to save uncle from Merwe and the Masai ruffians, after all! Grab the oars, then we'll hoist sail when we reach the sea."

In a very short time the boat reached the open sea, then went flying up the rock-bound East African coast under sail. An hour later the triumphant lads and black Sixpence landed in Wezi country.

Then they had little difficulty in persuading the Wezi chief to turn out his warriors as soon as the fellow understood that the ruffianly Boer, Merwe, meant to trade rifles to his enemies, the Masai; for once the Masai had got enough guns they would wipe the Wezi off the map of Africa.

"Now Piet Merwe's going to get a shock!"

whooped Harry as the brothers headed for the Masai kraal, on the Kipia River, with a hundred Wezi warriors. Piet Merwe did.

The Masai kraal was surrounded and rushed at dawn, the surprised inhabitants getting no chance to make much resistance. Sid and Harry found their uncle bound in the Masai chief's hut, and they swiftly liberated him.

"But how on earth——" began that astonished individual.

"No time to explain now," gasped Sid, gazing out of the hut. "Quick, Harry, that rotter Merwe is bolting."

The Boer, seeing the game was up, was racing for the schooner. It was a bold bid for freedom, and it would have succeeded but for the promptitude of the two boys. Racing like the wind, they caught up with the Boer and charged at him recklessly.

Fighting like a wild-cat, Merwe struggled and scratched, and punched and kicked, but Sid and Harry clung to him like glue.

"The game's up!" gasped Sid. "We've got you, you rotter!"

Sixpence, running up, an expansive smile on his dusky face, decided the issue, and behind Sixpence came a number of Wezi warriors. Sid and Harry left the Boer to them.

"No gun-running for you, Merwe!" cried both lads triumphantly. "You're for jug."

Vainly the captured Boer struggled in the grip of Wezi warriors, but he was dumped aboard the schooner he had stolen—as a prisoner! Then Sid and Harry told their uncle how they had managed to arrive in time to rescue him and foil the Boer.

"We've scotched the mystery of the N'gombi River, thanks to Merwe!" exclaimed Sid joyfully. "Of course, that monster squid never attacked our big schooner, so we'd never have seen it if we hadn't been forced to come down in the old boat."

"I bet coast natives'll flock up to trade now!" whooped Harry.

Directly the coast fellows learnt of the death of the "demon," they did, paddling up in canoes, unmolested. The Gibsons' store did a roaring trade in consequence.

High Days & Holidays



CAMPING OUT.

By Dick Penfold

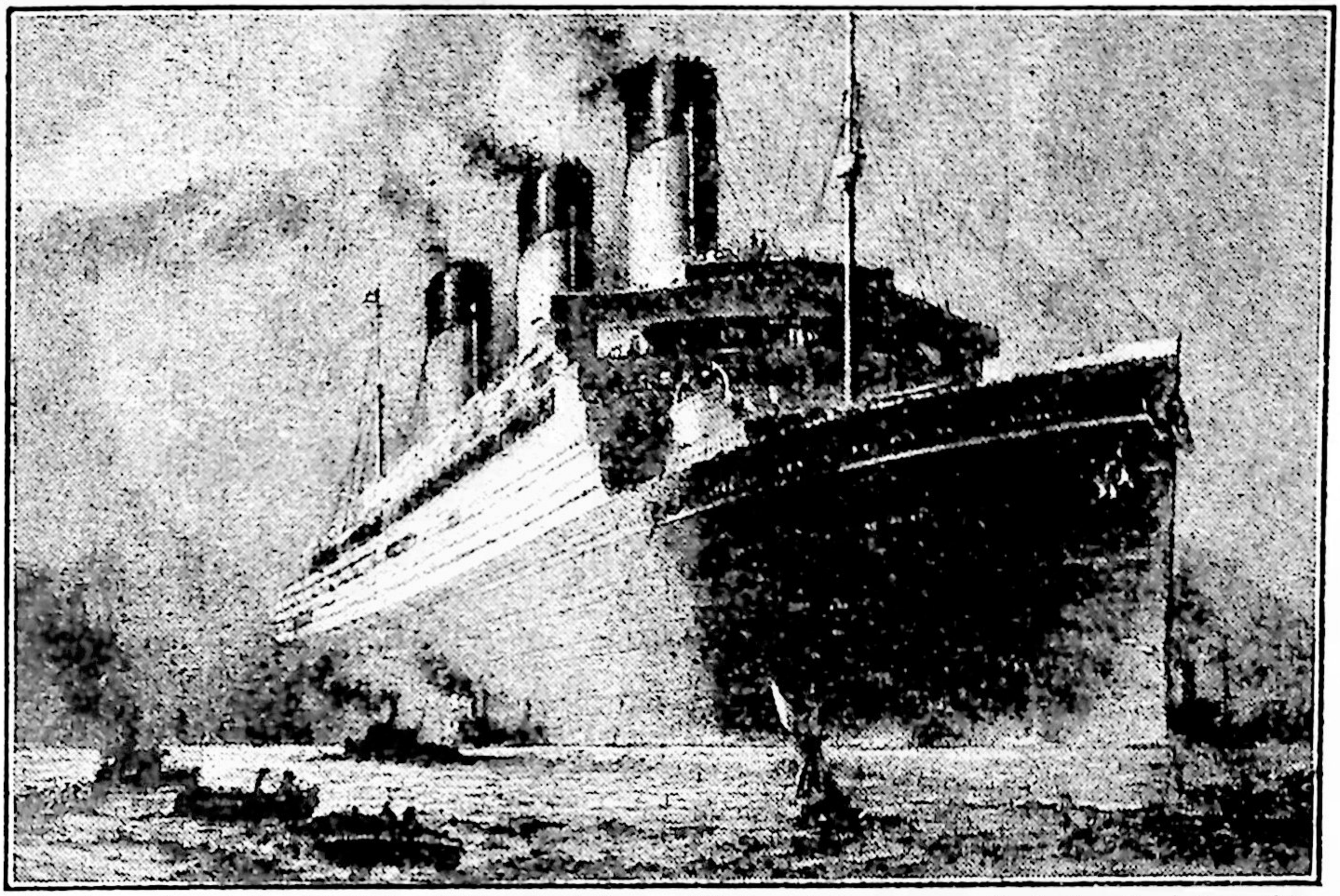
WHETHER the rain is teeming down,
Or winds are raging madly;
No camper-out will wear a frown—
We take our pleasures gladly!
And if King Sol should chance to smile
Upon our gay activities;
Sure, camping will be well worth while—
A lovely life to live it is!

In one of Farmer Hayseed's fields
Our tents are gleaming whitely;
A feast of pleasures camping yields
To schoolboys gay and sprightly.
One glorious whirl of happy days,
When every heart rejoices;
By night, around the camp-fire's rays,
We blend our happy voices!

Bob Cherry and his cheery chums
Are old and tried campaigners;
They never grouse, whatever comes,
Nor join the sad complainers.
With Billy Bunter, I'm afraid,
It's quite another story;
We hear his plaintive voice, dismayed:
"The dinner's burnt to glory!"

But Bunter's face grows longer still
When camping days are over;
And we must "trek" across the hill
To catch the train at Dover,
Back to our famous school in Kent,
With faces brown as berries;
Passing from "tent" to "discontent"—
(The jest, of course, is Cherry's!).

From COMET to MAJESTIC!



The huge size of the 56,000-ton "Majestic," the world's largest liner, can easily be imagined from this picture. But she must look to her laurels, for already orders for two new 60,000 tonners have been placed.

THE little Comet was not the first in our long line of steamships, for there had been one or two experiments before her. Her fame rests on the fact that she was the first British steamboat to do regular work successfully.

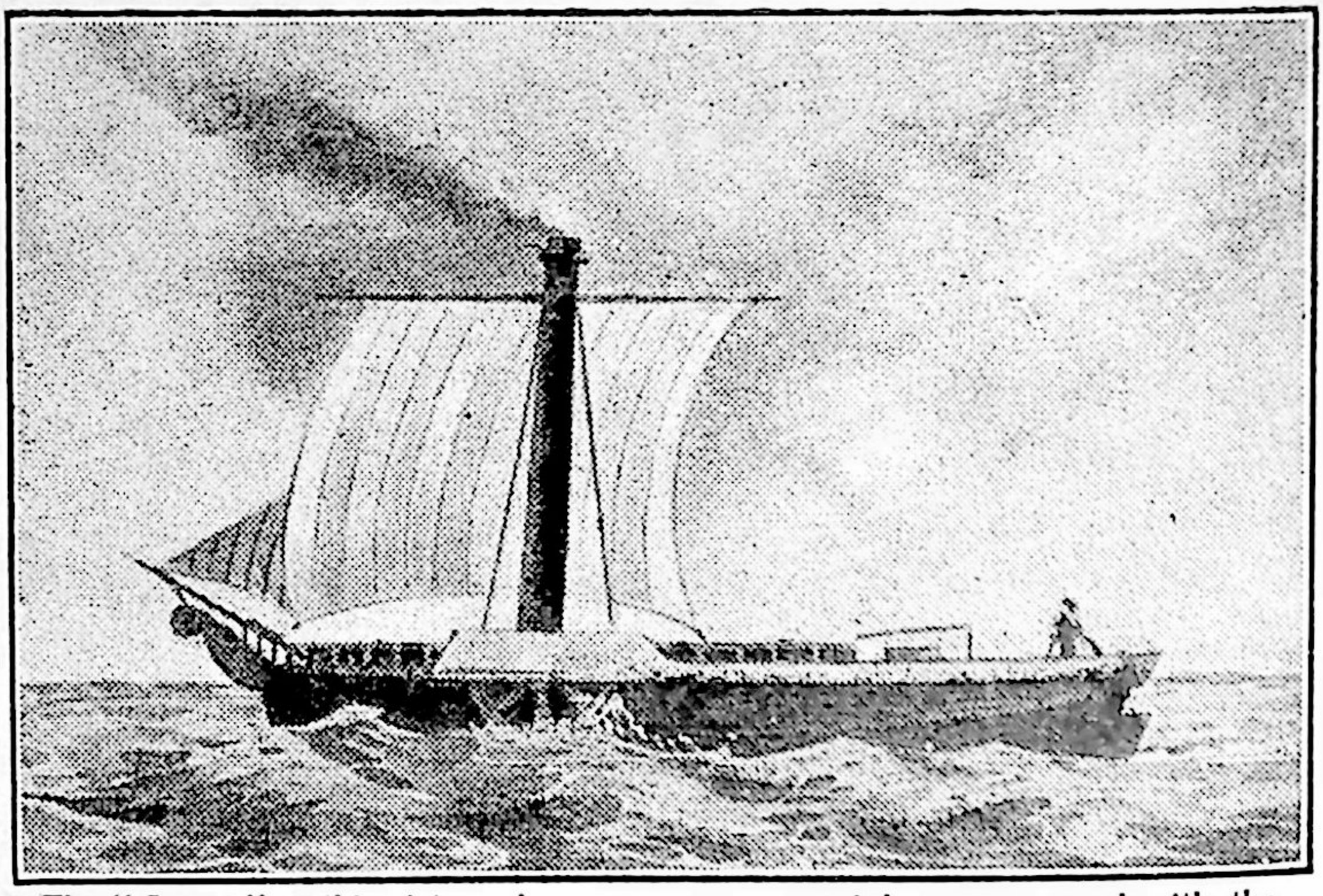
Up to her coming, in 1811, our great grandfathers had looked upon steamers as a wild dream of a cranky set of engineers. Just as they refused to believe that the steam locomotive could compete with the horse, so did they believe that the sailing ship represented the last word in water travel!

Rather more than a century ago, folks in Bonny Scotland saw this tiny fellow, with black smoke pouring out of its long funnel, churning its way along with paddles that reminded the onlookers of wooden malt shovels.

How the people on the banks stopped in amazement to watch this strange vessel, the more thoughtful, perhaps, trying to guess what the future held for such strange craft as this! There were no newspapers then, as we now know them, so that the fact that steam vessels had already been tried in America, and, indeed, in another part of Scotland, was not generally known.

Of one of the earliest Canadian steamers a little story is told which well illustrates the awe with which the first steamboats were regarded. In books, the engineer on a steamer is always a Scotsman. It was the same on this first Canadian steamer, and he was the only man who knew anything about the machinery. One day the little vessel was making its way down the St. Lawrence to a port where she was to discharge her cargo. As she approached her destination, Sandy, the engineer, could not be found anywhere.

The crew searched for him high and low for two hours without success, meanwhile using the helm in such a way that the boat cruised up and down in front of the quay—this to the amazement of those who awaited her coming. At last Sandy was found asleep in a corner where no one had thought of looking. Of course, the captain grumbled at him a good deal, complaining of the serious delay, and that no one knew how to stop the engines.



The "Comet," as this picture shows, was very ungainly as compared with the graceful clippers it was designed to replace. No wonder all who saw it stared in amazement.

"Why did ye no let the fire oot, then she'd a stoppit herself," retorted Sandy, rubbing sleep from his eyes as he just switched off the steam!

The Comet proved so successful that there were soon others, and within three years there was a regular service of steamboats on the Clyde.

A traveller of the period comments on the curious fact that either the mast was used for a funnel, or the funnel was used also as a mast; he could not make out which. It is a fact that the engines were so weak that sails were also used to help these little vessels along, and for a great number of years the steamship relied upon the aid of sails. Atlantic liners were found in service with masts and sails well into the present century; they were finally abandoned when building the famous Majestic and Teutonic of the White Star Line, in 1889.

THE first steamboat was in service on the Thames in Waterloo year. These early Thames steamers were not too popular at the start, and we read that the proprietors were prepared to carry ladies free if accompanied by gentlemen, *except* on Sundays. Although refreshments were sold on board, if people liked to bring their own they could, and the steamboat advertisements promised that they would be "assisted with hot water for tea-making."

How far away all this seems now, when the steamer is part of our daily life! Then a man or woman was regarded as very brave indeed for having ventured on such an unsafe vessel. History repeats itself, and it is not so long ago that we regarded men who had travelled on an aeroplane in a similar light, and the same kind of people said there was no future for the air machine—echoing exactly what their great-grandparents had said of the first steamers!

The Channel was being regularly crossed by steam just about a century ago, and from the Channel to the Atlantic was a natural step.

The date of the first crossing of the Atlantic by steam is just a little uncertain, because the first vessels to claim the honour were really not steamers at all. They were, in fact, sailing ships which carried an engine aboard, and let down their paddles when the wind failed, hauling them up and

putting out the boiler fire directly the wind began to blow! Frankly, the captain did not trust the engine at all, and was only too glad of an excuse to dispense with its services.

The Savannah, an American ship, is usually allotted first place in the Atlantic crossing by steam. This she accomplished in 1819, but on only a small portion of the passage was steam used, and she did the return journey entirely without it. The second record was also obtained by the Western Continent. This time it was the Royal William, built by the Canadians.

Then followed, in 1838, the first ocean race between steamships. This was between the Sirius and the Great Western, the Sirius winning by a few hours, though it must be said that the Great Western sailed a day or two later! But the Sirius deserves all the honour we can give her, for she was not intended for ocean steaming.

Two years after the first ocean race, we find the Cunard Company being formed to establish what is often called the "Atlantic Ferry."

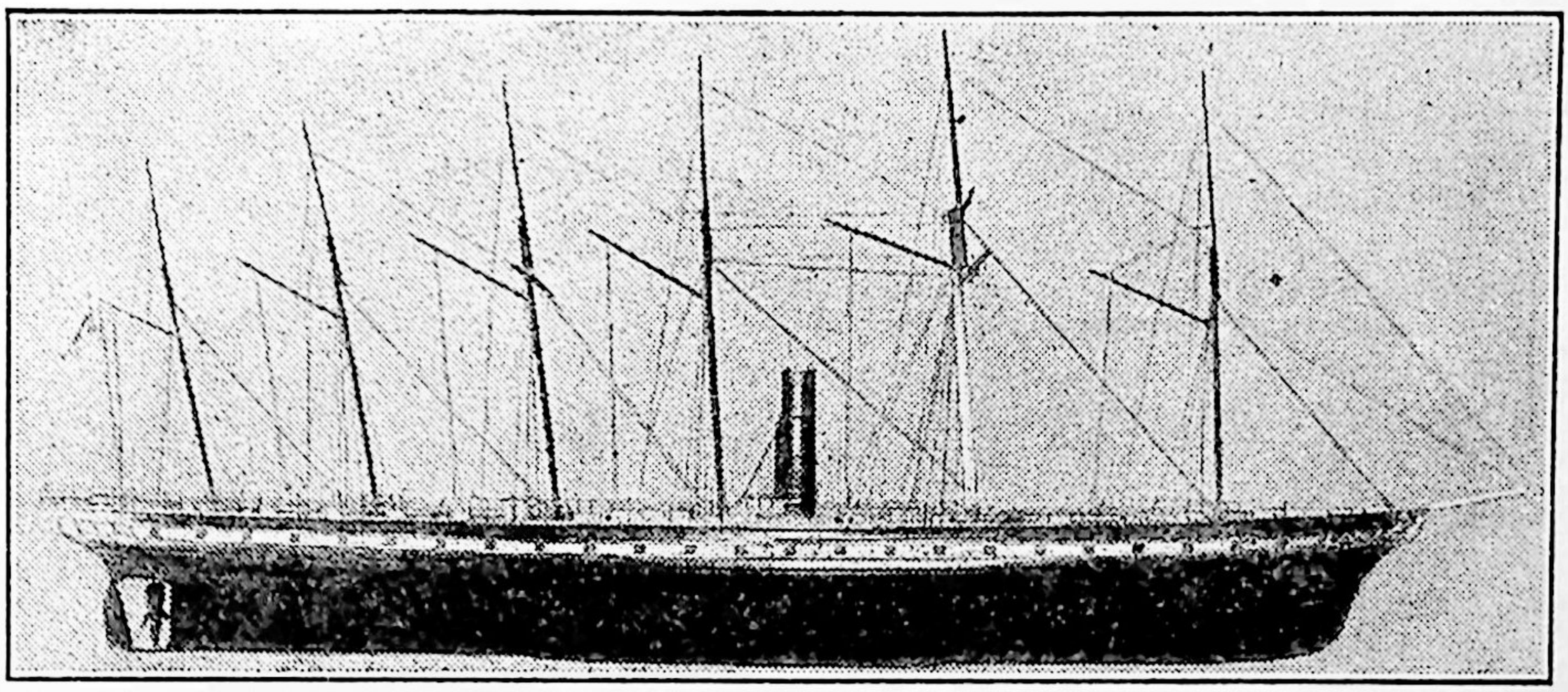
THE first Cunarder was the famous Britannia, a fine little paddle-wheeler, but so small that half a dozen like her could be carried on such a ship as the Aquitania! Charles Dickens crossed to America in the pioneer Cunarder; in "American Notes" he gives us a splendid word-picture of what the accommodation was like.

From 1840 steady progress was made in steam; there was now no question of going back to sails. Brunel had designed the Great Western, which was the first *real* Atlantic steam liner. Then he went on to build the Great Britain, the first iron liner, which was also screw-driven. There was quite a battle waged over the question as to whether a screw propeller was better than the well-tried paddle-wheels.

In the Navy, they settled it by tying a paddle-driven craft to the stern of a screw-propelled sloop, both vessels being of similar tonnage. The propeller won this queer tug-of-war, and so in the Navy, and in the mercantile marine, we find the favourite paddle-wheeler being displaced, until to-day it is used only for small steamers, performing short journeys.

In the 'fifties came the Inman Line, and all their vessels were screw-driven, even though the Cunard was still using paddles. The last of the paddle-wheelers of the Cunard service was the Scotia, which was still running in the 'sixties.

Soon the wooden steamer was discarded, and iron was used for all the large ships.



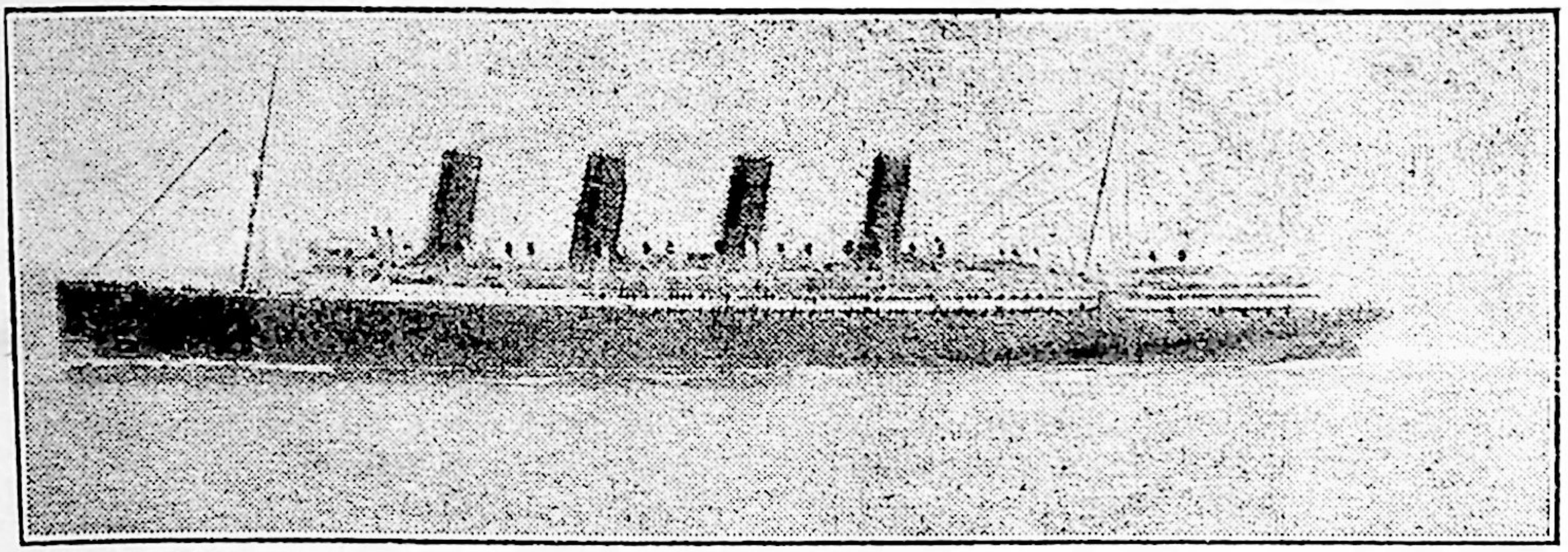
One of the earliest screw-driven steamers: the "Great Britain." She also enjoys the distinction of being the first all-iron liner.

Presently, in 1870, came the White Star Line, and with its Oceanic it made all other liners out of date. Up to this period, the liner had what we might call closed-in decks; that is to say, the bulwarks were of steel or wood, carried up several feet. The result was, when a heavy sea came aboard, the water had great difficulty in getting away, and often it took the easiest course—to the cabins!

In the Oceanic the decks were flush, fitted with rails, like they are to-day, so that the sea got away as quickly as it came. The long, narrow wooden deckhouse disappeared in the 'seventies, and a few years later there came the steel ship. This innovation made possible a great increase in size.

stopped; not so the size of the liner The Cunard built their famous Aquitania, the luxury ship, and the White Star their splendid trio, Olympic, Titanic, and Britannic. Alas! of these only the good old Olympic remains afloat.

The Germans, beaten in the race for speed, turned to the giant liner, and, whilst the four English ships last named were each about 46,000 tons, the Germans ranged from the 52,000-ton Imperator to the 56,000 Vaderland and Bismarck. You would look in vain for these names in a fleet list to-day. Write instead, and in the same order, the Berengaria of the Cunard, the Leviathan of the United States Line, and the Majestic of the White Star, and



The world's fastest liner at speed! Although she is now twenty-two years old, the "Mauretania" is doing better than when she was new!

The 10,000 tonner appeared in due course, and there were four most beautiful liners built round about 1888 of that tonnage. These were the Majestic and Teutonic of the White Star Line, and the City of Paris and City of New York of the Inman Line. These splendid liners were always breaking records, until the Cunarders, Campania and Lucania, took the "blue ribbon" from them. These, in turn, lost it to Germany in 1897, but ten years later the magnificent Lusitania, and the even more speedy Mauretania swept away all records. The Mauretania is to-day the fastest liner afloat, and doing better in her "twenties" than when she was new!

With these Cunard giants the speed race

there you have the three giants (or should it be giantesses?) of to-day, all in service, all popular.

There is a 60,000 tonner, now in course of construction, that will be known as the Britannic, of the White Star Line. Her engines will be oil-driven—a new departure in a liner of this size, and the experts who have designed her reckon that she will be the fastest liner afloat. The Britannic is reckoned to be completed, and ready for launching, by 1932, so the Mauretania will have to look to her laurels if she is to retain her title of "the fastest liner afloat."

So that is the story of steam—very briefly told, of course—from the tiny Comet to the huge Majestic, the biggest ship now running.

GUSSY'S LATEST STUNT!



By

MARTIN CLIFFORD

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the genial swell of St. Jim's, is ever and anon getting cranky notions. His newest wheeze—that of reforming the school—is no exception, as you will agree when you have read this humorous, extra-long yarn of the chums of St. Jim's

THE FIRST CHAPTER
Missing!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY adjusted his eyeglass carefully in his noble eye, and gazed round Study No. 6 at St. Jim's.

He gazed silently and severely.

Blake and Herries and Digby did not need telling that something was up. The expression on D'Arcy's face was sufficiently eloquent without words.

His expression, like that of Hamlet's father on the occasion when that old gentleman revisited the glimpses of the moon, was one more of sorrow than of anger.

When Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the ornament of the Fourth Form, adopted this expression matters were serious.

It was not, perhaps, time for the skies to fall, but certainly it was time for Study 6 to sit up and take notice.

Blake & Co., at least, should have looked serious, if not solemn.

Instead of which they smiled.

They smiled just as if they found something entertaining in the lofty and accusing look on the aristocratic countenance that was gazing at them.

Blake even inquired:

"What's biting you now, Gussy?"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Got a pain anywhere?" asked Herries.

"I have no pain anywhah, Hewwies," answered Arthur Augustus stiffly.

"Only a pane in your eye," remarked Blake, a humorous allusion to the monocle with which Gussy was fixing his study mates.

"Weally, you ass——"

"Well, let's get out for a run before tea," said Blake. "If you've finished your living-picture turn, Gussy——"

"Wats!"

"Anything up, old bean?" yawned Digby.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus' expression had been more of sorrow than of anger. Now it was more of anger than of sorrow. The frivolity of his study mates was stirring his noble ire.

"I can take a joke, you fellows," he said. "I am accustomed to jokes—genewally in bad taste—in this studay. I am accustomed to the absurd monkey-twicks which you are pleased to call pwactical jokes. But there is a limit."

"Bravo!" exclaimed Blake.

"Bai Jove! What are you sayin' bwavo for, you ass?"

"Only cheering your recitation," said Blake innocently. "You did it quite well. Elocution good, and gestures appropriate and restrained. Bravo!"

"You uttah ass!" roared Arthur Augustus. "You know vewy well that I was not giving a wecitation. I was makin' a wemark."

"I stand corrected," said Blake gravely. 'I forgot that your remarks were the same length as other fellows' recitations. My mistake."

Arthur Augustus breathed hard.

"I wepeat that I can take a joke," he said. "But there is a limit, and the limit is now weached."

"The limit of your remarks?" asked Blake.

"No!" howled Arthur Augustus.

"My mistake again. I forgot that your remarks have no limit. Look here, you've got some more to say, haven't you, old chap?"

"Yaas, wathah."

"What about saying it while we go out and punt a footer till tea-time? You can get finished by the time we come in to tea."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Herries and Dig, quite entertained by the expression with which Gussy received this suggestion.

Apparently Arthur Augustus did not want to make his remarks to the desert air.

"You sillay chump!" hooted D'Arcy. "Will you listen to a chap? I wepeat that I can take a joke, and I wepeat that the limit is now weached. When it comes to jokin' and waggin' with a fellow's clobbah, it is time to cwy halt."

"It's time to cry halt now?" asked Blake.

"Yaas, wathah."

"HALT!" cried Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you fwabjous fathead, will you be sewious? I should be sowwy to give you a feahful thwashin', Blake——"

"You would!" agreed Blake cordially. "Frightfully sorry—for yourself, old bean. You'd be quite cut up."

"But who's been joking with your clobber?" asked Digby. "Somebody been putting the cat in your hat-box again? It was Lowther, of the Shell, last time."

"My spwing ovahcoat has been abstwacted," said Arthur Augustus. "My new spwing ovahcoat. You fellows were pleased to make a lot of fwivolous wemarks on the subject, and I have not the slightest doubt that you have hidden my new coat away for a wotten pwactical joke. I demand its westitution on the spot. Othahwise——"

Arthur Augustus paused, leaving to the imaginations of his chums what would happen otherwise.

Blake & Co. grinned.

Gussy's new spring overcoat was well known in the School House at St. Jim's.

New spring overcoats were not, of course, rare. But Gussy's new spring overcoat was a thing by itself—a thing of beauty and a joy for ever—such a thing as might have haunted a tailor in his happiest dreams.

There was no doubt that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in that coat, looked a perfect peach.

Well-dressed fellows, like Cardew, of the Fourth, and St. Leger, of the Shell, never succeeded quite so well with their coats.

Gussy had an eye for such things.

Gussy could get a better coat from the tailor at Wayland than any other fellow could get from Bond Street. If the tailor did not know, Gussy knew; in fact, his comrades in No. 6 had told him that he was

wasted at St. Jim's, and that he ought to have been a tailor himself. Certainly Arthur Augustus knew how to dress. Other fellows at St. Jim's were simply clothed; Gussy was dressed.

Time and money were no objects when Gussy was dealing with a matter of such importance. He would spend hours on a half-holiday with his tailor if it was needed to make the garment a success.

Success generally attended his efforts. This particular spring overcoat had been a particular success.

It was the apple of Gussy's eye. Study No. 6 had admired it; they couldn't help that. Still, they jested on the subject. They affected to believe that Gussy had ordered that coat specially to catch the eye of the young lady at the bun-shop. They had pinned a ticket to its back on one occasion, bearing the inscription: "IN THIS STYLE, 1/6." Now that precious coat had been abstracted, and it was not surprising that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy showed signs of excitement—especially when his study mates refused to be serious at such a time.

"My new spring overcoat," went on D'Arcy sternly, "has been abstwacted. It has been taken away. I have no doubt whatevah that it has been hidden, for the purpose of a sillay pwactical joke. I wequiah the weturn of that ovahcoat at once!"

"Gone?" asked Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It was a spring overcoat?"

"Yaas."

"Well, do you think it has sprung?"

"Wha-at?"

"If it was a spring overcoat, it may have sprung somewhere," argued Blake. "That's the only way I can account for it."

"I do not want any wotten jokes!" roared Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I want my ovahcoat."

"You haven't popped it and lost the ticket?" asked Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"Mrs. Mimms may have given it to the rag-man in mistake for some old clo'!" suggested Digby brightly.

"You uttah ass!" Arthur Augustus' eyeglass almost bored into his smiling study mates. "If you have taken it for a joke, Blake——"

"Well, I couldn't help that!" urged Blake.

"Then you have done so?"

"Guilty, my lord."

"I will excuse your wepwehensible action, Blake, if you will tell me at once where to find the coat."



"I wepeat——" roared Arthur Augustus. But Blake and Herries and Digby did not wait for the repetition. They scudded out of the study and into the passage. (*See Chapter* 1.)

Blake stared at him.

"How should I know?" he asked.

"You have admitted that you took it for a joke?"

"Yes; but that was when you had it on," explained Blake. "I took it for a joke—and you were part of the joke."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You see, most fellows take you and your clobber for a joke," said Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus breathed hard and deep.

"Did you take my coat from the dormitowy?" he demanded.

"Not guilty! Ask Lowther, of the Shell. He may have bagged it. He's the funniest ass at St. Jim's—present company excepted."

"If you give me your word——"

"I've given you more than one word—whole sentences," protested Blake. "Anybody coming out for a run before tea?"

"Yes, rather!"

"I wepeat——" roared Arthur Augustus.

But Blake and Herries and Digby did not wait for the repetition. They scudded along the passage to the stairs and disappeared. Arthur Augustus was left, breathing wrath, and still without a clue to the coat that had vanished.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

To join in punting about a footer was, of course, impossible while the fate of that new spring overcoat was still wrapped in mystery. Arthur Augustus did not follow his comrades. He turned his footsteps in the direction of the Shell passage, there to pursue his wrathful inquiries for the missing article. It was quite possible that the misdirected sense of humour of Monty Lowther, of the Shell, was responsible for that missing garment; and, with wrath gleaming behind his eyeglass, the swell of St. Jim's made his way to Tom Merry's study in the Shell.

THE SECOND CHAPTER
Skimmy the Extremist!

SKIMPOLE, of the Shell, raised his eyes from the volume he was perusing, and blinked through his large spectacles as his study door opened.

Talbot and Gore came in.

Talbot, of the Shell, looked his usual good-natured and cheery self; George Gore looked unusually good-tempered. Talbot smiled and Gore frowned as they glanced at the study table, which was littered with papers and books.

"Time for tea, Skimmy," said Talbot.

"Shift that rubbish," said Gore.

Skimpole blinked at them.

"Perhaps you fellows would not mind teaing in some other study this time," he suggested. "I am rather busy at the present moment."

"Lines?" asked Talbot.

Skimpole smiled pityingly.

"I should not regard lines as a matter of great importance, my dear Talbot. I am engaged upon the seventieth chapter of my book. It is taking shape at last, and I have fairly commenced."

"Fathead!" said Gore.

"My dear Gore——"

"Cheese it! Shift that rubbish off the table!" growled Gore.

"We'd tea out, Skimmy," said Talbot pacifically, "only I've asked some fellows to tea; and Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther will be here in a few minutes."

"And we're not going to keep them waiting," said Gore. "And I'm not going to wait myself. Shift that silly scribble."

Gore took hold of the table with both hands, as if he intended to shift Skimpole's lucubrations by the simplest method—tilting the table and shooting them off into the fender. Talbot restrained him.

"Hold on, Gore! We really must have the table, Skimmy. Awfully sorry, and all that, but there you are! I'll help you pack up your papers."

Gore snorted, but he gave in to Talbot, as he generally did.

Skimpole was a rather trying study mate. Talbot was always gentle with him, Skimmy being generally regarded as a fellow with a bee in his bonnet. Gore was the reverse of gentle when Talbot was not by. He had no use for a fellow with bats in the belfry. Not that there was any harm in Skimpole. He was quite a nice fellow, and it was not his fault that he was the greatest bore at St. Jim's. Being born a bore, he naturally could not help it. Neither was it his fault that he was the greatest ass in the school or out of it. Asses, like poets, are born, not made.

Skimpole was deeply interested in all kinds of cranky subjects. Had he kept to bug-hunting, he would have found a fellow-feeling among some of the other juniors.

Had he kept to geology, at least Mr. Lathom would have appreciated him. Had he kept to philately, Mr. Linton, his Form-master, would have been one to understand and tolerate. But Skimmy, of the Shell, wasn't content with one thing—or even two or three things. His powerful intellect skidded, as it were, into all sorts of subjects, among them Socialism, Determinism, and other fearsome isms, none of which were understood by anybody else at St. Jim's—if they were understood by Skimpole himself, which was doubtful.

Had Skimpole been as rich as Racke, of the Shell, perhaps Gore would not have objected to the occasional practice of Socialism in the study.

A rich Socialist, who whacked out riches with other fellows, might be popular anywhere.

But Skimpole never had any money—which was, perhaps, one of the reasons why he believed fervently in what he called a redistribution of wealth.



George Gore made one bound to the study cupboard, and hurled open the door. As he and Talbot looked into the interior, they saw that hardly a crumb remained of the handsome spread they had designed. (*See Chapter* 2.)

Skimpole had read solid, stodgy volumes, which made other fellows' heads ache simply to look at them.

He had absorbed wonderful theories, and really believed, being young and inexperienced, that there was something in them besides a mere escape of gas. His latest was what he called Extremism; and it was bound to cause trouble for Skimpole at St. Jim's.

Gore was not a good-tempered fellow; but the best-tempered fellow might have been annoyed when his property was treated as common property, on the ground that under Extremism all property would belong to everybody.

If Gore had a pie in the study cupboard, Gore regarded that pie as his pie, and utterly refused to look upon it as a pie belonging to the whole human race; and it was quite useless for Skimmy to explain to him that under Extremism all pies would be nationalised.

If Skimmy gave Gore's pie to a tramp, on the grounds of universal brotherhood; or if he ate it, on the ground that it was as much his as Gore's, Gore would be cross.

Skimpole's logical arguments failed to convince him. But, indeed, Skimmy's logic did not satisfy even himself when Gore used one of his mighty volumes to light the study fire. On such occasions as that, Skimpole displayed a quite illogical temper, and his remarks had nothing to do with Extremism.

"You have requested the presence of other parties to a spread in this study, my dear Talbot?" inquired Skimpole.

"Yes, old chap, the fellows from the next study."

"And that is the reason why you desire me to remove my documents from the study table?"

"Just that."

"Then I am happy to assure you that it is quite unnecessary, my dear Talbot," said Skimpole, beaming. "There will not be a spread in this study."

"And why not?" demanded Gore.

"I am probably correct in assuming that the comestibles in the cupboard were designed for the spread to which you refer?" asked Skimpole.

It was one of Skimmy's happy and pleasing ways to talk as if his last meal had been made on a dictionary.

"Yes, ass!" grunted Gore.

"In the circumstances, Gore, the proposed festivity cannot take place. The comestibles are no longer there."

"What?" roared Gore.

George Gore made one bound to the study cupboard, and hurled open the door of it.

He glared into the cupboard.

Like the celebrated Mrs. Hubbard, he found that the cupboard was bare.

Of the handsome spread designed for the entertainment of the Terrible Three, of the Shell, as well as the occupants of the study, hardly a crumb remained.

Gore glared into the study cupboard, crimson with wrath. Even Talbot's good-natured face was clouded.

"What have you done with the tuck, Skimmy?" he asked.

"Scoffed it?" roared Gore.

Skimpole shook his head.

"I have certainly not consumed those comestibles, Gore," he answered. "I should, of course, have had every right to do so, as under Extremism, all tarts, cakes, and bottles of ginger-wine will be nationalised. Nevertheless, I have not scoffed, as you vulgarly put it, the edible articles that were in the cupboard. I have given them away."

"Given away our spread!" gasped Gore.

"Yes, my dear fellow. A man came to the back gate," explained Skimpole. "I regret to say that he was about to be turned empty away, but fortunately I beheld him. Remembering what I had seen in the study cupboard, I lost no time in making it into a bundle——"

"A—a bundle?"

"And, catching up a coat and a scarf—for the man looked cold—I rushed after him. He had gone some little distance, but I caught him up, and gave him the bundle of food, the coat, and the scarf. I was afraid that I should not catch him, but I did so. Was not that very fortunate, my dear fellows?"

Gore did not look as if he thought it fortunate.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Talbot. "Whose coat did you give away, Skimmy?"

"I really do not know, Talbot. I took the first I found in the first place I looked into."

"And whose scarf?"

"I cannot say. Yours, I think."

"You've given away our spread!" articulated Gore. "You've handed over ten bobs' worth of tuck to a tramp."

"My dear Gore, I trust that you're not about to exhibit ill-mannered excitement and reprehensible ill-temper——"

Skimpole's trust was ill-founded. Gore exhibited both.

He made a jump at Skimpole.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Talbot.

"Rats!" yelled Gore. "Shut up! I'll smash him!"

Crash!

Skimpole went to the floor with a terrific concussion. Gore sprawled over him, punching frantically.

Wild yells rose from Skimpole.

"Yarooh! Help! Whooop! Leggo! Gerroff! Yooop!" roared Skimpole. "My dear Gore— Yaroooh! Oooooop!"

Thump! Thump! Thump!

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Don't kill him, Gore," gasped Talbot.

Thump! Thump! Bump!

"Yaroooh! Grooogh! Whooop!"

Talbot seized Gore by the collar and fairly dragged him off. It really was time. Skimpole, of the Shell, was in a state of utter wreckage.

"Leggo!" roared Gore. "I'm going to smash him, I tell you."

"You have smashed him, I think," gasped Talbot. "Chuck it! Skimpole, you blithering idiot——"

"Yarooogh!"

"Lemme gerrat him!" shrieked Gore.

But Talbot held the infuriated Gore back. There was a tap at the study door, and it opened, and three cheery faces looked in. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther, of the Shell, smiled.

"Not too early, old beans?" asked Tom.

"Don't let us interrupt the dog-fight," said Monty Lowther.

"We'll look on!" offered Manners.

Gore wrenched himself away from Talbot. But the handsome Shell fellow stood guard over the wreck that was gasping on the carpet, and the enraged Gore could not get at him.

"I'm afraid there's going to be no spread, you chaps," said Talbot apologetically. "Skimpole has given it to a tramp."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I'll smash him!" roared Gore.

"Groogh! My dear Gore— Ooop! Oooooch!" Skimpole sat up, groping wildly for his spectacles. "Ow! I am somewhat breathless! Grooogh! My dear fellows—moooooh!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"You fellows tea in my study instead," he suggested. "Lowther's had a remittance, and No. 10 is a land flowing with milk and honey."

Skimpole scrambled up.

"I shall be very pleased to share in the repast also, my dear Merry," he said. "Over tea I will explain to you some of the principles of Extremism——"

"Will you?" grinned Manners.

"Certainly, my dear Manners—I—yaroooh!" roared Skimpole as Gore suddenly dodged round Talbot and restarted, after the interval as it were.

Talbot and the Terrible Three dragged Gore from the study. The door was slammed on Skimpole. In No. 10, fortunately, there was an excellent spread—and Skimpole, on second thoughts, decided not to join in it. He had had enough of Gore at close quarters. Besides, he had a variety of damages to attend to. Gore had thumped not wisely, but too well. It was quite a long time before Skimmy was able to turn his attention from bumps and bruises, and fix it once more upon his learned and long-winded lucubrations.

THE THIRD CHAPTER
The Way of the Reformer!

TEA in Tom Merry's study was a very cheery function.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther were cheerful and hospitable. Talbot was always agreeable, either as host or guest; and even Gore was restored to good-humour by an excellent spread and the general atmosphere of good-temper.

Tommy Merry talked about games; Manners about his latest photographs; Lowther about the last screaming jest he had compiled for the comic section of "Tom Merry's Weekly." Talbot listened more than he talked, but all that he said was worth hearing, while Gore gave his chief attention to the good things on the table.

Tea was going strong in No. 10, when there came a tap at the door of the study

Cheery conversation ceased.

"Skimmy, I suppose!" murmured Tom Merry.

The captain of the Shell was hospitality itself, but the prospect of having Skimpole to tea was enough to dismay any fellow.

In the conversational line, Skimmy was accustomed to hold the field against all comers. Other fellows could make remarks if they liked, but it never occurred to Skimmy to heed them. Nature had not been kind to Skimmy in the way of athletic gifts, but he was endowed with a chin of unusual activity, and it was seldom idle. The Terrible Three were quite hospitable, and they rather liked old Skimmy, but they did not like being drowned in a flood of oratory.

They gazed at the door with apprehension in their gaze, what time George Gore seized a loaf and took aim, ready to deliver it as soon as the door opened. Gore, as a guest in the study, really had no right to take drastic measures; but he was not bothering about the rights of the matter He was going to make Skimmy sorry he looked in as soon as the door opened.

It opened.

Whiz!

Crash!

"Yawoooh!"

"Gussy!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Oh!" exclaimed Gore.

It was not Skimpole. It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the ornament of the Fourth Form. Gore's error was excusable, but it was rather unfortunate for Arthur Augustus.

The loaf landed on his handsome waistcoat. It landed there with considerable force. D'Arcy sat down in the doorway with a roar.

"Gussy!" exclaimed Talbot. "You ass, Gore!"

"I thought it was Skimmy."

"Bai Jove! Ow! Wow!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus breathlessly. "You feahful wottahs! What the thump do you mean by buzzin' things at a chap? Ow!"

Tom Merry jumped up.

"Sorry, old man—quite a mistake," he said as he gave the swell of St. Jim's a helping hand to rise.

"I have weceived a feahful shock!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I have been thwown into quite a fluttah! Ow!"

"Sorry!" grinned Gore. "I thought it was another silly ass."

"Weally, Goah——"

"Trot in, old man," said Manners. "Take a pew, and join in the giddy feast. Jolly glad to see you!"

"Welcome as the flowers in May, old bean," said Monty Lowther.

Arthur Augustus gasped for breath.

"I did not come to tea, you fellows," he said. "I am sowwy to intewwupt, as I see you have visitahs. Ow! I am aftah my coat."

"Your coat?" repeated Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

No. 10 Study gazed inquiringly at the swell of St. Jim's.

"My new spwing ovahcoat," explained Gussy. "You fellows have pewwaps noticed it——"

"No perhaps about it," said Monty Lowther. "Who could help noticing it, Gussy?"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Anything happened to the coat?" asked Tom Merry, with an expression of the deepest anxiety, though his eyes were twinkling. "Has Herries' dog Towser been at it?"

"No, deah boy. It has been abstwacted. I left it hangin' on a hangah in the dormitowy, and it has been taken away—I pwesume by some wotten pwactical jokah." Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass accusingly upon Monty Lowther. "Was it you, Lowthah?"

Monty shook his head.

"Never thought of it," he said regretfully. "I've let the chance go by. Try some other study."

"Of course, I am bound to accept your word, Lowthah; but if it was not you who abstwacted my coat, I weally am at a loss to guess who it may have been."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gore suddenly.

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass coldly upon Gore.

"Do you see anythin' comic in the fact that my new spwing ovahcoat has been taken away by some wotten pwactical jokah, Goah?" he inquired freezingly.

Gore roared again.

"Skimmy! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wubbish! Skimpole is evewy othah kind of an ass, but he is not a beastly pwactical jokah."

Gore chuckled spasmodically.

"Skimmy has been at it again," he gurgled. "He gave our spread to a tramp this afternoon, and he mentioned that he had given the chap a coat. I wondered whose coat it was."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Talbot.

Arthur Augustus stood transfixed.

"Gweat Scott! You suggest that Skimpole has given my new spwing ovahcoat to a twamp?"

"I'm jolly sure of it," chortled Gore. "He's given the man a coat—and you can bet that it wasn't his own coat."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Terrible Three.

"Imposs.! Skimmy would not be such a bwute—such a—a—a villain! Such a feahful bwigand!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Better ask him," said Tom Merry. "It may not be too late to get the coat back, Gussy."

"Oh, cwumbs!"

Arthur Augustus hurried out of the study, leaving Tom Merry & Co. grinning. Arthur Augustus was not grinning. He was crimson with rage as he tore along to Skimpole's study. The repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere had quite deserted the swell of St. Jim's.

He hurled open Skimpole's door without even knocking. Skimpole was seated at the study table, pen in hand, wrinkle in brow, deep in Extremism.

He blinked up irritably at the excited Gussy.

"Dear me! These incessant interruptions are extremely disconcerting when one is engaged in intellectual efforts," he exclaimed. "Please go away, D'Arcy, and shut the door quietly."

"You fwabjous ass——"

"You appear somewhat perturbed," remarked Skimpole. "I trust that I have not inadvertently caused this ebullition of exasperation."



"Yaroooh! Stoppit! Whooop!" yelled Skimpole. Talbot seized Gore by the collar and fairly dragged him off. "Leggo!" roared Gore. "I'm going to smash him, I tell you!" (*See Chapter* 2.)

"Where is my coat?"

"Coat?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What coat?"

"My coat is missin' fwom the dormitowy, where I left it hangin' up. Goah says you have given a coat to a twamp. Have you

given my coat to a twamp, you fwightful ass?"

"I really do not know, D'Arcy. I gave the tramp the first coat that came to hand. Probably it was your coat."

"Bai Jove!"

"But I am sorry to say that I cannot go into the matter now," said Skimpole. "I am, as you observe, busy."

"Did you get it from the Fourth-Form dormitowy, you villain?"

"I hardly remember. Yes, now that I think of it, I remember that it was the Fourth-Form dormitory."

"It was my coat!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"No doubt," agreed Skimpole. "But I am somewhat engrossed, at the present moment, in intellectual work——"

"Where is that twamp now?"

"I have not the slightest idea, D'Arcy. He was, I think, proceeding in the direction of Wayland when I overtook him. If you desire to imitate my conduct, D'Arcy, and extend assistance to the down-trodden, undoubtedly you will be able to find some other deserving individual," said Skimpole encouragingly. "It is immaterial whether you find the same tramp or another, I presume."

"I want my coat!" yelled Arthur Augustus.

"I fear that it is too late for that, D'Arcy—it is hours since I saw the tramp. If it is any consolation to you, you may reflect that it was not, as a matter of fact, your coat," explained Skimpole. "Under Extremism, all coats will be nationalised. The present state of affairs is merely temporary."

"You burblin' chump——"

"My dear D'Arcy, if you are still dissatisfied, I will explain the first principles of Extremism to you with pleasure," said Skimpole, laying down his pen. "Now, to begin at the beginning, suppose there were two men on an island——"

Arthur Augustus did not seem in a mood to listen to the expounding of the first principles of Extremism. He refused for a moment to suppose that there were two men on an island. He declined to take into consideration the fact that under Extremism all coats—even a fellow's new spring coat—would be nationalised. He jumped at Skimpole.

Thump!

Arthur Augustus' knuckles smote Skimpole on the nose.

There was a wild yell from the St. Jim's Extremist, and he went backwards over his chair with a crash.

Arthur Augustus was upon him like a terrier upon a rat.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

Skimpole's unfortunate nose had already had some punishment. Now it had some more. There was no doubt that the path of a social reformer at St. Jim's was beset with thorns, and that a schoolboy Extremist was likely to collect more kicks than halfpence. Thump! Thump! Thump! In a state of wild excitement and wrath, Arthur Augustus dealt with Skimpole's nose as if he mistook it for a punch-ball. Wild and fearful yells came from the hapless Skimmy. Thump! Thump! Thump!

On his own principles, Skimmy ought not to have objected, for he was bound to admit that his nose was as much D'Arcy's as his own, and D'Arcy had a right to punch his own property; moreover, under Extremism, it was probable that all noses would be nationalised.

But Skimpole did object. Logic failed him in the circumstances. Skimpole objected at the top of his voice, and hit out frantically with his bony hands. But his resistance availed him nothing. Arthur Augustus punched and pommelled and pounded till he was quite tired and out of breath. By that time, Skimpole was more than tired.

"There, you cheekay wottah!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"If I do not get that coat back, I will give you anothah feahful thwashin'!"

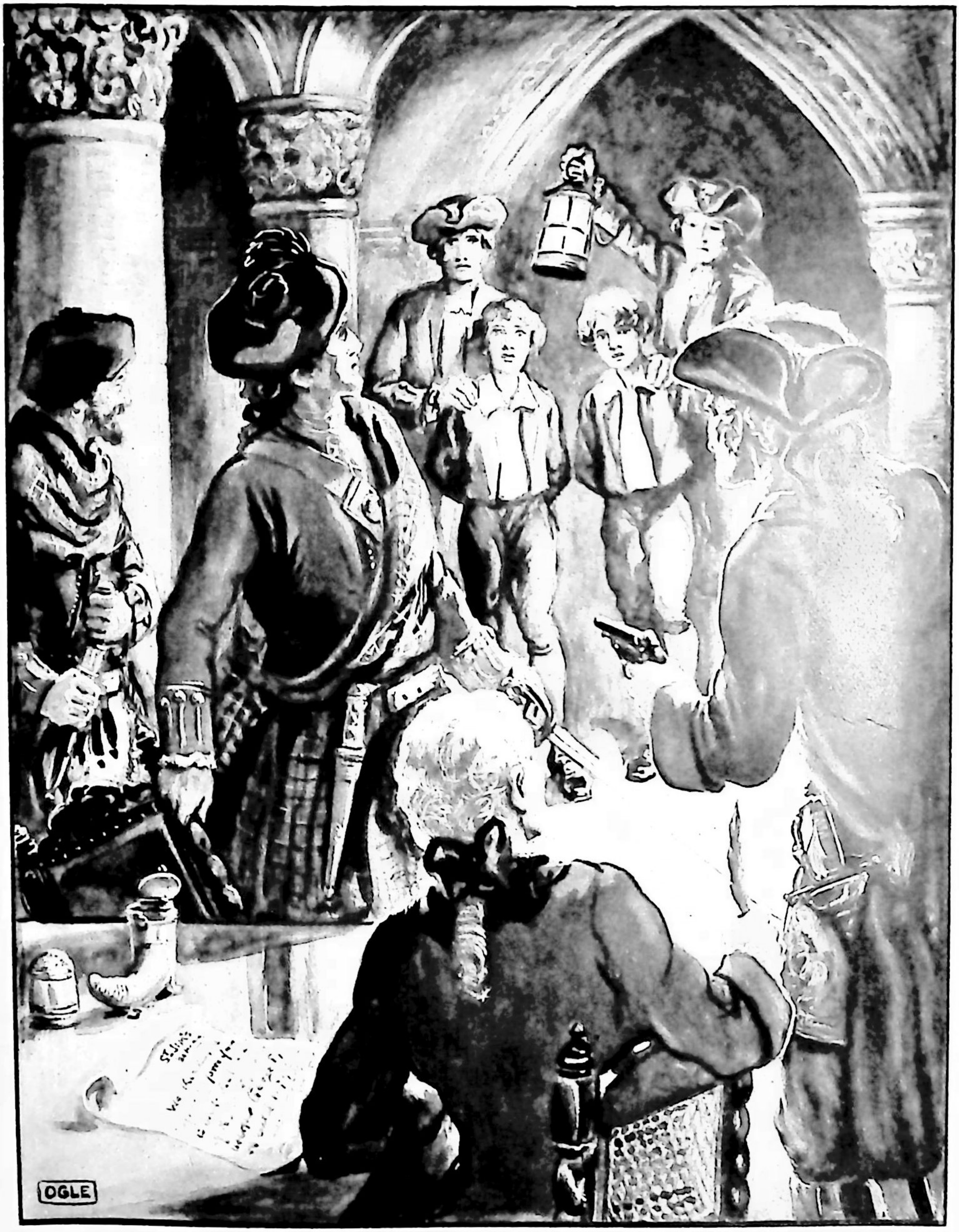
"Yow-ow-ow!"

"You uttah wapscallion!"

"Wow! Wow!"

"You feahful wottah!"

Jacobite Conspirators at St. Jim's!



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Two Schoolboys Surprise a Jacobite Meeting in the Vaults of St. Jim's.

For "Bonnie Prince Charlie"

EVEN at St. Jim's, in the peaceful heart of Sussex, untouched by the political intrigues that were common in the reign of George II, the news leaked out that "Bonnie Prince Charlie," or the Young Pretender, had landed at Moidart, on July 25th, 1745, and had raised his standard.

All over the country "Bonnie Prince Charlie's" faithful agents were holding meetings in secret, and at St. Jim's, rumours were rife that the neighbourhood sheltered a number of these Jacobite conspirators. These tales were discredited by those in authority, yet, even so, two adventurous juniors of the Fourth Form were not satisfied. Acting more on imagination than information, these two juniors, Ronald McSkeil and Jamie Macgregor, set out from their dormitory one night in September to explore the old vaults underneath the school. But it was not before the last torch had gutted out and the two chums found themselves in inky darkness that they heard a murmur of voices from somewhere near at hand. With beating hearts, they located the vault from which the voices came, and Macgregor, more venturesome than his companion, peered in. What he saw brought a low cry of excitement from his lips; for seated round a polished oak table were half a dozen kilted men, well known in the district. That it was a meeting of Jacobite conspirators young Macgregor was assured when he had listened to the conversation for a few moments, and, in his eagerness, he showed more of himself than was wise. One of the Jacobites, hearing a slight scuffle, wheeled sharply, just in time to see the head of a boy disappear. In a moment he and a companion had darted forward, and before either Macgregor or McSkeil could flee they were seized and, with their arms pinioned behind them, marched back into the vault. But fortunately, upon the boys proving by their names—and their accents—that they were Scottish to the backbone, and, moreover, loyal to the cause of Bonnie Prince Charlie, they were allowed to go free, after swearing solemnly that they would not betray the secret.

"Groogh!"

Skimpole sprawled and yelled and gasped. Even Gussy's righteous wrath was a little appeased as he beheld the state of wreckage to which he had reduced the social reformer of St. Jim's. He quitted the study and slammed the door after him, leaving Skimpole sitting on the floor, holding his nose with both hands, with his brain—such as it was—in a whirl.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER
Gussy Sees the Light!

TOM MERRY & Co. chuckled.

Blake & Co. chortled.

Figgins & Co., of the New House, seemed equally tickled.

To everyone but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the affair of that new spring overcoat seemed no end of a jest.

For two or three days, Gussy made wild efforts to trace the tramp to whom Skimpole had so generously presented that new spring overcoat.

His efforts were fruitless.

The tramp had vanished—likewise the coat. It was doubtful whether the tramp had gone away wearing that coat—extremely unlikely that he had been able to get into it. It was more likely that he had sold it or pawned it. But even Gussy did not undertake a search of all the second-hand clothes shops and pawnbroker's shops in Sussex. The tramp was gone, and the coat was gone—gone from his gaze like a beautiful dream. Arthur Augustus, like Rachel of ancient times, mourned for that which was lost, and could not be comforted.

But Skimpole, in point of fact, was more in need of comfort than Gussy. Gussy, the best-tempered fellow in the House, had always been kind and tolerant to Skimmy, often standing between that weird youth and raggings. Now he was neither kind nor tolerant. Gussy was a forgiving fellow; he could have forgiven almost anything, but the loss of his new spring overcoat was beyond forgiveness. He had promised Skimpole another thrashing if the coat was not recovered. He kept his word—more than kept it. He never saw Skimpole in these days without either kicking him or shaking him, or at least slanging him.

The coat was not only valuable, it was irreplaceable. Lord Eastwood, Gussy's noble pater, had groused considerably over a bill for twelve guineas for that coat. That his lordship would pay another bill of the same amount for a new coat that term was not to be thought of. The best-dressed fellow at St. Jim's had to wear an old coat, while his beautiful new coat reposed on the shelf of some unknown pawn-shop. No wonder he kicked Skimpole, and that his kicks were frequent and painful and free. The wonder was that he did not slaughter Skimpole outright.

All the Lower School chuckled over the matter, School House and New House alike. They seemed to see something comic in the episode—which was entirely lost on Arthur Augustus.

Baggy Trimble, whose habit of listening at keyholes was heartily deplored by the juniors, reported breathlessly that he had just overheard "Old Lathom" telling "Old Linton" about it in Masters' Common-room, and that they seemed to be regarding it as a huge joke. Baggy told that item of news quite breathlessly to Tom Merry & Co., but he departed still more breathlessly when Tom and his chums began to dribble him along the passage. Trimble's news may or may not have been correct, but Tom Merry & Co. did not approve of the fat junior's method of acquiring it.

But if the masters did hear of Gussy's spring overcoat, they certainly took no official steps in the matter—not even when Mr. Lathom encountered Arthur Augustus chasing after Skimpole with wrath and fury in his eyes did he interfere.

Skimpole's career in these days was one of hectic excitement. He watched warily for D'Arcy and dodged him. But he could not always dodge. Skimpole's big spectacles gave him a look of learned owlishness, but did not seem to assist his vision very much. Often he did not see D'Arcy till the application of an elegant boot warned him that the swell of St. Jim's was in the offing.

It was unfortunate that Skimpole was not a fighting man. His powerful intellect—so powerful that it looked like bulging out of his forehead in great bumps—was chock-ful of knowledge on all sorts of abstruse subjects. But his limbs were thin and bony, his muscles flabby. Fags in the Third could have licked Skimpole had he been considered worth the trouble of licking. A powerful intellect, choked up with knowledge, was of absolutely no use against boot leather. Intellectually, Skimpole would have undertaken to knock Gussy out hopelessly. Physically, he had not the ghost of a chance. So the career of kicker and kickee went on, and many suns went down on the wrath of Arthur Augustus, and rose on it still unabated.

Probably it was this painful state of affairs that put into Skimpole's powerful brain the great idea of making an earnest effort to convert Arthur Augustus to Extremism. Skimmy was growing very tired of being kicked, while D'Arcy, on the other hand, seemed to derive new vigour from the exercise. Leaflets and pamphlets began to make a regular appearance in Study No. 6, slipped under the door, or left on the study table when the owners of the study were absent.

Blake & Co. did not mind. They found this literature useful for lighting the study fire.

Certainly they did not think of reading it. If there was anything in it, which they doubted, they were willing to leave it there.

Most of this literature was the work of a young man in Wayland whose name was Giggs, who was a fervent and fervid young man, and wore a red necktie, and rode a bicycle which was painted red, as an advertisement of his opinions.

Young Mr. Giggs held open-air meetings in the market-place at Wayland, and poured forth floods of oratory, and lived in hopes of becoming a great Extremist leader. Other fellows had done well in that line, and Mr. Giggs did not see why he should not do equally well. To Skimpole, of the Shell, the voice of Giggs was even as the voice of a prophet.

Mr. Giggs' pamphlets upon Extremism, printed by subscription, circulated all over Wayland and Rylcombe, and Skimpole had

introduced this lurid literature into St. Jim's. And so it came to pass one afternoon that Blake, looking into Study No. 6 to call D'Arcy out to games practice, found that elegant youth seated in the study armchair, with a pamphlet in his hands, which he was perusing with deep interest.

"Come on, slacker!" called out Blake.

D'Arcy glanced up.

"I am weadin', deah boy."

"Games practice, fathead."

"Nevah mind games pwactice now, Blake. I have been thinkin'," said the swell of St. Jim's seriously.

"Draw it mild!" said Blake incredulously.

"Pway do not make wotten jokes, deah boy. I have made a vewy wemarkable discovewy," said Arthur Augustus. "There is somethin' in Extwemism, Blake."

"Lots in it if a fellow knows how to get at it," agreed Blake. "Look at that chap Giggs, in Wayland. He never works at his trade now, but lives entirely on his chin."

"I do not mean that, you ass. We have laughed at Skimpole," said Arthur Augustus, "but it appeahs to me, now that I have looked into the mattah, that old Skimmay was wight all the time."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Blake.

He stared at his noble chum.

"You've been thinking?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"That's what's done it," said Blake. "With a brain like yours, Gussy, you shouldn't do it. Something was bound to happen."

"Wats! I have thought the mattah out vewy earnestly," said Arthur Augustus. "The Extwemists are wight, Blake."

"Great Scott!"

"Look at it!" said Arthur Augustus. "People are all born equal——"

"Are they?" ejaculated Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! It stands to weason."

"If it stands to reason in that style, old bean, it had better sit down to reason," said Blake, shaking his head. "Mean to say that one fellow is born as good a footballer as another?"

"I shall have to think that out, deah boy."

"Not now," chuckled Blake. "Games practice now."

"I have no time for games pwactice this aftahnoon, Blake."

"You'll find some, old chap. This way!"

"Yawoooh!"

Blake and Gussy waltzed out of the study together. Arthur Augustus protested all the way to the changing-room. But though, on his new theories, all individuals were equal, Gussy did not seem quite equal to Blake in weight and muscle, and he arrived at the changing-room in a breathless state.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER
Gussy the Crank!

SKIMPOLE had done it.

It was all Skimpole's fault. Blake & Co. agreed upon that.

They kicked Skimpole.

They would have kicked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy also if it would have done him any good.

They argued with him, but they argued in vain. Arthur Augustus had imbibed a new belief, and argument was wasted on him.

Arthur Augustus was an Extremist; at all events, he fancied that he was.

Other fellows, when they heard of it, agreed that it was hard on Study No. 6. Hitherto, Skimpole, of the Shell, had been the only crank at St. Jim's. Now there was another, and he was a member of that celebrated study, No. 6 in the Fourth.

It was true that Gussy was not taken with much seriousness. But he took himself very seriously indeed.

Extremism, like many another "ism," appealed to the generous heart and the unreflecting head, and Gussy was gifted with both.

To the young and inexperienced, it seems so easy to make a bad old world better by talking and passing laws. They did not realise that the defects in our institutions are due to the defects of human nature, and can be mended only by human nature bettering itself—every man striving his hardest to do what is right. And the way does not lie through law-making, but by the study and practice of Christian charity

and human kindness of heart. Every man who helps a lame dog over a stile is doing more to improve the world than all the orators that ever orated.

These considerations did not occur to Gussy. His noble intellect had room for only one idea at a time.

The jargon of the pamphlets on Extremism jumbled in his aristocratic intellect like peas in soup.

Gussy wanted to know why should the Head or a Form-master tell a fellow to bend over when a fellow wasn't allowed to order the Head or any other master to bend over?

Why should he, the noble Gussy himself, ride a twenty-guinea bicycle when Mr. Giggs, for example, rode an old machine that was known at a distance, not only by its red paint but by the clinking of its ancient parts?

For Gussy was unique in his Extremism, as in everything else. He applied it to himself and his own property.

Skimpole certainly was prepared to give things away, but Skimmy had nothing to give. Gussy was prepared to give things away, and he had lots of things to give.

It was obvious that, unless his friends kept an eye on him, Gussy's Extremism would become something more than a joke—if it lasted.

Whatever Gussy did, he was bound to be the one and only. Now that he was an Extremist, he looked like making history in that "ism." For Gussy was a sincere and earnest youth; the same earnestness that he had hitherto devoted to the colour of his tie, or the cut of his overcoat, was now devoted to his new beliefs. He had no doubt that Mr. Giggs would have shared his dinner with the first comer, and handed his bicycle to the second comer, and his coat and boots to the third comer. The poet tells us that simple faith is better than Norman blood. Gussy had both, and Gussy was unique.

If the Lower School of St. Jim's had been tickled by the episode of Gussy's new overcoat, they were tickled to death by his new stunt.

Wally, of the Third, Gussy's younger brother, heard of it and gasped. He came along to Study No. 6 to inquire, and found that it was so. He brought Levison minor and Manners minor with him, and the three fags listened unto Gussy expounding the new truths he had discovered. They listened attentively, and then, at a sign from Wally, the trio held out their hands.

"Whack it out!" said Wally, of the Third.

"Weally, Wally——"

"You've had your allowance?"

"Yaas, but——"

"Whack it out. Why should you bloated profiteers in the Fourth have larger allowances than us down-trodden masses in the Third?" demanded Wally. "Shell out, old bean!"

"Shell out!" said Manners minor.

"Shell out!" grinned Levison minor.

Whether Gussy would have shelled out or not remained an unsettled question, for Blake & Co. fortunately arrived at the study just then and kicked out the three fags, utterly regardless of the brotherhood of man and the rights of the down-trodden fags.

Trimble, of the Fourth, heard of Gussy's conversion to Extremism with many fat chuckles, but with considerable hopes. Trimble often borrowed shillings and half-crowns of Gussy, who was too delicate to remind him of the debts. Not that reminding Trimble would have served any useful purpose. Baggy was never known to liquidate a debt, reminded or unreminded. Now it seemed to Baggy Trimble that where he had only gleaned before he was going to gather in a harvest. Instead of asking Gussy to oblige him with a half-crown till the end of the week, Baggy asked him to share out what he had in his pockets. He asked him in the presence of a dozen grinning fellows, who watched Gussy with great interest.

Arthur Augustus seemed lost in thought for some moments, and then he dived his hand into his pocket. Whereupon his friends intervened, and before the sharing-out could proceed they seized Baggy Trimble, bumped him on the floor, and

kicked him in unison, and Trimble departed yelling, and as impecunious as ever.

It was evident that Gussy's friends would have plenty to do so long as Gussy remained an Extremist.

Fortunately, there were few fellows like Trimble at St. Jim's; nevertheless, had Gussy been allowed to carry out his new wheeze unhindered, he would soon have been on his noble uppers.

Last, but not least, Gussy developed a red necktie.

This cost him more than parting with filthy lucre would have done. A red necktie did not suit his complexion.

It was as a sign of faith, however, that Gussy sported it.

Oddly enough, he did not consort much with Skimpole. of the Shell, who had succeeded in opening his noble eyes to the light. He left off kicking Skimmy now that he was convinced that Skimmy had acted rightly in giving away his new spring overcoat. But Skimpole was as great a bore as ever, and, though a firm believer in equality, he was never known to give any other fellow an equal share in the conversation. Gussy approved now of the remarkable ideas of the long-winded Skimmy, but he still found him long-winded, and long-windedness bored him as much as of old.

The Fourth-Form extremist was the victim of many jests.

Cardew, of the Fourth, took away his trousers one morning, on the ground that he had as much right to them as Gussy, and that under Extremism all trousers would be nationalised.



Thump! Arthur Augustus' knuckles smote Skimpole on the nose. There was a wild yell from the St. Jim's Extremist, and he went backwards over his chair with a crash. (*See Chapter* 3.)

Blake & Co. rescued the trousers, and saved Gussy from appearing at breakfast in the state of a South Sea Islander.

But when Trimble bagged his best waistcoat it was gone for good. When the waistcoat was rescued, it was found burst up the back and all the buttons gone.

But even the fate of the most beautiful waistcoat at St. Jim's did not deter Gussy. And his friends could only watch over him faithfully, consoled for the trouble he was giving them by the fact that Gussy the Extremist added considerably to the gaiety of existence at St. Jim's.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER
Why?

"GENTLEMEN, chaps, and fellows——"

"Hear, hear!"

"Go it, Gussy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a meeting in Tom Merry's study. The study was crowded. The Terrible Three were there, and Blake & Co. were there, and Figgins & Co., from the New House; and Talbot, of the Shell, and Cardew and Levison and Clive, and several other fellows. Gussy was to address the meeting and open a discussion on the topic, "Is Extremism Sound?" Tom Merry & Co. had agreed to give Gussy a hearing, and the meeting was the result, though it is much to be feared that Gussy's hearers met in a spirit of hilarity, with the intention of pulling Gussy's noble leg.

Fellows were crowded round the walls of the study, and on a chair in the centre of the room stood Gussy, somewhat in the style of Mr. Giggs in the market-place at Wayland. Gussy's noble face was deeply serious, and looked all the more so because it was the only serious face in the study. Deep in great thoughts, Gussy had not even noticed that a cord was attached to the leg of the chair which formed his rostrum, and that the other end of the cord was in the hand of that incorrigible practical joker, Monty Lowther, of the Shell. Gussy mounted on the chair to address the meeting, and Lowther for the present held his hand—and the cord. All the other fellows were aware of the peril in which the orator stood, and they smiled cheerily.

"Gentlemen, I am about to addwess you in a few well-chosen words," announced Arthur Augustus.

"Never mind about the well-chosen," suggested Cardew. "Stick to the few."

"Weally, Cardew——"

"Order!"

"I twust to open your minds on this gweat subject," said Arthur Augustus. "The question before the meetin' is: 'Is Extwemism Sound?'"

"It is—it are!" said Monty Lowther. "Sound—merely that, and nothing more."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I do not mean sound in that sense, Lowthah. Look awound you, and what do you see?"

"The walls of the study," said Herries.

"I do not mean that, Hewwies. I mean, look awound you in a largah sense. On the one hand, the down-twodden masses; on the othah hand, the bloated millionaire, wollin' in gold on the tesselated floor of his marble palace."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Why should such things be?" demanded Arthur Augustus warmly.

"Echo answers, 'Why?'" chuckled Tom Merry.

"Why should St. Jim's fellows—us, f'winstance—study Latin while Toby cleans the knives below stairs?"

"Because Toby has all the luck," said Cardew gravely. "Some fellows are born lucky, and Toby is one of them."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you ass——"

"Go it, Gussy!" said Blake encouragingly. "We're only giving you a few minutes. Make the most of them."

"Weally, Blake——"

"May I ask a question?" said Monty Lowther meekly.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!"

"Why," said Lowther gravely—"why should Gussy be a bigger ass than any other gentleman present? Every fellow has a right to be equally asinine; yet here is Gussy prancing off with the whole bag of tricks."

"You sillay ass!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"Why," continued Lowther, "should Gussy have more water on the brain than any other fellow at St. Jim's? Water is the common property of mankind——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I pause for a reply," said Lowther.

"I wegard you as an uttah ass, Lowthah. I will pwoceed with my wemarks. Where was I, you fellows?"

"On the chair, with your mouth open," said Blake.

"You ass, I mean where was I in my speech?"

"Nearly at the end."

"Wats! I was only just beginnin'——"

"Your mistake. You were ending. Gentlemen," said Blake, "equality being

the order of the day, why should Gussy be standing on that chair, instead of that chair standing on Gussy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suggest setting that matter right——"

"Hear, hear!"

"You sillay ass!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "I wepeat—I tell you—I say—— Yawooooooooop!"

The orator did not really intend to say "Yaroop." He said it involuntarily as Monty Lowther pulled the cord attached to the leg of the chair.

The chair departed suddenly from underneath Gussy, and there was a bump in Tom Merry's study.

"Oh, cwumbs!"

Gussy sat dizzily on the floor.

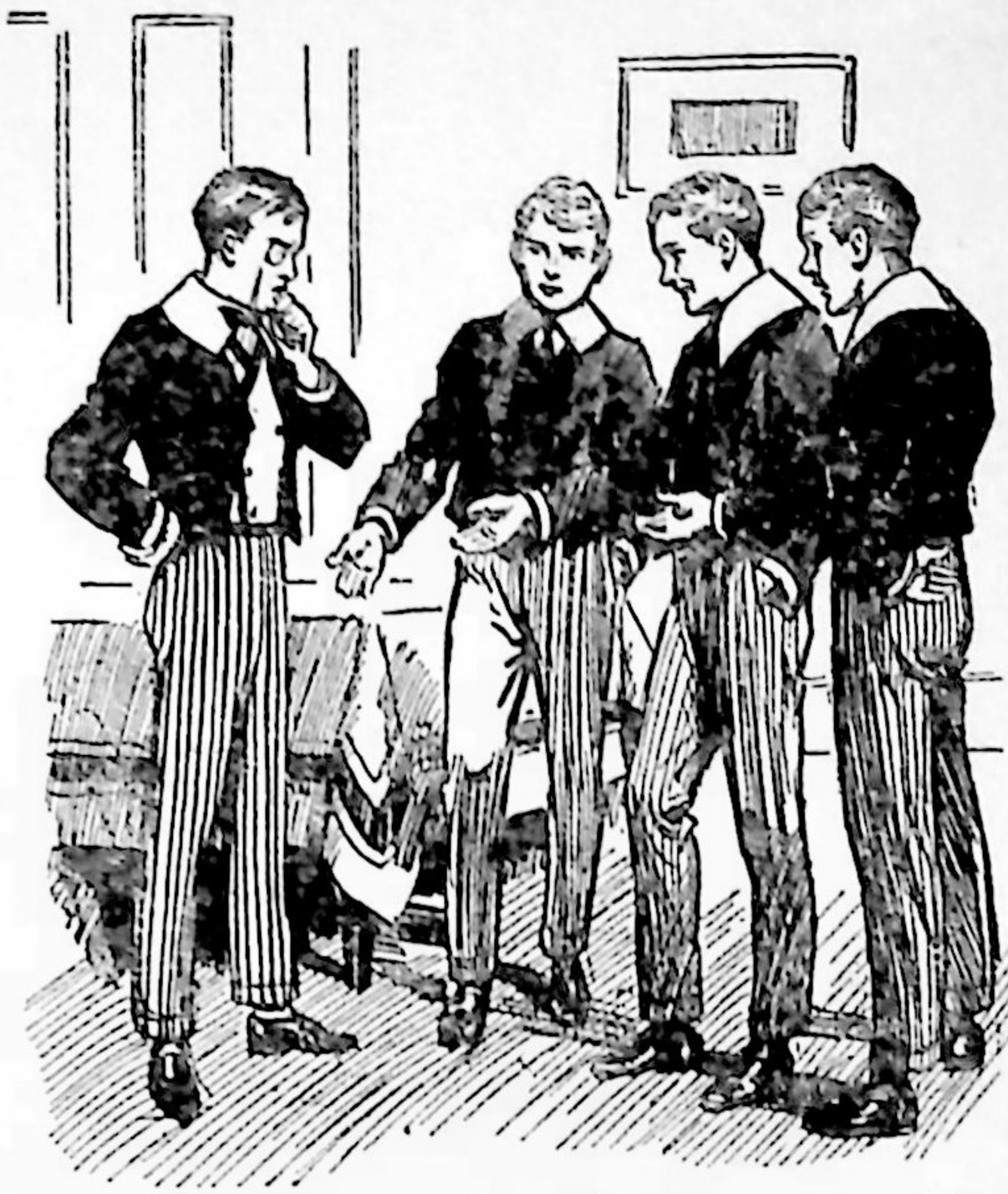
"Oh, deah! Ow! Wow! You fwightful asses! Gwooogh! Wow!"

Blake lifted the chair and stood it on Gussy, amid yells of laughter from the other juniors. The chair was a circular cane-seated one, with a rail round the legs of it, and it fitted nicely over Gussy's noble head.

Leaving the St. Jim's orator thus crowned, the audience departed from the study, chortling.

Gussy had been eloquent while he was standing on the chair, but he was still more eloquent while the chair was standing on him. His voice followed Tom Merry & Co. down the passage in tones of ferocious wrath.

When Gussy had extracted himself from the chair, he was not thinking of human brotherhood or the rights of man. He was thinking of vengeance. But by the time he had extracted himself, fortunately, some minutes had elapsed, and by that time the audience in Tom Merry's study had elapsed also.



Wally D'Arcy, Levison minor and Manners minor listened attentively to Gussy expounding the new truths he had discovered. Then, at a sign from Wally, the trio held out their hands. "Whack it out! Shell out!" cried the Third Formers. (*See Chapter 5.*)

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER
Gussy's Progress!

THERE was a perceptible coldness between Arthur Augustus and his chums after the meeting in Tom Merry's study. It had dawned upon Gussy's noble brain that the meeting had not gathered to hear words of wisdom falling like pearls from his lips, but to pull his aristocratic leg. They had pulled his leg—not to mention the leg of the chair on which he had mounted to address the meeting. Gussy was a forgiving fellow—he had even forgiven, in the light of his new opinions, the incident of his new spring overcoat. But how could an earnest fellow, seeking to spread the light in dark places, forgive such frivolous tricks as these on the part of the unenlightened? Gussy was offended.

In Study No. 6 there was, for a time, a rest from Extremism. In Tom Merry's study there was a rest. Arthur Augustus gave his old friends the go-by for a time, and spent many of his leisure hours in other studies, and over in the New House. Spreading the light in the New House, however, was not much of a success. Figgins & Co. chuckled over Gussy and his new

wheeze. They willingly admitted some points—such as that juniors had as much right really as seniors to walk on the Sixth-Form green. But that Third-Form fags had any rights in the Fourth-Form passage they refused to admit for a moment. That the Fourth was every whit as good as the Sixth they freely admitted; that the Third was as good as the Fourth they regarded as a ludicrous suggestion.

This sort of difficulty cropped up everywhere in the path of the St. Jim's reformer.

He talked to the Head's gardener, and found that gentleman quite prepared to believe that a combination of injustice with sheer chance made his position in life lower than the headmaster's. But the still lower position of the man whom the gardener employed to clean the lawn-mower was not, the gardener thought, due to injustice or chance; it was fixed in the laws of nature. When Gussy found the two of them together, and addressed them both as if they stood upon an equal footing, the gardener was extremely offended, and told Master D'Arcy that juniors were not allowed in the Head's garden.

Taggles, the porter, listened to the voice of the charmer with amazement at first, then with amusement, and then with some attention and interest. That he was a superior sort of man, only prevented by ill-luck from rising to great heights, Taggles had long been convinced. For a "nob" like Arthur Augustus to recognise that he was, in actual worth, the equal of any man at St. Jim's was grateful and comforting to Taggles. But when he learned that the stable-boy was equal to himself on the same theory, Taggles snorted with contempt, and requested Master D'Arcy not to talk dratted nonsense in his lodge.

Undoubtedly it was discouraging to a zealous reformer.

Arthur Augustus was surprised to find that there was a general willingness to level down to one's own level, but a general objection to levelling down an inch further.

Arthur Augustus strolled into the village grocer's one day and talked to Mr. Sands. Mr. Sands was rather entertained, but not at all displeased, to learn that he was entitled to be treated with the same respect as a duke or an archbishop. But when he learned that he was bound to treat his boy Grimes with the same respect, Mr. Sands laughed very heartily.

Grimes could see it. He saw it very clearly, and agreed whole-heartedly with Gussy. But Grimes rather looked down on the fishmonger's boy. Nothing could convince him that a fishmonger's boy was equal to a grocer's boy.

Gussy did not tackle the fishmonger's boy; but had he done so, he would probably have found that the fishmonger's boy looked down on somebody else.

It was disheartening.

But Gussy was a sticker. Having seen the light, he felt that it was his duty to spread it.

Hitherto, Skimpole, of the Shell, had been the only crank in the school, and the voice of Skimpole was as a voice crying in the wilderness. Now Gussy's voice was added.

He tried Racke, of the Shell. Racke was a very unpleasant fellow, and Gussy did not like him. He disliked him, not because he was the son of a profiteer, but because he was very unpleasant, and had unpleasant and shady ways. But clearly it was not Aubrey Racke's fault that he was unpleasant. Obviously he had been born unpleasant.

That must have been the case, for Racke simply could not have cultivated so much unpleasantness by his own efforts. So Gussy decided to take up Racke. Racke showed some willingness to be taken up by Lord Eastwood's son till Gussy explained how he regarded it as his duty to overlook the fact that Aubrey was a snob and a blackguard, and a rotter generally. To Gussy's surprise, Racke hit him on the nose, and the friendship ceased almost before it had begun.

Only in Skimpole, of the Shell, could Gussy find a kindred spirit, and unfortunately he could not stand Skimpole, of the Shell.

There was no doubt now, Gussy considered, that Skimmy's weird opinions were

well founded. But there was still less doubt that Skimmy was a long-winded bore.

During these days it was noticeable that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, formerly the best-dressed fellow at St. Jim's, was growing shabby.

His friends could not always be watching over him.

Baggy Trimble openly wore Gussy's best boots; Mellish, of the Fourth, had annexed his best trousers. Chowle came over from the New House to take away Gussy's Sunday topper.

At St. Jim's, as at most public schools, there was a good deal of Communism in personal property. A fellow who could not find his own football boots put on the first boots that came to hand if they fitted him. A fellow whose hat was upstairs put on any hat that was downstairs. A fellow whose hat was on another fellow's head naturally annexed a hat belonging to some other fellow. Fellows sometimes kicked up a shindy about it, but generally matters sorted themselves out in a more or less satisfactory manner.

Arthur Augustus had often strenuously objected to the whole thing. His clothes were not as other fellows' clothes. It did not matter much if Blake wore Dig's jacket, or Dig wore Herries' boots. But Gussy's jacket fitted him like a glove, and it lost that beautiful fit if it was stretched over a broader fellow's shoulders. He objected to ink-spots on his neckties, and grease-spots on his waistcoats, and mud on his bags.

Now all this was changed.

All property being the common property of all, according to Gussy's new opinions, he could scarcely object to the borrowing of his things, or to their permanent annexation.

When the fellow who possessed the best and most extensive wardrobe in the Form ceased to object to borrowing and annexation, obviously his things were not likely to be left long intact.

It was really fortunate for Gussy that he had some old clothes which nobody wanted to borrow, or he might have been reduced to the state of our orginal parents.

One article, however, was left alone. That was his red necktie. Nobody wanted to borrow that.

But destiny descended even on the red necktie. Gussy had worn it for about a week when his Form-master, Mr. Lathom, awoke to the fact that he was wearing it. One morning in class Mr. Lathom blinked at it over his spectacles.

"D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, sir!" said Arthur Augustus.

Gussy still addressed his Form-master as "sir," in spite of equality and the rights of man. His manners were better than his noble intellect.

"You are wearing a brightly-coloured necktie, D'Arcy."

"A wed one, sir," said Gussy.

Mr. Lathom blinked at him, while the Fourth Form grinned. The master of the Fourth did not know that the red necktie was an indication of advanced opinions. He regarded it simply as bad taste.

"You are well aware, D'Arcy, that St. Jim's boys are expected to dress quietly," said Mr. Lathom. "You should not wear such a gaudy tie, D'Arcy."

"Weally, sir——"

"Go and change it immediately."

"As a mattah of fact, sir——"

"You are wasting time, D'Arcy. Go and change your tie at once, and do not let me see you again in such a thing!"

Mr. Lathom turned away.

Slowly Arthur Augustus left the Form-room. Now was the time, really, to explain to Mr. Lathom that he had no right to give such an order—that, according to the rights of man and so forth, Gussy was as much entitled to give orders in the Form-room as any Form-master. But Gussy did not explain that to Mr. Lathom. He felt that Mr. Lathom would not understand. He came back to the Form-room minus the red necktie.

That afternoon, Gussy was going down to Rylcombe, and it was raining. Gussy was putting up his umbrella when Gore, of the Shell, came along. Gore also was going out.

"Give me my umbrella, please," said Gore.

Arthur Augustus looked at him.

"You are makin' a mistake, Goah, deah boy. This is my umbwellah," he said mildly.

Gore chuckled.

"Won't all umbrellas be nationalised under Extremism?" he demanded.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And isn't the present state of affairs founded on injustice, and merely temporary?"

"Yaas."

"Then how do you make out that that is your umbrella. I'd like to know?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Hand it over," said Gore. "It's common property, old bean, and I claim it."

"Yaas, but——" D'Arcy was struck by a bright idea. "It is twue that all umbrellas are common pwopahty, Goah, but I claim it, too. See?"

"Then we've got equal rights to it?" asked Gore.

"Yaas; and my wight bein' as good as yours, I'm keepin' it," said Arthur Augustus victoriously.

Gore grinned.

"When two fellows with equal rights claim the same property, there's only one way of settling it," he remarked.

And, with a sudden frontal attack, Gore up-ended the swell of St. Jim's, grasped the umbrella, and walked off with it.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus as he sat and gazed after Gore's retreating figure.

Undoubtedly the path of a reformer was set with thorns.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER
Below Stairs!

"Um!" said Toby dubiously.

In the first place, Toby didn't like fellows to butt into the boot-room.

The boot-room was Toby's own province, where he was monarch of all he surveyed.

There Toby gave orders to Charley, the boot-boy, and Toby liked giving orders to Charley. Toby received so many orders from all sorts of people that it was a pleasant relief to him to pass some of them on. Toby lived in hopes of becoming, some day, a butler, and giving orders to a whole swarm of menials.

If Mrs. Mimms or the Head's butler or the cook slanged Toby, Toby slanged Charley, and Charley, having no one to slang, took it out of the cat.

This was all very wrong, but there was a lot of human nature in it, and it was doubtful whether Gussy's new opinions, introduced into the boot-room, would make much difference to the human nature there. But Gussy could only do his best.

Gussy, sitting on a chair that Toby had dusted for him, was expounding Extremism. Toby listened dubiously.

Nothing, however, is so convincing as earnestness. A fellow who really believes what he says will always make converts. Besides, such a tale from the swell of St. Jim's was pleasant to the ears of Toby. Fortunately, Charley was not in the boot-room just then, or Gussy would certainly have put his noble foot in it again.

"You see, deah boy, we are all equal," Arthur Augustus explained patiently. "Some of us have accidental advantages, and some of us haven't. That is the only diffewence."

"'Course it is, sir," said Toby, convinced at once.

"We cannot change all this in a day, but we must do our best," said Arthur Augustus. "I am goin' to set mattahs wight heah as fah as I can. Why should I be learnin' Latin while you clean knives? Uttah wot! Your intellect is equal to mine, Toby."

"Is it?" ejaculated Toby.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Toby did not utter his thoughts. His own secret persuasion was that Gussy had the advantage of him in many ways, but that when it came to brains Gussy was not even an also ran.

Toby would have liked Gussy's nice clothes and nice manners and nice prospects, but he would have objected strongly to being endowed with Gussy's intellect.

Quite unsuspicious of Toby's secret

thoughts, the swell of St. Jim's rattled cheerily on.

"You see, deah boy, we can set this mattah wight. I am goin' to teach you Latin."

"Oh!" gasped Toby.

Sometimes Toby had envied St. Jim's fellows. But if there was one special thing he did not envy them, it was grinding at a dead language under a Form-master's eye.

There was, so far as Toby could see, no sense in it. Nobody talked in Latin, and the fellows who would want to read classical authors in their own tongue after leaving school were undoubtedly few in number.

Indeed, Toby was aware that most Old Boys who revisited St. Jim's, so far from remembering what they had learned in the Form-rooms there, would have had great difficulty in saving themselves from the cane if placed in junior Forms—let alone senior Forms.

Toby's opinion was that the only fellows who benefited from the study of Latin were those who were going to become schoolmasters, and who needed to learn the stuff in order to pass on their useless knowledge to a new generation of victims.

Possibly Toby was right.

Certainly the prospect of learning Latin filled him with dismay, and only his awe of Arthur Augustus prevented him from saying so.

"I—I—I shan't be able to find the time, sir," he gasped. "You see, I'm a 'ard-working bloke."

"I shall help you to find the time, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus encouragingly. "I shall do some of your work."

"Oh, my eye!"

"You cawwy coals to the mastahs' studies," said D'Arcy. "I will cawwy them instead."

"You wouldn't be let, sir," stuttered Toby. "They'd jolly soon stop you."

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that. I will find somethin' else. I will learn how to use the knife-machine."

Sniff from Toby.

"I never tetch the knife-machine, sir! That's Charley's work," he snapped. "I give him a 'and sometimes."

"Who polishes the silver?"

"I does," said Toby. "Mrs. Mimms wouldn't trust that Charley with the silver!"

"That's all wight, then," said D'Arcy cheerfully. "I'll polish the silvah while you are gwindin' at Latin. I can find the time on half-holidays, see?"



Monty Lowther pulled the cord attached to the leg of the chair, and it departed suddenly from underneath Gussy. "Yawoooh! Oh, cwumbs!" (*See Chapter* 6.)

Toby gazed at him.

He knew, of course, that D'Arcy was an ass. But he had not supposed that even D'Arcy was ass enough to believe that he could polish silver in the way Mrs. Mimms required silver to be polished.

"Now, it's a half-holiday to-day," said Arthur Augustus. "I was goin' out on my bike, but young Twimble bowwoed it the othah day and had a smash up, and it wathah wants wepairin' befoah it can be used. The othah fellows will be at games

pwactice, and we shall have No. 6 to ourselves. Pway come up to my studay this aftahnoon, Toby, and we will begin."

"Begin Latin?" faltered Toby.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You—you see, sir——"

"Of course, I am not a past-mastah in tutorin'," said Arthur Augustus modestly, "but I can put you wight at the start. All I know is quite at your service, Tobay."

"I wonder 'ow much that is?" murmured Toby.

"What did you say, deah boy?"

"Nothin', sir," said Toby hastily. "I'm rather afeared that I can't get off, sir."

"Mrs. Mimms will let you off if you ask her, Toby. She is a vewy good sort."

The hapless Toby realised that there was no help for it. Not for worlds would he have offended Master D'Arcy. The poor chap could not help being a silly chump, Toby considered, but he was very nice in other ways.

"I'll come, sir," he mumbled.

"That's all wight, then. What are you doin' now, Tobay?"

"Polishin' these 'ere glasses, sir."

"Pway take a west on this chair while I do the work for a bit."

Toby trembled.

Broken glasses meant trouble, and he dreaded to trust them into Gussy's inexperienced hands.

But the St. Jim's Extremist was not to be denied. When Gussy was good, he was very, very good.

He took a cut-glass tumbler and the polishing cloth from Toby and began.

Crash!

Smash!

"Bai Jove!"

"Oh, dear!" groaned Toby. "I knew what would 'appen!"

"Weally, Toby, I do not see how you could have known that it would happen," said Arthur Augustus, in surprise. "I certainly did not know. I do not see now how I came to dwop the glass. I will be vewy careful not to dwop any more."

"Leave 'em alone, sir, please!" implored Toby. "I shall 'ave to pay for that tumbler, and goodness only knows 'ow much!"

"I should certainly offah you the wequiahed amount, Toby——"

"Oh!" said Toby more brightly.

"Only I have no money."

"Oh!" said Toby, less brightly.

"You see, I have lent it all to Twimble. Othahwise, I should hand ovah the wequiahed sum."

"Oh!" said Toby, for the third time, in discouraged tones.

"But I will polish the west of the glasses for you."

Toby shuddered.

In his mind's eye he saw a whole year's wages going as the price of Gussy's generous assistance.

He hastily interposed.

"Let 'em alone, sir! I—I 'ear Mrs. Mimms comin.' Mrs. Mimms she don't like the young gentlemen to come into the bootroom, sir."

"A gentleman has a wight to call on anothah gentleman anywhah, Toby."

"Oh! Ah! Yes! But Mrs. Mimms don't see it, sir."

"I will explain the mattah to Mrs. Mimms."

"You'll get me into a row, sir," said Toby, in despair. "You don't want to get me the push, sir!"

"Bai Jove! Certainly I should not like to get you into any twouble, Toby; that is not my object at all. If you think it best I will wetire."

Toby not only thought it best, but said so emphatically, and Arthur Augustus retired.

He felt that he had done good in the bootroom. Toby, gazing at the fragments of glass, and thinking of the coming instruction in Latin, did not look as if Gussy's Extremism had brightened existence for him. He looked quite the reverse.

THE NINTH CHAPTER
Sauce for the Gander!

"TOM MERRY, deah boy! Lookin' for you!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, as he came on the captain of the Shell in the Shell passage.

Tom Merry smiled.

Fellows generally did smile when they encountered Arthur Augustus D'Arcy these days.

As an Extremist, Arthur Augustus was not taken with the seriousness that was the due of a great reformer. His activities added to the gaiety of existence at St. Jim's. The sight of his earnest face was enough to bring a smile to any other face.

"Well, here I am, old bean," said Tom cheerily. "What's up? Holding another meeting in my study?"

Arthur Augustus frowned a little.

"I am not holdin' anothah meetin' in your study," he answered stiffly.

"You're more than welcome, old chap," remarked Monty Lowther. "We quite enjoyed the last."

"Quite!" concurred Manners.

"Oh, wats! Pway don't wot, deah boys. I am wequiahin' some impot. papah and exahcise-books and things, as I am goin' to give some instwuction in Latin to a fwiend of mine."

"Who's the miserable victim?"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Giving up Extremism for tutoring?" asked Manners.

"Not at all, Mannahs. The one thing is part of the othah. I am tutorin' a chap who has not had a chance of learnin' Latin," Arthur Augustus explained. "My fwiend Tobay."

"Your friend Toby?" repeated Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, my only summer bonnet!"



Figgins and Co. chuckled whilst they listened to Gussy's new wheeze, and they readily agreed that the Fourth was every whit as good as the Sixth; but that the Third was as good as the Fourth was regarded as a ludicrous suggestion. (*See Chapter* 7.)

ejaculated Lowther. "You're going to instruct Toby in Latin?"

"Pwecisely."

"What has the poor chap done?"

"You uttah ass!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I am goin' to instwuct him in Latin as a benefit to him. Why should not Tobay learn Latin just like any othah fellow at St. Jim's?"

"Because he's a lucky dog."

"Oh, wats! We've wun out of impot. papah in our studay," said Arthur Augustus. "I shall have to set Tobay some simple exahcises to begin with, and I may want a lot of foolscap. Of course, I have a wight to step into your study and help myself, as undah Extwemism all foolscap will be nationalised, and the pwesent state of affaihs, with foolscap bein' held as pwivate pwopahty by individuals, is purely tempowawy. But I would weally wathah have your permission."

"Well, it's just as well to get a fellow's permission before you bag his things," assented Lowther. "Otherwise he might jump on the back of your neck while you were going it, what?"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"But I suppose under Extremism all necks will be nationalised?" asked Lowther thoughtfully.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will gas be nationalised under Extremism?" asked Lowther suddenly.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then the conversation of an Extremist will no longer be his private property?"

"You sillay ass!" roared Arthur Augustus. "I have a gweat mind to punch your sillay nose, Lowthah!"

"Better wait till noses are nationalised," said Lowther, shaking his head. "At present my nose is my own property, and I shall strew any fellow who punches it in small pieces along the passage."

Tom Merry chuckled.

"We've run out of impot. paper in our study, Gussy. That ass Lowther had a lot of lines for Linton. Try Skimmy. He's always got tons of foolscap in his study and as a crank— "

"What?"

"I mean, as a brainy Extremist he will be bound to hand over as much as you want."

"Bai Jove! That's a good idea!"

The Terrible Three walked on, grinning, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy tapped at Skimpole's door and entered.

The study was vacant.

Talbot and Gore were gone down to Little Side to games practice, and Skimpole had left immediately after dinner that day, to spend a happy afternoon at the Assembly Rooms, in Wayland. At the Assembly Rooms Mr. Giggs was addressing a meeting, and Skimmy did not want to miss the pearls of wisdom and eloquence that fell from the lips of Mr. Giggs. As there was no one in the study, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy would have been rather at a loss had he not been an Extremist calling on a fellow-Extremist. But as it was that it did not matter.

Skimpole, of the Shell, was not the happy possessor of a large allowance, but of his slender supply of cash a large proportion went on foolscap. Skimmy was not only a reader of ponderous volumes, but he had the ambition to be a writer of ponderous volumes. Much as Skimmy admired the great works of Professor Balmycrumpet and Herr Knumskull, Skimmy was persuaded that he could do a little better than these great men, and his volume had already reached the seventy-seventh chapter.

Skimmy's great work might—or might not—produce a revolution when it was published—if ever it was. In the meantime, it was good for the business of the stationer in Rylcombe. Skimmy was one of his best customers.

In Skimmy's study there was always a good supply of foolscap, much of it rendered useless by Skimmy' lucubrations being scribbled on it, but a good deal of it still blank and useful.

Gussy had only to help himself.

Gussy's manners being superior to his opinions, he never would have touched a fellow's property, though he had no

doubt, since he had seen the light, that all property ought to be held in common.

But Skimmy's property, of course, he was entitled to touch without the preliminary of asking permission, Skimmy being a fellow-Extremist, and a labourer in the same vineyard, so to speak.

That Skimmy would have any objection never even occurred to Gussy's powerful brain.

Had not Skimmy set the example by presenting Gussy's new spring overcoat to a tramp?

What was sauce for the goose was surely sauce for the gander in such matters as this.

So the swell of St. Jim's cheerfully sorted over the manuscript, and selected a stout wedge of it, which was unspoiled by the brainy lucubrations of Herbert Skimpole.

This he carried off to Study No. 6, in the Fourth.

Blake and Herries and Digby met him there. They stared at Gussy's burden as he landed it on the study table.

"Lines?" said Blake.

"Not at all, deah boy."

"What's that hefty stack of paper for, then?"

"I am givin' Tobay some instwuction in Latin this aftahnoon," explained Arthur Augustus.

"Toby!" yelled Blake.

"Latin!" exclaimed Dig.

"Oh, crumbs!" ejaculated Herries.

"I considah that Tobay is as much entitled to study Latin as we are," answered Arthur Augustus calmly. "I have awwanged with him to come up to the studay this aftahnoon for instwuction. I twust that you fellows are goin' down to games pwactice. I do not want you to intewwupt my tutorin' with wibald remarks."

"Toby keen on it?" grinned Blake.

"I have no doubt that Tobay is vewy keen on it," said Arthur Augustus. "He will be gettin' his wights, you know. I suppose any fellow is bound to be wathah keen on gettin' his wights."

"That depends," chuckled Blake. "There are rights and rights! I'd give up my right to study Latin if Mr. Lathom would let me."

"That is not the pwopah way of lookin' at it, Blake. You are quite in the dark. I will explain the matter fwom the beginnin'——"

There was a sudden rush of footsteps. Blake and Herries and Digby vanished along the passage, and Arthur Augustus found himself alone in Study No. 6.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

His chums were gone down to games practice—in rather a hurry. The St. Jim's reformer was left to waste his sweetness on the desert air.

"Bai Jove!" repeated Arthur Augustus. "It is said that wisdom cwies out in the stweets and no man wegards it, and I weally think it is twue."

There was no doubt that wisdom cried out in Study No. 6 at St. Jim's, and no man regarded it—such wisdom as Arthur Augustus was able to provide, at least.

THE TENTH CHAPTER
Toby Up Against It!

"TWICKLE in, deah boy."

Toby trickled in.

Toby had approached Study No. 6 with slow and reluctant feet. The nearer he drew to the headquarters of Fourth Form Extremism, the slower grew Toby's footsteps. The thought of fagging at the study of a dead language, like the poor fellows in Mr. Lathom's Form, who could not help themselves, was dismally dismaying to Toby.

St. Jim's fellows had to do it. There was no sense in it so far as Toby could see, but it was a custom at public schools, and fellows who went to public schools had to toe the line. Often and often had Toby felt sorry for them. And now he was in the same unhappy state himself, owing to the generous kindness of Gussy.

True, Toby could have helped himself; he was in a better position, in that respect, than any St. Jim's fellow. He could have refused point-blank to learn Latin without fear of being told to "bend over," like any St. Jim's fellow. But he was reluctant to offend Master D'Arcy. That D'Arcy was

a crass ass was not the poor fellow's fault, Toby charitably reflected. He could not help it. Obviously he meant well. Toby, with a heroism that was much to his credit, resolved to stand it—or, at least, to stand as much as he could of it. His chief hope was that Master D'Arcy would get tired of this extraordinary stunt, and let a bloke off.

He trickled into Study No. 6, as requested, with a woebegone expression on his chubby face. Arthur Augustus, though not an observant youth, could not help noticing that Toby looked woebegone, though he did not attribute that circumstance to its real cause.

"Anythin' w'ong, Tobay?" he inquired.

"Oh! Nunno, sir," gasped Toby.

"You're not lookin' vewy chirpy, deah boy."

"I—I'm feeling quite chirpy, sir," mumbled Toby.

A pile of Latin books and another pile of nice blank foolscap did not tend to cheer him. He blinked at both piles, and wished himself safe back in the boot-room.

"Now we're weady, old fellow," said Arthur Augustus cheerily, "I suppose we'd better begin at the beginnin'."

"It wouldn't be much use beginning at the hend, would it, sir?" murmured Toby.

"Not at all, Tobay. How much Latin do you know alweady?"

"None at all, sir," answered Toby, only wishing from the bottom of his heart that Fate would permit him to remain in that happy state.

"We'll soon change all that, deah boy. In a vewy short time you'll be fairly burstin' with iwwegular verbs," said Arthur Augustus encouragingly. "Bai Jove! Have you got a pain anywah, Tobay?"

"Nunno, sir."

"I thought I heard you gwoan."

"Di-di-did you, sir?" said Toby guiltily.

"Yaas, wathah! Howevah, to wesume—I mean, to begin. Latin is a dead language, to begin with, Tobay."

"Yessir," said Toby, not expressing his fervent wish that Latin was buried as well as dead.

"It was spoken by the Womans, Tobay—a vewy gweat people of ancient times, who lived in Wome. The Latins did not use an article, Tobay."

"Not any article, sir?"

"None at all, deah boy."

"Blessed if I see 'ow they got on without any articles," said the astonished Toby. "Didn't they have nothing in their 'ouses at all?"

"Eh? I do not quite compwehend, Tobay. Of course, they had furniture in their houses, the same as we do."

"Well, furniture is articles, ain't it?" asked Toby. "This 'ere table is an article."

"Not at all. Table is a noun, Tobay."

Toby blinked.

"You misappwehend, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "A table is certainly an article of furniture. But I was alludin' to gwammatical articles."

"Such as this 'ere Latin grammar, sir?"

"N-no. A gwammah is certainly an article, but not in a gwammatical sense. Gwammatically any article is a noun."

"Oh, my eye!"

There are two articles in English, Toby, as you are doubtless awah. 'The,' the definite article; and 'a' or 'an,' the indefinite article. The Latins never used eithah. F'winstance, if a Woman spoke of a table, he would say table, and it might mean eithah a table or the table."

"I thought table was an English word, sir. Was it a Latin word, too?"

"Oh, no! Mensa was the Latin word for table."

"But 'ow could a Latin say table if it wasn't a Latin word, sir?"

"He would not say table, Tobay; he would say mensa."

"Didn't you say he would say table, sir?"

"I was only givin' you an example, Tobay. Now, take the pen, and I will give you a few simple nouns to begin with. Mensa, a table."

"Mensa, a table," repeated Toby, writing it down in a big round hand on a sheet of Skimpole's foolscap. "I don't quite catch on, sir. Didn't you say those blokes didn't say 'a table'? Jest table."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then 'ow can mensa mean 'a table,' sir?" asked Toby.

"Pewwaps you had bettah w'ite mensa, table," said Arthur Augustus. "You will compwehend bettah latah, Tobay. Now insula, an island—I mean insula, island."

"Insoler, iland," wrote Toby.

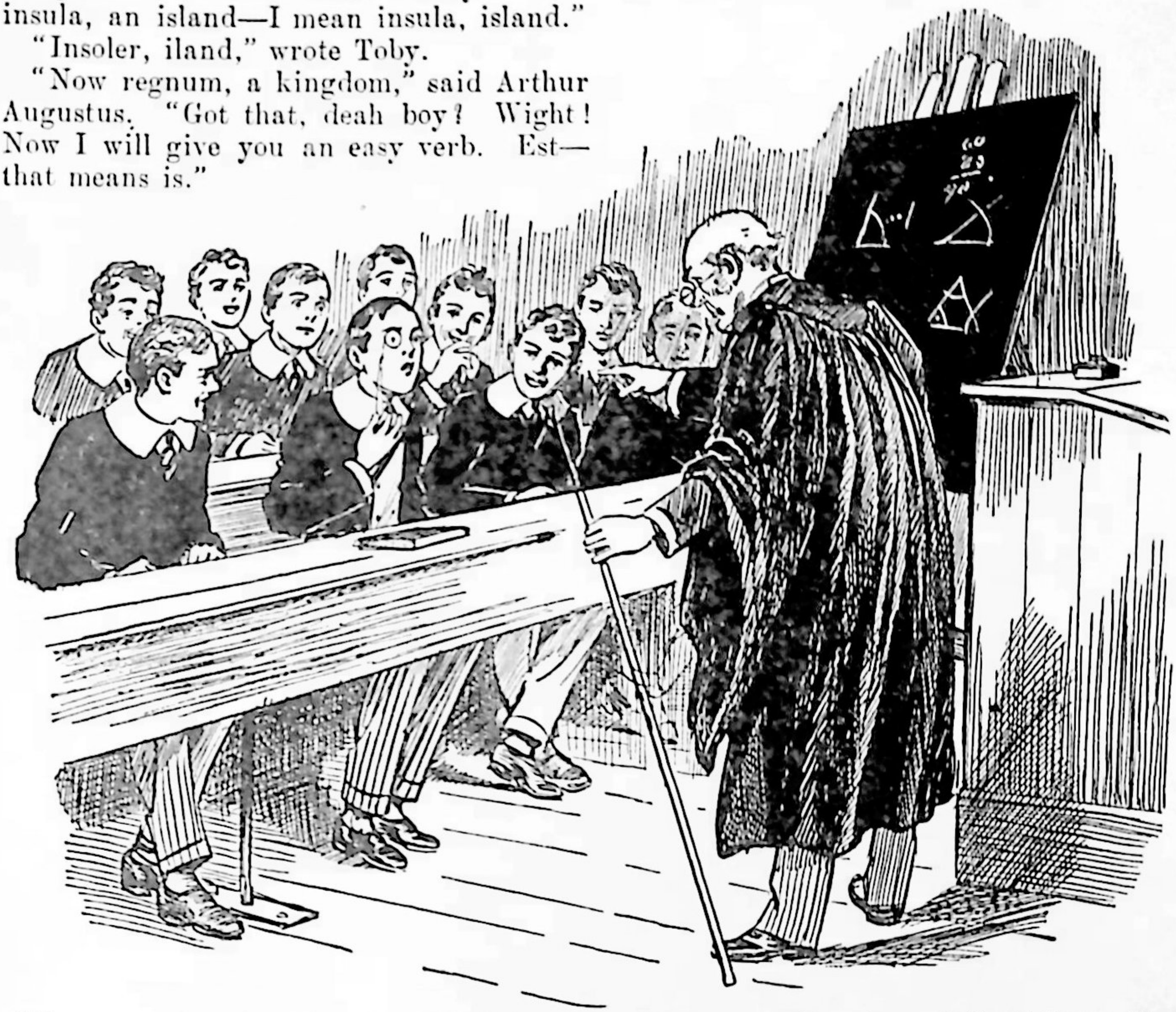
"Now regnum, a kingdom," said Arthur Augustus. "Got that, deah boy? Wight! Now I will give you an easy verb. Est—that means is."

"Yessir," said Toby.

"Now w'ite down 'Bwitannia est insula.' Now you have got a whole sentence, Tobay, which is vewy good for a beginnin'. You have w'itten down in Latin that Bwitain is an island."

"I knowed it was before, sir," said Toby. "I ain't ignorant, sir."

"Yaas, quite so, deah boy—quite so. Now you have w'itten it in Latin. Now you see that the Latins used no article," said Arthur Augustus patiently. "The exact twanslation would be 'Bwitannia is island,' not 'Bwitannia is an island,' as in English. Now w'ite down the word medicus, which means a doctah."



"You are wearing a brightly-coloured tie, D'Arcy," said Mr. Lathom. "A wed one, sir," said Gussy. The Fourth-form master blinked at him, while the other juniors grinned. (*See Chapter 7.*)

"Meddikus," wrote Toby.

"Now w'ite down meus, which is one form of the word my. We will come to the othah forms latah."

"Meeyus," wrote Toby.

"Now w'ite down hoc, which means this."

"Hock," wrote Toby.

"Now w'ite down narrat, which means welates or nawwates."

"Narat," wrote down Toby.

"Now you have anothah whole sentence, deah boy. 'Medicus meus hoc narrat'—'my doctor welates this.' See?" said Gussy encouragingly. "The ordah of the words is diffewent in Latin: 'doctor my this welates.' That is how the Latins put it."

"My eye! And did they understand one another, sir, when they mixed it up like that?" inquired Toby, in astonishment.

"Oh, bai Jove! Yaas, deah boy."

"Blessed if I know 'ow they did it, sir. They must have been clever blokes to know what it meant when they got it mixed that way."

"Hem! Let me look at your exahcise, Tobay."

Arthur Augustus looked at the exercise, and a puzzled wrinkle came into his noble brow as he read "Meddikus meeyus hock narat."

"Bai Jove! The spellin' won't quite do, Tobay. We shall have to give a little attention to orthogwaphy. I will w'ite out the words, and then you can copy them in the pwopah spellin.'"

"Yessir."

Arthur Augustus proceeded to write out the copy for Toby. Toby leaned back in his chair and took a rest. A little Latin went a long way with Toby, and he was tired. While Gussy's pen was still busy, Toby's chin dropped on his chest, and a sonorous and unmusical snore proceeded from Toby. Arthur Augustus glanced at him.

"Bai Jove! Tobay!"

Snore.

"Gweat Scott! The chap's gone to sleep," murmured Arthur Augustus. "I wondah what has made him dwop off to sleep. This is weally wathah wemarkable. I say, Tobay! Tobay!"

Toby awoke with a start.

"Yes, mum! I'm a-coming!" he called out, jumping up as he spoke. No doubt he woke under the impression that he was being called by Mrs. Mimms. "I'm coming, mum! I ain't been asleep."

"Bai Jove!"

Toby rubbed his sleepy eyes.

"Oh, I—I forgot I was 'ere, sir," stammered Toby, blushing. "Is that all for to-day, sir?"

"Bai Jove! We're only just beginnin', Tobay," said Arthur Augustus.

"Only just beginning, sir," faltered Toby, his heart sinking into his boots.

"Yaas, wathah! We're goin' to do twentay times more than that befoah we chuck it, old chap."

Even the worm will turn.

Toby had not absorbed very much Latin so far. But what he had absorbed had given him a headache. He did not want to offend Master D'Arcy. But he would have offended all the nobility and gentry in the Kingdom at one fell swoop rather than have had any more Latin that afternoon. There was a limit to human endurance, and Toby had reached it. If this sort of thing was going on, he might as well have been a St. Jim's fellow, and have had done with it!

He jumped up.

"Didn't you 'ear the bell, sir?" he exclaimed.

"Bai Jove! No!"

"'Skuse me, sir! I got to see to the bell."

"I think you are mistaken, Tobay; I certainly did not heah any bell," said Arthur Augustus. "It is all wight, Tobay. You have been noddin', you know, and your yahs have deceived you. Tobay—my deah chap, I assure you the bell did not wing. Tobay——"

But Toby was gone.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, addressing space. "It is vewy wight and pwopah for Toby to be so keen on cawwyin' out his duties, but I am absolutely assuahed that he was mistaken in thinkin' that he heard a bell wing. I will get some exahcises weady for him when he comes back."

Arthur Augustus industriously proceeded to prepare some Latin exercises for Toby. He used up quite a large quantity of Skimpole's foolscap in preparing those exercises, all ready for Toby when he came back.

But Toby did not come back.

Arthur Augustus wondered why. He concluded that some duty must have turned up to detain Toby. He felt that that was

rather hard on a fellow who was just beginning the study of Latin, and whose opportunities in that line were limited. But whatever was the reason, the fact was certain—Toby did not come back.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER
Trouble Among Reformers !

"My dear Talbot ——"

Talbot, of the Shell, halted good-naturedly. Talbot was always kind and patient with Skimpole. He was almost the only fellow at St. Jim's who was. Skimpole, of the Shell, would have tried the patience of Job to breaking-point.

"Yes, old chap," said Talbot.

He was coming up to the Shell passage after games practice when Skimpole's bony features and glimmering spectacles dawned upon him.

"A robbery has taken place in the study," said Skimpole.

"Oh, my hat!"

"My manuscript——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Talbot involuntarily.

The idea of anyone but a dustman, paid for the job, taking away Skimpole's precious manuscript was too much for him.

"My dear Talbot, I perceive no occasion for an outbreak of risibility," said Skimpole, perplexed. "The present conjuncture of circumstances is of an exceedingly serious nature. Returning from the meeting at Wayland, I was about to resume the inditing of my lucubrations on social subjects when I discovered, to my astonishment, that all my foolscap had been abstracted. I am not alluding, my dear Talbot, to the written pages of my extensive work on Socialism. Such a loss would have been irreparable, but it is not so serious as that."

"Oh!" said Talbot. "It's not so bad as that?"

"No, my dear fellow. My manuscripts are still reposing in complete security in the receptacle where I deposited them before proceeding to Wayland. But all my foolscap is gone, and I cannot find it anywhere in our apartment. You have not removed it, Talbot, for a thoughtless and unseemly pleasantry?"

"Not at all, old bean."



Crash ! Smash ! "Bai Jove !" cried Arthur Augustus in astonishment. "Oh, dear !" groaned Toby. "I knew what would 'appen !" (*See Chapter* 8.)

"I have asked Gore, and he replied very rudely that, as he had not had occasion to ignite the study fire, he had not used up my papers," said Skimpole. "It was a rude reply, but doubtless veracious. There has been a robbery, Talbot! Somebody has surreptitiously purloined two whole quires of foolscap from my study!"

Skimpole blinked seriously and solemnly at Talbot. It was a serious matter. Skimmy had returned from the meeting at Wayland, with his brain buzzing with the red-hot eloquence of Mr. Giggs. Great thoughts had been set going in his intellect. These thoughts it was necessary to transfer to paper before they grew dim. And there was no foolscap left, and Skimmy's great thoughts still boiled in his brain, untransferred to paper, in danger of being lost to humanity altogether. Skimmy was feeling like a lioness robbed of her cubs.

"Can you suggest who may have been the unscrupulous and surreptitious delinquent, my dear Talbot?" asked Skimpole anxiously. "It may not yet be too late to recover my abstracted property."

Talbqt shook his head.

"Some fellow may have wanted impot. paper for lines," he suggested. "Let's have tea, Skimmy, and leave it over."

Skimpole blinked at him more in sorrow than in anger. The suggestion of leaving over the seventy-eighth chapter of his great work was too puerile for a rejoinder, and so Skimmy did not reply. Having blinked at Talbot with the blink of a misunderstood genius, Skimpole ambled on his way in search of the perpetrator of the outrage in his study. Skimpole was not a fighting-man, as a rule; but he was now in a state of great wrath, and it was likely that trouble would accrue if he did not recover his precious foolscap in time to set down the great thoughts that were burning in his powerful intellect.

It was in this mood that Skimmy arrived at Study No. 6, in the Fourth.

He did not arrive there because that study sheltered another Extremist, who might have been supposed, on Skimmy's own principles, to have bagged the foolscap if he wanted it. Skimmy did not think of that. He never did reflect that his remarkable opinions were a sort of two-edged sword, that might be turned against his brainy self. He arrived at Study No. 6 in the course of his peregrinations, as he made extensive inquiries after the missing goods. But when he blinked into that study he could not help noting that the table was littered with foolscap, and he could not help his suspicions rising.

"My dear D'Arcy——"

Arthur Augustus was busy in Study No. 6. Blake & Co. had not yet come in, and Gussy was anxious to get those Latin exercises ready before they arrived. Toby was still missing, but the exercises could be handed over to him later, to be worked out in his room at his leisure. That was Gussy's present intention, in view of the mysterious disappearance of Toby.

"Pway don't intewwupt, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "I am wathah busay now, Skimmay."

"A quantity of foolscap has been surreptitiously abstracted from my study, D'Arcy," said Skimpole sternly.

"Yaas, that's all wight," asserted Arthur Augustus. "I've got it."

"What?" gasped Skimpole.

"I've got it heah, deah boy. I wequiahed it," explained Arthur Augustus. "Pway don't intewwupt me now. I am usin' it."

"You are using my foolscap!" ejaculated Skimpole.

"Yaas. I have used about half of it so far, and I am goin' to twy to get thwough the west befoah tea-time. You see, I am settin' copies for a chap—w'itin' the top line, and leavin' space for the chap to copy. Like a copy-book, you know. Wathah a good ideah, what?"

Skimpole blinked at him.

"You idiot!" he exclaimed.

"Bai Jove! What?"

"You frabjous chump!"

"Weally, Skimpole——"

"Hand over that foolscap at once!" roared the incensed Skimpole. "How dare you take my foolscap, you burbling fathead?"

Arthur Augustus laid down his pen, adjusted his eyeglass, and stared at Skimpole in absolute astonishment. He doubted whether his noble ears had heard aright.

"Pway keep calm, Skimpole," he said icily. "Pway allow me to point out that this foolscap was not yours."

"Not mine!" yelled Skimpole. "Not mine, when I bought it and paid for it at the stationer's, in Rylcombe?"

"Certainly not! Undah Extwemism all foolscap will be nationalised, as you know vewy well. The pwesent state of affaihs, with pwivate individuals pwetendin' that there is pwivate pwopahty in foolscap, is merely tempowawy. The foolscap is as much mine as yours, of course, and as much anybody else's as mine."

"You chump!" roared Skimpole. "I need that foolscap to write the seventy-eighth chapter of my book on Socialism."

"Wats!" retorted Arthur Augustus.

Skimpole breathed hard and deep. Like a humorist who can never understand a joke against himself, so the St. Jim's Extremist could not appreciate Extremism when it came home to roost, as it were. Skimpole clenched his bony hands.

"You can keep the sheets you have scribbled on, you silly ass," he said, "but I will take away the remainder."

"You jollay well won't," said Arthur Augustus hotly. "I have told you that I wequiah it."

"You require my foolscap?" hooted Skimpole.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You burbling idiot!"

"I wefuse to listen to these oppwobwious epithets, Skimpole. Pway leave my studay at once."

"Give me that foolscap!" roared Skimpole.

"Wats!"

"I'll jolly well take it, then!" shouted Skimpole, forgetting, in his excitement, to put it polysyllabically.

And the enraged Skimpole strode at the study table and clutched at the quire of foolscap that still remained intact.

Arthur Augustus jumped up, equally wrathy.

"Let that papah alone!" he shouted. "How dare you come to my studay to commit a wobbewy?"

"You silly owl!"

"You fwabjous chump!"

Skimpole clutched up the foolscap. Arthur Augustus whipped round the table and clutched Skimpole.

"You uttah chump!" he gasped. "I am sowwy to have to handle you, Skimmay, but you are not takin' away my foolscap, as I wequiah it!"

"It's mine!" shrieked Skimpole.

"Pway don't talk wubbish!"

"Leggo!" roared Skimpole.

"Wats!"

Foolscap was scattered over the floor of Study No. 6, like leaves in Vallombrosa, as the rival Extremists struggled.

Arthur Augustus gasped as he received a jab in the ribs from a bony fist. Skimpole yelled under the infliction of an uppercut that caught his bony chin.

They struggled furiously, trampling over the scattered sheets of foolscap, reducing them to a state in which they were useful neither for the Latin exercises nor for the seventy-eighth chapter of Skimpole's learned work.

Crash!

Skimpole went down at last, with the swell of St. Jim's sprawling over him.

"Ow! Yow! Wow!" yelled Skimpole.

"Get out of my studay, you wottah!" panted Arthur Augustus.

"My foolscap——"

"You are not goin' to wob me of my foolscap, Skimmay!"

"It's my foolscap!" raved Skimmy.

"Pway wing off that wot. Get out!" gasped D'Arcy. "Yawoooh!" he added as a bony fist crashed into his eye.

It was a terrific scrap. The study table rocked as the combatants crashed into it. Ink and papers flew in all directions; ink and inkpot, Latin exercises and Latin books were mixed up with D'Arcy and Skimpole, and Study No. 6 began to look as if a cyclone had struck it. Extremism at St. Jim's was in that happy state when Blake

& Co., accompanied by the Terrible Three, arrived for tea in Study No. 6.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER
Discouraging !

"WHAT the thump——"

"Great Scott !"

"Sounds like a dog-fight !"

Blake tore open the door of Study No. 6 and stared in. Herries and Dig stared in. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther stared in. For some moments they could hardly make out what was going on. The study was filled with flying sheets of paper and dust, overturned furniture, scattered books, and struggling forms.

"It's Gussy !" gasped Blake.

"And Skimmy !" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"What the merry dickens——"

"You rotter !" Skimpole was gasping. "Take that ! Yaroooogh ! Take that ! Oh, crumbs ! Yooop !"

"You uttah beast ! I'll jolly well give you a feahful thwashin' ! Oh, cwumbs !"

"Stop them !" exclaimed Tom.

Six juniors rushed into the study and grasped the two infuriated combatants and dragged them apart.

"Lemme get at him !" roared Skimpole.

"Bai Jove ! Let me get at that wottah !" gasped D'Arcy.

"Hold them !" grinned Blake. "Now, what's the row about ? Chuck it ! You've done enough damage for one afternoon. Look at the study !"

"I demand my foolscap !" howled Skimpole. "That—that tailor's dummy has taken my foolscap from my study."

"Oh, don't be a silly ass !" said Blake. "If you say that Gussy has taken anything belonging to you, you want kicking. Kick him out !"

"Hear, hear !"

Skimpole was promptly kicked out of Study No. 6. He sprawled in the Fourth Form passage with a bump and a roar.

Blake looked round the study.

"Precious state for a room to be in when we've asked fellows to tea !" he grunted.

"Better come along to my study to tea," said Tom, laughing.

"But what was the row about ?" demanded Herries. "What made that blinking idiot think you had taken his foolscap, Gussy ?"

"That's all wight. I had it, Hewwies."

"You had it ?" yelled Herries.

"Yaas, wathah !"

"Then we've chucked out the wrong man," said Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha !"

"But it was not Skimpole's foolscap," explained Arthur Augustus. "Undah Extwemism all foolscap will be nationalised."

"Oh, my only hat !"

"As an Extwemist Skimmy is bound to see that I was entitled to take the foolscap if I wanted it. The wemarkable thing is that he entirely failed to see it when I pointed it out to him in the most weasonable mannah."

"Ha, ha, ha !"

"Weally, you fellows——"

"Oh, my hat !" gasped Tom Merry. "So that's the trouble, is it ? You really thought a fellow believed in Communism in his own things ?"

"Yaas, wathah !"

"Ha, ha, ha !"

"I fail to see any cause for wibald mewwiment. I am extwemely shocked at Skimpole's wefusin' to act up to his own pwinciples."

"Ha, ha, ha !" roared the juniors.

A rather battered countenance, with spectacles slanting on a swollen nose, glared in at the study doorway.

"I want——" began Skimpole.

"Give him what he wants," grinned Dig.

And Skimpole was collared and run out of the study again. This time he was conducted, in a yelling bundle, as far as his own study in the Shell, and landed there with a bump and a crash. After which Skimpole let the matter drop for the present. He had to get his second wind before he could do anything but gasp and mumble.

Tom Merry & Co. returned to Study No. 6. They found Arthur Augustus in a state of great indignation, mopping a stream of crimson from his aristocratic nose. Both parties had suffered severe damages in the combat. There were marks

of Skimmy's bony knuckles all over Gussy.

"Fancy that cheekay wottah, you fellows!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Actually comin' heah to take away the foolscap, makin' out that it was his, you know, aftah I had explained to him that I wanted it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway don't cackle, deah boys. This is weally wathah shockin'. I have hitherto wegarded Skimpole as a vewy fat-headed cwank; but I am now bound to wegard him as a humbug as well. It is vewy shockin'!"



Blake and Herries and Digby stared at Gussy's burden as he landed it on the study table. "What's that hefty stack of paper for?" asked Blake. "I am giving Tobay some instwuction in Latin this aftahnoon," explained Arthur Augustus. (*See Chapter* 9.)

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And now all the foolscap has been twampled on and splashed with ink and wuined, includin' the Latin exahcises I had got weady for poor old Tobay," gasped Arthur Augustus. "I have had all my twouble for nothin'."

"That's all right," said Monty Lowther. "It isn't your trouble more than anybody else's. Under Extremism all trouble will be nationalised."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah ass!" hooted Arthur Augustus. "Pway don't make any of your wotten jokes on a sewious subject. Look at my eye."

"Whose eye?" asked Lowther.

"My eye, you ass! I feah it is goin' black."

"My dear chap, is it your eye more than anybody else's? Why should you bother especially about an eye that is the common property of mankind?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, we shan't get any tea here," said Blake, with a grunt. "We'll come along to No. 10 and bring the tuck. You'd better get a wash and a brush up, Gussy, before you come along to a respectable study."

"Oh, wats!"

Tom Merry & Co. departed in a state of great merriment. Arthur Augustus was left to attend to his injuries in the midst of the wreckage of Study No. 6. Those Latin exercises were never delivered to Toby, to his great regret—perhaps!

It was not until the following day that Arthur Augustus met Skimpole, of the Shell, again. They met in the quad., and Skimpole gave the swell of St. Jim's a glare and turned his back on him. Arthur Augustus bestowed a stare of lofty contempt and disdain on Skimpole's back.

The two social reformers of St. Jim's were no longer on speaking terms!

Blake & Co. nourished a hope that Arthur Augustus would derive wisdom from the episode. But Arthur Augustus was too deeply in earnest for that.

He had disdained to speak to Skimpole. He had given up hope of making converts at St. Jim's. But he still ploughed his lonely furrow. He could, at least, carry the light below stairs, and he renewed his generous efforts on Toby's account with greater zest than ever.

For some days Toby led a hunted life.

Spotting Master D'Arcy in the distance, Toby would tiptoe round corners to elude him.

When he was run to earth in the boot-room, and could not elude his generous benefactor, poor Toby, still reluctant to speak out plainly, made all sorts of excuses. Upon one point Toby was determined—that he was not going to have any more Latin.

Finally, a brilliant idea occurred to Toby. A hint to Mrs. Mimms was enough, and the House-dame descended on Master D'Arcy and sternly forbade him to enter the boot-room again, or to come below stairs at all, under penalty of a complaint to his House-master.

After that Toby breathed more freely.

Below stairs was barred to Master D'Arcy; above stairs Toby could dodge him with more or less success.

Even upon Arthur Augustus' unsuspicious mind it dawned, at long last, that Toby was not keen on equality and the rights of man; that he had, indeed, matters of more importance to think of.

And then came the affair of Mr. Giggs!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER

A Redistribution of Bikes!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS was tired.

The afternoon was warm—quite warm—and Arthur Augustus had walked rather far. It was a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and the swell of the Fourth had walked over to Wayland for the purpose of hearing a speech by that earnest and impassioned orator, Mr. Giggs.

It was not Gussy's lucky afternoon.

In the first place, he had never been able, as an Extremist, to refuse the loan of his bicycle to any fellow that wanted it, and the result was that his bicycle was in a state needing serious repairs. Trimble, of the Fourth, had ridden it not wisely but too well.

In the second place, no Extremist could possibly keep money in his pockets when such sordid stuff was needed by his fellow-man. Gussy had quite a generous allowance, but Trimble, and other fellows like Trimble, helped him get rid of it at quite a rapid rate; and Gussy was falling into the state of never having a sixpence to bless himself with.

In these circumstances, D'Arcy had walked across to Wayland. There he made the discovery that he had mistaken the date, and that it was on the previous Wednesday that Mr. Giggs had been booked to deliver his impassioned and eloquent speech; and the speech had been delivered a week before, and probably forgotten by this time.

There was a match on the Ramblers' ground which Gussy might have witnessed for a shilling, and a picture-palace that he might have visited for sixpence. But he was in the state of Peter of old; silver and gold he had none.

As he trailed away from Wayland, D'Arcy rather wished that he had gone out with Blake & Co. that afternoon, or joined up with Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther. He was feeling rather lonely on his lonely own, and he was tired and rather discouraged. He stopped at last to rest under a shady tree by the side of a leafy lane, near where a path ran up to a little wayside inn. At that wayside inn ginger-beer could have been obtained for a small consideration, and Gussy was dry, and would have liked some ginger-beer. But the smallest fee was now beyond his means, and so he sat down to rest, still dry. Rest, at least, could be had for nothing; rest in the grass was free to all, although it had not yet been nationalised.

It was then that Gussy observed a red-painted bicycle leaning on the fence beside the path that led up to the little inn. He gazed at it with interest. He was not

acquainted with Mr. Giggs, but he had seen that strenuous young man at a distance more than once, scudding along on the bicycle, which was painted red as an advertisement of his crimson opinions. Mr. Giggs' necktie was the reddest ever, and his bike was painted in pleasing harmony with his tie.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

Evidently Mr. Giggs had dismounted there and left his machine against the fence, while he went up to the inn for ginger-beer, or perhaps for some other sort of beer. Arthur Augustus eyed that bike and considered. He was tired, and he was three miles from the school. A ride back to St. Jim's, in time for tea, would in the circumstances be grateful and comforting. It would be easy to leave a note for Mr. Giggs pinned to the fence, telling him where his bike was if he wanted it again. D'Arcy reflected on this idea. But perhaps his experience with Skimpole and the foolscap made him hesitate, for he remained resting in the grass.

"Spare a copper, sir."

Gussy looked round as he heard the voice.

A weary gentleman halted and touched a rag of a cap. The gentleman was dusty and evidently tired, and there was a furtive look in his eye. His eye lingered on the red bicycle. Possibly, had not D'Arcy been there, the tired gentleman might have lifted that bicycle, not on the Extremist principles that Gussy was thinking of, but on the principles, or want of principles, of a common or garden sneak-thief. As Gussy was sitting only a few feet from the jigger, however, the tired gentleman gave up that idea, if it was in his mind, and proferred his modest request for a copper to the swell of St. Jim's.

"I'm awf'ly sowwy, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "I weally haven't a coppah about me."

"Tanner would do, sir," suggested the tired gentleman humorously.

"Yaas, I pwesume so; but I have no money at all," explained Arthur Augustus. "I am awf'ly sowwy."



As a sonorous and unmusical snore proceeded from Toby, Arthur Augustus glanced up at him. "Bai Jove! He has dwopped off to sleep! Tobay!" Snore. (*See Chapter* 10.)

The tired gentleman eyed him. It would have been obvious to anyone but Gussy that the tramp did not believe his statement.

"I've tramped five blessed hours on this 'ere road, sir, looking for work," said the tired gentleman pathetically. "It's a 'ard life, sir. 'Ow I shall get as fur as Wayland without dropping I don't know."

Arthur Augustus was deeply sympathetic.

"Bai Jove! That's vewy wuff," he said.

"Rough's the word, sir," said the tired gentleman, who had walked a hundred yards since taking his last nap under a haystack. "Jest a tanner, sir, would 'elp a cove on his way."

"I think I mentioned that I had no money," said Arthur Augustus, in surprise. "Howevah, pewwaps I can help you in anothah way. You are goin' to Wayland?"

"Yes, sir, two miles more from 'ere," sighed the tired gentleman, "and me sinking from 'unger and weakness, sir."

"That's too wotten, deah boy. Can you wide a bike."

"Eh? You bet I can," said the tired gentleman.

He would have been riding Mr. Giggs' bike by that time but for the circumstance that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was so near it.

"Then I can help you," said the swell of St. Jim's. "Take this bike, deah boy, and wide it. Aftah you get to Wayland, pwobably you can sell it for a small sum, which will help you along."

The man stared at him. He seemed stupefied for some moments.

"You—you—you're giving me that there bike?" he ejaculated at last.

"Certainly, deah boy. Take it if you like. You are vewy welcome to it," said Arthur Augustus.

"You mean it, sir?" said the vagrant, obviously not quite able to believe his ears.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I'm on, sir."

Arthur Augustus detached the bike from the fence, and handed it to the tired-looking gentleman.

Tired as he was, that gentleman mounted it quite rapidly, and pedalled away at a good speed. He did not stop to say thank you, even. Probably he was afraid that the schoolboy might alter his mind. Perhaps he thought he had fallen in with a lunatic. At all events, he disappeared on the bike at almost a record speed, and could hardly be seen for dust as he went.

Arthur Augustus gazed after him with a kind and benevolent smile as he vanished.

"That's all wight!" he murmured.

Gussy had no doubt that it was all right.

It was rather remarkable—to Gussy—that Mr. Giggs still possessed a bicycle at all when there were so many needy persons in Wayland who would have liked it.

Now Mr. Giggs no longer possessed a bicycle. He could have no objection, unless he was a humbug such as D'Arcy had discovered Skimpole, of the Shell, to be. And Gussy was not going to believe anything of that sort about Mr. Giggs. Gussy cultivated the best possible opinion about every fellow. The result was that he held many remarkable opinions. Among them, his opinion of Mr. Giggs was, perhaps, the most remarkable.

The matter was quite clear to Gussy. Under Extremism all bicycles would be nationalised, and distributed by officials to those who needed them most. Mr Giggs was a hefty young man, quite capable of doing his ten miles a day on Shanks' pony. The tired gentleman, on the other hand, was sinking with fatigue. He had told Gussy so, and Gussy was not the fellow to doubt a fellow's word. Obviously, under Extremism Mr. Giggs' bike would have been handed over to the tired gentleman, who needed it more than Mr. Giggs did. Mr. Giggs was striving passionately to bring about the reign of Extremism. He was, therefore, eager for his bike to fall into the hands of the person most entitled to it. It was all so clear that Arthur Augustus entertained no doubts whatever.

It was merely to save Mr. Giggs any unnecessary trouble in the matter that he decided to leave a note for him.

He indited a brief message on a leaf of his pocket-book, tore out the leaf, and fastened it with a pin to the fence in the spot where Mr. Giggs' bicycle had leaned. It ran, pencilled in an elegant hand:

"Comrade,—I have given your bicycle to a poor man who needed it.

"Yours truly,

"A. A. D'Arcy."

"St. Jim's School."

That was all. That was all that was needed. If Mr. Giggs liked to drop D'Arcy

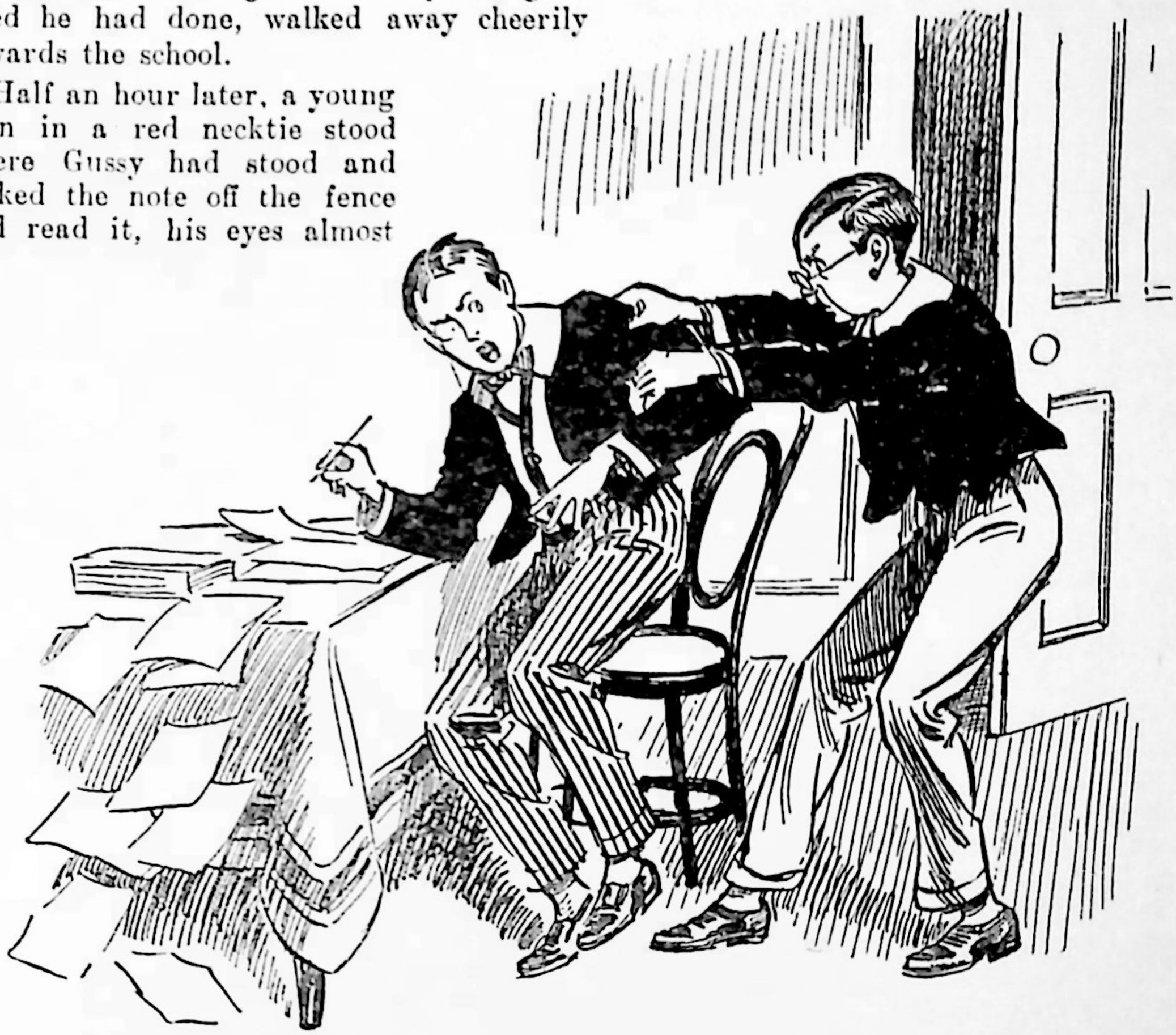
a line by post, thanking him, D'Arcy would be pleased to hear from Mr. Giggs. Anyhow, Mr. Giggs would know, as soon as he found that note, what had become of the machine, and would not worry about it.

This little matter satisfactorily settled, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, feeling refreshed by his rest in the grass and by the good deed he had done, walked away cheerily towards the school.

Half an hour later, a young man in a red necktie stood where Gussy had stood and picked the note off the fence and read it, his eyes almost bulging from his head with amazement and fury.

"My word!" gasped Mr. Giggs. "My bike! Blinking thief! Given it away! My eye! Lucky he's left his name and address. I'll give him 'poor man'! I'll give him beans! I'll—I'll—I'll——"

Words failed Mr. Giggs. He brandished his fist in the air, and had Gussy been still present there would undoubtedly have been trouble. Still in a state of excitement for which Arthur Augustus would have seen no cause whatever, Mr. Giggs started for St. Jim's. And he assuredly did not look as if he was going there to thank Arthur Augustus for what he had done!



"Give me that foolscap!" roared the enraged Skimpole as he clutched at Arthur Augustus and pulled him out of his chair. "You fwabjous chump!" shouted Gussy. "I shall have to handle you!" (*See Chapter* 11.)

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER
Mr. Giggs Looks In!

"MERRY!"

"Yes, sir!" said Tom, stopping at the call of Mr. Railton.

"Do you know whether D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form, is within gates?"

"Yes, sir. He came in some time ago. He's in my study now," answered the captain of the Shell.

"Very good. Please tell him that he is wanted in the Head's study at once."

"Oh! Yes, sir"

The expression on the Housemaster's face was very grave, and his gravity was reflected in Tom Merry's sunny countenance now. Tom, with a bundle under his arm, had just come in from the school shop; there was to be a spread in No. 10, in the Shell, and Tom was taking in supplies. Study No. 6 were guests in Tom Merry's study that afternoon, and Tom, as he went up the staircase, wondered what trouble was impending over his most distinguished guest. From Mr. Railton's look, it was plainly something serious.

"Oh, here you are!" said Manners as Tom came into No. 10. "Waiting for you, old scout."

"Anything up?" asked Blake, noting Tom's grave look.

"I'm afraid so. What have you been doing, Gussy?"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Message from Railton. The Head wants you in his study at once," said Tom.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked surprised. Also he looked displeased. He had come in tired from his long walk, and the chair he was occupying in Tom Merry's study was comfortable.

"More trouble!" sighed Blake. "What have you done, Gussy?"

"Nothin', deah boy."

"My hat!" exclaimed Lowther, in alarm. "You haven't been practising Extremism in the Head's study, have you?"

"Oh, crumbs!" ejaculated Dig.

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Well, what does the Head want to see you for, then?" demanded Blake uneasily.

"I weally do not know, Blake, unless he desiahs a little chat with me," said Arthur Augustus. "That may be the weason."

"Fathead!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"You'd better go at once, old chap," said Tom Merry. "Railton looked jolly serious. We'd better go with him as far as the Beak's passage, you men."

"Yes, rather!"

Tea in Tom Merry's study was unavoidably postponed. The whole tea-party went down with Arthur Augustus, all but Gussy looking and feeling uneasy. Fellows were not summoned to the headmaster's study without cause, and it was really highly improbable that Dr. Holmes wanted nothing more than a chat with a Lower School fellow.

"He, he, he! Here he is!" cackled Baggy Trimble as the juniors came down the staircase. "You're in for it, Gussy! He, he, he!"

"Weally, Twimble——"

"Gussy, old man," exclaimed Julian, of the Fourth, "it can't be true. We know you never did it."

"Did what, deah boy?"

"A man's come here—man in a red necktie—and he said out loud before a dozen fellows that you'd stolen his bike."

"Gweat Scott!"

"What!" roared Blake. "Where is he? I'll jolly well kick him out of the House, and chance it!"

"He's in the Head's study now," said Levison, of the Fourth. "Mr. Railton took him there. It's that man Giggs, of Wayland!"

"Giggs! Bai Jove!"

"The rotter!" said Blake. "He's got the cheek to say that Gussy has pinched his bike! Why, the—the—the——"

"The man must be mad!" said Tom Merry, in wonder.

"He, he, he!" chortled Trimble. "He, he—— Yaroooooh!" Blake's boot came with a sudden impact upon Trimble's tight trousers, and his chortle was changed into a wild yell.

"Nothin' in it, of course, Gussy," said Cardew, with a curious look at the swell of St. Jim's.

"I twust, Cardew, that no gentleman

pwesent will suspect me of stealin' a bike!" said Arthur Augustus stiffly.

"Of course not," said Levison hastily. "The man's made an idiotic mistake."

"I simply took the bike," explained Arthur Augustus.

"Eh?"

"What?"

"And gave it away," continued Arthur Augustus.

"You — you — you took a man's bike and gave it away?" stuttered Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, crikey!"

"But I left a note for Mr. Giggs explainin' it," said Arthur Augustus. "I weally cannot understand why he has come heah. Howevah, I dare say he will explain when I see him."



"Take this bike, deah boy, and wide it," said the swell of St. Jim's. The man stared at him, stupefied. "You—you—you're giving me that there bike?" he stuttered. "Certainly, deah boy." (*See Chapter* 13.)

And Arthur Augustus walked on towards the Head's study, his friends walking with him with dazed expressions on their faces, and a crowd of other fellows following on, in a buzz of excitement. Various inhabitants of that part of Sussex had, at different times, had various complaints to make of St. Jim's fellows. But certainly no St. Jim's man had ever been accused of stealing a bicycle before. That was the limit; and it was the sensation of the term in the School House.

At the corner of the Head's corridor the crowd had to stop, and Arthur Augustus walked on alone to Dr. Holmes' study and tapped at the door. His head was erect, his face calm. There was nothing on Gussy's conscience; he had done nothing for which he was not prepared to answer. He was prepared to face his headmaster, or a whole conclave of headmasters, and avow that he had acted according to his—and Mr. Giggs' —principles.

"Come in!"

The Head's voice was very deep.

Arthur Augustus entered the study.

Dr. Holmes, seated at his writing-table, had a very stern expression on his face. Mr. Giggs was standing before the table, and his countenance was excited. Wrath and indignation struggled for predominance in Mr. Giggs' speaking countenance. What might be the cause of Mr. Giggs' wrath

and indignation was unknown to Arthur Augustus.

"D'Arcy!" said the Head sternly.

"Yaas, sir," said Arthur Augustus calmly.

"This young man, Mr. Giggs, accuses you of having taken away his bicycle, which he left against a fence in Wayland Lane."

"Stealing it!" hooted Mr. Giggs.

"I should hardly have listened to such an accusation, D'Arcy, but this young man has produced a paper which your Housemaster tells me is apparently written in your hand, admitting that the article was taken by you."

"Yaas, sir."

"This young man——"

"Not so much of your young man, sir," interrupted Mr. Giggs. "I'm as good a man as you any day in the week! Lot of nobs at this here school—I don't think! Stealing a man's bike—yah!"

Dr. Holmes waited patiently until Mr. Giggs had finished. Then he resumed:

"This young man has come here to claim his property. I am convinced that there must be some mistake in the matter. Kindly explain at once. Did you, or did you not, remove a bicycle belonging to Mr. Giggs?"

"Yaas, sir."

"Bless my soul! And what did you do with it?"

"I gave it to a twamp, sir."

"Bless my soul!"

Dr. Holmes gazed speechlessly at the cheery swell of St. Jim's, while Mr. Giggs glared at him as if he could have eaten him. And there was a pause in the Head's study.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER
Arthur Augustus Thinks Twice!

DR. HOLMES found his voice at last.

"D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, sir."

"You—you admit having committed an act of—of dishonesty——"

Arthur Augustus flushed crimson.

"Certainly not, sir," he exclaimed indignantly. "I twust you know me bettah than to suppose anythin' of the kind."

"I fail to understand you, D'Arcy. You admit having taken away a bicycle belonging to this young man."

"Stole it!" hooted Mr. Giggs.

Arthur Augustus turned his eyes on Mr. Giggs. It was dawning upon his noble mind that Skimpole, of the Shell, was not the only Extremist who did not like Extremism when it came home to roost.

"Pway dwy up, Mr. Giggs," said D'Arcy, with dignity. "I should be sowwy to stwike you in the pwesence of my headmastah, but I cannot allow you to use such expwessions to me."

"My eye!" stuttered Mr. Giggs. "You took the blinking jigger! You boned my jigger! What do you call it?"

"You know perfectly well what it is called, Mr. Giggs. It is called a wedistwibution of wealth."

"Eh?"

"D'Arcy!" thundered the Head. "Explain yourself at once, if you have any explanation to give."

"Certainly, sir. I am vewy willin' to explain. Bein' an Extwemist——"

"A—a—a—a what?" stuttered the Head.

"An Extwemist, sir."

"Bless my soul!"

Dr. Holmes gazed at Arthur Augustus. The thunder in his brow cleared away a little. There even appeared a twinkle in his majestic eyes. It was barely possible that the Head saw something of a comic nature in Arthur Augustus having imbibed and adopted the latest "ism."

"Bein' an Extwemist, sir, I am bound to wegard bicycles, as well as evewy othah form of pwopahty, as public pwopahty," explained Arthur Augustus. "Mr. Giggs' bike was no more his than mine. A poor chap who was vewy tired asked me for help. He was in need of immediate help, sir, and it was, of course, impossible to leave the mattah ovah until Extwemism comes in, and bikes are nationalised. So I gave him that bike to wide, and advised him to sell it when he had done with it. I have no doubt he has done so."

"Bless my soul!"

"Of course, I should not have acted in this mannah, sir, had the bike belonged to

anybody else," said Arthur Augustus. "As it belonged to an Extwemist, it was all wight. I cannot undahstand in the vewy least what Mr. Giggs is complainin' about."

"I want my bike!" roared Mr. Giggs. "I'll have the law of you! I'll send you a summons! I'll prosecute you for theft! I'll——"

Arthur Augustus eyed him haughtily.

"If you take that wepwehensible view of the mattah, Mr. Giggs, I shall certainly pay you for the bike."

"You certainly will, or else you'll go to chokey," said Mr. Giggs venomously.



"I want my bike!" roared Mr. Giggs as Arthur Augustus eyed him haughtily. "I'll have the law on you! I'll prosecute you for theft!" (*See Chapter* 15.)

"But I must wemark," said Arthur Augustus sternly, "that I wegard you as an uttah humbug and hypocwite, Mr. Giggs. You are pwofessin' opinions upon which you wefuse to act. You are an awwant humbug!"

"Silence, please!" exclaimed the Head. "You utterly stupid and foolish boy——"

"Bai Jove!"

"If you have been reading or hearing of matters which you are not yet old enough to understand, it is very unfortunate," said the Head. "But it is no excuse for your conduct, D'Arcy. Whatever Mr. Giggs' opinions may be, if you believed that they would make him willing to part with his property without receiving its value in exchange, you must be a remarkably stupid boy."

"Weally, sir——"

"I shall pay Mr. Giggs for the bicycle ——"

"Somebody will, or there'll be trouble!" hooted Mr. Giggs.

"And the bill will be sent to your father, D'Arcy."

"Bai Jove!"

"You will also be caned by your Housemaster——"

"Oh!"

"And if you should ever repeat this absurd conduct, you will be flogged by me!" rapped the Head.

"I—I—weally, sir——"

"You will now take this note to Mr. Railton.

"But weally, sir——"

"Silence!"

The Head wrote a brief note and handed it to Arthur Augustus. The swell of St. Jim's, note in hand, went to the door. There he paused to cast a glance of the

greatest scorn at Mr. Giggs, who gave him a glare and a snort in return. Then he left the study.

"Well?" exclaimed a dozen voices as Arthur Augustus reached the corner of the passage.

"I am sent to Mr. Wailton, you chaps."

"What for?" asked Blake.

"I am not suah, but I wathah think it is for a lickin'," said Arthur Augustus. "The Head appeahed to be quite watty. I weally feah it is goin' to be a lickin'."

Arthur Augustus' fear was well founded.

It was a licking!

When the swell of St. Jim's emerged from Mr. Railton's study, he was looking quite pale and very grave.

Mr. Giggs, recompensed for the loss of his machine, shook the dust of St. Jim's from his feet and departed. He had not lost on the transaction. Dr. Holmes did not know so much about the value of bikes as Mr. Giggs knew. Tom Merry & Co. gathered round Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and walked him away to No. 10, in the Shell.

Arthur Augustus did not sit down to tea. He had his tea leaning in an elegant attitude on the mantelpiece. It appeared that Mr. Railton had put considerable beef into the caning.

Tom Merry & Co. were sympathetic, but they could not help grinning. After tea, Arthur Augustus had a few words to say.

"You fellows——"

He paused.

"Go it, old bean!" said Tom.

"I am goin' to give up Extwemism——"

"Bravo!"

"And I twust you fellows will take warnin'——"

"Eh?"

"And beware of the dangah of gettin' hold of cwanky opinions and airin' them," said Arthur Augustus seriously. "Thoughtless youngstahs like you fellows are vewy liable to make asses of yourselves in that way. I twust this will be a lesson to you!"

"Well, my hat!" said Tom Merry.

And that was all he could say!

THE END

War from an Arm-Chair!

No longer does the greatest peril to warships threaten from the seas. From the air it comes: depth charges and wireless-controlled torpedoes dropped from aeroplanes! Thus destruction can come in a moment to battleships and cruisers that cost millions of pounds each.

But modern methods of warfare are not stopping at that. With the coming of television and the perfection of wireless, the "brains" of a future war will be farther and safer from the actual perils of combat even than they were in the Great War. It is predicted by scientists that future wars —if ever they arrive—will be conducted from headquarters in cement-and-armour-plate-shielded caverns far below the ground.

There the Headquarters Staff will sit back in padded armchairs, watching before them on a vivid screen the panorama of any piece of battle-front they switch on.

Orders will be sent out by wireless, and if experiments now being conducted progress successfully, the battleships and other fighting craft of the Navy will be worked without hands. Electrical equipment aboard the vessels will pick from the ether orders wirelessed in code from G.H.Q., and act on them, without human intervention.

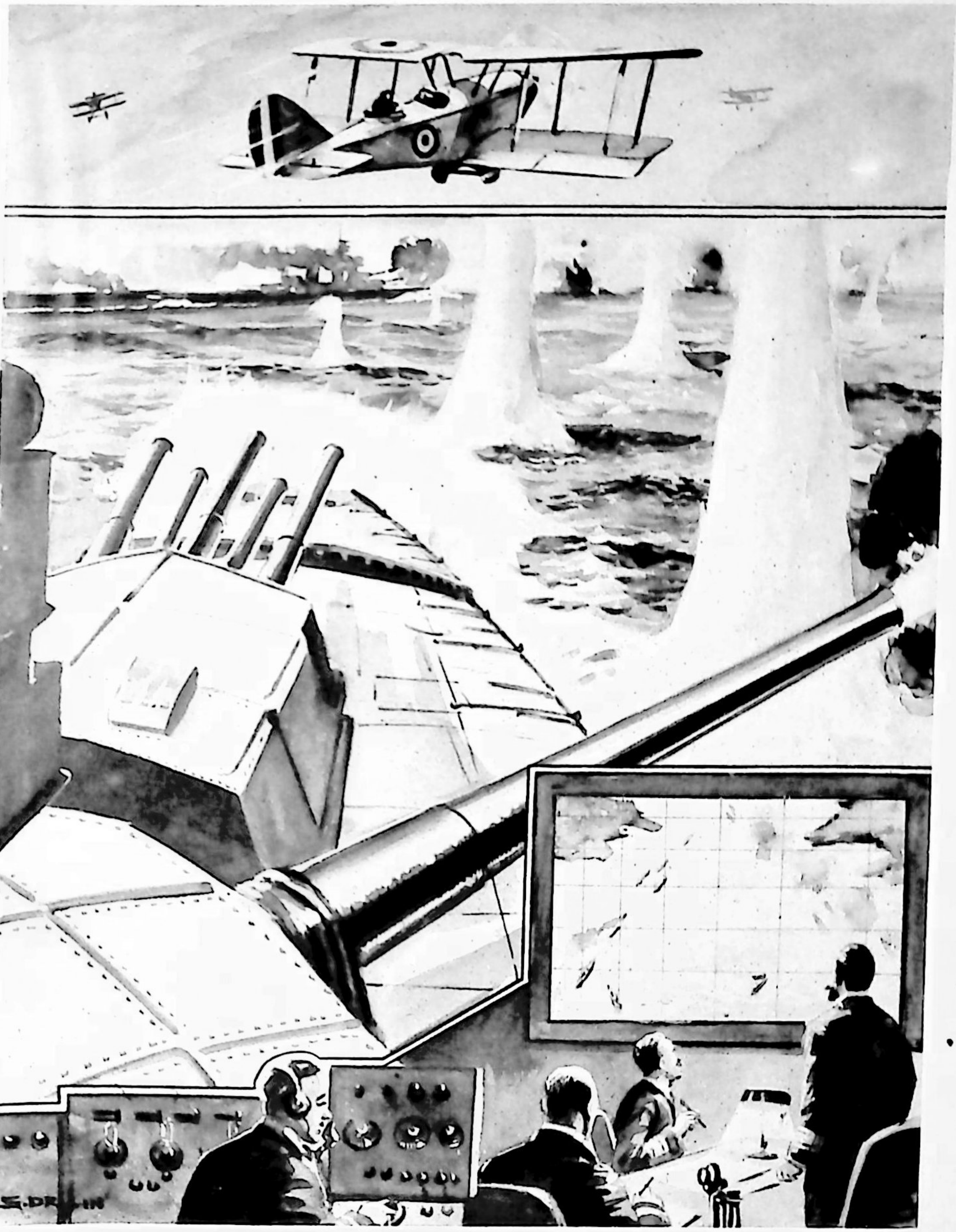
Whether such things will be possible at some future date with bombing and raiding aeroplanes no man can yet tell.

But improvements in aircraft have developed so rapidly in the last few years that *anything* may be possible. At present we have super-bombing machines that can carry four tons of bombs apiece, and travel 4,000 miles without a stop.

Three hundred miles an hour will be the speed of their successors. Soaring at a height of up to 45,000 feet, they will hurtle down at a lower enemy at a diving speed of upwards of 800 miles an hour!

Battleships will be defenceless against the appalling bomb-droppers—unless television and wireless combine to shatter the enemy 'planes as they hurtle through the air!

The Eye of Science in War!



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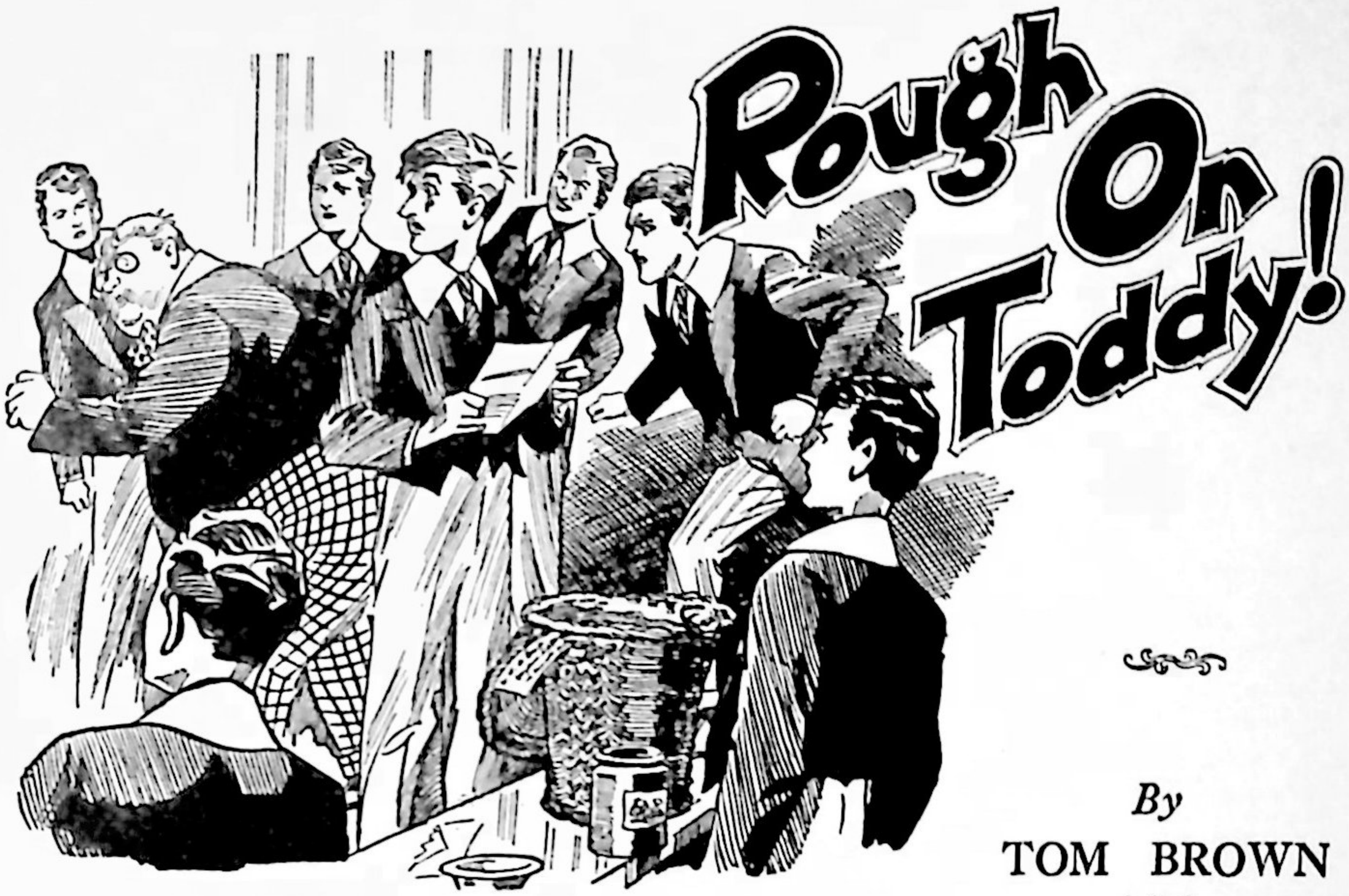
Watching a Naval Battle on the Televisor Screen at the Admiralty.



Rough On Toddy!

By
TOM BROWN
(of the Greyfriars Remove.)

A hamper for W. G. Bunter! Who said the age of miracles was past? But when the Removites get over that shock, they receive the biggest surprise of their lives.

"IT'S time something was done!"

Peter Todd frowned.

"Hear, hear!"

The leader of Study No. 7 was standing in the Greyfriars "Rag," surrounded by quite a crowd of Removites. Tom Brown was there, and William Wibley, Ogilvy, and Morgan, and several others. Most of them were talking, and their remarks were addressed to Peter Todd. And, judging by the frown on Todd's face, the said remarks were not pleasing to him.

"You see, he owes me three-and-sixpence," explained Wibley.

"And me half-a-crown," said Squiff.

"And he's owed me two bob for a couple of terms, look you!" added Morgan.

Todd's frown deepened.

"Anyway, you ought to be able to do something, Toddy," said Tom Brown. "You're supposed to be the boss of the study, and it's up to you to see that the fat bounder squares up."

"Hear, hear!"

Todd scratched his chin reflectively.

"H'm! It's a bit awkward," he said. "The worst of it is, Bunter never has any money. I can lam him with a cricket-stump, if you like!"

"What's the good of that? That won't give me back my half-crown!"

"Nor my three-and-six!"

"Nor my two bob!"

"Well, I'm blessed if I know what to do," confessed Todd. "Anyway, you chaps had better come along to my study, and we'll see what the fat fraud has to say about it!"

There was a general exodus from the Rag, and the fellows marched along with Todd to the Remove passage.

Trouble of this kind had been threatening for a long time. At one time or another, Bunter had borrowed money from practically everybody in the Remove, and he had never been known to pay anyone back. Of course, anybody who lends money to Bunter

is asking for trouble. But we all have our weak moments, and Bunter is quick at taking full advantage of them.

In the ordinary way, nobody would have worried much about trying to recover the small amounts due from our prize porpoise. At the time of the general appeal to Todd, however, the Remove was passing through one of those unaccountably lean periods likely to fall to the lot of any Form at different times. Just as it happened, there had been a falling-off in the number and size of remittances from home in all directions, and the fellows were feeling the pinch a little. Hence the sudden bringing to light of Bunter's many little long-standing loans.

Reaching the Remove passage, Bunter's creditors followed Peter Todd into Study No. 7, which Bunter also occupied.

Billy Bunter was standing by the study table when they entered. He seemed to be performing some mysterious operation on the label attached to a big hamper on the table, and when the crowd surged into the study, he wheeled round as if he had been caught committing a crime. His fat face fell, and he blinked at them through his big spectacles in considerable alarm.

"I—I say, you fellows, what's the game?"

Peter Todd pointed dramatically to the Removites.

"These chaps have come round for a settlement," he said sternly.

"A sus-settlement?" gasped Bunter nervously. "B-blessed if I understand you, Peter."

"Perhaps half a dozen with a cricket-stump will make you understand, then!" said Todd grimly. "Pass it over, Squiff, will you?"

"Here, keep off, you beast!" yelled Billy Bunter. "I understand all right! I suppose you've all come round for the paltry little amounts I owe you."

"That's better!" remarked Todd. "Well, what about it, Fatty? Are you going to square up, or shall I take it out of your hide?"

"Oh, really, Peter! I am going to square up, of course! I don't want to remain under any obligation to these rotters any longer!"

"Good!" said Peter, very much surprised and gratified, while Bunter's creditors brightened up a little.

"There's only one difficulty," said Bunter thoughtfully.

"What's that?"

"Well, as a matter of fact, I've been disappointed about a postal-order I was expecting, and I haven't got any money."

The Removites stared at their fat debtor speechlessly.

Peter Todd glared.

"Then if you haven't got any money, you frabjous ass, how the dickens are you going to square up now?"

"I—I thought you wouldn't mind advancing the cash, perhaps, until my postal-order arrives, Peter!"

There was a roar from the Removites.

"Ass!"

"Idiot!"

"Slaughter the fat slug!"

Peter Todd made a rush at Bunter with his cricket-stump, but the porpoise of Greyfriars jumped out of the way, and Todd bumped against the table instead of hitting him.

It was then, for the first time, that his eye fell on the large hamper, whose label Bunter had been examining with such care when the Removites entered the study.

Todd stopped and looked at it, and as he read the label, he started.

"My hat! Hold on, you fellows! Who said the age of miracles had passed?"

"What's the matter, Toddy?" asked half a dozen fellows at once.

"Why, this thumping great hamper here——"

"What about it?"

"It's Bunter's!"

"Gammon!"

"It *is* Bunter's all right, anyway," said Peter Todd. "Come and have a look at it."

The Removites crowded round the study table. Sure enough, the label was addressed:

"Mr. W. G. BUNTER,
Greyfriars School,
Via Friardale, Kent."

"Well, I'm dashed!"

"A hamper for Bunter! Did you ever?"

The fellows were very much surprised. Hampers for William George Bunter were few and far between; so much so, in fact, that nobody there at that moment could remember the Owl of the Remove ever receiving one before.

Anyway, there was his name in black-and-white. They couldn't get away from it.

"Well, this is a find, anyway!" remarked Peter Todd. "A hamper—particularly a great hamper like this—is distinctly useful!"

"What's the idea, Toddy?"

"The idea," replied Peter Todd, with a grin, "is that, as Bunter can't pay you in cash, you'll have to take payment in kind. In other words, collar his tuck!"

Bunter's creditors smiled.

If Bunter had been in a position to settle up with them, no doubt most of them would have expended the cash in the school tuck-shop. Consequently, accepting payment in kind from Bunter would amount to very much the same thing.

"Well, what do you think?" asked Peter genially.

"I think it's a top-hole idea!"

"So do I!"

"Same here!"

"Good! Then we'll carry it out, here and now!" said the leader of Study No. 7 cheerfully. "I take it that the sums owing are all small. Nothing over three-and-six, is there?"

The fellows shook their heads.

"Well, anyway, we won't try to divide up the stuff in correct proportions," said Todd. "You'd better all have a tuck-in, and we'll see how far it will go round. Got a pocket-knife, someone?"

Morgan obliged with a pocket-knife, and Todd started to cut the cord round the hamper. Billy Bunter blinked at the fellows indignantly and sniffed.

He did not display so much indignation, however, as most of them had thought he would.

They had expected him to yell and struggle, and plead and threaten, and generally "carry on alarming," so to speak. Instead of that, Bunter simply sniffed and looked a little uneasy.



Billy Bunter was standing by the study table when they entered. He seemed to be performing some mysterious operation on the label attached to a big hamper on the table. (*See previous page.*)

Peter Todd opened the hamper, and the Removites crowded round and gazed in admiration at the contents.

Without a doubt, it was something out of the ordinary in the way of hampers. Chicken, tongue, tinned pineapples and apricots, jams, cakes, pastries, a couple of Christmas puddings, a large tin of toffee—there seemed to be no end to the good things contained in that hamper.

"Well, this is something like!" remarked Squiff.

"Corn in Egypt, and no mistake!" chuckled Tom Brown.

Billy Bunter's eyes glistened as he saw that wonderful collection of delicacies.

"I say, you fellows, fair play, you know," he said, barging his way to the front. "I hope you're not thinking of wolfing up all these things! All the piffling little sums I owe you put together wouldn't buy half of this tuck."

"Something in that!" agreed Peter Todd judicially. "Well, we'll let you join in the feed, Bunter, if you like. You'll eat as much as the rest of us put together!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, wire in, you chaps!" said Peter hospitably. "Make yourselves at home, you know!"

"Rather!"

"What-ho!"

The Removites sat down; on the chairs, the window-ledge, the coal-scuttle, on the floor, according to their luck, and "wired in" with a will, and for the next ten minutes they thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

"Bit of chicken for you, Ogilvy?"

"Thanks!"

"Pass the cake, you chaps!"

"Anybody possess a tin-opener?"

Study No. 7 had never witnessed a jollier feed.

Billy Bunter set to work in a thoroughly business-like manner. He drew a chair up to the table as near the hamper as he could get, and ravenously ate everything he could lay his fat paws on. Christmas pudding, tongue, cakes, and pineapples disappeared into his capacious mouth with a rapidity that was truly remarkable.

Extensive as the hamper was, it could not stand the strain of such an onslaught for long. Within a quarter of an hour very little was left, apart from empty tins and basins and packing.

"Great!" was the general opinion.

"Thanks very much, Bunter!"

"Don't mensh!" said Bunter, with an airy wave of his fat hand.

Bunter was shiny and contented now, and he almost beamed on his uninvited guests. The latter were still a little puzzled at the singular lack of protest from Bunter. They could only conclude that the fat junior was making the best of a bad job. Still, it was queer.

"Well, after that, you can consider yourself square with me," said Tom Brown.

"And with me!"

There was quite a chorus of fellows anxious to assure Bunter that the old debts were now wiped out.

"Right-ho, you chaps!" said Bunter. "I say, as we're quits now, I suppose one of you wouldn't care to advance me five bob on the postal-order I'm expecting?"

"Quite right! We wouldn't!" grinned Squiff.

"Still, thanks for the feed, Bunter! Enjoyed it no end!"

"Hear, hear!"

The Removites got ready to depart.

It was at that moment that Tom Dutton, the deaf junior, another of the queer inhabitants of Study No. 7, looked in.

He stared in surprise at the crowd.

"Hallo, you chaps! What's on? Been celebrating something or other?"

"Been having a feed!" explained Tom Brown, yelling the words into Dutton's ear.

"Friends in need?" said Dutton, with a stare. "Well, I didn't know we were exactly in need in this study. Eh?"

Tom Brown shouted his original statement again, and the deaf junior looked even more surprised.

"No necessity for that, so far as I can see," he remarked. "I know we're pretty hard up here, but I don't think it's bad enough to make your heart bleed!"

Tom Brown gave it up.

"I've brought up a letter for you, Toddy," said Dutton, passing over a small business envelope, addressed to Todd.

Peter Todd nodded.

"From the pater," he said, glancing at it. "Excuse me, you chaps!"

He slit open the envelope, and scanned the letter through, and as he did so, a very peculiar expression appeared on his face.

"Bad news, Toddy?" asked Squiff sympathetically.

"Oh, nothing serious," answered Todd carelessly. "The pater was coming down to see me to-morrow, but business has stopped him. Hold on, Bunter! I want to speak to you in a minute."

"I—I've just remembered I've got to see a fellow," mumbled Billy Bunter, looking dubiously at Todd.

Bunter, strange to relate, seemed to have been affected by the news that Todd's letter was from his father. On hearing it, he had started guiltily and made for the door, and would have got away had not Todd intercepted him.

"Just keep Bunter here for a minute, you chaps!" said Todd.

The fellows looked surprised, but they duly lined up in the doorway to prevent the fat junior passing.

Todd behaved strangely after that. Picking up the empty hamper, he examined the label with great care, and as he did so, his expression became quite alarming.

"As I thought!" he muttered. "Oh, the fat spoofer! The—the burglar!"

"What's the matter?" asked the puzzled Removites.

"Matter!" repeated Todd bitterly. "Why, I've been dished and done by that fat brute, that's all! My pater tells me that to make up for the disappointment I'd feel in not seeing him, he sent me a whacking great hamper yesterday."

"Well?"



The Removites sat down; on the chairs, the window-ledge, coal-scuttle, on the floor, according to their luck, and "wired in" with a will, and for the next ten minutes they thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

(*See previous page.*)



Todd forced his fat study-mate across the table, and, while Tom Dutton held him there, he vigorously applied the stump. Thwack ! Thwack ! Thwack ! (*See this page.*)

"Toddy was the one to suggest eating the hamper !"

"And it turns out to be his own hamper !"

"Ha, ha, ha !"

The Removites roared.

"That's right ! Laugh, you cackling idiots !" said Todd bitterly.

"Ha, ha, ha !"

"You grinning hyenas ! Get out of my study !"

Todd seized his cricket-stump once more and rushed at the hilarious Removites, and the fellows hurriedly departed. It was not wise to argue with the enraged leader of No. 7 in his present mood.

Bunter did his best to leave with the rest, but Todd meant to have him, at least. Fixing a thumb and forefinger firmly on Bunter's ear, he led him back into the study.

"I—I say, Peter ! Don't take it seriously !" pleaded Bunter. "I only meant it as a joke, you know !"

"And I only mean this as a joke !" roared Todd. "Bend over this table !"

Todd had to force his fat study-mate into the required position, then he began to apply the stump with great vigour.

Thwack ! Thwack ! Thwack !

Howls of anguish rose from Bunter, and by the time Todd had finished with him, he had repented of his little "joke" over and over again.

THE END

"Well, don't you see, you idiots ? That's the hamper we've just polished off !"

"But that was addressed to Bunter !"

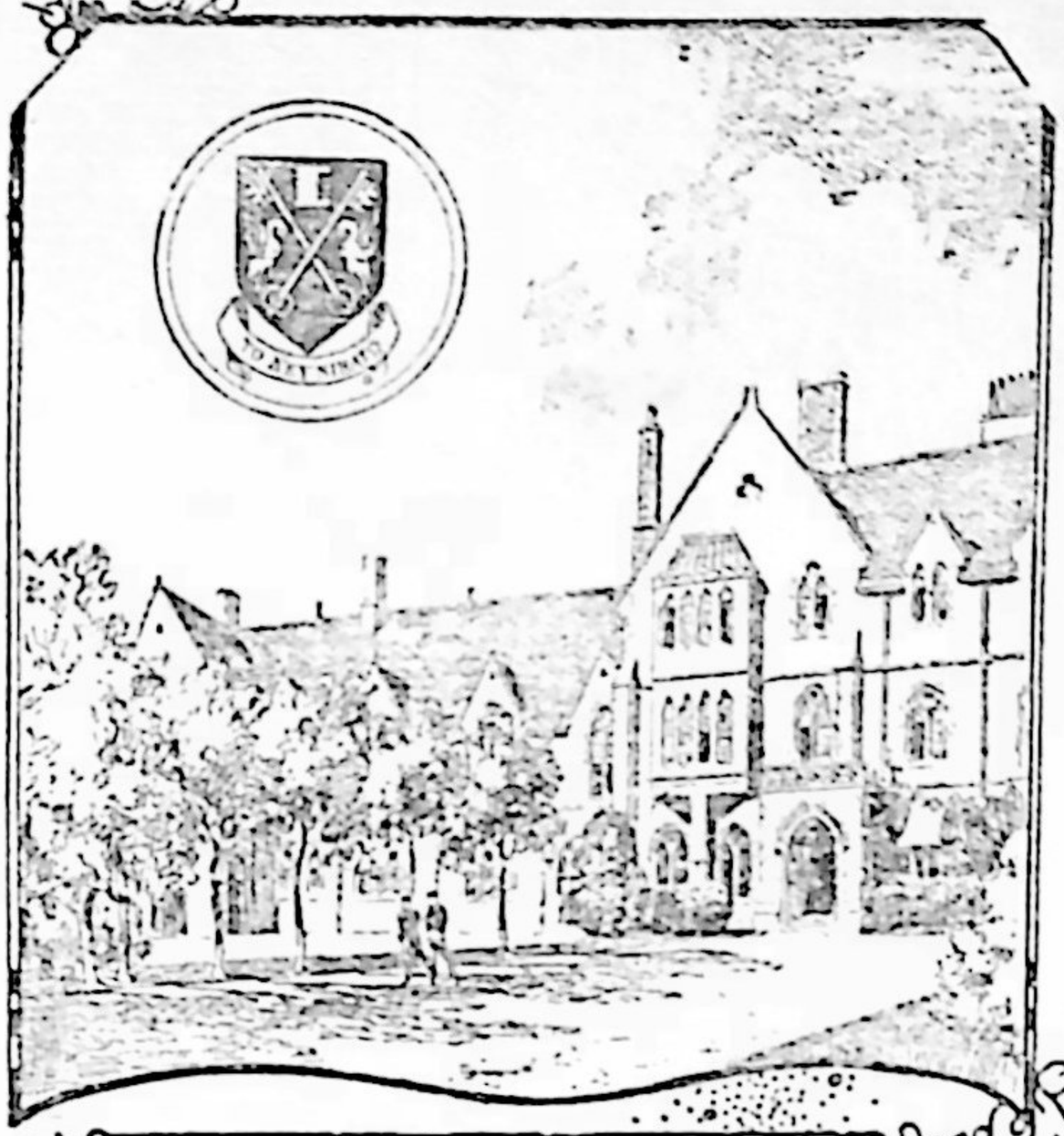
"I know it was—after the fat forger had rubbed out my name from the label ! You can see for yourselves here !"

"Oh, my hat !"

The fellows swarmed round the hamper. Looking closely at the label, they could see for themselves that Todd was right. Evidently, when they first entered the room, Bunter had just been putting the finishing touches to his handiwork.

"Well, if that's not rich !" gasped Tom Brown.

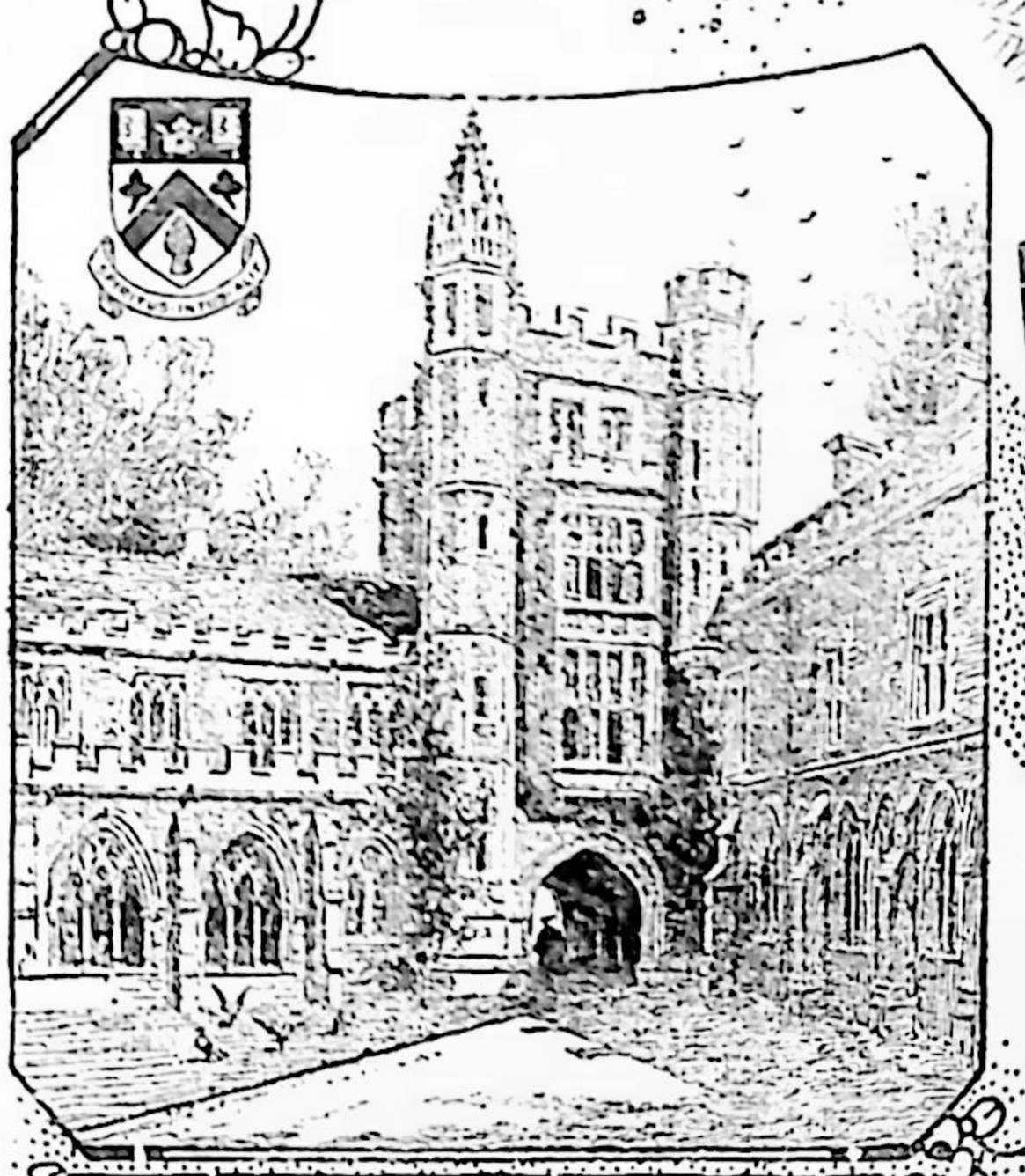
Famous Public Schools



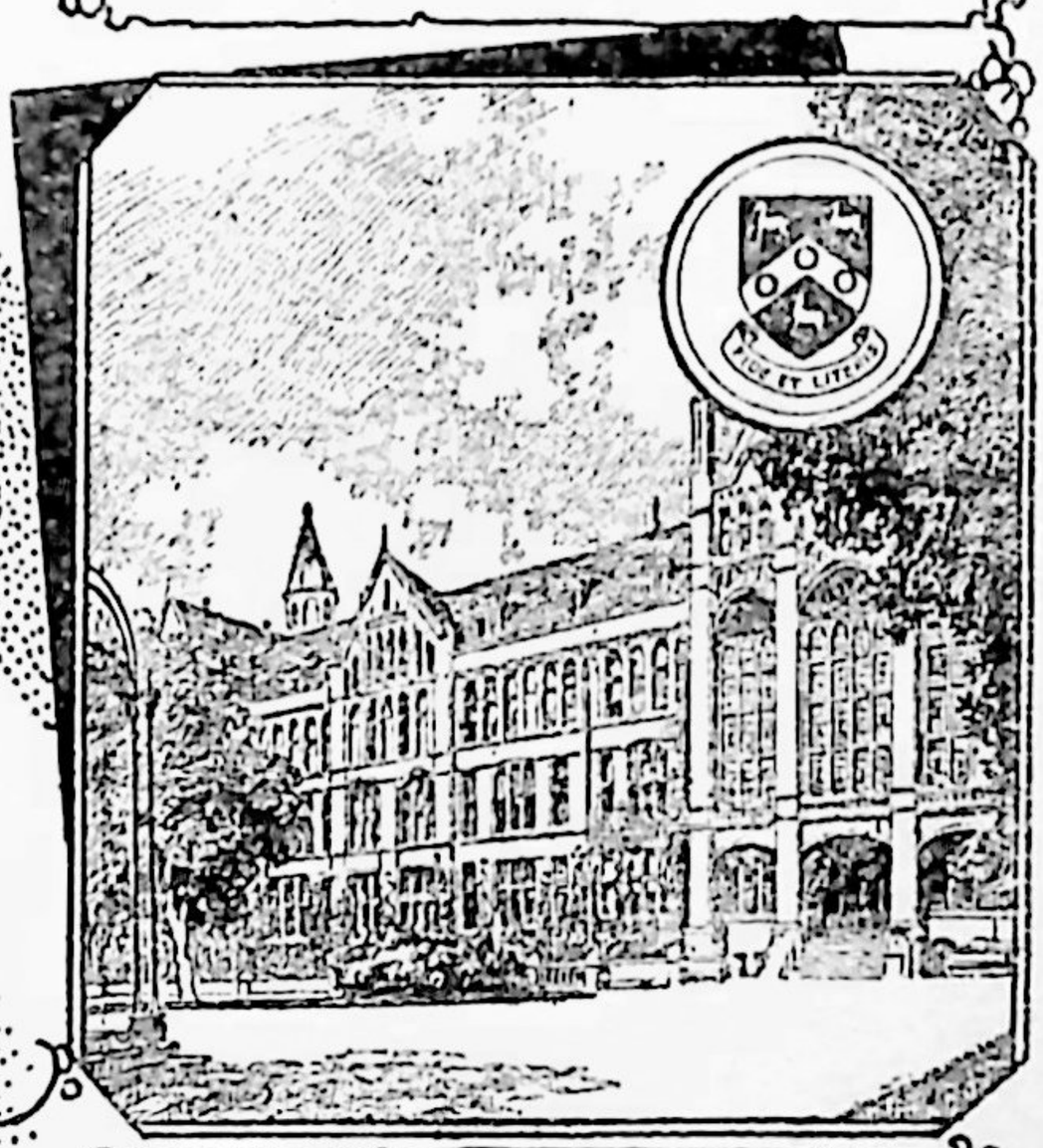
BRIGHTON COLLEGE



REPTON SCHOOL



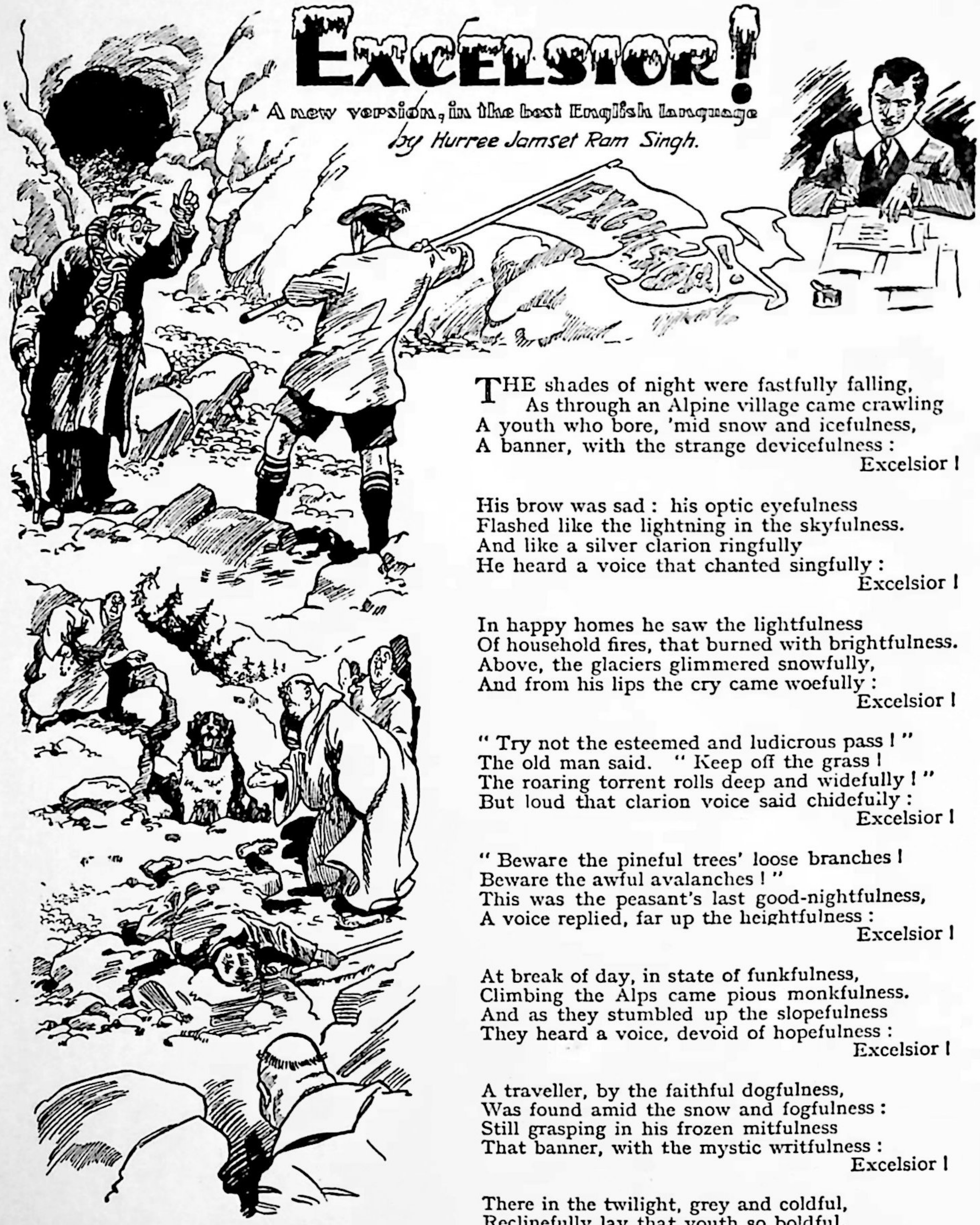
CLIFTON COLLEGE



St. PAUL'S SCHOOL

EXCELSIOR!

A new version, in the best English language
by Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.



THE shades of night were fastfully falling,
As through an Alpine village came crawling
A youth who bore, 'mid snow and icefulness,
A banner, with the strange devicefulness :
Excelsior !

His brow was sad : his optic eyefulness
Flashed like the lightning in the skyfulness.
And like a silver clarion ringfully
He heard a voice that chanted singfully :
Excelsior !

In happy homes he saw the lightfulness
Of household fires, that burned with brightfulness.
Above, the glaciers glimmered snowfully,
And from his lips the cry came woefully :
Excelsior !

" Try not the esteemed and ludicrous pass ! "
The old man said. " Keep off the grass !
The roaring torrent rolls deep and widefully ! "
But loud that clarion voice said chidefully :
Excelsior !

" Beware the pineful trees' loose branches !
Beware the awful avalanches ! "
This was the peasant's last good-nightfulness,
A voice replied, far up the heightfulness :
Excelsior !

At break of day, in state of funkfulness,
Climbing the Alps came pious monkfulness.
And as they stumbled up the slopefulness
They heard a voice, devoid of hopefulness :
Excelsior !

A traveller, by the faithful dogfulness,
Was found amid the snow and fogfulness :
Still grasping in his frozen mitfulness
That banner, with the mystic writfulness :
Excelsior !

There in the twilight, grey and coldful,
Reclinefully lay that youth so boldful.
And from the sky, far-off, aloftfully,
A voice fell, tenderly and softfully :
Excelsior !



The Greyfriars Domestic Corner!

Edited by SQUIFF.

As the contributors to this novel feature have been asked to be funny, readers are requested not to take their statements too seriously.—Ed.

THE Greyfriars Domestic Corner is a humble attempt to set up for schoolboys something on the lines of the "home" magazines which our feminine relatives read. It has been said of these magazines that no home is complete without one. We trust that the time will come when no schoolboy's study will be complete without a copy of "The Greyfriars Corner"!

HOW TO REMOVE GRAVY-STAINS FROM AN ETON SUIT.

By Billy Bunter.

PUZZLED readers may well ask, *Why* remove gravy-stains from an Eton suit? Well, dear readers, I can assure you that if it rested with me, I should certainly decline to do such meenial work. But that beast Quelchy, you know, comes down like a ton of brix on any fellow he spots with spots of gravy on him.

The jewdicious Removite, therefore, has to give his consideration to this problem—if you spill the soup over your trowsis, how can you avoid getting into the soup? Well, I can tell you this. I've tried every known method of removing gravy-stains, without suxxess, and I'm now convinced that *it can't be done!*

Consequently, the answer to the problem is simple—change your trowsis! To those who object that they have no other trowsis to change into, I will confide a secret. Occasionally, my vally at Bunter Court forgets to send on more than a duzzen pairs, and sometimes, therefore, I find myself short.

When that happens, I just go to the locker of my old pal Lord Mauleverer (he always leaves it unlocked) and borrow a pair of his. Like all the other fellows in the Remove, he's a skinny beast, but what his trowsis lack in quantity they make up for in quality. I can recommend them.

If you adopt my suggestion, dear readers, you won't need to worry any more about how to remove gravy-stains from Eton suits!

RECIPES.

By Wun Lung.

ME velly good cook. Me tell you how you make velly nice dinner.

First you get big stew-pot, and boilee water plenty hot. Then you put in nicee carcase of fat cattee, and plenty lats' tails and bird seed. You cookee plenty much. You startee dinner with velly nice omelette,

makee with lizards' eggs and sunflower seeds, then you eat velly nicee stew, and you enjoy good Chinese dinner!

SOCIETY GOSSIP.

By H. Vernon-Smith.

RUMOURS are in circulation of the impending engagement of Lord Mauleverer to the young lady who serves behind the counter at the bun-shop in Courtfield. If they contain any truth, we can imagine that the Hon. William George Bunter is likely to feel a little aggrieved, for we understand that he has cast his eye in the direction of the bun-shop more than once of late, though whether attracted by the young lady or the buns we cannot say.

The smart little party given in the Remove dormitory by Tom Brown, Esq., on the occasion of his recent remittance, witnessed a notable gathering of the cream of Greyfriars society. A sumptuous repast of pork-pies and dough-nuts, with excellent ginger-beer, was followed by a most enjoyable game of leap-frog over the beds. The celebration terminated rather hurriedly owing to the appearance of Wingate with an ashplant!

FURNISHING A STUDY.

By Dick Rake.

THE problem of turning a study into a "home from home" at a moderate cost is one that faces a good many fellows at the beginning of a new term. I propose to offer a few suggestions.

Starting with window decorations, a pair of neat tapestry curtains will give your study a refined air. You should obtain a reasonably good pair for about £12 19s. 11¾d. A good-looking Bokhara carpet for the floor should cost you no more than £50, and a few fairly "classy" etchings for the wall can be had for a half of that sum. Of course, you will need a bookcase. Get a nice one; it adds "tone" to the room.

Don't, however, pay more than £30 or £40 for it; anything in excess of £40 may be considered extravagant. A table and chairs in the Jacobean style need not run to more than another £50, and you will, perhaps, expend a further £50 on odds and ends. A refrigerator and an electric stove (say £50 the two) will add to the convenience of the room, and a nice gramophone and a wireless set, costing not much more than £100 between them, will make the place attractive as well as comfortable.

The whole thing, as you see, should not run you into £400. If you haven't this amount handy, save up your pocket-money for a few weeks. It's wonderful how soon it tells up!

LATEST FASHIONS.

By the Earl Mauleverer.

FASHIONABLE Removites will soon be considering the renewal of their wardrobes for the spring, begad, and I consider, therefore, that the time is ripe to give my readers particulars of a perfectly charming fancy waistcoat, free pattern of which is given with this number. The waistcoat can be made very easily at home in your study, with the aid of a pair of knitting-needles and a sewing-machine, which can doubtless be borrowed from one of the masters.

Take two yards of gabardine (preferably heliotrope with splashes of jade green, 1s. 11¾d. a yard, from Chunkley's bargain basement), and cut out to pattern. Then knit the pockets with pink wool, and stick on with fish-glue. Add mother-of-pearl buttons to suit the personal taste. A striking effect is obtained if the waistcoat is pleated and a fringe of rose-petals hung from the bottom.

Needless to say, one should be careful in selecting other garments to match the creation. I would suggest sky-blue trousers and a scarlet Eton jacket.

HEALTH NOTES.

By Dr. Harold Skinner.

IT'S always as well to remember, in talking on health topics, that one man's meat is another's poison. The air of one health resort doesn't necessarily suit everyone who goes there, for instance. Personally, I find that the atmosphere of the billiards-room

in the Cross Keys suits me down to the ground.

Most of the Remove, however, seem to prefer Little Side. Then, again, a game of nap seems to me a very congenial form of exercise, whereas other chaps choose boxing, or some other violent thing. No accounting for tastes, is there?

Well, now for a few hints on what to do in cases of illness. I will choose a few ordinary complaints, such as we're all liable to contract.

Indigestion.—Indigestion is usually caused by too many visits to Mrs. Mimble's tuck-shop. The remedy is simple—stop eating. If you stop eating, obviously there's soon nothing left in your "little Mary" to digest, and the indigestion ceases. The longer you go without grub, the less likelihood there is of the indigestion returning. Try going without for about three months, and it's a sure thing that you'll never suffer from indigestion again!



"Me tell you how you make velly nice dinner. First you get big stew-pot, and boilee water plenty hot. Then you put in nicee carcase of fat cattee, and plenty lats' tails and bird seed." (*See page* 89.)

Mumps.—An effective cure must start in the early stages. Watch carefully for the first mump to appear, and, as soon as it does so, get a friend to hit it hard with a sledge-hammer. This should disperse it, and might also have the effect of scaring all the other mumps away. If it doesn't, get your friend to hit all in the same way, and you'll soon feel a different man!

Cold in the Head.—Immediately you suspect you have a cold in the head, plunge the head into a basinful of boiling oil. (N.B.—If no oil available, use boiling water.) You will emerge with a feeling of considerable relief.

Measles.—When you get this distressing malady, the best thing to do is to keep cool, calm, and collected. Don't do anything rash!

[Any more of this, Dr. Skinner, and I can see your patients thirsting for vengeance. In fact, if your rash statements become rasher, you'll find it hard to save your bacon!—Ed.]

The Last Laugh!



An Amusing Story of Rookwood School — Narrated by Teddy Grace.

TUBBY MUFFIN, the plump Falstaff of the Classical Fourth, awoke with a start, wondering vaguely what had wakened him.

Tubby yawned long and deeply, and he was for turning over and going to sleep again, when suddenly he made the discovery that the Fourth-Form dormitory was empty save for himself.

He blinked in bewilderment at the rows of beds—all of them unoccupied. Then his glance wandered to the watch which was suspended from his bed-rail, and he stared at it as if transfixed.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Tubby Muffin, in alarm. "It's half-past seven! Rising-bell went half an hour ago, and all the fellows are dressed and downstairs! How jolly mean of them not to give me a call!"

Tubby was wide awake now. He bounded out of bed with surprising alacrity, and started to scramble into his clothes. Tubby had visions of being late for breakfast—perhaps missing it altogether—and that would be a dire calamity. Some fellows might miss a meal quite cheerfully, and feel none the worse for it; but Tubby Muffin was not of their number. Tubby believed in fortifying himself against the cares of the day by eating substantial quantities of eggs and bacon, and sausages, and toast and marmalade. The prospect of missing his breakfast was appalling. It made him go cold all over.

"The beasts!" he muttered, snatching up a jug and splashing water into a bowl. "Fancy letting me sleep on after rising-bell! I'll tell Jimmy Silver, and Lovell, and the other beasts exactly what I think of them as soon as I see them!"

So saying, Tubby performed a hasty "cat-lick." Soap and water were his natural enemies, and Tubby's ablutions grew smaller by degrees and beautifully less, so to speak. On this occasion, he merely sprayed his features, and then dabbed them hurriedly with a towel. In a twinkling he adjusted his collar and tie, and ran a comb through his unruly mop of hair, and literally flung himself into his waistcoat. Then he dashed from the dormitory and down the stairs, putting on his Eton jacket as he went.

Tubby seemed fairly to bounce down the stairs, and on reaching the foot of them he sprinted away in the direction of the dining-hall, like a champion of the cinder-path.

He expected, as he drew near the dining-hall, to hear the clatter of knives and forks. But all was silent. And when he arrived breathlessly at his destination and flung open the door, Tubby received his second shock that morning.

The dining-hall was deserted!

Apparently breakfast was over, for the tables were bare.

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Tubby Muffin, in dismay. "What frightful luck!"

"As he stood there, blinking into the deserted hall, Tubby fancied he heard a faint titter behind him. He spun round

swiftly. Like Moses of old, he looked this way and that, but there was no man.

"I could have sworn I heard some fellow chuckling," muttered Tubby. "Must have been my fancy. But where is everybody? Surely morning lessons haven't started?

But that was the only explanation of the deserted dining-hall and corridors. It must be frightfully late—later even than Tubby's watch indicated. Not only was



Tubby Muffin dashed from the dormitory and down the stairs, putting on his Eton jacket as he went.

breakfast over, but morning school was in progress. Tubby had overslept with a vengeance!

"This is awful!" groaned the fat junior. "Dicky Dalton will come down on me like a thousand of bricks!"

Mr. "Dicky" Dalton, the master of the Classical Fourth, was a stickler for punctuality. If a pupil was five minutes late for lessons, he got a severe wigging. If he was ten minutes late, it was a case for "handers." If he was later still, his punishment was increased in proportion. And Tubby Muffin, not knowing exactly how late he was, had visions of something lingering, with boiling oil in it!

He fairly flew round to the Form-room. And as he rushed helter-skelter round the corridors, he wondered what excuse he could offer for his belated arrival.

Tubby paused outside the Form-room door, pumping in breath. Then he nerved himself for the coming ordeal, and turned the door-handle. But the door refused to open; it was locked on the inside.

"Who is there?" came a stern, gruff voice from within—the voice, apparently, of Mr. Dalton. "Is that you, Muffin?"

"Y-e-e-s, sir," faltered Tubby.

"You are locked out!" continued the voice sternly. "You are hopelessly late for lessons, Muffin!"

"I know, sir. I—I'm awfully sorry, but it isn't my fault, really. You see, I overslept, and those beasts——"

"Enough!" came the stern interruption. "You will go and report yourself to the headmaster immediately, and tell him why I sent you. You are an incurably lazy boy, Muffin, and Dr. Chisholm will probably give you a severe flogging!"

"Ow!" yelped the hapless Tubby. And at the prospect of a birching from the Head, cold shivers chased each other down his spine.

"I—I say, Mr. Dalton," he stammered appealingly, "if you will unlock this door, and let me come in and explain——"

"Go!" thundered the deep voice from within. "Do not dare to try to temporise with me, Muffin! Report yourself to the headmaster at once!"

Tubby Muffin rolled away, feeling very disconsolate. Everything seemed to be going wrong this morning. Quite obviously it was not Tubby's lucky day!

It was in fear and trembling that he made his way to the Head's study. His knees were wobbling under him, and he had not felt such awful apprehension since his last visit to the dentist in Coombe. He shivered all over, like a fat table jelly, as he rolled into the Head's corridor.

And then came the third big shock of the morning—a shock so staggering that Tubby Muffin stood petrified.

On the door of the Head's study a placard had been pinned, and the inscription, in large capital letters, danced before Tubby's bewildered eyes:

APRIL FOOL.

For a moment Tubby Muffin stood spellbound. He was an obtuse fellow, and the revelation that he had been hoaxed did not come to him all at once. But when the loud clang of the rising-bell smote upon his ears, Tubby began to realise what had happened.

"Spoofed!" he yelled. "Those awful



On the door of the Head's study a placard had been pinned, and the inscription, in large capital letters, danced before Tubby's bewildered eyes: "APRIL FOOL!" (*See this page.*)

beasts have played an April-Fool joke on me! They must have been hiding under their beds when I woke up, and they put my watch on to half-past seven to make me think rising-bell had gone. One of the rotters must have gone down to the Form-room and imitated Dicky Dalton's voice. Oh, the beasts! Why didn't I remember it was April the First?"

Tubby Muffin wrenched at the placard and tore it to shreds. Then, with fury in his face, he made his way to the Fourth-Form dormitory.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were in the act of rising. George Raby was already dressed. Everybody was laughing, and when Tubby

Muffin rolled into the dormitory the laughter rose to a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"April Fool!"

"Ever been had, Tubby?"

Tubby Muffin shook his fist at the grinning faces around him. Tubby was not a fighting man, but he felt really warlike at that moment, and it was only the terrific odds against him that prevented him from rushing at the merry japers and hitting out right and left.

"You—you—you——" Words almost failed Tubby Muffin. "You've robbed me of an hour's sleep, you grinning gargoyles!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose it was you, Raby, who imitated Dicky Dalton's voice?"

"Guilty!" said George Raby, with a grin.

"And who put the placard on the Head's door?"

"Little me!" said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "You must admit we've made a very complete April Fool of you, Tubby! Hear us smile!"

And a fresh peal of laughter rang out. Indeed, the "smile" might have been heard all over Rookwood.

Naturally, Tubby Muffin was feeling very sore as he went down to breakfast with the others. His fat leg had been pulled, and he was the object of mirth and ridicule all round.

But there was consolation in store for Tubby. On taking his seat at the breakfast-table, he found a note on his plate. It was addressed to him in the scholarly handwriting of Mr. Dalton, and Tubby ripped open the envelope in wonder. His wonder increased, and his face beamed like a full moon, on reading what appeared to be a message from the Form-master:

> "Mr. Dalton is giving a little celebration in his study this afternoon, at five o'clock. The pleasure of Reginald Muffin's company is cordially requested.
>
> "Do not trouble to acknowledge this invitation, unless for some reason you are unable to accept."

Tubby Muffin was delighted. It was very unusual for a Form-master to invite a junior to tea; still, it was not unheard-of, and Mr. Dalton had a way of unbending occasionally and inviting some of his chosen pupils to a study repast. Hitherto, Tubby Muffin had not been among the chosen, but evidently Tubby's turn had come at last!

Tubby thrust the note into his pocket, and pitched into his breakfast with cheerful zest. He was all eagerness for the little celebration in Mr. Dalton's study. It engrossed Tubby's mind to the exclusion of all else. During morning lessons he was constantly called over the coals by Mr. Dalton for inattention; and on one occasion Mr. Dalton



Tubby Muffin rolled in with alacrity. He was rather disappointed, on blinking round the study, to find the table laid very sparsely for tea. (*See page* 96.)

rapped him sharply on the knuckles with his pointer—which was rather a queer way to treat a prospective guest.

After what seemed an eternity, five o'clock came. And Tubby Muffin, looking very smart and spruce, and having taken infinite pains with his toilet for once, presented himself at Mr. Dalton's study.



At Mr. Dalton's bidding, Tubby sat down and made himself at home, and the good things rapidly disappeared into his capacious interior. (*See page* 97.)

"Come in!" called out the Form-master, in response to Tubby's knock.

The fat junior rolled in with alacrity. He was rather disappointed, on blinking round the study, to find the table laid very sparsely for tea. There was a plate of thin bread-and-butter and a pot of tea; merely that, and nothing more. Such a frugal snack scarcely savoured of a celebration, and Tubby Muffin frowned a little as he drew a chair up to the table and sat down.

Mr. Dalton glared at him in amazement and anger.

"Muffin!" The Form-master's voice was like a thunderclap. "How dare you take such an unwarrantable liberty? Stand up at once!"

"Oh, really, sir——"

"At once!" thundered Mr. Dalton. "I have a good mind to cane you, Muffin, for this impertinence!"

"M-m-my hat!"

Tubby Muffin rose to his feet, blinking at Mr. Dalton in perplexity.

"Really, sir, I don't see where the impertinence comes in. You invited me to tea——"

"What?"

"And a guest naturally expects to be allowed to sit down, sir. I can't take my meals standing up, like a horse!"

Mr. Dalton frowned darkly.

"Boy, your impertinence passes all bounds! You are no guest of mine, nor have I invited you to come and take tea with me. I should hardly be likely to issue such an invitation to the most backward pupil in my Form."

Tubby Muffin stared blankly at the Form-master, whose hand was straying towards a cane. Then, urged by the instinct of self-preservation, Tubby hastily pulled from his pocket the invitation he had received that morning and handed it to Mr. Dalton. That gentleman perused it with a puzzled frown; then his face relaxed into a smile.

"Muffin, you stupid boy, you have been the victim of a hoax—an April-Fool joke, apparently. This invitation did not emanate from me, though the writer has cleverly imitated my handwriting."

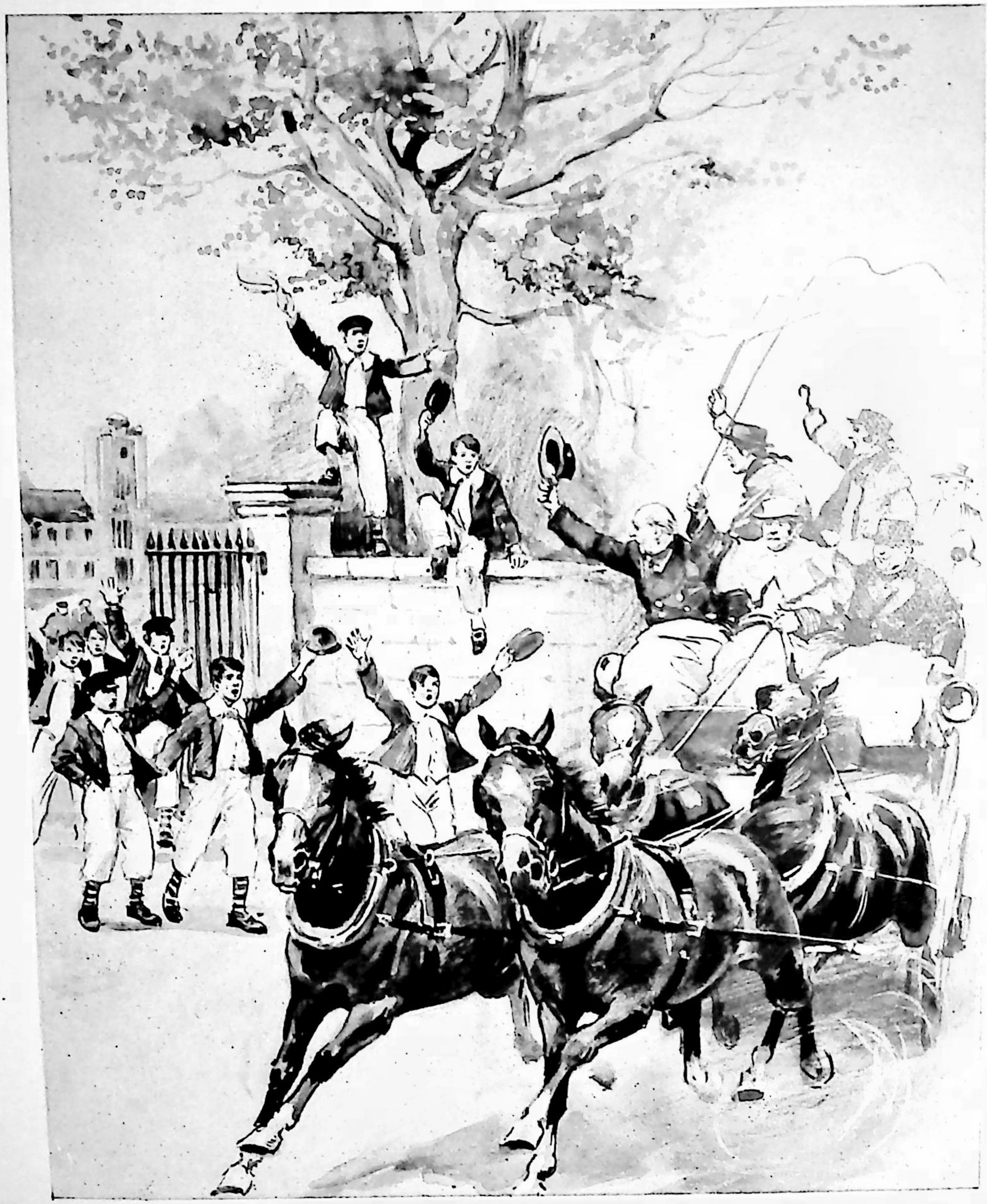
"Oh, crumbs!"

Tubby Muffin's face fell. He realised that once again he had been spoofed by his schoolfellows, and he could have blubbed with vexation and disappointment. Indeed, he was very near to tears, and Mr. Dalton noted the fact.

"Come, cheer up, Muffin!" he said kindly. "You shall have the last laugh, after all! You may stay and have tea with me."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" exclaimed Tubby, brightening up.

Tidings Of Victory !



To face page 97

How the News of Trafalgar Came to Rookwood School !

"Before you sit down," said Mr. Dalton, "take a peep in my cupboard. You may possibly find something more appetising than bread-and-butter."

And Tubby did. He discovered a really handsome plum cake, and a dish of jam tarts, and another dish of assorted pastries. And then, at Mr. Dalton's bidding, Tubby sat down and made himself at home, and the good things rapidly disappeared into his capacious interior. It was a glorious spread, and Tubby Muffin enjoyed it to the last crumb, while Mr. Dalton chatted away quite pleasantly on a variety of topics.

Meanwhile, Jimmy Silver & Co. were waiting outside in the corridor, waiting for Tubby Muffin to emerge. Perhaps Mr. Dalton heard the impatient fidgeting of their feet, for they were made to wait a very long time.

"I wonder what's keeping the fat ass all this time," remarked Lovell.

"Well, as we haven't heard any noise, he's not getting handers," said Jimmy Silver.

"Probably old Dalton's telling him what a naughty boy he is," laughed Raby.

But when Tubby Muffin appeared at last, however, beaming all over his face, the japers got a shock.

"Thanks so much for the invitation, you fellows!" he said cheerily. "I've had the finest feed ever!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. stared.

"You—you mean to say that you've had tea with Dalton?" gasped Jimmy.

"Rather! Old Dalton's a brick. I say, you fellows, your April-Fool joke rather missed fire—what? He laughs loudest who laughs last! He, he, he!"

And Tubby Muffin's loud and unmusical giggle echoed along the corridor, while Jimmy Silver & Co. ruefully agreed that the laugh was with Tubby.

THE END

TIDINGS of VICTORY!

DURING the early years of the nineteenth century, when England was at war with France and Spain, the mother country had cause to bless the meteoric rise of one of her sailor sons, who was destined to overthrow the might of Napoleon Buonaparte on the high seas. The name of Lord Nelson was on every patriotic Britisher's lips. Here was a born leader of men, frail physically and seemingly unfitted for the arduous life of a sailor, but with a courage and a confidence in his destiny that was unquenchable and inspiring to all who came in contact with him. At Rookwood School, in the heart of Hampshire, masters, seniors, and juniors alike idolised Lord Nelson as the greatest admiral the world had known.

His last memorable battle, on October 21st, 1805, at Trafalgar, where, with twenty-seven men-o'-war and four frigates, he engaged Admiral Villeneuve's thirty-three men-o'-war and seven frigates—the pick of the combined French and Spanish navies—in a fierce fight to the death, will live in the annals of naval history for all time.

The might of Buonaparte had been broken, and England was now safe from the threatened invasion which the all-conquering Frenchman had contemplated.

The victory of Trafalgar was carried back to England as fast as human means could devise, and from Portsmouth a stage coach at once set off for London and the Admiralty offices. With its passengers cheering and shouting, the news of Nelson's great victory spread from hamlet to village and village to town, and when the coach tore past the walls of Rookwood a crowd of scholars had collected. The joyous news went from mouth to mouth, and loud and thunderous cheers floated after the coach as it rattled on to London town.

The Head of Rookwood held a special thanksgiving service in the school chapel, and then, in honour of the occasion, gave the boys in his charge a full day's holiday, of which, needless to say, they made the most.



Illustrated by Warwick Reynolds.

When Reynard came to Fernside

When chickens are scarce, a nice plump rabbit will ease the pangs of hunger of Master Reynard. But rabbits are slippery individuals to catch, as a new-comer to Fernside quickly discovers.

A Delightful Nature Story

By CLIVE R. FENN.

THINGS went along at a comfortable jog-trot at Fernside until one winter night, when the soft mists over the lea were silvered by the Hunters' Moon, when Quickear, a particularly smart fox, popped over the creaky wooden bridge which crossed the brackish stream and gave a sniff—a highly intelligent and appreciative sniff.

Quickear had never been in that part of the country before. Strange as it is to relate, he, perhaps the most chivvied fox in the southern counties, he who had shown a clean pair of heels to the hounds more times than he cared to remember, was completely baffled by the appearance of the place. There was something special and not unpleasant about the air—a rabbity whiff. Even as he paused in a reedy clump, Quickear caught sight of a gay little rabbit which perked its knowing head over a tiny mound on the mossy bank and surveyed the newcomer.

"Oho, what have we here?" muttered Quickear, making a dart.

Whitetail, the rabbit, hitched himself backwards, gave a cry, and was gone. He had heard of fine animals called foxes, which go out racing with strings of keen-scented hounds, and with huntsmen in pink in close attendance. But until that moment Whitetail had regarded the whole thing as so much hearsay. Buckeye, a venerable rabbit of the district, had often talked of a grand run he had had long ago with a fox in full cry, but this was one of the stories one only half believed, you understand.

This time, however, there was no mistaking the fact. You could never have missed Quickear, presuming you had a nose at all.

Quickear had gone rather hungry that day, and he had missed the route home. He reasoned that there were worse things than a rabbit, and he made a dart, being a fellow full of energy. But he missed Whitetail by inches. The rabbit was on home ground, and he was gone like a streak of lightning, racing for the family burrow. Arrived there, he told his story, and was not believed, just as it is with most good stories. Whitetail's mother was vexed over supper details, for some friends had dropped in without being asked. Whitetail was chided, and sent off to bed with only a bit of cold

cabbage as his share; but he knew he had seen the fox, and that was that.

Meantime, Quickear loped on through Fernside, which was a large district, the whole place owned by a certain old Professor Beringer. The news of his visit soon spread, and there was a tremor of agitation in rabbit circles, for rabbits throve in the place in question. Fernside was a rabbit sanctuary, as for all other animals—bar foxes. There had never been any foxes, so far. The learned professor never gave them a single thought; but as he stood at the door of his log hut in the forest that night he saw Quickear shoot by.

"This is most interesting," he said to himself.

The fox considered it more exciting than merely interesting, for he had not realised the presence of the long, low hut where the professor lived, and the sudden flash of light shocked his nerves. He did not dally. It occurred to him that the shadowy figure seen for a second might be someone unsportsmanlike enough to lie in wait for a fox with a gun. Quickear had had some; in fact, he'd been hit once by a charge of shot, and the result had been a bobbed effect in the region of his brush for at least a week.

The professor was pleased to see the newcomer, for he was a bland, kind-hearted gentleman, ready to welcome anything on four legs. This weakness of his, though amiable enough, made him highly unpopular with all the farmers of the region. Maybe if the professor had troubled to think the matter out, he would have been less easy in his mind over the appearance of the fox; but he was a bit of a dreamer, and as he went to bed, he reflected that perhaps there would be a chance now of studying the character of Reynard, just as he had dived into the subject of rabbit life—namely, what a rabbit eats, what it thinks about; in fact, all the mysterious matters a deeply-read biologist likes to know.

That night while the rabbits slept the snow fell.

Whitetail was up early, feeling peckish after his light supper off shop-soiled cabbage. No sign of the fox that morning. All was peace. Whitetail kissed his paw to a chum who was valsing out of the next burrow but one.

"Nice morning!" he cried.

"Nice!" growled rabbit No. 2. "You call it nice!"

"Well, isn't it?" snapped Whitetail.

"You haven't heard the news, then? Everybody's talking about it! There's been a fox, and he ate poor old Buckeye last night."

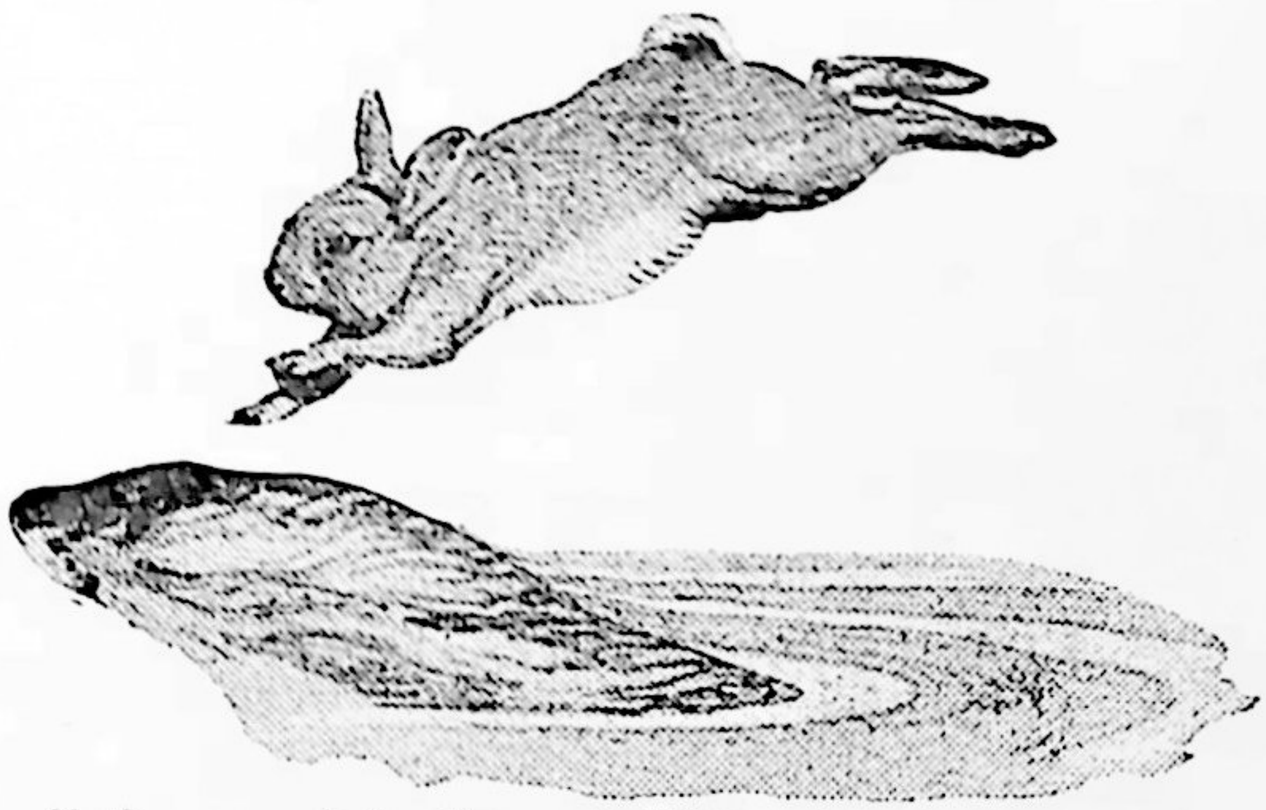
"Poor fellow!" cried Whitetail, with a shiver.

He referred to the rabbit, not the fox, it must be understood.

Fernside simply quivered with excitement, and Whitetail listened in awe and trembling. For all that, his interest was strangely stirred, and he felt a shade perky, too, for his report of the previous day had been laughed at. Now there was no laughter! They say that the wise consider in silence. Whitetail was not wise, but he was curious, and it struck him, as he darted off across a common stretch and bounded lightly across the narrow brook, that it was up to him, having seen the visitant once, to see him again. That would add to his sense of importance.

How true it is that those who seek fame run many risks!

Whitetail went in quest of adventure, and he found it—tons more than he bargained for. A



Hotly pursued by Reynard, Whitetail flashed across the stream, but he could not throw off his pursuer.

surprising thing had happened after he had gambolled across country and put a mile at least between him and his friends. He was just beginning to think life was proving a bit dull when he saw a vivid splash of colour a dozen yards from him. The colour was red, and it showed up plainly against a wall of bracken, which was still green. This spot of colour was the fox.

Quickear was lying prone and feeling extremely bad-tempered. The fact was he had qualms. The pain was considerable. He was suffering from too much Buckeye, for the old and seasoned rabbit, which had furnished a late supper for Reynard, held the open record for toughness. The fox had eaten the ancient bunny with all the misguided enthusiasm which is frequently brought to bear on a supper for which there has been a lengthy wait.

Quickear suddenly heard a scuffling in the near neighbourhood, and lazily opened one eye. He spied another rabbit staring at him wild eyed, as if fascinated.

"That one'll be tender enough, anyhow!" thought Quickear, making a quick spring.

All Whitetail's courage evaporated on the instant.

He bolted, with Quickear behind him taking up the running in good style. Down the hillside they went, Whitetail looking for cover; but cover there was none. The fox felt his keenness increasing. A nice young rabbit might make him forget Buckeye.

Whitetail dashed on to the level, then flashed across a stream, but he could not throw off his pursuer. Quickear dropped into a steady gallop, and as he was gaining on his quarry, he was not worrying, not even when the swift little rabbit tore up to rising ground again.

"Oh, I wish I had done as mother told me and stopped at home!" sighed Whitetail.

Too late! There was no help coming. The rabbit was already badly winded, and far too frightened and all of a shake to see where he was going. Ahead lay a big, disused quarry pit, but Whitetail did not know of this. He simply bounded on, a little lump of terrified fur, up the steep side of the hill. Here and there in the hollows the snow lay deep. Whitetail felt the hot breath of the fox behind, or imagined he did.

The fact was Reynard was uncomfortably near! The fox did realise what was just ahead, namely, the jagged edge of the black quarry, with a stiff drop of hundreds of feet to the boulders below.

"I shall have the little beggar here!" panted the fox as he raced on.

The rabbit was almost done! He flew along a narrow ledge cut in the face of the quarry, with Quickear at his heels. Then Whitetail's fluttering heart almost stopped beating.

Right in the middle of the narrow path crouched Titmus, the steely-eyed stoat, handsome in his winter coat of white ermine, but cruel and relentless—the most dangerous enemy of all rabbits!

Whitetail, caught thus between two fires, completely lost his head. Behind was the fox; in front, barring his path, was the stoat! What was a hunted rabbit to do? There was only one chance, and instinctively he took it, and leaped over the edge of the precipice!

With a terrified squeal, Whitetail shot forward into the blue! His two enemies held fast right at the edge. They had lost the day—or rather, the rabbit.

Down flew Whitetail—down, down! The fall seemed endless, but his luck was not right out. He landed at last on a point of rock which jutted out of the towering stone wall of the deep quarry. Bruised and giddy, he tried to get a foothold, but could find none, and the next moment he had bounced off this precarious resting-place, to drop to the bottom of the quarry, where luckily a thick patch of broom helped to break his fall. Though scared out of his wits, he was not much hurt. Anyway, he managed to scuffle out and pull himself together.

But this was not accomplished in a hurry. The rabbit had been through the biggest scare of his life. His very earliest recollections were intimately concerned with the inveterate enemy of the rabbit race, namely, the stoat. He knew from his mother that never was any mercy to be looked for from

this unscrupulous foe, and he shivered beneath his fur as he reflected on his escape.

For a time he just rested while his nerve returned, and it was a bit slow in coming back. One could fool a fox, but it was quite another matter with the stoat, whose cunning was matchless. So Whitetail lay in cover and laid back his ears, making himself as small as possible in the tufty growth. Even a ray of wintry sunshine did not restore his spirits all at once. He was not himself. He wanted to get back home to his snug burrow, and yet he felt a trifle timid about facing his mother. That wise old rabbit would scold him, Whitetail knew, as sure as anything, for she was skilled at chiding. And what she would say would be true enough. He had made a terrible mess of things.

It was a very much humbler rabbit who made his way back home to tell his tale —a rabbit's tale. No more fox-hunting for him!

It was vastly different, however, with Quickear. The fox did not go over the side. To his mortification he saw his quarry vanish, but Quickear had got a rare good purchase on the sloping hillside, and all he suffered from was extreme irritation at losing a breakfast which had looked promising in the extreme. He forgot even that annoyance as a sound all too familiar fell on his ear.

They were after him. "They" meant the huntsmen and the hounds. The whole countryside was up and in search of the marauder, and the local hunt had lost no time. Quickear turned as he saw the hounds tearing straight for the spot where he stood. He swung round and raced for safety as he had never done before.

But did they get Reynard? Not much! Quickear went to earth in a copse, and lay low till nightfall, when he limped back to his own country, vowing he had had enough of Fernside.

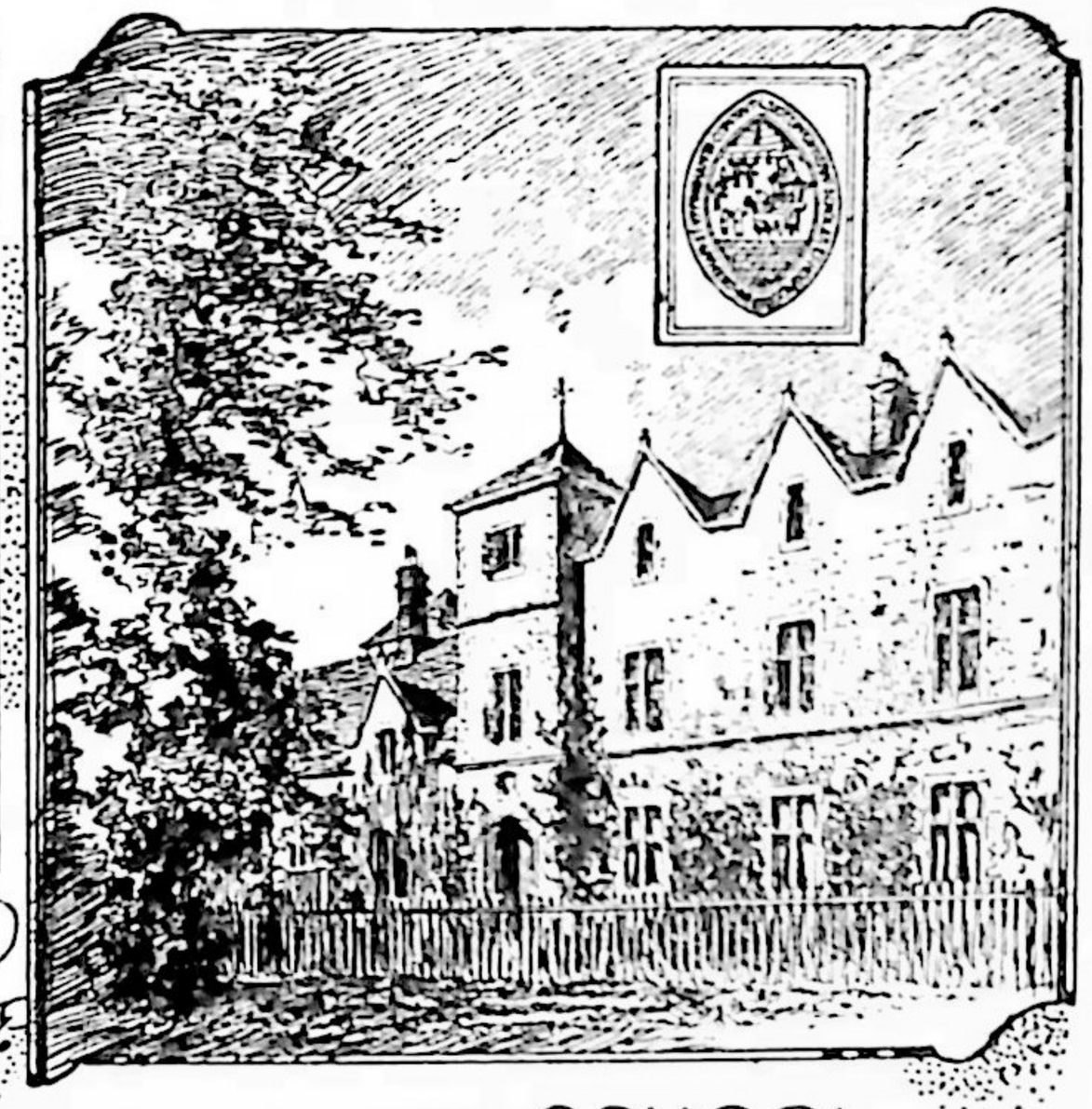
THE END



Caught between two fires, Whitetail, with a terrified squeal, leapt over the edge of the precipice! Down, down he hurtled towards a point of rock.

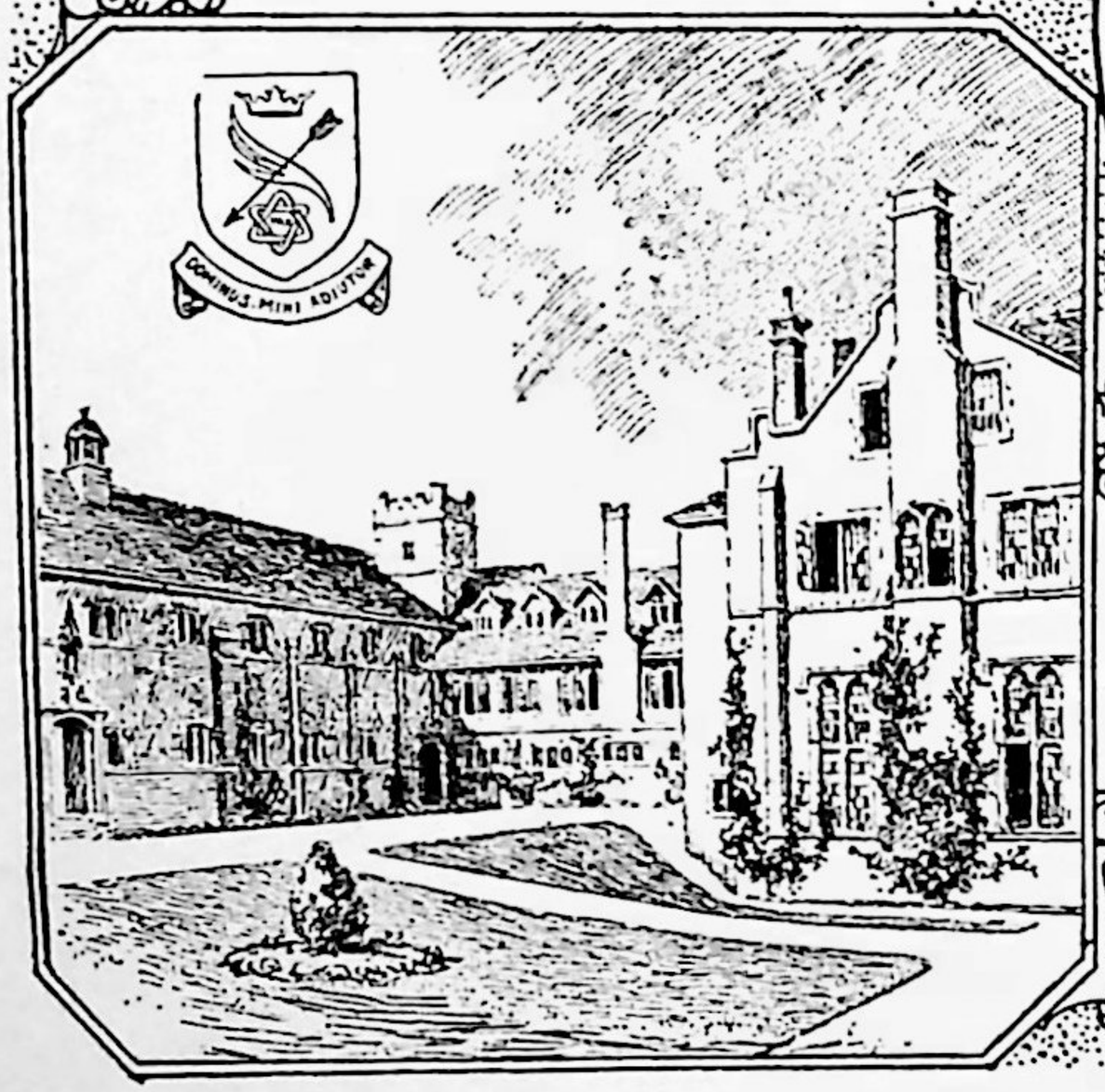


BRIDLINGTON GRAMMAR SCH.



OAKHAM SCHOOL.

FAMOUS PUBLIC SCHOOLS





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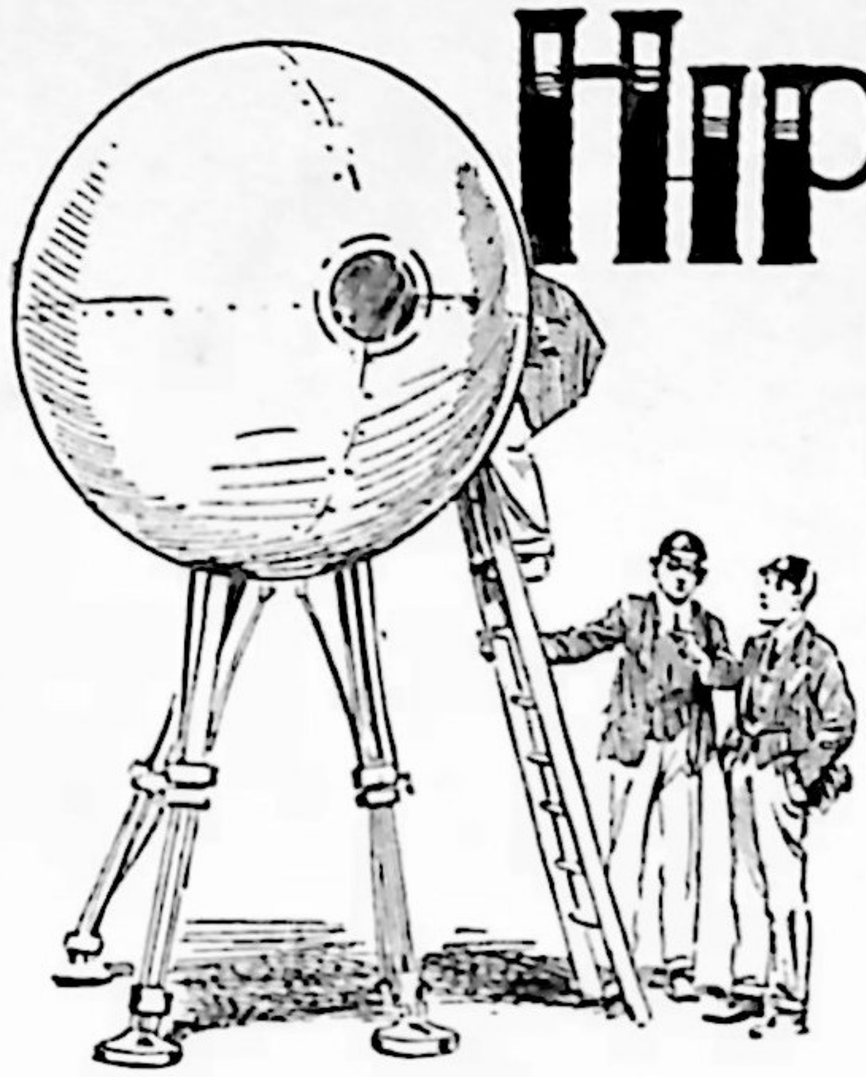
HIPPOMOBILE!



Inventors all have their trials and setbacks, and their fun, too, as you will agree when you've read this delightful story of Jehoshaphat Jarndyce's weird and wonderful invention.

By
W. H. MORRIS

THE FIRST CHAPTER
A Trial Run !

JEHOSHAPHAT JARNDYCE beamed triumphantly.

"This invention," he said in a voice that vibrated with mingled pride and excitement, "is going to make me as famous as Stephenson, Edison, or Marconi."

Tommy Budge grunted sceptically.

"Your inventions always are," he said.

"And," put in Augustus Lane, generally called the "Owl," on account of his solemn mien and horn-rimmed spectacles, "something always goes wrong with them. They're never a success."

He uttered a sepulchral sigh and looked even more melancholy than was his wont.

Jehoshaphat snorted wrathfully.

"You blessed pessimists!" he exclaimed. "All inventors have their trials."

"You'll get penal servitude as well one of these days," Tommy warned him.

Except for a look of withering scorn, Jarndyce ignored this witticism.

"This is an epoch-making discovery," he declared.

The chums were standing in the big back garden of Professor Jarndyce's house, near Sandleigh, where the scientist had his laboratory. The professor, who believed in bending the twig whilst it is young, gave his son every encouragement in the exercise of his inventive genius, and Jehoshaphat had a shed of his own, wherein he evolved the most weird and wonderful contraptions, most of which had unexpected and usually painful results. However, Jehoshaphat was never disheartened by these vicissitudes, but went on inventing new devices. The conversation just recorded had taken place when he had announced that he was about to show his latest invention to his chums.

With a magnificent gesture, he now flung open the door of the shed, and waved Tommy and the Owl inside. What they saw made them utter gasps of astonishment.

In the middle of the shed was a huge metal sphere, balanced on three legs. Each leg was made up of a bewildering assortment of powerful springs and heavy, plated joints, whilst the sphere itself was equipped with a small porthole just above the two forelegs.

"What is it?" gasped Tommy as soon as he had recovered his breath.

"The Hippomobile," Jehoshaphat answered proudly.

"The what?" Tommy shouted.

"The Hippomobile," his chum repeated. "Hippos is Greek for horse, and this is a mechanical horse. The machinery inside makes the legs move two at a time in cyclic order, and the machine can go striding

about the country, over ploughed fields and rough ground, through woods and up hillsides, just as well as it can along a smooth road. That gives it a big advantage over the automobile, and there'll be a big demand for it when I've perfected it and put it on the market."

"My giddy aunt!" Tommy Budge exclaimed faintly, and sank down on an empty crate. "You'll get run in if you go gallumphing about the country in that thing."

"There's no law against it," the young inventor protested seriously. "Anyhow, I'm going to make a trial spin to-night. I've tried it in the garden, but I want to give it a proper trial out in the open, where there's more opportunity for testing its qualities. You chaps care to come?"

"Well," said Tommy doubtfully, "I suppose we had better come to keep you out of trouble, although I shouldn't be surprised if you break all our necks."

"Sooner or later," said the Owl, with a kind of gloomy relish, "one of your inventions will have fatal results. It may as well be this as any other."

Jehoshaphat breathed heavily, and cast about for some withering reply. Words failing him, however, he stalked up to the Hippomobile, reared a short ladder against the sphere, and, mounting this, opened a small circular door. Squeezing in through this, he called to his chums to follow him, and, doing as he said, they found themselves in a tiny apartment. Jehoshaphat told them to seat themselves on a small bench at the rear of the machine, and himself took a seat which was placed immediately behind the porthole, with a bewildering variety of levers within his reach. He pulled one of these and the door clanged into place. Then he touched several others, and there was a whir of machinery that was almost deafening in the narrow confines of the sphere. Finally, he pulled the starting-lever, and the two front legs reared up, and Hippomobile balanced precariously for a moment on the third leg. Then the two raised legs stretched out in response to some further manipulation of the machinery, and dropped to the ground once more, two yards in advance of their original position.

Straightway one of the fore legs and the hind leg repeated the process, then the hind leg and the other fore leg. And so, the legs moving continuously in pairs, the Hippomobile staggered out of the shed and across the garden, Tommy and the Owl bumping up and down and from side to side on their seat.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

Little Sarrum Has a Shock!

HIPPOMOBILE took the hedge at the end of the garden in her stride, and went careering down the road on the far side. His freckled face beaming with delight, the young inventor guided the mechanical horse along this road, over a piece of bumpy waste ground—where the machine rocked perilously and tossed the passengers to and fro in an alarming manner—and finally on to the road that led away from Sandleigh towards the neighbouring village of Little Sarrum. Jehoshaphat had selected this road for the trial spin, knowing that usually it was deserted after nightfall.

All went well for the first quarter of a mile, and they met no vehicles or pedestrians. Then, staggering round a sharp bend in the road, between high hedgerows, they came upon a couple of men. One was Mr. Pepper, a local chandler; the other was Mr. Swales, the village schoolmaster. The two men, who were returning home from a trip to Sandleigh, had heard Hippomobile approaching, and, thinking by the din that it made that half a dozen motor-lorries at least were overtaking them, had halted by the side of the road to let them pass.

The moon was only just rising, a blotchy yellow ball, and the men got but an indistinct view of Jehoshaphat's invention. But that was enough to give them the fright of their lives. Imagine your own feelings if, strolling cheerfully along a lonely country lane, you were overtaken by a weird monstrosity eight feet high, trotting along on three enormous legs, with what appeared

to be one central eye fixed in a glassy stare on you!

The two men were as brave as most people, but they gave one yell apiece and bolted for their lives. Mr. Pepper was a short, stout man, who had not sprinted for thirty years; and Mr. Swales was a sufferer from flat feet and corns. But the pair of them broke a few records during the next five minutes, racing neck and neck for the village.

They rushed into the first open door they came to, which happened to be the tap-room of the Swan and Keys, on the outskirts of Little Sarrum. They entered with such precipitation that the chandler barged into a couple of customers who were standing near the counter discussing hurdle racing with mine host, Sam Pecker, and all three staggered to the ground together. The schoolmaster pulled up abruptly just over the threshold, slammed the door behind him, and jammed his back against it.



Mr. Pepper, crouching behind a red-currant bush, uttered an ear-splitting yell as the chicken's talons hitched themselves into his hindquarters. He was under the impression that Hippomobile had seized him. (*See Chapter* 3.)

For a few seconds the air was thick with shouts and threats; then, as the three men scrambled to their feet, the schoolmaster was able to make his voice heard.

"Awful!" he said, with a shudder.

"'Orrible!" added Mr. Pepper, trembling so visibly that his treble chin waggled. "It ain't nat'ral. It oughtn't to be allowed by law, I say."

"Heaven knows what it was!" said Mr. Swales, with another shudder.

"One of them prehistoric brutes, I should say," suggested the chandler.

"Or else some monstrosity that has emerged from the sea," said the schoolmaster.

"Anyhow," said the chandler, with an air of profound conviction, "it ain't a proper thing to be at large, and it oughter be hunted down."

"'Ere! What's all this?" Sam Pecker demanded rather truculently, mopping his shirt-front, where the better part of a pint of ale had slopped over him when the chandler had capsized his customers.

Mr. Swales proceeded to give an account of their encounter, and, possessing a powerful imagination and a florid style, he managed pretty effectively to curdle his listeners' blood.

Mr. Pecker wrinkled his brows at the schoolmaster, and shook his head a great number of times. Finally he ejaculated:

"Bah! It's my belief the pair of you 'ave been drinking too much, and been imagining things."

"I'm a life-long abstainer!" Mr. Swales affirmed indignantly.

The innkeeper was about to make some withering comment when several of his patrons, who had been looking rather nervously out of the window, uttered yells of mingled astonishment and fright. Hippomobile had just come in sight, staggering unsteadily about the road, from one side to another.

The fact was that Jehoshaphat found that the controls did not work too well, and that he could not steer the machine properly. But to the startled watchers in the Swan and Keys, it appeared that the monstrosity prowled about the road for a few seconds, then made a sudden dash towards the inn.

Like one man, the patrons of the place stampeded for the back door, knocking down Mr. Pecker in their rush, and tramping heedlessly over his prostrate body in their anxiety to escape.

Jehoshaphat made an unavailing attempt to steer away from the inn, but Hippomobile planted one foot firmly against the tap-room door, sent it flying, and staggered into the place, and danced—or seemed to the unhappy tavern keeper to dance—about the sanded floor in fiendish glee!

THE THIRD CHAPTER
The Hunt!

For a few moments Mr. Pecker sprawled on the floor, watching the monstrosity that had invaded his house dance hither and thither, somewhat after the fashion of a gigantic daddy-longlegs. Then, as it came waltzing towards him, he leapt up with a yell that would have done credit to a Red Indian on the war-path, and, bolting upstairs, locked himself in his bed-room.

Hippomobile overturned a couple of settles, then dashed suddenly out through the back door into the yard. There it battered in the side of a chicken-run, and a host of startled fowls fluttered out with a tremendous squawking, one large black cock alighting upon the hindquarters of Mr. Pepper, the wretched man having crouched behind a red-currant bush. The chandler's head was buried under the bush, and accordingly he could not see what his assailant was.

As the bird's talons hitched themselves into his nether quarters, he uttered an ear-splitting yell, being under the impression that Hippomobile had seized him. Thereafter he jumped up, reached the yard wall in two magnificent bounds, and, with the startled bird still clinging to the small of his back and squawking loudly, sprang to the top of the wall. He leapt down the other side, almost on top of P.-c. Swift, who had been summoned from the village by one of the frequenters of the Swan and Keys.

The constable had been told that some monstrous creature had invaded the inn, and had been more than a little sceptical of the accuracy of the report. But now, catching only a fleeting glimpse of the chandler as he sprang over the yard wall, he had a vague impression that a winged, man-like creature, uttering unearthly cries, had assaulted him. He was bowled over by the chandler before he had time to draw his truncheon. He planted a very heavy, knuckly fist in the chandler's wind as he went down, however, and Mr. Pepper uttered a final loud shriek and rolled up into a ball, clutching his abdomen.

Thereupon P.-c. Swift pommelled him well and good, until, suddenly realising who his assailant was, he sat up and said in a severe and breathless voice:

"Alf, I'm surprised at you, at your time o' life, playing the fool like this. A-creating a disturbance of the peace, you are, and I've a good mind to harrest you for it!"

Mr. Pepper was too breathless to explain that he had not leapt the garden wall carrying a cockerel on his back for fun. All that he did was to groan, and roll his eyes in anguish.

And then, just as the P.-c. got slowly to his feet, Hippomobile crashed into the yard gate, and, smashing it down, trotted out, and made its way across a common at the back of the inn at a steady five miles an hour.

P.-c. Swift sat down abruptly again, and watched the apparition disappear into the gloom, his mouth gaping wide with bewilderment. Then he rose once more, and staggered weakly into the house, and called in a faint voice for a drink.

One by one most of Mr. Pecker's patrons returned to the tap-room, and, having carefully closed and bolted every door and securely fastened the window-shutters, they engaged in a heated discussion of what had just taken place. Various hypotheses were put forward, but the majority were of the opinion that Hippomobile was some species of giant insect which had escaped from a private zoological collection.

"One of them South American grasshoppers, I reckon," said Mr. Pecker, who had emerged from his hiding-place upstairs. "There's hants and spiders there big as—as bulldogs and helephants."

"I believe," said Mr. Swale, with an air of superior wisdom such as befitted a man of his scholastic attainments, "that it is some kind of marine creature which has emerged from the sea. There are many terrible and amazing forms of living creatures which inhabit the depths of the ocean, and manifest themselves from time to time. I am certain the brute was not naturally a land creature. Its locomotive organs were not adapted to land travel, as anyone could see by its unsteady gait."

"I dunno about locomotive organs," said Mr. Pepper, with deep feeling, nursing a very swollen nose and patting tenderly at inflamed eyes, "but it's your dooty, Swift, to arrest it. It ain't fit to be at large."

The P.-c. was no coward, but he looked a trifle uncomfortable.

"I think it's a job for the military," he said cautiously.

"It's your dooty to arrest it," Mr. Pepper persisted doggedly.

After a somewhat heated argument, a compromise was arrived at, it being agreed that the P.-c. should seek the aid of Colonel Butcher, who lived just outside Little Sarrum, and was a noted big-game hunter.



Mr. Henry Padgers gave one last, despairing shriek as a bullet tore through the bushes in horrible proximity to his person, and then he struggled through the bush and fled like a hare. (*See Chapter* 4.)

At first the colonel was inclined to ridicule the story that the constable told him, but in the end he was prevailed upon to lend his aid, and, armed with a formidable-looking elephant gun, he sallied forth in search of Hippomobile, accompanied by P.-c. Swift and half a dozen of the bolder spirits from the Swan and Keys. The tracks left by the machine were plainly

discernible, and, following these, the hunters reached the sand dunes that stretch along the coast between Little Sarrum and Sandleigh.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER
The "Kill"!

MEANWHILE, Hippomobile had plunged gaily across country towards the sea.

"I say!" said Tommy, shouting to make himself heard above the din of the machinery. "Stop the thing! I'm one big bruise!"

Jehoshaphat turned a flushed, perspiring face to his chum.

"I can't!" he answered. "Something has gone wrong with the controls. It was barging into that door did it, I believe."

Tommy Budge and the Owl expressed their feelings in no uncertain way, the latter gloomily remarking that if by a miracle they escaped all other disasters they would probably be drowned by the thing charging into the sea. As by this time Hippomobile was striding across the sand dunes, there seemed an excellent chance that the melancholic youth would prove a true prophet.

Sinking deep into the loose sand at every stride, and staggering like a ship in a gale, Hippomobile climbed to the summit of a dune and blundered down the other side into a narrow valley that ran between the sandhills. And there it came suddenly upon Mr. Henry Padgers. Henry was a gentleman of leisure; in other words, a tramp. He had removed his tattered boots for greater comfort, and was stretched full-length on a piece of soft, dry turf, peacefully dozing.

From this sleep he roused suddenly, to see Hippomobile bearing down upon him. In the feeble light of the yellow moon that was just showing over the top of the dunes, the mechanical horse looked ghastly enough to startle the boldest heart. Henry was not particularly lion-hearted, and after one incredulous glance at the nightmare shape, he bounded to his feet and bolted.

Hippomobile, with a kind of uncanny perversity, persisted in giving chase to the miserable fugitive, despite all the efforts that Jehoshaphat made to turn it in another direction. The fact of the matter was that the rough travelling over the sandhills had completely put the machinery out of order, and none of the controls worked effectively.

Running was not easy over the sandy track, where innumerable tufts of long, rank grass tripped the feet, and one's way was constantly barred by gorse bushes. Finding that the gigantic daddy-longlegs that pursued him was steadily gaining upon him, Henry hurled himself with a shrill sob of terror into the heart of a bush. Between his fright and the pain that he endured as the prickles dug into him, his screams were blood-curdling.

Colonel Butcher and his companions, who were just approaching the dunes, halted by common consent and stared at one another, rather white of face, being under the impression that some unfortunate wretch was being torn to pieces by their quarry.

Then, as befitted a big-game hunter, the colonel held his gun ready for use, and advanced briskly towards the direction whence came the cries. P.-c. Swift followed, as did the village chandler, who reasoned that the proximity of the elephant gun was the safest spot in the immediate neighbourhood. The rest of the hunters vanished more speedily than they had come.

Dashing up the sand dunes and down the other side, the hunters stumbled over Mr. Padgers' tattered boots.

"Good heavens!" the chandler quavered, his eyes nearly starting out of his head. "The—the brute has devoured him except for—for his boots! Oh, lor'!"

By this time Hippomobile had disappeared round a bend in the valley and was striding purposefully towards the sea again. Following the spoor, the colonel suddenly detected a movement among the gorse bushes, and, convinced that his quarry was lurking there, he flung up the elephant gun and blazed away.

Mr. Henry Padgers gave one last, despairing shriek as a bullet tore through the bushes in horrible proximity to his per-

son, and then contrived somehow to struggle through the bush, leapt to its feet, and fled like a hare. He did not stop until he had put a considerable distance between himself and the sand dunes. Then, as he sank breathless on the ground, he took a solemn vow never again to touch intoxicating liquor, being convinced that he had been a victim of a particularly vivid attack of delirium tremens.

Meanwhile, seeing that the machine was heading straight for the sea and that he could not stop it, Jehoshaphat opened the door in the sphere and yelled to his chums to jump out. They did so, suffering nothing worse than a bruise or two on the soft sand. The young inventor followed them. Then, with the same uncanny perversity that it had previously exhibited, Hippomobile turned suddenly, and blundered back the way it had come.

The colonel was feverishly reloading his gun when the monstrosity came charging down on them. P.-c. Swift bolted incontinently, and Mr. Pepper sought refuge beneath a gorse bush. The colonel, being made of sterner stuff, stood his ground, and waved the elephant gun in a threatening manner.

And then, to his astonishment, three boyish figures appeared, who seemed to be pursuing the monstrous brute.

One of them—it was Jehoshaphat—overtook it, and grabbed at one of the long legs. He was swung off his feet, and sent flying head over heels into a bush, but his intervention sufficed to turn the machine. It made off at a tangent, climbed swiftly to the top of the dunes, plunged down the other side, and dashed over across the beach into the water.

The last that was seen of it, it was striding purposefully out to sea, and vanished beneath the waves. And for all that is known to the contrary, it may now be marching off to America or the northern coast of Africa. At any rate, nothing more has been seen of Hippomobile.

After what had happened, the chums decided that it would be wise to keep what they knew about Hippomobile to themselves. And so to this day the inhabitants of Little Sarrum sometimes discuss in awe-stricken voices the monstrosity that invaded their village, and the schoolmaster is firmly convinced that his theory that it was a denizen of the sea is the correct one.

As for Jehoshaphat and his chums, they are prime favourites with the colonel, for he insists that they showed most commendable pluck in the way they tackled the brute when even grown men fled from it in terror. And he shows his approbation in a practical way, by giving them the free run of his grounds, and frequently treating them to a first-class feed.



WHEN!

DICK PENFOLD







WHEN Bunter never tries to borrow,
And eats jam-tarts in moderation:
And says, "You fellows! from to-morrow
I'll never tell a fabrication."

When Harold Skinner scorns to stoop
To any mean or caddish action:
When William Stott and Sidney Snoop
Give universal satisfaction.

When Coker of the Fifth becomes
A modest fellow, meek and humble:
Who never quarrels with his chums
Or gives them cause to grouse and grumble.

When Doctor Locke his birch-rod takes
And breaks it into little pieces:
And says, "My boys, for all your sakes
I have decided flogging ceases!"

When Mr. Quelch is mild and bland,
Full of the milk of human kindness:
And if his class gets out of hand
Makes a pretence of sudden blindness.

When William Gosling, at the gate,
Becomes the merriest of mortals:
And never chides us when we're late,
But promptly lets us pass the portals.

When Mrs. Mimble, at the shop,
Sells us delicious strawberry ices,
And cakes and tarts and ginger-pop,
At less than half the present prices.

When all these changes spring to birth
(Merely a modest list I'm giving),
Then Greyfriars will be heaven on earth,
And life at last will be worth living!

The Greyfriars Adventurers!



Pirates—savages—dangers of the African jungle! Many are the perils the chums of Greyfriars School have to face in their quest for Bob Cherry's father. This vividly-written, complete story goes with a swing from start to finish.

THE FIRST CHAPTER
Bad News for Bob!

BOB CHERRY came out of his study in the Remove passage at Greyfriars, whistling cheerily.

Bob Cherry's whistle was loud, and it was shrill, and it indicated that Bob was in good spirits; but it could not be said to be in tune. Voices raised in angry protest could be heard from various studies as Bob Cherry passed the doors.

"Stop that row!"

"Chuck it!"

"Cheese it, you shrieking ass!"

Whereat Bob Cherry grinned, and whistled the more. When Bob was in high spirits, he whistled; and he generally was in high spirits. He had perfect health, he was always fit, and he had a happy disposition. And just now he was looking forward to the summer vacation, and a long excursion with Harry Wharton and Nugent and John Bull. No wonder he whistled; but as he had no musical ear whatever, it was not surprising that his tuneless shriek elicited howls of complaint from other fellows.

Harry Wharton opened the door of No. 1 Study, and looked out. He was one of Bob Cherry's best chums, but there are some things that put too great a strain even upon sincere friendship.

"Shut up, you ass!" he shouted.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, breaking off. "What's the row?"

"That whistle of yours, you ass!"

"What's the matter with it?"

"What do you mean by whistling the Dead March in 'Saul,' anyway?" Wharton demanded.

Bob Cherry gave a sort of snort.

"You chump!" he said. "That wasn't the Dead March in 'Saul.' It was 'It all depends on you.'"

"Can't you get up?"

"Ow! No; I'm injured!"

"Then I'll help you."

Bob Cherry proceeded to help Bunter in a somewhat rough-and-ready manner. He applied his boot to Bunter's fat person with vigour and emphasis.

Billy Bunter roared and leaped to his feet, showing surprising agility for a fellow who was fatally injured.

"Ow, ow! Yarooh!"

Biff, biff!

Bunter rolled away down the passage, and Bob Cherry pursued him for some distance, still helping him.

The fat junior disappeared round a corner, and then Bob Cherry went to the letter-rack for his letter.

There was a letter for him there, and as he took it down, the marks of a dirty thumb on the envelope showed that Billy Bunter had indeed been handling it, doubtless with the idea of discovering, if possible, what was inside. Bunter was afflicted with an incurable desire to examine into other fellows' correspondence.

Bob Cherry gave a growl. Inquisitiveness and spying were faults that he could never quite forgive; they were so opposed to his own nature.

The letter was in his mother's hand, and Bob Cherry looked at it for a moment or two before opening it. Bob Cherry's father had lately left England to return to India, and Bob had no doubt that the letter contained news of his safe arrival there, or else of his having sent a message from some intermediate port. Bob himself had last heard from his father from Port Said.

Billy Bunter blinked round the corner of the passage. To Billy Bunter, letters were divided into two classes—those which contained remittances, and those which did not. Those which did not were of no importance to anybody, in Billy Bunter's opinion; and those that did were of great interest to Bunter, whomsoever they might belong to. And Bunter knew that Major Cherry sometimes sent his son substantial tips.

"I—I say, Cherry!"

Bob Cherry turned his head.

"Oh, buzz off, you ass!"

"Is there a postal-order in it?"

"I don't know, porpoise."

Bunter grunted.

"Well, why don't you open it and see?" he demanded. "What are you wasting time for? Look here, Cherry, I'm expecting a postal-order this evening and if you've got a remittance there, you might advance me something."

"Oh, scat!"

Bob Cherry inserted a lead-pencil into the envelope and split it open. He drew out the letter, which was a thick one, unusually long for his mother to write. On the front page, as he unfolded it, was a blotch, as if something wet had dropped upon the page and caused the ink to spread.

Bob Cherry started as he saw it.

"Mother's been crying!" he muttered.

Was it bad news?

Billy Bunter came cautiously along the passage. Bob Cherry's stillness encouraged the fat junior, standing ready, however, to dodge if necessary.

"I say, Cherry!"

Bob Cherry did not answer; he did not even hear. He stood, with the letter in his hand, quite still.

"Cherry, old man, if you could lend me——"

Bob made a gesture, and the fat junior backed away. Then Bob read the letter. His healthy, ruddy face became paler and paler as he read, and a low sound as of pain came from his lips.

"Oh, father! Oh, dad—dad!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER
Lost!

HARRY WHARTON started as he came down the stairs.

That sharp, agonised exclamation fell suddenly upon his ears, and he looked round and saw Bob Cherry with the letter in his hand.

He ran towards Bob at once.

"Bob, what's the matter? What is it?"

Bob Cherry groaned.

That seemed to be, for the moment, the only reply he could make.

Harry Wharton, in alarm, grasped him by the arm.

"Bob, what is it? Bad news from home?"

"Yes," groaned Bob.

"Your mother?"

"The mater's all right."

"Thank goodness for that," said Harry Wharton. "But what's the matter, then?"

"My father!"

"I understood that he was gone back to India."

"Wrecked!" groaned Bob Cherry. "Wrecked in the Red Sea. The steamer went down on a reef, and there's only one survivor—chap who swam for four hours and was picked up. My pater's gone! Oh!"

And then Bob fairly broke down.

"Poor old Bob!"

Harry led the junior quietly into a window recess, and made him sit down. Billy Bunter blinked after them.

"I—I say, you fellows, wasn't there a postal-order in the letter?"

Wharton made so furious a gesture that Bunter jumped back in alarm and scuttled away. Wharton sat down beside Bob, his arm through Bob's.

"Poor old chap!" he said. "It's awful. But is it certain, Bob? Do you know for certain that your father's gone down?"

"Look at that!" said Bob.

He pointed out a tear-stained paragraph in the letter:

"So far as is known, there was only one survivor—a sailor who swam for four hours before he was picked up. But your father was a good swimmer, too, and I still hope that he may have succeeded in getting to the shore. He must be searched for, Bob, and found, if he is still living, though yet I do not know how."

"He may be still living, then," said Harry Wharton. "My dear old Bob, you can't give up hope yet."

Bob groaned.

"I remember he was a splendid swimmer," said Harry, "and if one man escaped by swimming another may have. Major Cherry would have as good a chance as anybody. If he succeeded in getting ashore ——"

"The shore of the Red Sea," muttered Bob. "Among black savages and dervishes—devils who would murder him as soon as look at him."

Wharton nodded slowly.

He could not help thinking that Major Cherry's chances of escape were very slim, but he wanted to comfort Bob.

"There's a chance yet, Bob," he said steadily. "And as your mater says, the major will have to be looked for."

"Yes, yes. But how?"

"Somehow. I don't know."

Bob Cherry's face set firmly.

"I'm going to look for him," he said.

"You, Bob?"

"Yes. There's nobody else to do it. I'm going to do it. I shall have to do it. If my father's still alive, I'm going to find him."

"But you can't get away!"

"I shall get away. I'll make mother ask the Head. I'm going to the Red Sea to search for my father," said Bob determinedly. "Why, old chap, he may be wrecked there on the coast, waiting to be found and taken off—waiting for somebody to come and help him. Do you think I could stick at Greyfriars while I thought that?"

"But——"

"I'm going—if I have to run away from school! But that's all right. I shall get leave all serene. I wish you could come with me, Harry!"

Harry Wharton's eyes sparkled.

"By Jove, Bob! Look here! We were planning a long excursion for the summer vac., and it's just on us now. Why shouldn't we have a run abroad instead of the run at home we were planning—say a run down to the Red Sea!"

"Good!"

"My uncle would take me there if I asked him, and our people couldn't have any fear of our going, with Colonel Wharton in charge of us," said Harry. "I know he'd do it, if I begged it of him—and he was a



Harry Wharton led Bob Cherry into a window recess, and made him sit down. "Poor old chap!" he said. "It's awful! But do you know for certain that your father's been drowned?" *(See Chapter 2.)*

friend of your father's too. They were in India together."

"Oh, Harry!"

"We'll settle it. Nugent and Bull can write to their people, and Marky, too, and we'll all go together."

Bob Cherry grasped his chum's hand.

"Oh, that would be splendid, Harry—splendid!"

"We'll settle it, then."

Bob Cherry rose to his feet.

"I—I think I'll go to my study for a bit," he said. "I feel quite rocky. I shall have to go home to-day, to see mother. She will want me. When can you see your uncle and ask him?"

"I'll see him to-day, too!"

"Jolly good!"

Bob Cherry moved away with slow steps. All the brightness, all the cheery elasticity, seemed to be gone from the lad.

The blow that had fallen upon him had crushed him for the time.

In his study Bob Cherry sat in silence, with his face in his hands, and the tears trickling through his fingers—tears that Bob's eyes were unaccustomed to shed.

THE THIRD CHAPTER
The Colonel Says "Yes."

THE news of Bob Cherry's misfortune won him a great deal of sympathy among the other fellows at Greyfriars. Bob was a general favourite, as he deserved to be; his

open, sunny nature made him liked by all. And his father, too, was well known at the old school.

Most of the fellows tried to encourage Bob to look upon the brighter side of the affair. It was quite possible that his father had got safely ashore, and might have been rescued by now, or possibly was still waiting on the African coast to be taken off.

And Bob, after the first terrible shock was over, made up his mind to hope for the best, in accordance with his sunny, hopeful nature.

The idea of searching for Bob Cherry's father under tropic suns appealed very strongly to the chums of the Remove Form.

They had been planning a caravan trip for the long vacation, but a voyage to the Red Sea in search of a shipwrecked man appealed to them much more strongly, if it could only be managed.

And Harry Wharton had little doubt of being able to persuade his uncle on the subject. Colonel Wharton was devoted to his nephew, as fond as his father could have been if his father had lived.

Bob went in to see the Head, and left Greyfriars within an hour after receiving the bad news. He was wanted at home now.

Harry Wharton talked the matter over in his study with Frank Nugent and John Bull and Mark Linley.

The three were keen enough upon the proposed expedition, and they had no doubt that their people would agree if Colonel Wharton was in charge of the party.

"It will be ripping," said Nugent enthusiastically. "Simply splendid! And we'll jolly well find Major Cherry, and bring him home in triumph."

"What-ho!" said John Bull.

"But it will be an expensive journey," said Mark Linley hesitatingly. "I—I think you had better leave me out, Wharton."

"Wouldn't you like to come?"

"Yes, of course. I want to stand by old Bob. But—well, you know how poor my people are. It's no good making any bones about the matter," said the scholarship boy frankly. "And so——"

"I'll fix that with my uncle," said Harry. "You needn't mind the colonel standing treat. He will do the same for all of us if we go. And you've simply got to come! You're Bob's best chum."

"I should like to immensely, of course," said the Lancashire lad, with a sigh.

"Then you shall, if we do."

"And I guess I'm coming, too," said a voice at the door; and Fisher T. Fish, the American junior, looked in, with his cool grin. "Excuse me, sirs. I guess I know what you're planning, and what you want to help you through is a chap about my size, with a clear American brain to think things out for you some."

"We'll be glad, if you can get leave," said Harry Wharton, with a smile.

"Oh, yes, rather! We shall be serious enough; and we want Fish to cheer us up," said Nugent. "He will be able to show us how everything ought not to be done, and ——"

"I guess I could give you some pointers, my sons," said Fisher T. Fish, in his airy way. "You bet! I guess I'm coming on this journey, and if the major's found, I guess I shall be the individual who will dig him up."

"Rats!"

"I guess you'll see."

"I'd better go and speak to the Head," said Harry Wharton. "It will be only beginning the summer vac. a week or two in advance really, and I don't see why he should mind. I'll ask him, anyway."

And Harry Wharton quitted the study, leaving the other fellows eagerly discussing the prospects of the journey.

Harry Wharton was feeling a little doubtful as he tapped at the door of the Head's study. But he was quite calm and cool as he entered in response to the "Come in!" in the deep tones of Dr. Locke.

"If you please, sir, may I have leave to go home and see my uncle," said Harry.

The Head raised his eyebrows.

"For what reason, Wharton?"

"You know about what's happened to Bob? Bob Cherry, I mean."

"Yes; I was very sorry to hear it," said the Head gravely. "I sincerely hope that Major Cherry still lives."

"He is going to be searched for, sir."

"That is an excellent thing."

"We—we were thinking of looking for him, sir."

Dr. Locke started, and stared at the junior, as well he might.

"You, Wharton?"

"Yes, sir," said Harry. "I, and Bob, Nugent and Bull, sir, Linley and Fish. If you would be kind enough to give us leave, sir, to get away from Greyfriars before the vac."

"You cannot be serious, Wharton. Even in the vacation your people would not allow mere boys to undertake such a journey."

"I think my uncle would take us, sir."

"Ah! That would alter the case, of course," said the Head. "But have you any reason to suppose that Colonel Wharton would undertake this journey?"

"I want to ask him, sir."

"And that is the reason why you wish to go home to-day?"

"Yes, sir."

The Head wrinkled his brows thoughtfully.

"Very well, Wharton. You can at least have leave to visit your uncle. If he should consent to take you on this journey, I shall discuss the matter with him."

"Thank you very much, sir."

And Wharton, ten minutes later, was walking down to the gates of Greyfriars, with Nugent and Linley and Bull and Fish to see him off.

"I kinder guess I ought to come with you, Wharton," Fisher T. Fish remarked as they stood on the platform of the old station of Friardale, waiting for the train to come in.

Wharton stared at the American youth.

"What the dickens for?" he demanded.

"To persuade the old gentleman. I could put it to him in a businesslike way, you know," explained Fisher T. Fish. "I guess I could make him cotton to the idea that he simply must come."

Harry Wharton smiled.

"I think I can do all that's necessary," he said. "Hallo, here's my train!"

The train came rolling in. Nugent opened a carriage door for his chum.

"I guess I had better come," said Fish.

"Rats!"

"I can talk to him like a Dutch uncle, you know. I can give him straight goods on the subject, and make him savvy."

"Bosh!"

"I'll talk to him in a businesslike way—the way we do over there," said Fisher T. Fish. "Over there" was the United States in Fisher T. Fish's peculiar language. "I can make him see it, you see. You may get left."

"Piffle!"

"Stand back there!" shouted the guard.

"Good-bye, Harry!"

"Get off there, Fish!"

Linley and Bull and Nugent made a grasp at the American junior. But the slim and elusive Yankee whipped into the carriage after Wharton. The train was moving. He grinned back at the astonished juniors on the platform.

"Jevver get left?" he inquired.

"You ass——"

"You fathead——"

"You chump——"

"Explain to the doctor that I had to go and take care of Wharton——"

But the rest of Fisher T. Fish's message was lost in the distance as the train rushed out of the station.

Harry Wharton leaned back in his seat and stared at the Yankee schoolboy.

"Well, of all the cheek!" he ejaculated.

Fisher T. Fish grinned.

"I guess it's all O.K.," he remarked. "You hear me talk to the old guy, and I'll ——"

"The what?"

"The old guy."

"If you are referring to my uncle as an old guy, you'll get a prize thick ear to take back to Greyfriars with you!" said Harry Wharton wrathfully.

"No offence," said Fisher T. Fish. "I guess I should have said the old gentleman."

"I guess you should, you howling ass!"

"But you hear me put it to him, that's all," said Fisher T. Fish confidently. "You'll hear the guy—I mean, you'll hear him say 'Yes.'"

"Rats!"

"I guess——"

"Br-r-r-r!"

The train rushed on. Fisher T. Fish put his feet up on the seat opposite him in the true American fashion, and chewed the end of a pencil till the train ran into the station at Wharton Magnus.

A quarter of an hour later the two juniors descended from a hack at the gates of Wharton Lodge. A tall, handsome gentleman with a white moustache was standing by the gate, talking to the lodgekeeper.

He swung round with an exclamation as the two juniors approached him.

"Harry!"

"Uncle!"

Colonel Wharton was evidently pleased to see Harry, and at the same time considerably surprised.

"But what are you doing here, Harry?" he asked. "Why are you away from Greyfriars?"

"I've come to ask you a big favour, uncle."

The colonel smiled.

"You know you can ask me anything in reason, Harry," he said, "and I know you too well to think that you would ask me anything out of reason."

"I guess you'll say yes, sir," said Fisher T. Fish. "I guess——"

"I hope you will say yes, sir," said Harry.

The colonel laughed.

"Yes," he said.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER
Bunter is Not Wanted!

HARRY WHARTON pressed his uncle's hand. "Thank you," he said—"thank you so much, uncle! But it's a big thing I'm going to ask, and you're at liberty to take the 'yes' back if you like, after I've told you."

"I guess the colonel won't do that," said Fisher T. Fish.

"It's about Bob Cherry," said Harry.

"Not in trouble, surely?" asked the colonel.

"Yes, uncle. His father's been wrecked in the Red Sea, on the way to India, and, so far as is known, only one chap survived the wreck. But Bob's mother hopes that the major may have got ashore somehow—he was a splendid swimmer, you know—for the sole known survivor was saved through being able to swim four hours in the water."

The colonel's brow clouded.

"Poor old Cherry! He was with me in the Khyber!" he exclaimed. "I am very sorry to hear this, Harry!"

"It's rotten for poor old Bob," said Harry. "He's awfully cut up by it. We were thinking, uncle——"

He paused.

"Yes, Harry?"

"We kinder guess that the major may still be flourishing out there somewhere on the African coast," Fisher T. Fish interjected. "We're thinking of going to look for him."

"Ahem!"

"That's it, uncle," said Harry Wharton eagerly. "You see, the major is very likely still alive—wrecked on a coast among savages and Arab dervishes. You were going to take all of us on a caravan trip for the summer vac. Will you take us on a cruise instead?"

"A cruise, Harry?" said the colonel, tugging thoughtfully at his white moustache.

"Yes, uncle; a cruise to the Red Sea."

"By Jove!"

"As for the expense, I shall have a lot of money when I'm twenty-one, you know, and I should like to pay for it," said Harry diffidently. "I know it will cost some money."

The colonel shook his head.

"That would not do, Harry. Besides, the money is not the point. If I could go, I could find the money easily enough. What does your headmaster say about it? I suppose you asked him first?"

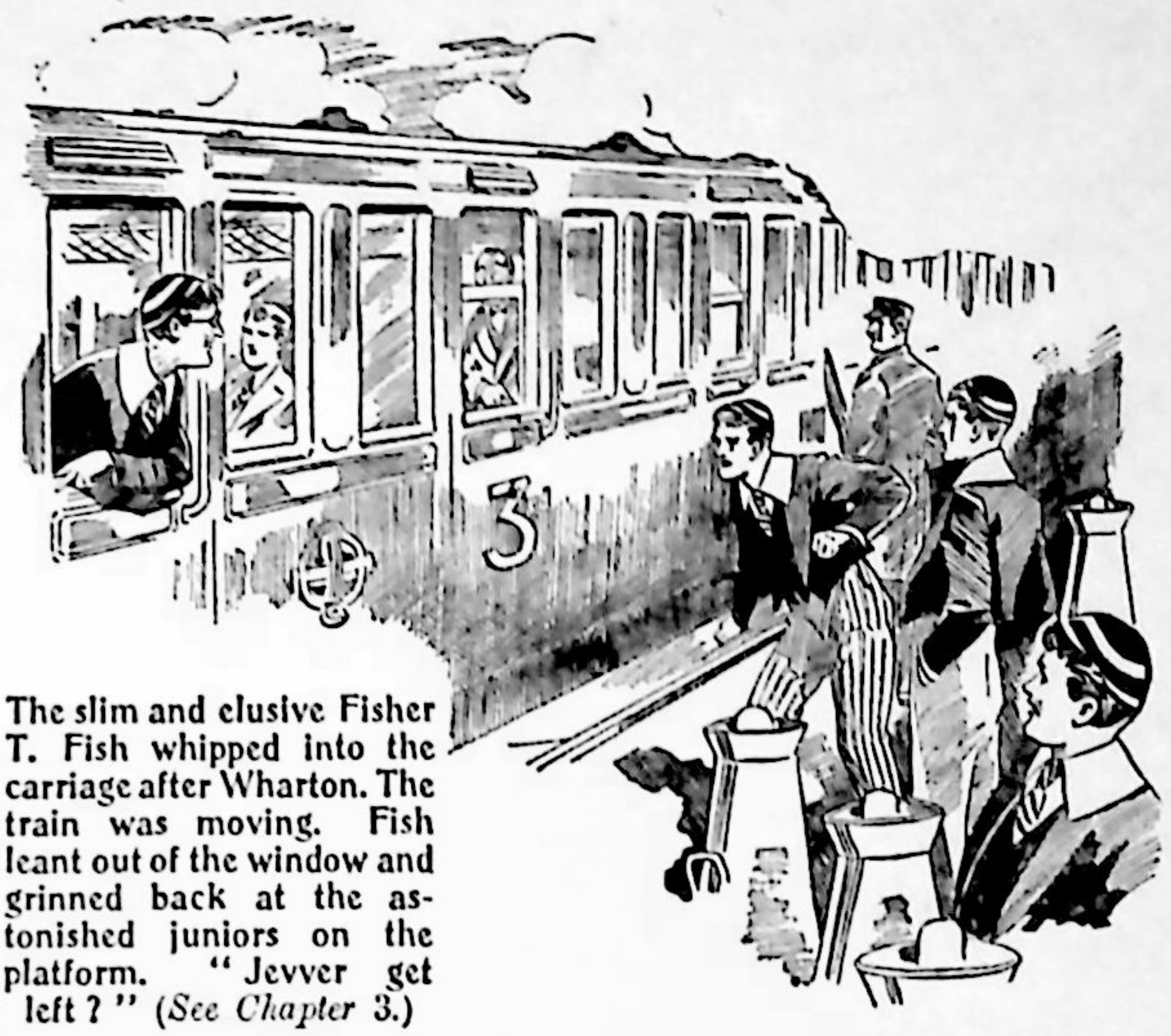
"Yes, uncle; and I think he will give his permission easily enough if he knows that you will take us."

The colonel nodded.

"Very well, Harry. I will think it over, at all events. A matter of this sort cannot be settled in a few minutes. I am sorry for the major, and I should be glad to do anything I could to help him if he is really cast away on the shores of the Red Sea."

"What did I tell you?" exclaimed Fisher T. Fish triumphantly. "Didn't I tell you he would be an old sport?"

"Thanks for your good opinion," said the colonel, smiling. "I hope I shall always be an old sport. Come into the house now and have some dinner, and we will talk it over."



The slim and elusive Fisher T. Fish whipped into the carriage after Wharton. The train was moving. Fish leant out of the window and grinned back at the astonished juniors on the platform. "Jevver get left?" (*See Chapter* 3.)

And over a cosy little dinner they discussed the matter. The more they discussed it, the more the colonel seemed to take to the idea, and it was not long before he decided to carry it out. Fisher T. Fish grinned at Harry Wharton over the table.

"I reckon I told you I should work the riffle," he said.

Harry stared.

"You!" he ejaculated.

"Yep!"

"It will be an excellent way of passing the summer vacation, instructive as well as amusing," said the colonel. "But if any good is to be done, we shall have to start immediately, and I shall come down to Greyfriars and ask the Head's consent for you boys to accompany me."

"Thank you so much, uncle!"

The colonel looked at his watch.

"I will come this evening," he said. "I can return with you. There will still be time for me to catch the last train for London, where I shall have to go to arrange about chartering a steamer."

Wharton's eyes glistened.

Even Fisher T. Fish, convinced as he was that nothing ever was done on this side of the Atlantic as it might be done on the other side, was impressed. The colonel certainly did not intend to allow the grass to grow under his feet.

"I guess your uncle's up to snuff, yep," Fisher T. Fish remarked as they walked back to the station. "I guess he's as hefty as an Amurrican when it comes to making things hum. What time does that train go?"

"Half-past seven."

"Better hustle, then, or we'll lose it. Sorry to hurry you, sir, but we shall lose the train if we don't hustle."

Colonel Wharton looked down at the slim and far from athletic American with a smile.

Fisher T. Fish prided himself upon his powers as a walker, but, as a matter of fact, there were Third Form fags at Greyfriars who could have walked away from him.

"Very well; let us walk faster," said Colonel Wharton.

And he stepped out with his soldier's

stride. Harry grinned and quickened his pace. Fisher T. Fish laboured after them, grunting. In about two minutes he dropped hopelessly behind.

"I guess we've got time enough now," he called out breathlessly.

Colonel Wharton and his nephew did not appear to hear. They strode on at the same rapid pace, and Fisher T. Fish broke into a run to keep up.

"I guess it's all right now!" he bawled.

But there was no reply, nor did they slacken their pace.

Fisher T. Fish was kept on the run until the little old station of Wharton Magnus was reached.

He was gasping for breath as he came into the station, and found the colonel and Harry lounging in a leisurely way on the platform.

"Hallo!" said Harry. "Did we leave you behind?"

Fish panted.

"Nope! I—I guess I was taking it easily," he jerked out.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, I'm not tired; I'm not out of b-b-breath. I'm all O.K."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wharton.

The train came in, and they were soon bowling back to Greyfriars. Colonel Wharton rang at the college gates when they reached the school, and Gosling, the porter, hushed his growl as he saw the tall figure outside. As the three crossed the old Close, a fat figure rolled out of the School House, and the starlight glimmered upon Billy Bunter's big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Buzz off, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! I only want to know, you know. Are you going on that expedish?"

"Yes."

"I guess we are, Bunty."

"Good!" exclaimed Billy Bunter. "I'll come with you."

"I guess not."

"Oh, really, Fish——"

"That you jolly well won't!" Harry Wharton exclaimed. "You're trouble enough here, Bunter. Buzz off!"

"Look here, Wharton," said Billy Bunter, taking hold of Harry's sleeve, and speaking in his most persuasive tones. "Look here——"

"Rats! Leggo!"

"It's simply imperative for me to come. You see, I shall be so useful. If there is any cooking to be done——"

"Rats!"

"Or eating," grinned Fisher T. Fish. "That's where Bunter could lend valuable assistance."

"Oh, really, you know—— Look here, Wharton, I simply must come. I don't see why I should stick to lessons while you chaps go off on blessed holidays. Look here—— Oh!"

Wharton jerked his arm away from the fat junior, and Fisher T. Fish gave him a gentle bump. Billy Bunter sat down in the Close and gasped, with a sound like escaping gas.

"Ow! Yow! Beasts!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton and Fish went on into the House. Billy Bunter sat and gasped, and his dulcet tones floated in after the two juniors.

"Beasts!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER
The Wrong Nose!

THE next few days were busy ones for the chums of Greyfriars.

It had been decided that they should go, and that the party should consist of six juniors—Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, John Bull, Mark Linley, and Fisher T. Fish.

Their Hindu chum, Hurree Singh, was absent from Greyfriars, on a visit to his native land.

The half-dozen juniors had plenty of preparations to make.

They were going on a voyage to a tropical clime, and into dangerous regions, and they had to go prepared.

In the matter of clothing the colonel's experience stood him in good stead. His advice was very valuable to the

juniors, and they did some shopping in London under his guidance, obtaining the maximum of value for the minimum of expenditure.

There was the question of arms to be considered, too, and there the colonel's help came in very useful. Harry Wharton was a good shot, and knew a great deal about guns; but the others did not. But they were greatly pleased with themselves when they saw the case of rifles and revolvers provided for them.

Nugent's eyes sparkled as he looked at the case.

"My hat!" he exclaimed. "This looks really like business at last. I wonder if we shall have to use these things?"

"Very likely," said Harry Wharton quietly. "We're going to the African shore of the Red Sea, and the natives there are savage enough—some of them cannibals, I believe. There are certainly cannibals farther inland, in the Sudan."

"By Jove!"

"We shall have to land, of course, to search for the major, and we may have fighting to do—perhaps every day," said Harry.

"Ripping!" said John Bull.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"We might get the worst of it," he suggested.

"Oh, rats!"

"Yep, rats," said Fisher T. Fish. "Eh? What do you think, Bob, old son?"

Bob Cherry started out of a reverie.

"Eh?" he said. "Why, I think I'll fight all North Africa, if necessary, to find my father!"

"Hear, hear!" said Mark Linley.

The colonel had chartered a steamer to take the party to the Red Sea. It was a great day for the Greyfriars juniors when they started.

Mrs. Cherry saw them off in the train for London.

The major's wife—or, perhaps, widow—was very calm and quiet, but the red on her eyelids showed of recent tears.

"Good-bye, ma'am!" said Harry Wharton as he shook hands with Bob's mother. "Good-bye! And never fear, we'll bring Bob back all right."

"And dad, too, mother," whispered Bob.

"God bless you, my boy," whispered Mrs. Cherry, "and grant, too, that you may find your father. Good-bye, my dear boys!"

And the juniors waved their hats as the train steamed out.

Bob Cherry sat in a corner and coughed. Like many boys of really deep feeling, he felt a curious shame about showing his emotions. The train rushed on towards London, and Bob Cherry coughed in his corner and blinked.

"How the wind blows in!" he grunted, rubbing his eyes. "Makes a fellow's eyes water."

"Yes, doesn't it?" agreed Harry.

"I guess you'd better change with me, and have your back to the engine, sonny," said Fisher T. Fish sympathetically.

"Never mind; I'm all right."

And Bob Cherry plunged his face into a newspaper, and appeared to be reading for the next half-hour; but as he was holding the paper upside down, it is highly improbable that he read any of it.

The colonel and his companions alighted from the train in London, and they proceeded at once to the steamer.

It was a little craft, and did not look a very handsome vessel; but it was fast and well built.

The captain, a short, thick-set man, with a red beard, called Captain Coke, was presented to the juniors, and he greeted them in a deep voice that seemed to echo from the depths of his huge beard.

The boys were shown to their quarters on the steamer. They found them confined enough as to space, but clean and comfortable.

"I guess we can manage here," Fisher T. Fish remarked. "Of course, perhaps this isn't exactly as we should do it over there."

"Oh, cheese it, Fishy!"

"I guess——"

"Shut up!" roared the juniors.

And the American grinned and shut up.

The six juniors occupied three state-rooms

adjoining one another, each containing two bunks. There was room for the cabin trunks they had brought, and room for them to move. And more than that, as Frank Nugent remarked philosophically, they really could not expect.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER
All Alike!

"HERE we are—at sea!"

Harry Wharton uttered the exclamation as he came up on the deck of the steamer. The Thames, with its busy shipping, its thousands of masts and funnels, had been left behind.

Away out of the great estuary of the Thames the steamer was gliding, leaving behind a black track of smoke against the sunny sky.

The weather was beautiful, the sea softly rippling and gleaming in the rays of the summer sun.

Overhead the sky was blue, and skylarks skimmed to and fro upon the broad expanse. It was a cheerful and inspiriting sight.

It was a great change, too, for the juniors of Greyfriars. Much as they loved the old school, much as they loved the grey old walls and ivied windows, they were glad to be upon the blue sea, to be sailing for new and strange lands.

"I guess this is all right," Fisher T. Fish remarked, leaning gracefully upon the rail, with one foot stretched out behind him.

"I guess we shall enjoy this trip—some."

"I guess so," said Frank Nugent, with a smile.

"I hope you chaps ain't seasick."

"I'm not," said Harry.

"I guess you'll all knock under as soon as we get to the Channel," said Fisher T. Fish, with a grin. "You'll be crawling all over the deck, I guess. Of course, I shall not feel it a bit. I'm an old sailor."

"Weren't you sick crossing from New York?" asked Mark Linley.

The American youth did not appear to hear the question.

"The old tub will begin to roll as soon as we get into the Channel," he said. "I suppose we have to go through the Channel?"

"Yes, rather—and then through the Bay of Biscay," said Harry.

Nugent gave a groan of comic apprehension.

"The Bay of Biscay! My hat! That will give us a twist, unless we've got on our sea-legs by that time."

"I guess I shall be all O.K."

"I guess you will, if swank can do it," said John Bull.

It was a sunny afternoon as the steamer plunged into the chops of the Channel. The weather was not at all rough, but the sea was rolling very much past the cliffs of Dover. Frank Nugent sat on a seat on the deck, and fell very silent. Bob Cherry appeared to be thinking something out very deeply.

Fisher T. Fish looked at them and grinned.

"I guess I'm getting hungry," he remarked.

John Bull gave a start.

"Hungry!" he exclaimed.

"I guess so!"

"You ass! You won't think of eating anything now!"

"I guess I'm an old sailor, and I can eat when I like," said Fisher T. Fish serenely. "You don't think the forecastle hands miss their meals going to sea, do you?"

"No; but——"

"I guess I'll have some tommy. Shall I bring you some? The cook's keeping open house for us, you know, by the colonel's orders."

"None for me, thanks."

"Shall I bring you something, Nugent?"

Nugent grunted.

"No."

"Not a little bit of fat pork, or—— Oh!"

Nugent plunged forward to the rail, and leaned over it in anguish. The mention of fat pork had been the finishing touch.

"Oh! Groo!" groaned Nugent.

"Poor old chap!" said Fisher T. Fish commiseratingly. "I say, Bob, shall I get you some fat bacon, or some blanc-mange?"



Colonel Wharton and his nephew strode to the station at a rapid pace, and Fisher T. Fish laboured after them. "I guess we've got time enough now," he called out breathlessly. But they did not appear to hear, nor did they slacken their pace. (*See Chapter* 4.)

"Buzz off, you beast!" said Bob Cherry faintly.

"Shall I get you some fried fish, or——"

Bob Cherry made a feeble blow at the American youth, who grinned and dodged, and then Bob joined Frank at the rail.

"I guess I'll go and get my own grub, then," said Fisher T. Fish. "Sure there's nothing I can do for you fellows?"

The fellows made no reply, and the American junior swung below. He came up a few minutes later with a can of hot coffee in one hand and a shrimp sandwich in the other. He grinned serenely at the Greyfriars juniors, who were all feeling inclined for anything but eating at that moment.

"Have some of this coffee, Wharton?"

"No, thanks."

"Have a bit of my shrimp sandwich, Bull?"

"No, hang you!"

Bull's reply was a little less polite than Harry Wharton's. But the junior from New York only grinned.

"I guess a shrimp sandwich is all O.K.," he said. "Better have one; it will buck you up. Take my tip."

"Groo!"

"What's the matter with you, Bob?"

"Gerrooh!"

"I guess you chaps ought to have stayed ashore. I say, Bull, you're looking rather seedy. Have some bloater-paste to buck you up."

"Gruh!" gasped Johnny Bull, and he rushed to the side.

The American grinned.

"How are you feeling, Linley?"

"I am all right," he said.

"I guess you're an old sailor, eh?"

"I spent a lot of time on the Mersey and the Irish Sea once," said the Lancashire lad quietly. "I'm seasoned."

"You all right, Wharton?"

"Don't talk to me."

"Why not?"

"Groo!"

"Poor chap! Have some coffee?"

"Gruh!"

"Have some grub?"

"Oh, shut up!"

The steamer was rolling and pitching now in the chops of the Channel, and Harry Wharton joined his comrades at the rail.

Mark Linley was quite composed, and he fetched glasses of water for his afflicted chums, and ministered to them, while Fisher T. Fish drank his coffee and ate his shrimp sandwich with an air of great serenity.

But, as a matter of fact, Fisher T. Fish's serenity was being undermined.

He did not finish that shrimp sandwich. About half-way through it he tossed what was left over the rail into the sea, with a careless sort of air.

Then he was observed to place the cup of coffee on the deck, not more than half consumed.

Mark Linley looked at him, and he could not help grinning. A peculiar shade of colour was creeping over the face of the American junior.

"Feeling all right, Fishy?" asked Mark.

"Yep."

"Not getting at all rocky?"

"Nope."

"I'm so glad. Shall I fetch you anything to eat?" asked Linley, with a grin.

Fisher T. Fish made a sort of gulp.

"I guess I've had enough for the present," he remarked. "Change of air affects my appetite, you know. and I—I don't feel hungry now."

Bob Cherry turned a colourless face from the rail.

"Won't you have some fat pork?" he groaned.

"Oh, ring off!"

"Or a chunk of fat bacon with plenty of grease?"

"Ow!"

John Bull was sitting down, in a state of intense misery. But a ghostly grin stole over his face as he saw the expression of Fisher T. Fish.

"He's got it, too!" he gasped.

"Oh, good!"

"Rot!" said Fisher T. Fish, in a feeble voice. "I haven't got it. I'm an old sailor, I guess—some."

"I'm jolly glad you've got it," said John Bull, "and, to judge by the look of you, you'll have it worse than we do."

"Nope."

"Shrimp sandwiches aren't good for sea-sickness," said John Bull, with fiendish glee. "You'll be rolling on the deck in a minute."

"I guess—— Ow! Oh! Oooch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow!"

"Ha, ha—— Groooooch!"

John Bull's laugh ended in a gurgling groan, and he hurried to the side. Fisher T. Fish sat down on the bench and moaned.

It had been out of sheer bravado that he had taken the coffee and the shrimp sandwich. He was sorry for it now. His swank had cost him dear. As a matter of fact, he was far worse a sailor than any of the others.

Colonel Wharton came along the deck, and he looked at the juniors with great commiseration. The rolling of the steamer made no difference to the tough old soldier.

"I'm sorry you're feeling bad, my lads," he said.

"I guess I'm all O.K.," groaned Fisher T. Fish.

"You don't feel it?"

"Nope."

"Then your looks are very deceptive," said the colonel drily.

"I guess—— Oh!"

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing, I guess."

"Oh!" moaned Nugent. "Oh! This is terrific, as old Inky used to say! Ow! I'm jolly glad Fishy has got it too, though."

"Nope. I—— Oh!"

Fisher T. Fish stopped short in his denial, and fairly laid down on the deck, and was terribly sick. And for the next two or three hours Fisher T. Fish hardly moved, and made no sound excepting to emit a groan.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER
Left!

By the time the Hope was through the Channel the Greyfriars juniors had got on their sea-legs, as a sailor would say, and the terrible mal-de-mer no longer assailed them. Fisher T. Fish was the last to recover; and even when the steamer ran past Ushant, the American junior was still feeling considerably uneasy inside. The other fellows were very much inclined to chip him on the subject after the swank he had started with, but he looked so yellow and miserable that they had not the heart to do so. All his swank was gone for the present, which was a great comfort, though it was pretty certain to return as soon as the American junior felt recovered.

Ushant disappeared to port, and the bows of the steamer plunged into the troubled waters of the Bay of Biscay.

The dreaded Bay was smiling to the view, but long ere Cape Finisterre came into sight, the sea was rolling under a gale, and the Hope rolled and plunged more terribly than in the chops of the Channel.

Then came the second attack, and the Greyfriars juniors moaned and said things about the Bay of Biscay which were not complimentary.

But all things come to an end, and the steamer ran on into calmer and sunnier waters, and the mountains of Portugal loomed up through sunshine and blue.

"This is ripping!" Frank Nugent remarked one morning as he came on deck. "Beats caravaning at home, eh?"

"I guess so," said Fisher T. Fish, "but it doesn't beat coaching on the Hudson over there, though."

"Oh, blow over there!"

"I guess——"

"Fishy's recovered," said Mark Linley with a grin. "We shall have swank without end now that he's got over the sickness."

The American gave a sniff.

"I guess I wasn't really sick," he remarked, with uncommon nerve. "I was feeling a little seedy, that's all, after that shrimp sandwich. My opinion is that the shrimps were high. I'm a jolly good sailor, and——"

"Rats!"

"And I've practically never been sick ——"

There was a shout of protest from the juniors.

After the exhibition Fisher T. Fish had made of himself in the Bay of Biscay, rolling on the deck or moaning in his bunk for hours together, this was really a little too cool.

"Shut up!"

"Cheese it!"

"Ring off!"

"I guess——" began Fisher T. Fish.

"Of all the cheek!" exclaimed Harry Wharton indignantly. "When you're as yellow as a guinea at the present moment, and you've made more fuss than the lot of us put together!"

"Nope! I——"

"Oh, bump him!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Good egg!"

The juniors made a rush at Fisher T. Fish. The American junior made a rush in his turn for the companion-way, and bolted down the stairs. There was a roar from the direction of the cabin ladder and the sound of a heavy bump.

"My hat!" roared Frank Nugent. "The ass! Who's he knocked down?"

A deep voice answered the question.

"You clumsy swab!"

"Captain Coke! The skipper, by Jove!" gasped Wharton.

The juniors ran to look down after Fisher T. Fish.

Captain Coke was just picking himself up at the bottom of the steps, and Fisher T. Fish still lay gasping on the floor. The expression upon the thickly-bearded face of the skipper showed that he was very angry.

"You silly swab!" he exclaimed. "You clumsy lubber!"

"I guess——"

"You tumbling lubber!"

"I guess I'm sorry!"

The skipper growled and tramped on deck. Fisher T. Fish rose to his feet, looking considerably dazed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fisher T. Fish looked up at the grinning faces above.

"Ow!" he grunted. "Ow! I'm hurt!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Nugent. "Jevver get left?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Fisher T. Fish limped away without replying.

The steamer rounded the coast of Portugal, and stopped at the Spanish coast, at Cadiz, for a few hours, and then ran on swiftly through the Straits of Gibraltar.

As the steamer rushed on into the Mediterranean, the juniors had a glimpse of Gibraltar, that wonderful fortress won by British pluck, held by British fortitude, and now the guardian of the entrance of the Mediterranean Sea.

"There's Gib.!" said Harry Wharton. "I'd like to land there, if we had time; but we haven't!"

Bob Cherry nodded.

He, too, would have been glad to explore the famous Rock, but he was anxious to get to the scene of his father's shipwreck and commence the search for him.

All Bob Cherry's thoughts now were of his father, and somehow, as the steamer ran on into Southern waters, Bob's hopes of finding his father alive rose and grew stronger. In his mind's eye he could see his father on the rocky coast, in tattered attire, looking out to sea, waiting for the vessel that was to rescue him.

"And we jolly well will save him," said Bob Cherry, pursuing his unspoken thought aloud. "I'm not going back without him, or else without proof that it's all over!"

"And we'll stick to you, Bob," said John Bull.

"I guess so! But you leave it to me—I'll find him," said Fisher T. Fish. "You rely on the hoss-sense of a fellow from over there."

To which all the juniors replied with remarkable unanimity:

"Rats!"

Colonel Wharton came on deck with a cardboard target in his hand, and a seaman brought up half a dozen rifles. The juniors gathered round the old soldier at once.

"We're going to have some shooting practice, sir?" asked Bob.

The colonel nodded.

"That's it, my lad. We may have to use our firearms on the coast when we get there, and you need practice. I hope, of course, that there will be no fighting; but you can never tell, and the best way to avoid a fight is to be ready for one."

"Yes, rather, sir."

Fisher T. Fish picked up one of the rifles. The way he held it showed that he had handled a gun before, but whether he could use it to any purpose was another question. The American junior had certainly told the fellows that he was a dead shot, but he had told them many other things that they did not quite believe.

"I guess I could account for a good many of the beggars with this gun," Fisher T. Fish remarked, looking round for admiration. "You should have seen the way I shot buffaloes over there."

"In New York?" grinned John Bull.

"Yep—I mean nope. On the prairies," said Fish vaguely. "I'm a dead shot! I guess I could show you chaps something in shooting!"

"Go it, then."

Colonel Wharton laughed.

"You shall begin, then," he said. "Put up the target, Hanson."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

The deck was cleared for a space for the target shooting. All the juniors knew how to load their rifles, but with the exception of Harry Wharton they were little given to shooting straight. Fisher T. Fish put the rifle to his shoulder, and glanced along the barrel.

"It might be a good idea to put the sights correctly before firing," the colonel suggested quietly.

"I guess so," said Fisher T. Fish, unabashed.

Bang!

"I guess that's a bullseye."

The target was large enough, and it was at no great range. But it did not show a sign of having been touched. Even on the outermost rim of it Fisher T. Fish's bullet had made no mark.

There was a chuckle from the juniors and from the seamen looking on. Fisher T. Fish's bullet had whizzed away to sea, at least a yard from the rim of the target.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess my hand's out a little," said Fisher T. Fish. "You watch me, that's all."

"Ha, ha, ha! We're watching you."

"Go it, Fishy!"

Bang!

No mark on the target!



Fisher T. Fish, eager to escape the juniors, bolted down the stairs. There was a roar from the direction of the cabin ladder and the sound of a heavy bump. "My hat!" said Frank Nugent. "He's knocked down Captain Coke!"
(*See Chapter* 7.)

Bang! Bang!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Say," exclaimed Fisher T. Fish, "I guess these ain't blank cartridges any mistake, are they?"

The colonel burst into a laugh.

"No, they are not blank," he said.

"Then what's the matter?"

"The matter is that you cannot shoot, I suppose."

"I guess——"

"Oh, shut up, Fishy!" said Harry Wharton. "You can't shoot for toffee! Cheese it, and take a back seat."

"I guess——"

"Rats!"

And Fisher T. Fish was gently pushed aside, and the other juniors joined in the rifle practice, and ere long the target was spotted over with holes. Harry Wharton succeeded in getting bullseyes twice in three

shots, and the rest succeeded in putting their lead somewhere near the mark; but Fisher T. Fish, try as he would, could not hit the target at all.

He threw down his rifle at last.

"I guess I can't get on to the hang of these English rifles," he said. "But you should have seen me at shooting over there."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess I don't see where the cackle comes in."

"But we do," grinned Nugent. "Hear us grin! Ha, ha, ha!"

And the juniors grinned loudly.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER
Danger!

SUNNY skies and sunny seas!

The Hope steamed on through the calm waters of the Mediterranean, between coasts famed in song and story. On the right, Africa, Morocco, Algeria, Tunis, Tripoli, in quick succession. On the left, Sardinia and Sicily, and then Greece and the Isles of Greece and Crete. The succession of romantic names was dazzling to the minds of the Greyfriars juniors.

Bob Cherry looked away to port one morning towards the distant mountains of Greece and drew a deep breath.

"And that's where old Homer actually trotted round when he was alive!" he said. "My hat! How I'd like to go there!"

And Mark Linley looked away towards distant Greece with a longing eye. Mark, the scholarship boy, the fellow who had worked in a factory before he had won his scholarship to Greyfriars, was the only fellow there who read Homer as if the Greek were English, and to him Greece meant more than it meant to the others.

"We'll go there some day, Bob," he said.

"Yes, rather!"

"I guess we're going to stick to bizney now, though," said Fisher T. Fish. "Achilles and his giddy wrath cut no ice with me, I can tell you. So don't you begin with 'Menin aeide Thea,' please, Marky."

Mark Linley laughed.

"I wasn't going to," he said.

"Good! We shall be at Port Said soon," said Fisher T. Fish. "I hope we shall get a run ashore there. People say that it's the wickedest hole on the face of the earth. Worth seeing, I guess."

"Rats!"

Fisher T. Fish was disappointed. The juniors were not allowed ashore at Port Said, which was probably all the better for them. The steamer glided on through the Suez Canal, which the juniors viewed with breathless interest, and then the waters of the Red Sea were round her keel.

The Red Sea!

The mere name of it had a thousand associations. The juniors thought of the ages ago, when Pharaoh and his host were overwhelmed in the waters of that sea—that sea upon which their eyes now actually rested.

"Here we are!" said Bob Cherry, in a low voice.

"The Red Sea at last!"

"Yes," said Colonel Wharton quietly; "and here is where our quest begins."

It was blazing with heat. Overhead, in a sky of steely blue, the sun was like a ball of fire, and the vertical rays came down on the deck and blistered it.

The juniors were clad now in their thinnest garments, with broad, shady hats upon their heads, and they panted with the heat and the breathlessness.

"Warm, ain't it?" said Fisher T. Fish, as the steamer glided through glassy waters.

"My hat! Talk about furnaces!"

"I'm about done all over, I think," Nugent said faintly. "I can feel my skin frizzling."

Colonel Wharton was consulting with Captain Coke now. He wanted to bring the steamer to the exact spot, so near as it was known, where the shipwreck had taken place. The vessel taking Major Cherry out to India had been driven upon a reef in a sudden squall, and Captain Coke was confident that he could find the spot, from the information he had received from the survivor of the wreck.

"It's in the loneliest part of a lonely coast, sir," he said. "I believe I know just

where to look for it, but we shall have to be careful of the steamer."

"I leave it in your hands, captain."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

Bob Cherry approached the colonel as he came down from the bridge. Bob's face was very eager.

"Are we getting near now, sir?" he asked.

"Yes, my lad"

Bob Cherry's eyes glistened.

"Then we're really going to begin the search at last?" he asked.

"Yes. We shall be on the exact spot where your father's vessel was wrecked this afternoon, according to our skipper"

"Oh, good, sir!"

"And from there we shall steam directly to the shore, and our search begins for the major."

"Thank you, sir!"

The steamer glided on through shining waters.

At first, many sails and many funnels had been in sight, but now the steamer was drawing towards the African coast, out of the track of ships.

Only a sail or two of an Arab dhow, going to or from Massawah, broke the blue of the sea.

The juniors were looking out eagerly.

A rocky, barren shore, with dark woods inland, came up from the sea, and they were looking upon Africa.

Here the waters were curling over many a sunken reef, with long white lines of foam, and the pace of the steamer dropped to almost a crawl.

There was a dead calm on the sea; the water was glassy. Had the Hope been a sailing vessel she would have been becalmed, motionless upon the motionless waters.

But the engines were throbbing, and the steamer crawled on through dangerous channels, amid grim, bristling reefs.

The juniors watched the sea breathlessly.

It needed only a little miscalculation on the part of the navigator for the vessel to run upon some sharp fang of rock, and to go to the bottom—as always in the life of a sailor, in the midst of life they were in death.

Wrecked on that desolate coast, in an open boat under the blazing sun, their lot would not be an enviable one.

But the juniors were not thinking of the danger.

All their thoughts were in the quest, in finding the spot where the major had been wrecked, and then seeking him on the nearest land.

It was with a thrill that the juniors saw firearms served out to the seamen of the steamer.

Piracy in the Red Sea—a very flourishing concern not so very long ago—has been stamped out by the British Navy. But in odd corners of that lawless region, sailormen know that unarmed vessels sometimes pay toll to savage Arabs, half traders and half robbers, who infest the coast in their swift dhows. It was necessary to be careful.

The juniors received their rifles with the rest. Daily practice at the target on deck during the voyage had made them all proficient, with the exception of Fisher T. Fish. It seemed unlikely that the American junior would ever be able to shoot straight, though he was never tired of relating the exploits he had performed "over there" with all kinds of firearms.

The juniors put on their bandoliers and loaded their rifles, and watched the sea.

John Bull had a pair of binoculars swung over his shoulder, and he raised them several times and scanned the water eastward.

"I guess you're looking in the wrong direction, Johnny," said Fisher T. Fish. "The wreck was towards the African coast, and you're looking towards Arabia, sonny."

"I wasn't looking for the wreck, my son."

"Then what the——"

"I was looking at that vessel," said John Bull quietly. "It's been following us for more than an hour—ever since we slackened down speed among the reefs, in fact."

"My hat!"

The juniors followed John Bull's glance. Eastward on the sea loomed up a large Arab dhow, and in the blazing sunlight they could see the dark faces and the white garments of her crew. For a vessel of her

size, the crew seemed very numerous, and in the sun-blaze the juniors were certain they caught a flash and glitter here and there of bright steel.

"By Jove!" said Harry Wharton.

"I believe the beggars mean mischief," said John Bull quietly. "If they don't, what are they following us for?"

"Not to help us, anyway."

"No fear!"

"I'll speak to my uncle."

Harry Wharton crossed over to the colonel, who was standing by the rail, watching the curling sea ahead, and looking away towards dim Africa. Harry touched the old soldier on the arm.

"Uncle!"

The colonel glanced down at him.

"What is it, Harry?"

"Will you look at that craft? Bull says she has been following us for an hour. I didn't notice it before."

Colonel Wharton started.

"By Jove!"

He joined the captain hurriedly on the bridge.

THE NINTH CHAPTER
Arab Pirates!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. looked away anxiously towards the dhow. The craft had been creeping on, on the track of the steamer, like some wild animal cautiously following its prey. But now its speed was increasing, as if it were sure.

Captain Coke knitted his grizzled brows as he looked at the dhow. Colonel Wharton read his expression aright.

"You think they mean mischief?" he asked.

The skipper nodded.

"Ay, ay, sir."

"But a steamer could soon show a clean pair of heels to any sailing vessel, in case of necessity," the colonel remarked.

"Not in this case, sir," said Captain Coke, with a shake of the head. "You see, those scoundrels know this coast better than I do, and they think they've got us into a trap."

"A trap! In what way?"

"We're right among the reefs now, and going at a crawl. We can't put on steam, sir, without staving in our timbers on the reefs, and they know it well."

The colonel tugged at his grey moustache.

"Then we cannot run."

"Impossible!"

"Then if they mean mischief——"

"They can attack us if they like," said the skipper quietly.

"And you think——"

"I think they will like."

"By Jove!"

The colonel looked towards the Arab dhow again. It was ranging up closer and closer to the steamer.

The Arabs were crowding the deck now. The glimmer of steel was to be plainly seen.

Firearms, probably, the brown rascals had few or none; but they had knives or scimitars in abundance. If they should get to close quarters, they would be terribly dangerous foes to tackle.

And that they meant mischief there could be little doubt now. They were near enough for the brown, malignant faces, the drawn lips and shining teeth, to be clearly seen.

They were going to attack!

The juniors could see it, too. Their hearts beat faster as they grasped their rifles.

Harry Wharton & Co. seemed likely to have to fight for their lives, and to depend for their safety upon nothing but their own pluck and strength.

The colonel lowered his voice as he spoke again. There was nothing like fear in the heart of the old soldier; he was thinking of the boys whom he had brought from Greyfriars into this terrible peril.

"They are coming for us?" he muttered.

"Ay, ay!"

"And if they board us——"

Captain Coke smiled grimly.

"If they once get aboard, sir, they'll get the better of us by numbers. There are two-score of them at least."

"And if they beat us——"

"They will murder every mother's son on the ship, and then sink her after they've taken away everything valuable. They

won't leave anybody alive to bring down a British cruiser upon them."

"The hounds!"

Captain Coke shrugged his shoulders.

"These fellows were slavers and pirates till our cruisers stopped them," he said. "They've changed their ways, but not their natures. They're all ready to break out again at a moment's notice."

"I suppose so."

"But they won't get aboard," said the captain grimly. "We have fifteen hands, including the boys, and most of them know how to shoot. I'll hail the scum yonder through the megaphone, and warn them off."

"Good!"

The captain's hail rang over the rapidly lessening space between the two vessels.

"Ahoy! Ahoy, there!"

There was no reply from the dhow.

But the vessel crept on steadily, her side lined with dark, savage faces and glittering eyes, faces and eyes of men who looked like wild beasts about to spring.

Harry Wharton gritted his teeth.

"They're coming for us," he said tensely.

"I guess so."



Captain Coke set his lips. Once more he bawled through the megaphone, "Keep off, or we fire!" An incomprehensible yell from the pirates answered and still the dhow came on. (*See Chapter* 9.)

"Load!" rang out Colonel Wharton's voice.

Again the captain hailed the dhow.

"Ahoy! Keep off, or we shall shoot!"

A jabbering in strange tongues, a sound of mocking, cruel laughter. Savage faces grinned from the dhow, and weapons were openly displayed now. There was no

further disguise about the Arabs. Slavers in old times, traders and robbers as chance offered, they were pirates now, prepared for any savage and desperate work.

Captain Coke set his lips.

Once more he bawled through the megaphone.

"Keep off, or we fire!"

A yell from the dhow answered.

The words were incomprehensible, but the meaning was clear—the meaning was robbery, murder! That was clear enough.

The dhow was not fifty yards distant now. The Arabs were standing ready to spring aboard the steamer; some of them had placed their knives in their teeth, to leave their hands free till they should be aboard.

Captain Coke glanced down along the deck.

"Fire!" he said.

Crack! crack! crack!

A blaze of rifle-fire burst from the deck of the steamer.

It crashed into the crowded Arabs on the dhow like hail.

There was a fearful yell from the crowd of brown-faced savages.

Men fell right and left, shrieking and groaning.

Colonel Wharton's eyes gleamed. To the old soldier, the crack of a rifle was a sound of music. Like an old war-horse, the sniff of battle was delightful to him.

"Fire!" he shouted. "Give it them well!"

Crack-ack-ack-ack!

The magazine rifles poured out a deadly hail of lead.

It swept through and through the crowd of savage Arabs, bowling them over like ninepins.

Wounded men sprawled over the dhow, shrieking and screaming, and louder yells of rage broke from those who were not hit.

The juniors were firing with the rest.

Which of the shots went home and which did not it was impossible to tell. Many missed, and many found billets in savage breasts.

It was no time to think of squeamish mercy. Life itself was at stake; it was life they were fighting for.

Crack-ack-ack!

And still the dhow glided on.

Bump!

For a moment the vessels touched, and ere they receded apart a brawny Arab leaped on the deck of the steamer.

The vessels separated, and two or three following Arabs dropped into the sea between. The rifles still blazed away at the dhow.

The single Arab stood on the steamer's deck, panting, a long, gleaming scimitar in his hand. With savage face, he rushed right at the juniors who were nearest to him.

Crack!

It was a revolver in Colonel Wharton's hand that rang out.

The ruffian gave a convulsive leap, and spun round, and crashed down upon the deck.

He did not move again.

Harry Wharton drew a deep, deep breath. The scimitar had been within three feet of him when his uncle shot the ruffian down.

Crack—crack—crack—crack!

The rifles were yet ringing out, but the dhow was not coming on now. The pirates had had enough of it, and they were sheering off.

Like a frightened animal, the Arab craft fled before the wind, a savage yell ringing back from her ferocious crew as she went.

From the British seamen and the Greyfriars juniors a loud hurrah answered. They had won!

"Hurrah! Hurrah!"

THE TENTH CHAPTER

A Clue at Last!

COLONEL WHARTON stepped towards the fallen Arab on the deck of the steamer. He was the only man who had gained a footing there, and he had fallen to the colonel's revolver. But the man was not dead. As the colonel stopped beside him, the dusky ruffian stirred, and his wild, dark eyes opened.

Hate and rage blazed in them as they rested upon the white man.

Colonel Wharton stooped and disarmed

the man. He caught up the scimitar and tossed it over the rail into the sea. Then he dragged a knife and a revolver from the ruffian's sash.

The Arab groaned.

The knife the colonel tossed aside, but the revolver he retained in his hand It excited his interest. It was not, properly speaking, a revolver, but a repeating pistol of the most modern manufacture, and certainly a most surprising weapon to find in the possession of an Arab in the Red Sea.

"That has belonged to some European quite lately, sir," Captain Coke remarked.

Colonel Wharton nodded.

"Yes, I was thinking so. Someone whom this scoundrel has robbed, I suppose."

The pirate groaned again.

"Make him tell you, sir," said Bob Cherry eagerly. "Do you mind letting me see the pistol closely, sir?"

"By all means. But why?"

"It's a Browning, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"My father had a pair of Browning pistols with him," said Bob Cherry. "I saw him practising with them a lot of times last vacation, sir. They were exactly that make, and it occurred to me just now——"

He paused.

"My hat!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, with great interest. "Was there any mark on your dad's pistols, Bob?"

"Yes; his initials, cut in the stock."

"We shall soon see as to that," said Colonel Wharton.

He turned the butt of the pistol up to view. A sharp cry escaped from Bob Cherry, and it was echoed from the rest.

There, in the butt, were the engraved initials—"R. C."

"Robert Cherry!" ejaculated Harry Wharton.

Bob's eyes blazed with excitement.

"It's one of my father's pistols!" he exclaimed. "Then dad can't have gone down, or it would have gone down with him. That villain must have taken it from my father while he was still living."

"Hurrah!" shouted John Bull.

"Quite right, I think," said the colonel slowly. He did not add the thought that came at once into his mind—the Arab pirate was hardly likely to have robbed the major without doing him further harm. He would not discourage the boy. "We'll get the truth from this scoundrel, anyway."

"Can he speak English, sir?"

"We shall see."

The wounded pirate was glaring savagely at the Englishmen. His face was covered with blood from his wound, where the bullet had ploughed along his skull and stunned him. He was recovering fast now, but he was unarmed, and at the mercy of the white men.

"Do you speak English?" exclaimed the colonel.

The man shook his head.

"I dare say he could if he liked, sir," said Captain Coke. "But it's no matter. I can talk his lingo, and I'll translate for the swab, if you like."

"Thank you, captain."

Coke turned to the wounded Arab and jabbered to him in a tongue incomprehensible to the juniors. The Arab shook his head savagely.

The captain smiled grimly.

"He refuses to reply, sir," he said, "but we'll soon alter that. Hanson, run a noose round the swab's neck."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

The juniors looked quickly at one another, but they did not think of interfering. They left Colonel Wharton to do that if he chose, and the bronzed colonel made no movement.

The seaman ran the noose round the neck of the Arab. The man's dusky face went a chalky white.

He jabbered again in his own tongue.

"He's coming round!" said Captain Coke grimly.

He spoke again in Arabic.

Then a stream of rapid talk fell from the lips of the Arab, the skipper of the steamer listening with a grim face.

"What does he say?" asked Colonel Wharton, when there was a pause.

"He says he took the pistol from a white man on the coast here a week ago."

"An Englishman?"

"Yes," said Captain Coke, after interrogating the Arab again.

"And what became of the man?"

"He says the man was left on the coast."

"Alive?"

"So he says."

"He does not know the man's name?"

"No."

"It was my father!" Bob Cherry exclaimed joyfully. "It must have been my father! It is his pistol, and if it was taken from a white man, that white man must have been my father. He did not go down in the wreck."

The colonel nodded.

"That seems to be pretty clear now," he said. "Whatever became of Major Cherry afterwards, he did not go down in the wreck."

"Oh, he lives, sir—I am sure of it—and we shall find him!"

The rope was unlaced from the Arab's neck. He staggered to his feet. In spite of the stains of blood upon his face, he was not much hurt.

"What are you going to do with him, captain?" Colonel Wharton asked.

"Put him in irons, and give him up to the authorities when we touch at some port," replied Captain Coke.

Whether the Arab understood English or not, he cast a sudden startled glance upon the skipper, and made a rush for the side.

"Seize him!" shouted Captain Coke.

Wharton made a clutch at the Arab, but he eluded it, sprang to the rail, and leaped over it into the sea.

Splash!

"He's gone!"

"The madman!" said Captain Coke, with an angry shrug of the shoulders. "He's gone to his death!"

"What do you mean, captain? He may swim to the dhow or to the shore."

Captain Coke raised his brown hand to point to the sea.

"Look there!"

A fin showed above the shining waters. Another and another followed it. The colonel's face turned a shade paler.

"Sharks!" he muttered.

"Ay, ay!"

"Good heavens!"

The juniors ran to the side, looking after the Arab with white faces and straining eyes. The trail of blood from the pirate's wound had perhaps attracted the sharks. Five or six of them were playing round him in a few seconds.

He did not seem to see them. He swam right on, heading for the shore.

Colonel Wharton turned quickly to the skipper.

"Is it too late to save him? A boat——"

Captain Coke shook his head.

"Too late! We could never reach him in time."

It was evidently too late. There was a gleam of white on the sea as a shark turned over to seize his prey.

A sudden leap of the swimmer in the water, a bubbling cry, and a stain of red on the shining sea, and the Arab pirate disappeared for ever.

The juniors turned back from the sea, sick at heart.

The Arab sea-robber had deserved his doom, no doubt; but it was a terrible one, and it brought home to them the savage realities of the wild, lawless regions they were voyaging in.

"Heaven have mercy on him!" muttered the colonel.

The steamer crawled on among the reefs. In the distance the Arab dhow had faded to a mere speck.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

Darkest Africa!

"THIS is the place!" said Captain Coke.

The juniors looked round them from the deck of the steamer.

Low-lying reefs and rocks, with the sea curling between; a low shore, with hills rising farther inland, and thick forest—that was the scene. In such a place had Bob Cherry's father been wrecked.

"Are you sure?" the colonel asked.

"As sure as can be, sir. From the description, this is the place. Somewhere within five miles of where we now are the vessel went down."



"Do you mind letting me see the pistol closely, sir?" said Bob Cherry. "By all means," said Colonel Wharton. "But why?" "My father had a pair of Browning pistols with him," replied Bob. (*See Chapter* 10.)

"The shore is not two miles distant," the colonel remarked, with a glance towards the African shore, now deepening into the dusk of evening.

"Ay, ay, sir! The vessel must have been driven far out of her course by the storm. Probably the engines broke down."

"And now——"

"I should say that we should make for the nearest land, for that's certainly the spot Major Cherry made for if he's alive, sir."

"You are right."

The steamer glided on towards the African shore.

It rose clearer to the view. The moon was creeping above the heavy trees inland, and the soft white light gleamed upon the curling sea and the grim, grey rocks.

The sun had sunk out of sight now; save for a rosy glow in the heavens, it was night. The glow swiftly departed and all was black, save where the moonlight fell.

The juniors stood silently watching the dusky shore.

Was Major Cherry there?

It seemed certainly the case, from the clue that had fallen into their hands, that he had succeeded in landing after the wreck of his vessel.

But what had happened to him since?

Had the Arab pirates spared him? Had the black savages of the coast found him?

So near to the goal now, these uneasy thoughts thronged in Bob Cherry's mind. And yet he was hopeful.

Nearer and nearer to the shore.

The steamer crawled now. And at last she stopped in a little inlet among the high rocks, which hid her almost from sight.

The anchor was dropped.

Bob Cherry strained his eyes into the dusk of the shore.

Was his father there?

That was the thought that was beating in the brain of the Greyfriars junior—was his father there?

He touched the colonel upon the sleeve, and the old soldier looked down kindly upon him.

"Can we go ashore at once, sir?" asked Bob tremulously.

"Of what use in the dark, lad?" said the colonel. "We shall commence in the morning. There is nothing to be done to-night."

"I—I suppose not. But——"

"Better get a good night's rest, and be up with the sun, lad."

"Yes, I shall be up with the sun," said Bob. "I—I don't feel as if I could sleep to-night, though. Could we fire guns, as a signal to anybody who was on the shore, sir?"

The colonel hesitated.

"There are plenty of savage niggers in these parts, and they would hear the firing, sir," said Captain Coke. "It might bring them round us. But, after all, we can't search for the major without giving away our presence here. Suppose we blow the steam syren at intervals through the night? If the major is on the coast, he will hear that, and he will know that it means a white man's steamer."

"Good!" said the colonel.

A wild and wailing note sounded from the steamer's syren.

It rang and echoed far along the deep, tropical forest inland.

At intervals of five minutes, the syren's note rang and echoed over the lonely shore, echoing far into the silent night.

Strange and eerie enough it sounded as it echoed among the rocks.

But no reply came to the signal. No white man's voice hailed the vessel from the gloom of the rocky shore.

Harry Wharton, watching over the rail as the moon climbed higher, thought once or twice that he saw a moving figure on the shore, and called aloud. But there was no answer.

The men of the steamer were on the watch in turns all night, with their rifles ready. They were in dangerous quarters.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER
The Quest!

Bob Cherry was early on deck.

He had his bandolier slung on and his rifle under his arm, and a sandwich in his hand. He was ready to start. But the others were not quite ready.

Ere long, however, after a hasty breakfast, the colonel and the Greyfriars juniors were rowed ashore.

It was always possible that the defeated dhow or some other lawless craft of the same sort might happen upon the steamer in the inlet, and it had been settled that Captain Coke and his men should guard the vessel while the colonel and the juniors searched the coast for the missing man.

Bob Cherry jumped lightly from the boat to the beach.

He seemed to become a new boy as he felt the sand of the African shore crumbling under his boots.

At last he was treading the shore that his father's feet had trod—perhaps on this very spot Major Cherry had stood and looked towards the sea, whence he had hoped that succour would come!

The shore was blank and desolate, shingly sand and great rocks, and the thick, heavy belt of tropical forest inland.

"We shall strike southward along the coast first, and cover twenty miles," said the colonel. "If we find no clue, we will



Even as the lion sprang towards the juniors, Colonel Wharton's rifle rang out. Crack! There was a fierce roar from the lion, and he dropped short in his spring, falling back with a heavy thud upon the burning sand.
(*See Chapter* 12.)

strike northward to-morrow in the same way. If nothing is found, we can sail farther down the coast in the Hope. But I have some hope that Major Cherry may have left a clue."

"In what way, uncle?" Harry asked.

"A man wrecked here would naturally try to reach one of the trading towns along the coast," said the colonel. "But, in case he was searched for, would he not naturally think of leaving some indication of his intentions near the spot where he had been cast ashore, to guide rescuers?"

"True!"

"It is for something of the sort that we must look."

The idea caught on at once. It was very probable; indeed, Bob Cherry declared at once that it was the very thing his father would have thought of.

The juniors tramped along the shore, with their rifles under their arms. With the exception of Fisher T. Fish, they were all pretty good shots, and the magazine-rifles were deadly weapons in conflict. And the Greyfriars fellows had shown, in the fight with the pirate dhow, that they could be depended upon to remain steady and firm in the time of danger.

The steamer disappeared from sight. The party tramped on, with the hot sand crumbling under their feet and the sun rising higher and higher in the heavens and pouring down rays of intense heat.

Harry Wharton wiped the flowing perspiration from his face.

"My hat, this is getting horrid!" he murmured.

Nugent gasped.

"Like a giddy furnace, ain't it?"

"I've known hotter days than this, I guess, over there," Fisher T. Fish remarked. "You should have been in New York one day when——"

"Oh, rats!"

"I guess I could tell you——"

"Whoppers!" said John Bull. "Do ring off! It's too hot to swank!"

And Fisher T. Fish grinned and "rang off."

Colonel Wharton was keeping his eyes well about him as they tramped southward along the rocky shore, and so were the juniors, for that matter.

The colonel suddenly halted.

"Stop!" he said.

Bob Cherry looked at him eagerly.

"What is it, sir?"

"Danger!"

The colonel raised his rifle. From the belt of tropical forest, where it closely approached the shore, a sinuous form had crept.

The juniors thrilled as they saw the huge body and limbs of a full-grown African lion.

The monster had seen them, it was evident, from the covert of the wood. Whether he was stalking them or not, they could not yet tell.

"A lion!" John Bull muttered. "This is getting thick!"

"I guess——"

"You are all loaded?" asked the colonel.

"Yes, sir."

"Good. If he attacks us, let me have the first shot, with my heavy gun, and then you pile in with the magazine-rifles as fast as you can."

"Very well, sir."

Woof!

The voice of the lion came echoing along the shore. The sinuous body crept on, till the huge animal was directly in the path the juniors had been following.

There the lion halted.

Woof!

"He means business," said the colonel quietly. "Stand ready, lads!"

"We're ready, sir."

Colonel Wharton dropped on one knee and sighted his heavy rifle. The barrel bore upon the lion, as he stood fifty yards distant, lashing his tail.

The great beast was crouching now for a spring, which would have carried him very near to the juniors.

But even as he sprang, the colonel's rifle rang out.

Crack!

There was a fierce roar from the lion, and he dropped short in his spring, falling back with a heavy thud upon the burning sand.

Roar and roar again!

Crack, crack, crack!

The lion staggered up as the bullets struck his thick hide like hail on glass.

He rushed furiously towards the juniors.

"Scatter!" shouted the colonel.

And the juniors scattered fast enough.

There was a sharp cry from Bob Cherry as he stumbled over a loose stone and went with a heavy thud to the ground.

The lion made straight at him.

Harry Wharton turned back.

For a moment his face blanched white as he saw the deadly peril of his chum, and he stood as if rooted to the ground.

Then, with a hoarse exclamation, he rushed to the rescue.

Crack, crack!

He fired twice as he ran on, both bullets hitting the lion in the flank, but not stopping his furious rush towards the fallen junior.

The lion reached Bob Cherry just as Harry dashed up. Wharton clubbed his rifle, and brought down the butt with a crash upon the jaws of the lion.

The animal gave a furious growl, and turned upon him.

Crack, crack!

The colonel's heavy rifle spoke again, and the animal lurched heavily forward, and fell almost at Harry's feet.

There he lay, kicking and tearing up the sand in the last struggle, while Harry grasped Bob Cherry by the shoulder, and dragged him quickly away from the reach of the lashing claws.

Bob staggered up breathlessly.

"Oh!" he muttered. "Oh! I thought he had me!"

Wharton panted for breath.

"A miss is as good as a mile, Bob."

"You saved me!" said Bob.

Crack, crack, crack!

The lion expired under the shower of bullets as the juniors gathered round him and pumped out the lead from the magazine-rifles.

Colonel Wharton drew a deep breath.

"That was a narrow shave," he said. "But all's well that ends well! My heart was in my mouth when the brute turned upon you, Harry!"

Harry smiled.

"But you didn't miss your aim, all the same, uncle," he said. "It was true as a die."

The dead body of the lion lay stretched in the sun on the burning sand. And as the juniors turned to go on their way, jackals came creeping forth from the wood, and birds of prey descended upon rustling pinions to join in a horrid feast.

From a distance the Greyfriars juniors looked back.

The carcase of the lion was black with birds, and round it a horde of jackals snapped and snarled.

They shuddered, and did not look back again.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER
Surrounded by Foes!

"EUREKA!"

It was Mark Linley who uttered the exclamation.

The Lancashire lad had stopped upon a rocky slope. He was a little ahead of the others, and he turned and waved his hand to them to come on.

"He's found something!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

Bob Cherry's eyes gleamed.

"Quick!" he said.

He dashed on at a run, the others at his heels. The blazing sun was almost vertical now, and the juniors had been looking for a sheltered spot for the noonday halt.

Mark Linley waved his hand excitedly.

"Buck up!" he shouted.

"You've found something?"

"Yes."

"Hurray!"

The juniors and the colonel joined Mark Linley on top of the acclivity. Away to the east the sea rolled in a flood of silver. Overhead the tropical sun blazed down mercilessly.

On top of the knoll was a mass of rock, and on the rock, in glaring white letters, a foot or more high, was an inscription.

The letters were put on with a kind of chalk, apparently mixed with some sticky substance to make it last the longer.

On the flat, perpendicular surface of the big rock, almost as smooth as a wall, the chalked inscription ran:

"MA—OR CHERR— WRECKED HERE. TRYING TO REAC— MASSAWAH! HELP!"

Three letters were missing, having been somehow obliterated.

But the message could be read clearly.

"Major Cherry wrecked here. Trying to reach Massawah! Help!"

It was plain enough.

Bob Cherry's eyes danced.

"I knew he was alive!" he shouted. "Hurrah!"

And the juniors of the Greyfriars Remove echoed his shout heartily.

"Hurrah! Hip, hip, hurrah!"

Colonel Wharton read the inscription over again, his eyes sparkling with satisfaction.

"You were quite right, uncle!" Harry exclaimed. "The major did think of leaving a clue behind, in case he was searched for."

Colonel Wharton nodded.

"Exactly, Harry! And we have found it."

"I shouldn't wonder if he left others."

"But this is enough. Trying to reach Massawah," said the colonel, tugging at his white moustache thoughtfully. "Massawah is in the Italian African territory, and he must have followed the coast southward to reach it."

"Then we know the direction in which to strike?"

"Certainly. We are a hundred miles north of Massawah now, or thereabouts. The major would have to pass through some dangerous country to reach Massawah, but——"

"Unarmed, alone, without food," said Bob Cherry heavily.

The colonel laid a hand upon his shoulder.

"Cheer up, my lad. Major Cherry was a man of resource. I always knew him as that, in India, when we were in the Khyber together. If any man would survive an adventure of this sort, it's Major Cherry."

Bob's eyes sparkled.

"I'm glad you think so, sir. I know the dad was jolly tough, anyway."

"I guess we'll find him," said Fisher T. Fish. "If there were a trail here, like we get on a prairie, I could follow it blindfold; but——"

"But as there isn't, you can't," suggested John Bull.

"Nope! But——"

"We have done nearly twelve miles from the steamer's anchorage," said the colonel. "It would be best to bring the Hope farther along the coast. If it were safe to leave you lads here, I could return alone, and bring the steamer on, and rejoin you here, while you are resting. You cannot keep on much farther without a good rest."

"We should be all right, sir. But——"

"And I," said the colonel. "But I am not so sure about you lads. Only you could not do the twelve miles back again to-day, and we want to save every minute of time we can."

"We could do it if necessary, sir."

The colonel smiled.

"You could not do it to-day," he said. "You could do it starting again after sundown. But by that time I hope to have the steamer here, and we can take up the march in the right direction instead of back to the steamer."

"But you, sir!"

"I shall be all right. But you lads—the question is, dare I leave you to yourselves for the afternoon?"

"We shall be all right, sir, too."

The colonel looked dubious.

So much time would be saved by his returning alone and bringing the steamer on that he would not have hesitated for a second only for his anxiety for the safety of the Greyfriars lads.

Yet if any danger threatened them, they had shown only too well that they were brave enough and steady enough to defend themselves.

"We could rig up a breastwork of rocks round this knoll and camp here, under the shadow of this big rock," Mark Linley suggested.

"Good egg, Marky."

The colonel assented.

"Very good!" he exclaimed. "It is an excellent idea. And, in case of danger, you will defend yourselves, my lads."

"I guess so, rather. We shall be all O.K. here, sir," said Fisher T. Fish. "I'll look after them."

The colonel did not appear to derive much comfort from this assurance.

"Oh, cheese it, you blessed Yank!" said Bob Cherry unceremoniously. "We shall be all right, sir. You can rely on us."

"Well, it's the best thing to be done," said the colonel musingly. "Even an hour may make a difference of life or death to Major Cherry, if he is in danger."

"Quite so, sir."

"I will help you make a camp, then, and then I will leave you."

It did not take the juniors long to pile up a breastwork of rocks enclosing a space for a camp, under the shadow of the big rock where the chalked inscription blinked at them in the sun.

Then the colonel bade them good-bye, and tramped back along the sandy path the way they had come.

The tall form disappeared along the rocky coast.

In the blazing afternoon, the juniors lay down to rest, the shadow of the big rock sheltering them from the tropic sun.



Colonel Wharton and the juniors joined Mark Linley on the top of the acclivity, and facing them was a mass of rock. On the flat, perpendicular surface of the rock, in glaring white letters, was an inscription: "MA—OR CHERR—WRECKED HERE. TRYING TO REAC— MASSAWAH! HELP!" (*See Chapter* 13.)

"My hat!" murmured John Bull. "It's warm!"

"I guess I've known it hotter in——"

"Oh, draw it mild!"

"I wish we had some blessed iced lemonade," said Bob Cherry, with a grunt. "What price ginger-pop at Mrs. Mimble's now, you fellows?"

There was a general howl.

"Shut up, you tantalising ass!"

"Or ices at Uncle Cleggs'."

"Yow! Shut up!"

"Or a plunge in the pool," said Bob Cherry.

John Bull picked up a stone.

"You utter ass! Any more of your funny remarks, and I'll drop this on your silly head."

"Pax!" said Bob Cherry. "It's too warm to dodge."

Harry Wharton sat up.

"What was that?" he asked.

"Eh?" said Nugent lazily. "What was what? I didn't see anything."

"I heard something, I think."

"I didn't!"

"You've been dreaming, Harry!" said John Bull; and he carelessly tossed the stone he had picked up over the rocky breastwork with which they had circled their camp.

There was a sound of the falling stone, but not the clink of it falling to the ground. It was a soft thud, and it was followed by a most unexpected sound—a savage yell of surprise and pain.

"My hat!" ejaculated Wharton, in astonishment and alarm. "What——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What——"

"Look out!" yelled Mark Linley.

The juniors leaped to their feet, grasping their rifles.

And then, with wildly beating hearts, they saw what they had not seen while they were lazily reposing in the shadow of the rock—a crowd of black savages, with shields on their arms and spears in their hands, creeping stealthily up the acclivity towards the camp.

The stone carelessly tossed out of the camp by John Bull had fallen upon the head of one of the blacks, eliciting a howl of pain from him, and thus giving the alarm, else——

The juniors did not care to think what would have happened had not the alarm been given.

But they had little time to think of that, or anything else.

As the startled, white faces looked over the barricade of rocks, a yell burst from the savages. They saw that their advance was discovered, and they threw concealment to the winds.

With a ferocious yell, they rushed to the attack, brandishing their spears.

"Fire!" shouted Harry Wharton.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER
A Narrow Escape!

"FIRE!"

The word was followed by the sharp crack of the rifles.

Crack-ack-ack!

Crack-crack!

Wild yells rose from the charging savages. Three of them, who had almost reached the breastwork of piled rocks, staggered back, and rolled down the declivity, shrieking madly.

Two of the others reeled away yelling, and were trampled down by the surging throng as they charged onward.

Right up to the rocky pile the blacks came, with fiendish yells, their spears brandished in the air.

Crack-crack-crack!

If the rifles had not been magazines, it would have been all over with Harry Wharton & Co.

They had no time to reload, if it had been necessary.

But the steady fire from the rocky breastwork daunted the savages.

They reeled back from it; they yelled and gesticulated, and broke and fled, many of them carrying terrible wounds from the rapid fire.

The firing ceased.

The juniors would not fire upon a retreating foe, and the terrible work sickened them the moment their own danger was past.

Out on the hot rocks, in the blaze of the sun, wounded wretches were crawling away. Wharton set his lips hard.

"It was to save our own lives!" he muttered.

"You bet!" said Fisher T. Fish tersely. "It's all O.K. They would have killed us as soon as have looked at us."

"Yes, rather!"

"But it's horrible!"

Bob Cherry's brows were darkly contracted.

"My poor dad!" he muttered. "He must have passed among these villains. He must have been among them for days, even if he ever got through. Poor old dad!"

The thought that his father might have fallen by the hands of the savages quite banished any feeling of pity from Bob Cherry's breast.

What had become of the major if he had fallen into the hands of these brutal, savage barbarians? What had been his fate? Death—perhaps by torture!

The juniors knew that it was only too likely, and they shuddered at the thought.

The last wounded wretch had crawled away, and the sound of the groaning was silent. Still as death was the blaze of the tropic afternoon, the rocks blistering under the sun's rays, only lizards venturing to crawl abroad in the terrible heat.

Under the shadow of the rocks and their broad hats, the juniors gasped for breath, and prayed for sundown.

At the same time they kept a sharp lookout for the savages.

Probably their reception had thoroughly daunted the blacks, for they did not return. From the little fort on the knoll the Union Jack waved, stuck to a branch upright in a heap of stones. When a breath of air came from the sea it stirred the old flag on the branch, and it fluttered proudly.

But there was little wind, and what there was was hot as the breath of a furnace. The juniors baked and gasped for air.

Slowly, slowly the flaming sun sank to rest behind the wide, grim woods of the African mainland.

The blazing heat passed away, and a cooler air came from the sea to revive the juniors, exhausted by the tropic blaze.

Bob Cherry fanned himself with his Panama hat.

"By Jove, that's better now!" he exclaimed. "Oh, my only hat—for just one mouthful of ice-cream. Oh!"

"It's getting cooler," said Harry Wharton. "I shall be jolly glad when it's night. The colonel will be back here with the steamer before then."

"I guess so. I can see the steamer now," said Fisher T. Fish.

The juniors sprang up, forgetting the heat and their fatigue as the American youth pointed out to sea.

In the red sunset the steamer came into view, leaving a black trail of smoke along the blue sky behind.

The syren sent forth a long, unmusical hoot, and the juniors shouted and waved their hats in reply.

The steamer dropped her anchor at some distance from the rocky shore, and a boat plumped into the water.

The juniors ran down to the beach to meet it.

John Bull took the Union Jack with him. He waved it on the beach to the boat's crew as they pulled in to the shore. Colonel Wharton stood up in the boat.

"Welcome back, sir," said John Bull. "We've pulled through all right."

The colonel looked quickly at the juniors.

"Have you been in any danger since I left you?"

"We have been attacked by blacks, sir."

"Ah! And you——"

"We beat them off, uncle," said Harry. "It was a fight, too. A good many of them were hurt, but they didn't get too close to us. We're all right."

"Thank Heaven!" said the colonel.

Bob Cherry hesitated.

"It's cool travelling at night, and we've had a good rest, as far as we're concerned," he remarked.

"I guess so."

The colonel smiled.

"I see you are keen to get forward," he said. "Quite right, too. We will get on for some distance, at all events."

"Thank you, sir."

"So long as there is moonlight, we can search the coast almost as well as in the daytime," the colonel remarked. "And I have no doubt that Major Cherry covered some distance, at least, in the direction he started out in. I have arranged with Captain Coke to follow us along the coast, keeping as near to us as the nature of the shore will allow. Then, in case of being hard pressed, we can always retreat to the steamer."

"Good idea, sir."

And in a short time the party were on the march again.

In the cool of the evening, marching was a pleasure, and when the bright round moon came up over the Red Sea it was almost as light as by day.

The juniors marched on, chatting cheerfully, their rifles on their shoulders, ready for instant use in case of alarm.

The tall, soldierly figure of the colonel strode on a little ahead. The colonel seemed tireless. After the exertions of the day, he seemed prepared to march on for ever if necessary.

High over the forests and the sandy shore the moon soared, sending down a flood of silver light. From the forest, in the still hours, came strange cries of wild animals, and the deep "woof-woof" of the prowling lion.

The juniors kept a sharp look-out, but they were not attacked. At last, well after midnight, they halted for a rest. The night, as often in equatorial regions, had gone quite cold, in startling contrast to the blazing heat of the day.

"We'll have a camp-fire," said the colonel.

"Good! I guess I can build a camp-fire, slick," said Fisher T. Fish.

"Gather fuel, my lads."

The juniors gathered fuel on the edge of the forest.

Fisher T. Fish stooped to pick up what he took to be a withered branch, and he gave a sudden cry as the supposed branch curled round his arm and then round his legs, and held him as in a bond of iron.

"Ow! Help! Yarooh! Great snakes!"

"What's the matter, Fishy?" called out Harry Wharton.

"Ow! Help!"

The juniors ran up.

The American junior was in the coils of a snake at least eight feet long, with a muscular, sinuous body that was winding and winding round him, enclosing his limbs in a crushing grip.

"Help!" moaned Fish.

Harry Wharton rushed to the rescue instantly. Whether the snake was poisonous or not he did not know, and did not stop to think.

He grasped the neck of the monster with both hands, and by main force prevented the tongue from striking in the direction of Fisher T. Fish.

"Quick!" gasped Harry. "A knife—quick!"

John Bull drew his knife, but Mark Linley was first. The Lancashire lad's hand darted forward, the long knife in it. A fierce, swift slash, and the head of the snake rolled, still hissing, in the grass.

The coils wriggled and twisted convulsively round the limbs of the American junior, the life still strong in them.

They rolled and twisted to the ground, and Fisher T. Fish stood free, shaking in every limb, and white as death.

"Oh, thunder!" he muttered. "I reckoned I was a gone coon then! Gee!"

"A miss is as good as a mile," said Harry comfortingly.

Colonel Wharton was running up. Too late! The snake was dead, and the danger was over. The veteran looked at the dead monster with a serious face.

"You have had a narrow escape, Fish," he said. "If that snake had struck you, you would have been dead in two minutes, and nothing could have saved you. For goodness' sake be more careful, and keep a sharper look-out."

"I guessed the blessed thing was a branch, and I was going to pick it up, sir," said Fisher T. Fish.

"That's the way they do things over there," murmured Frank Nugent.

And Fisher T. Fish found nothing to reply for the moment.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER
On a Terrible Track!

THE camp-fire blazed out into the blackness of the night.

Round the fire the juniors lay sleeping, with their feet towards the glowing embers.

Two of them kept watch at a time. There was danger lurking in every shadow of the wild African shore.

But there was no alarm, and at last the sun flashed up over the sea and the rocks, and the explorers rose for the new march.

Far out from the rocky coast they could see the smoke of the steamer, picking her way cautiously along to the southward.

After breakfast, the juniors set their faces to the southward again, and marched on, with eyes and ears well open.

On the lonely shore there was no trace of inhabitants. Even the blacks who had attacked them the previous day gave no sign of their presence.

The way grew wilder and more hilly, and the explorers were forced to leave the shore, and the sea vanished from their view.

Harry Wharton glanced more than once at the bronzed face of the colonel, wondering what his uncle thought of the prospects of the search.

They were tramping over the same ground that Major Cherry must have covered in his efforts to reach the seaport of Massawah, in the Italian African territory.

But many things might have happened since then, and it seemed too much to hope that an unarmed man, alone, had passed through so many perils unscathed.

If the major had succeeded, they would find him or hear of him at Massawah.

And they refused to give up hope.

It had evidently been in the major's mind that he might be searched for; perhaps he had hoped that many others had escaped from the wreck, and that there would be a search party for the missing. It was probable that he might leave some further clue to his journey and the explorers kept a sharp look-out for it

The way ran through a dense wood now, and sea and shore had disappeared. That it was the route followed by the wrecked

man was most probable, for it was the only practicable route open to the explorers. Huge trees rose on either side of them. The path they were following was marked by the feet of wild animals, and snakes curled among the branches as they tramped on, and black-faced monkeys chattered and grinned down at them.

There was a sound in the thickets—the sound of a savage growling and snarling. Colonel Wharton halted.



As the startled, white faces of the juniors looked over the barricade of rocks, a shout burst from the savages. With a ferocious yell, they rushed to the attack, brandishing their spears. "Fire!" shouted Harry Wharton. *(See Chapter 13.)*

The juniors grasped their rifles at once.

"What is it, sir?" exclaimed John Bull. "Lions again?"

The colonel shook his head.

"No. Jackals, I think."

"They will not attack us?"

"No; but——"

The colonel paused.

"Go ahead and watch the path, Cherry," he exclaimed. "You others remain here. Come with me, Harry."

The juniors did as they were bidden. Harry Wharton, wondering a little, followed his uncle into the thickets.

"What is it, uncle?" he asked breathlessly.

The colonel's bronzed face was very grim.

"Those brutes are quarrelling over some carrion," he said, in a low and tense voice.

"You fear——"

"It may be a dead antelope, but——"

"I understand."

Wharton knew then why Bob Cherry had been sent ahead. The thought had come into the colonel's mind that the prey of the jackal might be a man—the man, perhaps, whom they were seeking.

They burst through the thickets, and a shout from the colonel startled the obscene beasts away from their prey.

In a deep glade of the forest lay what the jackals had been tearing—a mass of bones, picked almost clean.

Bones, gnawed clean and white, glistened in the rays of the sun that fell in golden sheen through the foliage overhead.

Wharton shuddered.

It was again one of the grim realities of the African forest. To whom had those picked bones belonged? The Greyfriars junior dared not look, but the steady eye of the old soldier missed nothing.

"What is it, uncle?" said Harry, in an almost inaudible voice. "The bones of an animal, or——"

He could not finish.

"Of a man," said the colonel tersely.

"Then a man——"

"A dead man!"

"Oh, heavens!"

"But not a white man," said the colonel, after a grim, searching look at the prey of the jackals. "That skull never belonged to a white man."

Harry drew a deep, almost sobbing breath of relief.

"Then—then it cannot be——"

"Major Cherry? No."

"Thank Heaven!"

"But there has been trouble here, and not so long ago," said Colonel Wharton quietly. "That man has not been dead long, or the jackals would have finished their work."

"I suppose so."

"He has not been shot, so far as I can see," the colonel remarked, "but we know that the major had lost his firearms—the Arab thieves saw to that. This man had been killed by a blow on the head."

"Poor fellow!"

The colonel shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know that he deserves our pity. He was killed in fight—perhaps in attacking a castaway."

"But then——"

"It is quite possible that we are on the track now, Harry."

"I hope so, uncle."

They returned to the forest path. The juniors met them with eager, inquiring glances.

"Keep on," said the colonel.

"Is it a clue, sir?" asked Bob Cherry.

"I am not sure."

They marched on. From the forest came snarling and yapping as the jackals returned to their prey, and from a fresh direction came a repetition of the same sounds. Colonel Wharton plunged into the wood again.

He returned in a few minutes.

"Another nigger," he said.

"There has been fighting here, I suppose?" Bob Cherry said.

"Yes, and not long ago."

"I wonder——"

Bob broke off, and marched on in silence. It was useless to wonder; the explorers could only search, and hope for the best.

Suddenly John Bull gave a start. He held up his hand.

"Hark!"

From the deep magnolias came a low sound—the groan of a wounded man. The explorers dragged the heavy leaves aside, and looked down upon a negro lying on the sward, with blood thick upon his bare chest.

He turned a wild and rolling eye upon them.

The man was dying—that was clear. He had received a terrible spear-thrust in his broad, brawny chest.

He looked wildly at the explorers, evidently expecting a blow.

The colonel bent over him.

"Can you ask him anything, sir?" asked Bob Cherry.

"I am going to try. I can speak some of the patter of the Red Sea coast."

In strange, uncouth syllables, curious enough to the ears of the juniors, the colonel spoke to the dying savage.

The man stared at him with glassy eyes, and did not answer.

"He doesn't understand," muttered Bob Cherry. "He can tell us nothing."

"He understands. He wants water."

Bob Cherry placed his water-bottle to the lips of the savage. The man drank deeply and greedily, and gasped for breath.

The colonel spoke again in the same uncouth tongue, and the man answered him in low, muttered words that were difficult to hear.

Colonel Wharton had to bend low to catch the words. The juniors listened with breathless interest, but understanding not a word.

Colonel Wharton rose erect at last.

"What does he say?" exclaimed Bob Cherry anxiously.

"There has been a fight here," said the colonel slowly. "This man and his fellows found a white man tramping in the forest ——"

"A white man?"

"Yes. They attacked him——"

"Oh, my father!"

"We do not know that it was your father, Bob. They attacked him, and he resisted, and it seems that he snatched a spear from one of them and made a good fight. He killed two of the niggers and wounded this one, and then he was captured."

"Captured—not killed?"

"Yes."

"And now?"

"They have taken him away with them."

"Couldn't the man give you a description of him—something we might be able to recognise him by?" Bob Cherry exclaimed eagerly.

"He can say no more."

It was only too true. The savage was sinking back upon the earth, and even as Bob Cherry spoke the glaze of death came over his wild eyes.

The juniors turned away, with pale faces.

Sudden and violent death, the commonplace of the African forests, was still new to them, fresh from the quiet Form-rooms of Greyfriars.

A dead man lay at their feet, and from the deep gloom of the forest the jackals were already creeping towards their prey.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER
Near I

Colonel Wharton turned from the dead man, and gave the signal to advance. In grim silence the explorers tramped on their way.

"They went in this direction, sir?" Bob Cherry asked.

"Southward—yes."

There was a troubled look on Bob's face. A white man was in the hands of the African savages, and his fate would be beyond question unless he was rescued. Death, most probably by torture, perhaps to be followed by some horrible cannibal repast.

It was the duty of the explorers to do their best to rescue him; and perhaps, too, the white man was the man they sought.

But if not, they were losing time—time of which every minute was precious—for the sake of a stranger.

"We must find him," said the colonel.

Bob bowed his head.

"Yes. Whether it's my father or not, we must save him if we can, sir."

"That's right!"

The explorers were all agreed upon that point. It was the plain course of duty, even if the man were not the man they sought, even if they were losing time necessary to the safety of the major.

They kept their eyes and ears well on the alert as they advanced. At any moment they might come upon some desperate gang of savages.

Bob Cherry paused suddenly on the forest path. Something lying among the thick creepers there had caught his eyes.

He stopped and picked it up, with a sharp exclamation.

The colonel swung round.

"What is it, Bob?"

"Look, sir!"

Bob held up a tobacco-pouch. It was empty; but it still smelled of the tobacco it had contained.

Upon the silver clasp were two initials.

"R. C."

"Robert Cherry!" said the colonel.

Bob nodded, with tears blinding his eyes.

"It was my father's," he said. "He never left it anywhere; he always had this with him. You chaps may remember it when he was at Greyfriars."

"I remember," said Frank Nugent.

"It's my father who's been taken by the blacks, sir. He must have dropped this as they dragged him along."

"That's pretty clear, Bob. We are nearer to Major Cherry than we thought," said the colonel quietly.

The juniors looked at the tobacco-pouch, marked with the initials of Major Cherry, with breathless interest.

It was proof enough that the shipwrecked man had passed that way, and the only conclusion they could come to was that he was the white man who had been captured by savages, perhaps not more than an hour ago.

His attempt to reach Massawah had evidently not been a success; perhaps he had been turned back from the path by danger ahead. The route might have been closed by savages, or he might have met with some accident that had delayed him.

It was pretty clear, and past all reasonable doubt, that Major Cherry was the man who was now in the hands of the blacks.

"We're going to rescue him?" said Harry Wharton.

The colonel nodded.

"You are all ready?" he asked. "Mind, we shall take our lives in our hands at every step now."

"We're ready, sir."

There was not the slightest hesitation in the reply of the Greyfriars juniors. They were ready.

"I guess we're keen on this lay-out," Fisher T. Fish remarked. "If you like, I'll pick up the trail for you."

"Rats!" said Nugent.

"I guess I could do it, and it would save time, too, to follow the trail, instead of blundering on like this," said the American junior.

"Bosh! You can't!"

"Yep! I guess I'll show you."

Fisher T. Fish bent down and examined the trampled ground with an air of great attention and keenness.

The juniors watched him.

Colonel Wharton was also examining the ground farther along the forest path. Fisher T. Fish moved along the path, his head bent down, and muttering to himself as he examined the dim signs in the soil.

"Well," said John Bull sarcastically, "have you discovered anything yet, Fishy?"

The American looked up.

"Yep."

"Which way did they go?"

"Right on."

"How do you know?" said Mark Linley.

Fisher T. Fish grinned knowingly. He was evidently quite satisfied with his powers as a picker-up of trails.

"Look at these footmarks," he said. "You see, they're all bunched together, and it shows that there were a gang of them. They all go in the same direction, right on from here."

"Yes, but——"

"And this footprint," said Fisher T. Fish, "is smaller than the others, and looks as if the foot had a boot on. That's Major Cherry's."

The juniors examined the footprint attentively.

"That isn't a boot mark," said Frank Nugent.

"What is it, then?"

"Looks to me like a mark where a cocoanut or something has fallen off a tree."

"Gee-whiz! I guess I know a footprint when I see one."

"Rats!"

The colonel came back towards the juniors.

"We strike off from the path here," he said. "The savages have gone through the forest towards the east."

Fisher T. Fish jumped, and the juniors could not help grinning. After the information the Yankee schoolboy had given them, the colonel's words seemed peculiar.

"I guess you've got it wrong, sir," said Fisher T. Fish.

"What?" said the colonel, looking at him. "What do you mean, Fish?"



"Stand ready to fire!" roared Colonel Wharton. Suddenly the forest seemed to become alive with yells and shouting. Then five or six blacks appeared in view, and they rushed to the attack without a pause. (*See Chapter* 17.)

"They went right on from here, sir."

"Why do you think so?"

"Look at the tracks."

"What tracks?"

"The tracks in the ground, sir," said Fisher T. Fish, pointing at them. "Look there! You can see that a crowd of people, with jolly big feet, passed this way."

The colonel smiled.

"Quite so!" he replied.

The American junior grinned triumphantly at the other fellows.

"I reckoned I had it down fine," he remarked. "This is the way we do things over there, you know."

"I don't think you have it quite right, however," said the colonel. "Certainly a crowd of big feet passed this way, but they did not belong to human beings."

"Eh?"

"My dear lad, a herd of animals has passed down this path, and left those tracks," said the colonel. "Surely you did not mistake those footmarks for human prints?"

"Oh!"

"The savages left the path here, and went through the forest. The indications are clear enough," said the colonel. "Follow me!"

"B-b-but——"

"Come, follow me!"

The juniors grinned as they followed the colonel. They could not help it. Fisher T. Fish's face was a study.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER
Attacked!

THE indications were, as the colonel had said, clear enough. The savages had no motive for disguising their trail, and it was plain enough for anybody to see. Trampled bushes and creepers and torn branches showed where the mob of blacks had left the path and plunged through the underwoods to the east.

Fisher T. Fish followed the rest in silence. He did not offer his services to find the trail again.

The trail, indeed, hardly needed finding. It would really have been difficult to miss it.

The savages were probably taking a short cut through the forest to reach their village, or else some camping ground.

If the former were the case, the task before the rescuers was not an easy one. In some savage town they might find hundreds of foes, and the rescue of the prisoner would be a difficult problem.

But they never thought of hesitating.

If the others had thought of pausing, Bob Cherry would never have turned back. He was there to save his father, or to die for him, and the brave lad would have faced all the black savages in Darkest Africa rather than have failed his father in the hour of need.

The way was difficult for the explorers—among huge, irregular trees, laced with creepers and twining vines. But later they came out into a beaten track in the forest, marked by the innumerable tracks of wild animals.

The colonel paused, and looked about him keenly.

The ground was more open here, and the juniors could see to some distance among the trees.

"Look out!" said the colonel quietly.

"What is it, sir?"

"Danger!"

From a flowering magnolia thicket a black face looked out with two savage eyes, and a hand was raised with a spear in it.

The explorers were evidently close upon the track of the savages now.

The colonel's hand went up with a revolver to a level, and the sharp crack rang with a thousand echoes through the forest.

A yell of anguish answered the report of the revolver. There was a crash, and a burly savage disappeared into the bush he had risen from.

"Stand ready to fire!"

"We're ready, sir."

In answer to the shot and the yell, the forest seemed to become alive with yells and shouting.

Five or six blacks appeared in view from different directions, and at the sight of the whites they rushed to the attack with brandished spears, without a pause.

The juniors fired.

Four or five brawny forms went reeling to right and left, and the rush was stopped. But from the forest came loud and louder yells.

"Come!" shouted the colonel. "Follow me!"

He led the way into the wood.

Loud yells from behind showed that the savages were following them.

Bob Cherry grasped the colonel's sleeve as they ran on.

"Are we going to retreat, sir?"

"Do you want to be killed?" said the colonel roughly. "Obey my orders, Bob, and leave it to me to do what is for the best."

Bob was silent.

"Run for your lives!" muttered the colonel.

The juniors ran hard.

It was evidently time to run, for a crowd of black savages were swarming on their track, and even with their firearms the explorers would have had little chance in a combat with such odds.

The yells of the savages died away at last in the distance of the echoing forest.

The colonel halted, panting.

"That was a close shave!" he exclaimed.

"By Jove, yes!"

Bob Cherry gritted his teeth.

"Yes, sir. We're safe, but——"

The colonel looked at him sternly.

"Can you not trust me, Cherry?" he exclaimed.

Bob hung his head.

"But my father, sir?"

"Do you think I have forgotten your father?"

"No, sir. But——"

"Chuck it, Bob!" said Harry. "We know how anxious you feel; but we've got to trust our leader, old man. The colonel knows best."

"Yes, but——"

"We have tracked the savages down," said the colonel. "When we fell in with them we must have been close upon their village; or, at all events, upon a large camp. We could not save Major Cherry by getting ourselves killed at once. That would make matters worse instead of better."

"Yes, sir. But——"

"You have a plan, uncle?"

"Certainly! Now that we know where the major is, we know what we have to do. We are not far from the coast. There is only a thin belt of forest now between us and the shore, we have turned so far eastward. If we could get through to the sea, we should probably see the steamer. We want every hand to the work for rescuing the major, and we must have the help of Captain Coke and his crew."

"Good!"

"I know how you feel anything like delay at the present moment, Bob, my lad," said the colonel, dropping his hand kindly on Bob's shoulder. "But I assure you I am acting for the best. It would not help Major Cherry in any way if I allowed you all to be massacred by his captors."

"I know, sir. I do trust your judgment. But I feel so horribly anxious," said Bob repentantly. "They may murder him while we delay."

"It cannot be helped. It is useless rushing to our death and leaving him still to be murdered," said the colonel quietly.

"I know, sir—I know."

"Even with the crew of the steamer to help us, we may not be strong enough to succeed," said the colonel. "But we shall try. I do not think any of the seamen will hesitate to land and aid us in rescuing a white man from these horrible savages. I must try to reach the steamer and get help. You must remain here, quiet, until I return. I know it is terribly hard, Bob, but it's the only thing to be done."

"Oh, sir!"

"There is another point. They have taken him prisoner, instead of killing him at once, and there is no reason to suppose that they intend to put him to death now. They must have captured him alive for some reason."

Bob looked a little relieved.

"I suppose you're right, sir. You know best."

"I can get to the coast in an hour from here if I get through the blacks safely," said the colonel. "Listen! If I am not back here in three hours, I leave you with permission to do as you think best."

"Three hours, sir?"

"Yes. If I cannot bring help—if I do not get through—I should prefer you to abandon the expedition and save yourselves. But I know you will not do that, and I leave you free to do as you like. But for three hours I ask you to obey me, my lads. I am acting for the best."

Bob Cherry seemed to gulp something down.

"Yes, sir. I'll do as you say. I know you know best."

"Keep close here in the thickets," said the colonel. "Keep by this big tree. I can see it at a distance over the forest, and shall easily find you again—if I return."

And the colonel disappeared into the forest, leaving the juniors alone in the shade of the heavy foliage.

Bob Cherry gave a groan.

"Oh, father! And I can't help you!"

"Patience, Bob!" said Harry quietly. "Think of the colonel. Think of the danger he has gone into to save your father! He said 'if he returned.' And if he does not return, it will be because——"

Wharton's voice broke.

"I—I'm a selfish beast, Harry!" said Bob, with a break in his own voice. "I ought to have thought of that; but—but I can't think of anything but my father in the hands of those black demons!"

"I understand, Bob. But patience!"

The juniors waited.

There was no further alarm of the savages. From the forest came the busy hum of tropical life, and that was all.

The sun climbed higher over the trees. Through the thick foliage came down the vertical rays, hot and blinding; the forest was swimming with heat.

Wharton looked at his watch from time to time.

One hour passed—two—and the third hour dragged slowly by.

Was the colonel returning?

Had he found the steamer? Was he coming back with help for the rescue of the prisoner in the hands of the savages?

Bob Cherry could not rest.

He moved about aimlessly, shifting from one position to another, restless, unquiet, almost feverish.

"Harry, how long now?" he exclaimed at last.

Wharton's face was sombre.

"Five minutes," he said.

"Oh!"

The juniors listened with straining ears.

There was a sound in the forest, and Wharton sprang to his feet. An antelope brushed through the underwoods and disappeared.

Wharton's face fell again. He was sick with anxiety for what might have happened to the colonel.

Where was he?

"Time's up," said John Bull, in a low voice.

Bob Cherry grasped his rifle and examined it. Harry Wharton gave him an appealing look.

"I'm ready," said Bob.

"Give him five minutes more, Bob."

Bob Cherry nodded without speaking.

Five minutes ticked slowly away.

But there was no sign, no sound, of the colonel.

Harry Wharton put his watch back into his pocket, with a sigh that sounded almost like a groan.

"He is not coming!"

"I'm sorry, Harry," said Bob, in a broken voice. "I—I'm horribly sorry! But he may have got through all right, and may not have found the steamer. There's no reason to think he's come to harm. But my father—we know he's in the hands of those demons. The colonel said we could go if he did not return."

Wharton nodded.

"Let us go," he said.

He scribbled a few words upon a leaf from his pocket-book, and pinned the note to the tree with a long thorn. It was for the colonel if he should return.

Then the juniors, rifles in hand, left the spot.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER
Bob's Father!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. were very silent as they threaded their way through the forest. They had a rough idea of the direction in which to go, and they were not long left without a clue. In the midst of the thick green of the tropical wood they came suddenly upon a heap of bones, fresh picked by jackal and vulture, and they knew that it indicated where one of the blacks had fallen before their fire.

They shuddered and passed on.

Exactly what was before them they did not know. They only knew that there was danger—terrible danger! That was all.

A shimmer of blue between the thinning trees caught their eyes, and Frank Nugent uttered an exclamation.

"The sea!"

They were coming out upon the coast again. From the distance, in the direction of the shore, came a blare of noise.

The juniors listened, with beating hearts.

The crash of tom-toms, the shouts of savage, uncouth voices, and the shrieks of strange, barbaric musical instruments mingled in a terrible din.

The juniors exchanged glances. They understood well enough what it meant.

"Some giddy celebration among those savage brutes," John Bull muttered.

"A feast—or something of the sort," said Mark Linley. "Perhaps——"

He paused.

Bob Cherry's face was white.

"Perhaps a sacrifice," he said.

"Yes, Bob. We're in time, though."

"Heaven grant it!"

The juniors pressed on.

Louder and louder sounded the wild uproar of the savages, but as yet they could not see any of the blacks.

They were not in the forest, and the wood was left behind, and still the savages were not in sight. The uproar proceeded from beyond a ridge of rock, which shut out the view of the sea and the beach.

"They're on the shore," said Bob.

"Yes. This way. Caution!"

"You bet!"

The juniors trod on cautiously over the rocks.

Fisher T. Fish nudged Harry, and the junior looked round inquiringly.

"What do you want?"

"I guess I'd better go ahead and see how the land lies," said Fisher T. Fish. "I did a lot of scouting over there, and——"

"Oh, cheese it! Keep behind!"

"I guess——"

"Shut up!"

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry led the way. They crept up over the ridge of rocks and looked at the scene beyond.

Bob Cherry caught his breath.



It was a terrible scene that burst upon the view of Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry as they looked over the rocks. In a clearing, a white man was tied to a stake, and round him a horde of savages were circling in a wild barbaric dance. (*See Chapter* 18.)

"Oh, the demons!"

It was a terrible scene that burst upon the view of the juniors as they looked over the rocks.

A stake had been planted in the ground, and a white man was tied to it with thick cords of vegetable fibre.

Round him a horde of black savages were circling in a wild, barbaric dance. They were waving spears and shields, and others standing round were beating tom-toms, making a fearful din.

It was evidently some savage rite, and it was clear enough that the finale was to be a human sacrifice.

For there was fuel close to the bound man, and it was placed there for lighting. The prisoner was to be burned at the stake!

Wharton set his teeth hard. The odds were heavy against the rescuers; but Harry did not think of retreating. Better death than abandoning an Englishman to that terrible doom.

Bob Cherry caught his arms in a convulsive grasp.

"Harry, it's my father!"

Wharton nodded. He had recognised the major.

Major Cherry's face, darkly burnt by the sun and lined now with haggard lines, could be clearly seen by the juniors.

Harry Wharton knew him at once. He was changed; he looked worn and older, but he was the same stout, burly man who had come down to Greyfriars, ages ago, as it seemed to Harry now, though in reality only a few weeks.

The major did not see them.

His eyes were fixed upon the savages, and his haggard look showed that he had given up all hope of life.

But he was facing his doom with cool, steady courage—the courage of a British soldier who had looked Death too often in the face to fear it now.

There was not a tremor in the strong, sturdy form, not a quiver in the bronzed face, haggard as it was.

Steady courage looked out of the major's unwavering eyes as he watched the antics of the dancing savages.

Little did he dream, at that moment, how near his son was to him.

Perhaps, in the hour of doom, he thought of his boy; but he thought of him as far away at Greyfriars, pursuing his lessons in the quiet old Form-room, or strolling under the elms in the old quad.

Bob Cherry gritted his teeth.

"The demons! Buck up, you chaps! We chip in here!"

"You bet!"

"Shoot straight, and pile it in thick," said Harry Wharton. "There are a crowd of the brutes, and we shall have a fight for it!"

John Bull unrolled the Union Jack, and then grasped his rifle. The six juniors crept farther forward, till over the rough rocks they were as close to the savage scene as they could get without betraying themselves.

"Stop here," said Harry.

"I guess——"

"Take aim, and let them have it when I give the word!"

"Right-ho!"

Bang, bang from the tom-toms, yell and shriek and savage howl! The dance continued madly, and suddenly ceased.

A brawny savage, brandishing his spear, made a sudden rush towards the bound man. Whether he intended to drive the spear into his breast, as it appeared from his action, or whether he intended simply to rack his nerves with the apprehension, was not clear, for the savage never reached the major.

Bob Cherry's rifle rang out.

The savage gave a fearful yell, and staggered forward, with a bullet in his right leg, and lay writhing and howling on the ground.

The major gave a sudden, convulsive start, and turned his haggard eyes in the direction whence the shot had come.

He seemed dazed as he saw his son leap into view upon the rocks, his rifle to his shoulder, pumping out bullets from the magazine as fast as he could pull the trigger.

Crack, crack, crack!

There was a wild howl from the savages, and they ran, leaving five or six of their number stretched upon the ground.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER
Hurrah!

BOB CHERRY dashed forward as the blacks broke and fled.

He threw down his rifle and drew his knife, and slashed fiercely at the thick rope that held the major to the stake.

Major Cherry seemed like a man in a dream.

He was an old soldier, and accustomed to the surprises of a soldier's life, but this surprise was a little too much for him.

"Bob!" he gasped. "Bob!"

"Yes, dad!"

"Bob! You here!"

"Oh, dad!"

"My boy! Oh, my brave lad! But here—here!" stammered the major. "I can't understand it! It's like a dream! Bob!"

The knife slashed swiftly through the ropes, and they fell in fragments round the major.

Two or three of the blacks on the ground stirred and groaned.

Major Cherry stretched his cramped limbs, and drew in a deep, deep breath. John Bull waved the Union Jack frantically.

And the Greyfriars juniors joined heartily in the cheer.

"Hurrah! Hip, hip, hurrah!"

Major Cherry grasped his son's hand.

"Bob! You've saved me—you and the others!"

"Yes, dad; and thank goodness we found you! Thank goodness we came in time!"

"I guess——"

"But how did you come here?" the major gasped. "How did you? You—you ought to be at Greyfriars. I supposed you to be still at school. How——"

"We came to search for you, sir, as soon as we knew you had been wrecked," Harry Wharton explained.

"You—you lads did."

"My uncle was with us."

"Oh, I see! Where is Colonel Wharton now?"

Harry's face clouded.

"He left us to get help to rescue you, sir," he said. "He has not joined us yet. I only hope nothing has happened to him."

"I guess he's all O.K.," said Fisher T. Fish. "But we'd better get back to the place where we were waiting for him."

"Yes, rather!"

The major cast a quick, anxious look round.

"We must get away," he said. "The blacks are rallying. They can see now that they have only a handful to deal with."

"You bet!"

"Let's get off," said Mark Linley.

"Come on, dad! Look here, you can take my rifle! You'll handle it better than I should," said Bob.

The major grasped the rifle. It seemed to make a new man of him to feel a weapon in his grasp once more.

"Come on," he said. "You lead the way."

The juniors and the major retreated to the ridge of rocks. In the distance the blacks were gathering again, and their savage howls could be heard.

The sudden attack had taken them by surprise, and they had fled; but they had seen from a distance how few their foes were, and their courage was reviving.

As the juniors retreated towards the ridge, the blacks swarmed in pursuit. There were fifty or more of them, and if they had once got to close quarters there would have been little chance for the Greyfriars party.

The rescuers retreated over the ridge, and as they disappeared behind the rocks the savages broke into a rapid run in pursuit.

The major halted.

His eyes were blazing. He was evidently keen to return to the savages something of what he had suffered at their hands.

"We can stop them here!" he exclaimed. "Line the ridge!"

"Good!"

"You bet!"

The juniors turned back at the ridge, and levelled their rifles over the rocks. The blacks were coming on in a bunch, yelling and brandishing their spears.

"Fire!"

Major Cherry rapped out the word as if he were in his old place, giving orders. The juniors pulled trigger at once.

The rifles rang out together, and the lead poured into the midst of the savage mob, and fearful howls answered the volley.

"Now, come on!"

With their rifles under their arms, they ran for the wood.

For a time nothing but wild howls and yells came from beyond the ridge, but at last the blacks took up the pursuit again.

As the juniors reached the forest, they looked back, and saw the ridge crowned with the yelling savages.

"They're after us," said Harry Wharton.

"I guess so."

"Run for it!"

They dashed into the wood.

Loud and louder rang the savage howls of the blacks as they pursued the explorers into the shadows of the tropical forest.

The juniors ran on, Major Cherry easily keeping pace with the swiftest of them. Harry Wharton was heading for the big tree which was the rendezvous with the colonel. Before entering the wood he had seen it clearly from the distance, but in the mazes of the forest he quickly grew uncertain of the direction.

He paused in a deep glade, panting, and looking about him anxiously.

"Is this the way, Bob?" he exclaimed.

Bob Cherry shook his head.

"Blessed if I know," he said.

"I guess we ought to keep to the right."

"I was just thinking it would be better to bear to the left," said Frank Nugent.

"Right on!" said John Bull. "That's my idea. Keep right on!"

Harry laughed breathlessly. Two heads might be better than one on some occasions, but this was evidently not one of the occasions.

The juniors were well ahead of their pursuers, but the loud yells from the distance, echoing through the forest, showed that the savages were still on the track.

"Well," said the major, "you don't know the way?"

"It's such a puzzle in the forest, sir."

"You've lost it?"

"Yes," confessed Harry.

The major chuckled grimly.

"It would have been a wonder if you had kept it," he said. "I doubt if I could, in a tangled forest like this. But we'd better keep on."

"Yes, I suppose so, sir. They'll be up to us soon."

They tramped on through the forest as fast as they could. The blaze of the sun was over now, and it was cooler, for which they were thankful. Suddenly Bob Cherry paused, with an exclamation.

"Look! I know where we are now."

From the thick green of the earth a shattered skeleton grinned up at them. From its position and surroundings they knew that it was the one they had passed an hour earlier.

Harry Wharton's eyes sparkled.

"It's all right now!" he exclaimed. "I know the direction from here. We're not ten minutes away from the tree where the colonel left us."

"Good!"

"I guess we'd better hustle. They're coming on fast."

"This way, then!"

Harry Wharton led the way, swerving off to the west, and they plunged on through the thick, tropical forest.

The yells were ringing behind, mingled with trampling and the crashing of branches. It was clear that the savages would not easily be shaken off.

"Here we are!"

Harry Wharton, panting, came out under the branches of the great tree. He looked quickly round. There was no sign of the colonel or of the men of the steamer. On the trunk of the tree was his note, pinned to the bark with a thorn, just as he had left it.

Harry groaned.

That meant that his uncle had not returned. Would he ever see the kind old soldier again? Had one life been lost in saving another?

But there was little time for such reflections. The enemy were at hand.

"Nobody here!" exclaimed John Bull.

"Nobody!"

"We'd better get off, then——"

"I guess it's too late," said Fisher T. Fish coolly. "They're here!"

"Shoulder to shoulder!" shouted the major.

The savages were bursting from the trees. On all sides came savage, black faces, and brandished spears and shields. The juniors faced the enemy fearlessly, with their rifles to their shoulders, and the sharp crack-crack of rifle-fire mingled with the ferocious yells of the savages.



Major Cherry and Colonel Wharton grasped hands, but the colonel's face was still full of astonishment. "How on earth did you get here?" he exclaimed. "These brave lads saved me," returned the major. (*See Chapter* 19.)

But the horde of black wretches came savagely on, and it looked as if the Greyfriars party would be overwhelmed by the rush, but just as the stabbing spears were close upon them there came a sudden burst of rifle-fire from the wood, and a loud, ringing sailors' cheer.

Crack-ack-ack-ack!

"Hurrah!"

From the thick underwood came Colonel Wharton and Captain Coke and the seamen of the steamer at a rush.

Under that fresh attack the savages broke away and retreated into the forest. The bullets followed them fast.

"Just in time, Harry!" exclaimed the colonel, grasping his nephew's hand. "I was delayed on the shore. The steamer had not come up, but——"

"It's all right, uncle."

"And now for the major!"

"The major's here," said Major Cherry, with a laugh. And the colonel turned towards him in blank amazement.

"What?" he exclaimed.

"Don't you know me?"

"Cherry, old man!"

The two old soldiers grasped hands, but the colonel's face was still full of astonishment.

"How on earth did you get here?" he exclaimed.

"These brave lads saved me."

"Oh, Harry!"

"We waited the three hours, sir," said Harry, "then we looked for the major. We found him."

"I guess we did."

"Ay, ay, and I'm glad to see you safe and sound, sir," said Captain Coke; "and if I may say so, sir, the sooner we get to

the steamer the better, for there's hordes of these black fiends in these forests, and they may come in swarms at any minute."

"Quite right," said the colonel. "We are all here, so let us be gone."

"I guess that's O.K."

And the party turned through the forest in the direction of the shore. As they tramped through the wood, they were well on the alert, but nothing more was seen of the savages. Doubtless they had had enough, and by the time they recovered their courage and rallied, the explorers intended to be gone.

The party came out upon the shore at a considerable distance from the spot where the major had been rescued. In a small bay the steamer was floating at anchor, with only one man on board. Captain Coke had been compelled to take that risk, in order to take his men ashore, but he was glad and relieved enough to see the steamer still safe. Ten minutes later the boat had taken them out to the steamer, the anchor was up and the engines were throbbing.

The juniors and the rescued major stood on the deck, looking back at the savage shore they were so glad to leave.

"And now," said Major Cherry, turning to his son—"now explain to me, you young rascal, what you mean by wandering about in African forests with a rifle under your arm instead of sticking to your lessons at Greyfriars."

And Bob Cherry grinned, and explained.

The major listened to his story from beginning to end, and then he clapped the junior on the shoulder.

"I'm proud of you, Bob!" he said. "My dear lad, any man might be proud of such a son! And these lads, too—I don't know how to thank them."

"That's all right, sir," said Harry Wharton, smiling. "It's been a ripping adventure for us, and it will be something to talk about when we get back to Greyfriars."

They were a happy party on board the steamer during the run back to England.

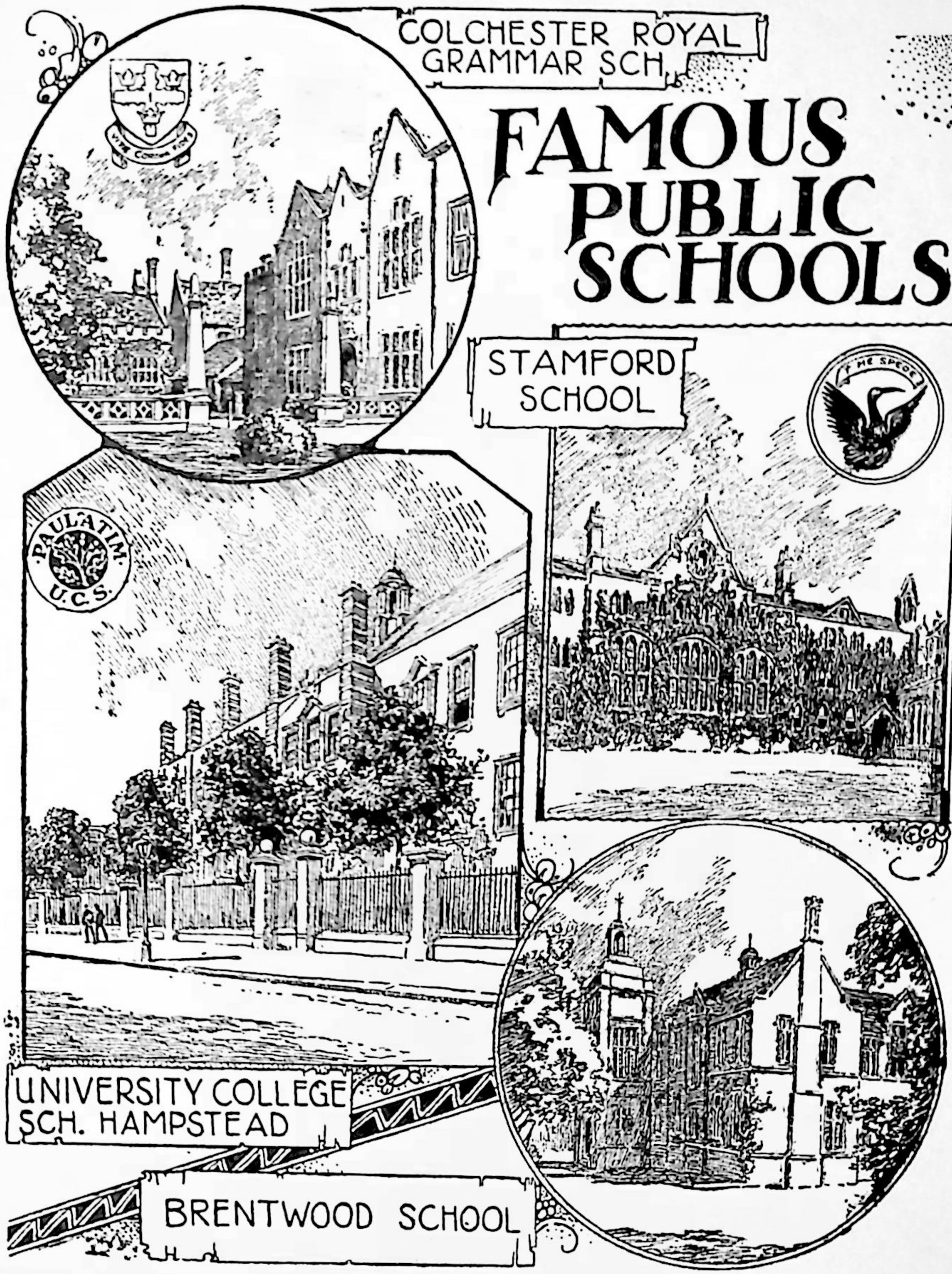
And Mrs. Cherry's joy on their arrival we need not describe. From Port Said the telegraph had apprised her of the rescue of her husband and the safety of her son, and she was at Southampton to meet the steamer.

Harry Wharton & Co. returned to Greyfriars, and, needless to say, they had to relate in nearly every study in the school the full story of the adventures of Bob Cherry in search of his father.

THE END



FAMOUS PUBLIC SCHOOLS



"Making Up"





The art of "make-up" is one of the first things an amateur actor should acquire to make a "hit."

One of the principal things which the amateur actor who wishes to make a "hit" must know thoroughly is the art of "making-up" to suit the various characters he or she is going to play.

You should remember, first of all, that the amount of grease paint you use depends on the lighting of the room or hall or theatre in which you are playing. On a large stage that is fully lighted, like an ordinary stage, a fair amount of paint is required. For a small hall with lighting that is not particularly strong, grease paint should be used sparingly.

Grease paint is supplied in sticks, which are given different numbers.

Before applying the grease paint, a little cold cream should be rubbed on the face. Then the stick of grease paint should be well rubbed over that. With the fingers this is rubbed completely over the face until it is all covered. Remember, also, to rub right back to the neck, and down below the chin, otherwise your "make-up" will look patchy.

A flesh colour grease paint is not sufficient by itself, because it makes tho face look all the same colour. No. 9, therefore, is used to redden the cheeks, but it must be used sparingly. If No. 9 is used by itself, it gives a Red Indian make-up!

Here is a good tip to remember. The lighter a thing is painted, the more prominent it becomes when the stage lighting shines on it. Suppose, for instance, you have a very small nose, and wish to make it more prominent. You can do this by drawing a line down the centre of your nose with



Do not attempt to wash your face until all the grease paint has been removed with cold cream.

white grease paint. This makes it show up ever so much better!

A dark tint is used for making anything appear to be deep—wrinkles, for instance. A wrinkle is drawn on the face with what is called a "liner." This is a thin stick of grease paint, like a pencil, and is used like a pencil.

Suppose you are playing the hero in your school play. You require what is known as a "straight" make-up. Rub cold cream lightly over your face, then apply No. 2½, working it well into your face. Heighten the colour of your cheeks with No. 9. Darken your eyebrows with a brown liner, and, with the same liner, put in a faint wrinkle or two—not too many, but just sufficient to make you appear older. That is, of course, if you have an older part to play. If not, you do not need wrinkles.



Making up as a tramp means that you should have an unkempt appearance.

To find out where the wrinkles should be, just allow your face to wrinkle naturally, then draw the liner down the wrinkles, very faintly. You will also have to colour your eyelashes. To do this, squeeze the end of the brown liner until it is flat. Then close your eye and draw the liner across the lashes, letting plenty of paint stick to them.

If you want to make your eyes appear blue, you must draw a line with blue liner just below your lower eyelash. Put a little brown liner on your upper lid and also on the lower lid. Then, with your finger, smooth this and rub it well in, taking care that it is not too dark. Your eyes are then made up.

When playing character parts, you require a "character" make-up. An old man would have a pale face, which you can get by using No. 3, or No. 1½. The liner you will use for wrinkles in this make-up is known as lake, and you can also get the effect of the old man's veins standing out on his hands by drawing them with a blue liner. For a Chinaman, you must use No. 7, which is a brown tint, and mix it well with chrome, which has no number.

Making up as a tramp means that you should have an unshaven chin, and this you get by using blue-black, which also has no number. Clowns make up with white grease paint, and they paint their lips with red. For a negro, burnt cork is better to use than grease paint, but if it is a comic negro the lips should be painted very large with red grease paint.

Here is a list of the various numbers for grease paints, and what they are used for:

No. 1 is a very pale flesh tint, and No. 1½ is moderately pale. These are the two lightest shades, and are generally used by girls. If you are playing a girl's part, you will use these, and heighten the colour of the cheeks with rouge or with carmine grease paint. No. 2 is fair complexion colour. No. 2½ is medium flesh colour, and is a popular colour for "straight" make-ups. No. 3 is pale complexion, and should not be used by itself unless you are playing the part of a very pale or ill person; but, mixed with No. 9, it provides an excellent colour for "straight" parts.

No. 3½ is slightly sunburnt, suitable for characters who are supposed to have come from abroad or who lead an open-air life. No. 4 is dark flesh colour, suitable for villains. No. 5 is sallow, and can be used

for Chinese. No. 6 is similar, but is more yellowish. No. 7 is for making up as a mulatto or a half-caste. If you were playing a Mexican, you would find this suitable.

No. 8 is reddish brown, and, like No. 9, can be used for Red Indians. No. 10 is a light brown, and is only used when a light brown effect is required.

In addition to these numbered grease paints, there are also the following, which have no numbers: carmine, which is a substitute for rouge; chrome, for painting sallow complexions; blue-black, red, and white. "Liners" are supplied in the following colours: black, brown, lake, grey, red, carmine, mid-blue, and light blue.

When your make-up is finished, you must powder it thoroughly, letting the powder soak into the grease. But be sure to dust off the superfluous powder, or you will look patchy. Remember, too, that the powder will make you look a little paler, so your make-up should be slightly heavier than you really require before you start to "powder off."

If you have to come on the stage as though you had been running along a dusty road, you can get the effect by dusting your clothes with Fuller's Earth. If you are supposed to be muddy, mix some Fuller's Earth with water, and dab that on your clothes. It gives the effect very well, and can be brushed off when dry without harming the clothes.

To take off your grease paint after the performance, rub cold cream well into your face, and then wipe your face with a rag or towel. Do not wash your face until all the grease is removed from it.

If you pay attention to these little details, and practise "making-up" before the great night, it will pay you, for a good make-up has a great deal to do with the success of a play.

You can obtain the grease paints from almost any chemist's shop, and they cost from about 4d. to 6d. a stick. One stick will last you for a very large number of performances, and if you break it into pieces or take turns in using it, one stick will do for three or four performers.

High Days & Holidays



THE SUMMER VAC.

IF May's for mirth, and June's for joy,
July must stand for jollity;
The Summer Vac., to every boy,
Brings frolic and frivolity.
Good-bye to Latin and to Greek,
And schoolboy feuds and factions;
Heigh-ho! for many a merry week
We're free from such distractions!

Wharton and all his chums have planned
A treasure-hunt in Devon;
Whose towering tors, and shining strand,
Afford a glimpse of Heaven.
To Lancashire Mark Linley goes,
'Mid hubbub of machinery;
Smithy will seek the Alpine snows,
And revel in the scenery.

Old Coker, on his motor-bike,
Will go pedestrian-hunting;
Potter and Greene would rather like
To pass the days in punting.
Bunter, on the Vacation's eve,
Has made no preparations;
He'll spend it angling, I believe—
Fishing for invitations!

Even the masters, staid and grim,
Will cease their arduous swotting;
Prout will enjoy his daily swim,
The Head is going yachting.
Oh, it will be a glorious Vac.!
Its joys we'll all remember
Long after we come trooping back
To Greyfriars in September!

When You Can't Go Out!

Here are a few simple, home-made tricks that will cause much amusement and help while away a wet afternoon.

How often it happens that the rain comes pouring down on the day you have arranged for an outing! What, then, are you to do to pass the time away? Here are a few bright suggestions.

We will commence with a smart little trick, for which you require six pieces of thin cardboard. Cigarette-cards will do admirably. Bend them in the manner shown at Fig. 1. The trick is to construct a firm box out of the six of them—a box that will stand a fair amount of handling without dropping to pieces.

Fig. 2 shows how the cards are to be fitted together. With a little care, you will be able to construct the box without the slightest difficulty, but your chums won't be able to do so until you show them how!

Another cute puzzle is made from four pieces of cardboard, cut to the shape shown at Fig. 3. These are the dimensions of the cards: width at bottom, two inches and one-tenth; height at left side, two inches and one-tenth; height at right side, two inches and six-tenths; width at top, one inch and five-tenths.

The puzzle is to arrange the pieces in a square, which will measure four inches along each side. You will find this very puzzling until you look at Fig. 4, which shows just how the pieces of card should be arranged.

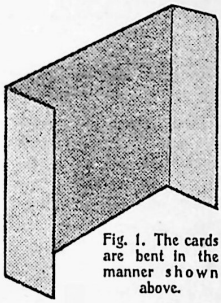
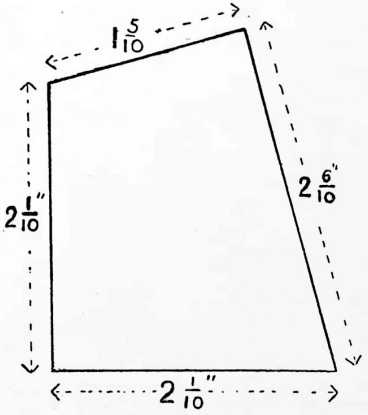


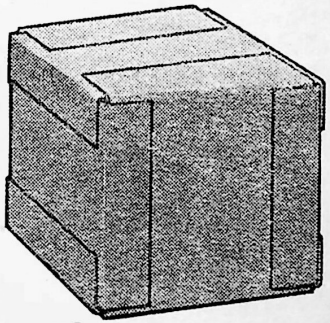
Fig. 1. The cards are bent in the manner shown above.

The "fakir's bands" trick is another good one. You make

Fig. 2 (below). The completed box. It is quite easy to put together, but your chums will be baffled.

Fig. 3 (left). Four pieces of cardboard are cut to the shape and dimensions given.





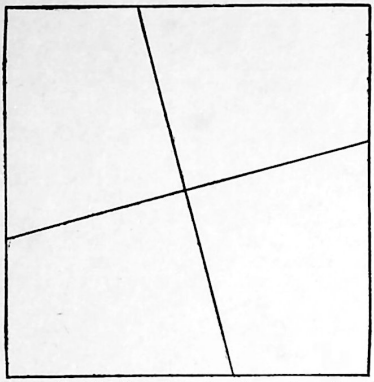


Fig. 4. To solve the puzzle, the pieces of cardboard are arranged in this shape.

three rings of paper, and commence to cut them lengthwise. The first ring you cut, as everyone naturally expects, falls into two separate rings. But when the second ring is cut in the same manner, your chums will be surprised to see that, although it falls into two rings, those rings are interlinked! When you cut the third ring, they will get another surprise, for it will fall into one ring twice as large. Fig. 5 shows you what the rings will look like.

This is how the three rings, which all look alike at first, are made to produce such

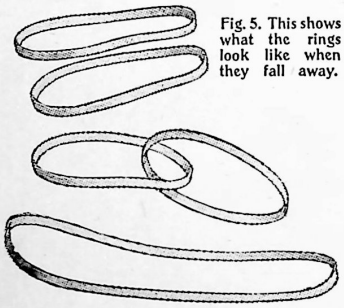


Fig. 5. This shows what the rings look like when they fall away.

astonishing results! When you make the first paper ring, you join the ends together and gum them in an ordinary straightforward manner. Before you fasten the second ring you give it a half-twist. Before you join up the third ring you give it a complete twist. Fig. 6 shows you how to do it.

A "lung-tester" which affords a great deal of amusement is made as follows: bend a cigarette-card in the same manner as you did for making the puzzle box. Place it on the table like a little bridge, then try to blow it over so that the bent ends stick up in the air. You will find that this is not very easy. The way to do it is to blow on the table about six inches *in front* of the card. Give a short, sharp blow, and the card will turn over.

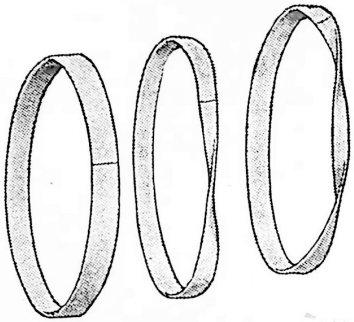


Fig. 6. The first ring is made in a straightforward manner, the second is given half a twist, and the third a full twist.

An amusing novelty which is easily made is a working water-wheel. For this you require five corks of the same weight, four needles, and a block of camphor. Fix the needles and the corks together as shown at Fig. 7. Divide the camphor into four equal parts, and attach one part to each of the four corks, as shown, with the aid of sealing-wax.

Now you must rig up some sort of contrivance which will hold the water-wheel vertical above the surface of the water, with

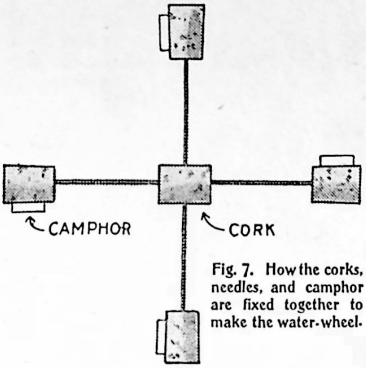


Fig. 7. How the corks, needles, and camphor are fixed together to make the water-wheel.

only one of the corks touching the water. The camphor and the water will "quarrel," causing the wheel to revolve merrily.

Here is an interesting little game. Get two hair-brushes with handles and as stiff bristles as you can get. Place the hair-brushes at one end of a table, and then, at the signal to start, you and your chum begin to tap the handles of the brushes. As each brush-handle is tapped, the brush will give a little jump forward. Whoever gets his brush first to the other end of the table wins the game. You must not *push* the brushes; that is not allowed. The secret of winning this novel race is to tap the handles lightly, not heavily, for they jump farther when given a light tap.

Now for a final puzzle. Draw a circle and place nine dots inside it in the form of a cross, as at Fig. 8 (left). The puzzle is to separate these dots by three smaller circles, drawn inside the larger circle in such a manner that each dot is left in a space by itself. Fig. 8 (right) shows how it is done. Anyone who does not know the secret will have a puzzling time before he discovers it!

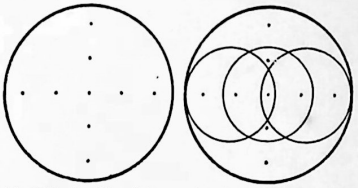
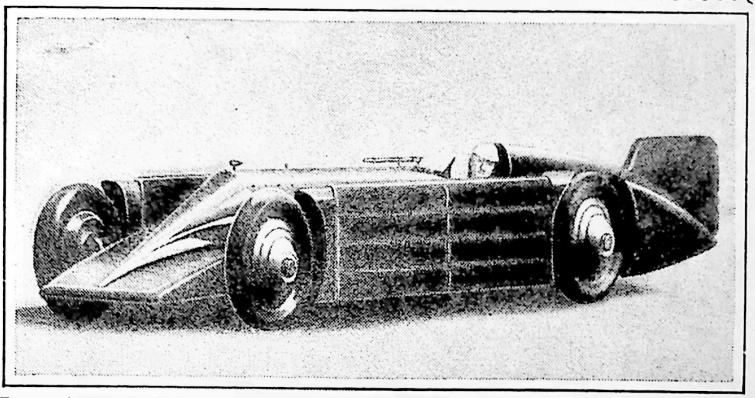


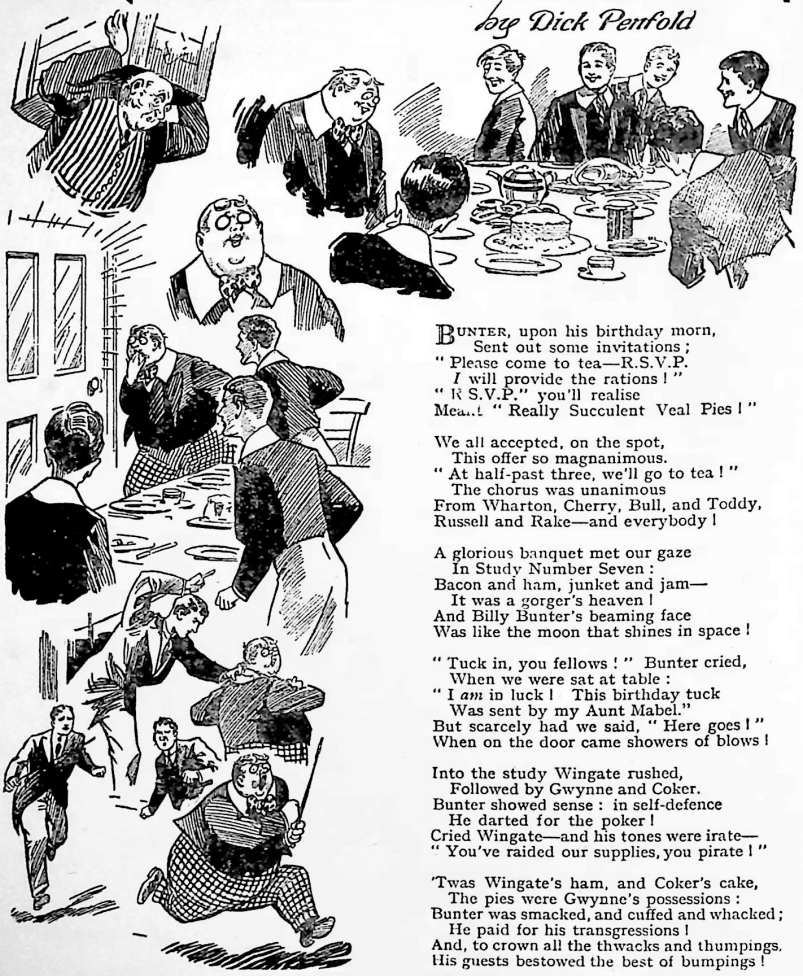
Fig. 8 (Left). Nine dots are placed inside a circle in the form of a cross, and (right) the solution.



This wonder car, the Golden Arrow, British throughout, cost £18,000 to build. But it was well worth it, for with gallant Major Segrave at the wheel, the Golden Arrow gave to Great Britain the land-speed record of over 231 miles per hour.

BUNTER'S BIRTHDAY PARTY!

by Dick Penfold



BUNTER, upon his birthday morn,
Sent out some invitations;
"Please come to tea—R.S.V.P.
I will provide the rations!"
"R S.V.P." you'll realise
Meant "Really Succulent Veal Pies!"

We all accepted, on the spot,
This offer so magnanimous.
"At half-past three, we'll go to tea!"
The chorus was unanimous
From Wharton, Cherry, Bull, and Toddy,
Russell and Rake—and everybody!

A glorious banquet met our gaze
In Study Number Seven:
Bacon and ham, junket and jam—
It was a gorger's heaven!
And Billy Bunter's beaming face
Was like the moon that shines in space!

"Tuck in, you fellows!" Bunter cried,
When we were sat at table:
"I *am* in luck! This birthday tuck
Was sent by my Aunt Mabel."
But scarcely had we said, "Here goes!"
When on the door came showers of blows!

Into the study Wingate rushed,
Followed by Gwynne and Coker.
Bunter showed sense: in self-defence
He darted for the poker!
Cried Wingate—and his tones were irate—
"You've raided our supplies, you pirate!"

'Twas Wingate's ham, and Coker's cake,
The pies were Gwynne's possessions:
Bunter was smacked, and cuffed and whacked;
He paid for his transgressions!
And, to crown all the thwacks and thumpings,
His guests bestowed the best of bumpings!

AN AFFAIR of HONOUR

By GEO. E. ROCHESTER



A complete, true-to-life story of fighting in the air during the Great War, and how an affair of honour was settled by an aerial duel.

THE FIRST CHAPTER
The Dawn Patrol

"Four o'clock, sir!"

Captain Eric Milvain, of One Hundred and Ten Squadron, operating from Duville, was awake in an instant.

"Oh, hallo, Bates!" he grunted. "What kind of morning is it?"

"Clear and fine, sir," replied the batman.

"Right-ho!" exclaimed Eric. "Stand by outside with the canvas bucket, Bates, and I'll have a cold sluice!"

Five minutes later, dressed in his oil-stained khaki uniform, with its pilot's wings and row of medal ribbons on the left breast of the tunic, Eric crossed to the mess, his flying kit over his arm.

Dew sparkled on the grass, and there was in the air the fresh, clean smell of early morning. But from eastwards came the rumble of heavy gunfire, grim token that the dawn "strafe" had commenced in earnest.

Eric gulped down a cup of steaming black coffee, then made his way towards the hangars, where mechanics were wheeling his fast little Camel fighting scout out on to the tarmac. A sergeant mechanic swung himself up to the snug cockpit, and, as he

switched on, another mechanic swung the propeller.

The engine picked up with a shattering roar, and, after running it up to full revolutions, the sergeant throttled down. Leaving the propeller ticking over, he clambered out of the cockpit and dropped to the ground.

"O.K., sergeant?" asked Eric.

"Yes, sir," replied the sergeant, saluting.

"Giving her revs?"

"Yes, sir. She's fine!" replied the sergeant.

Eric nodded.

"I'm off towards Metz on offensive patrol," he remarked, buttoning his leather flying coat at the neck, then added regretfully: "I suppose it's a bit too early in the day for our friend, the Count, to be astir!"

The sergeant grinned. Every flying man on that part of the line knew the Count. They called him the Count, but his full name was Count Gerhard von Platz. One of the most brilliant war aces that had ever taken the air, he had over seventy Allied machines to his credit.

The machine he flew was a black Fokker scout, with a grinning skull painted in white on the stream-lined fuselage. As his record showed, he was a brilliant fighting pilot, fearless and merciless.

Eric himself had thirty-four German machines to his credit, but he had never yet had the satisfaction of meeting Gerhard von Platz in the air.

"I suppose I'm lucky, sergeant," he said, turning towards his cockpit, "in that I've never met him yet."

"Lucky, sir?" questioned the sergeant.

"Yes," replied the boy, "because when I do only one of us will return home, and I don't think that one will be me!"

"You're as good as he is, sir," replied the sergeant emphatically. "And you only want to meet him in the air to prove it!"

"Ah, but I don't seem fated to meet him," laughed Eric, and swung himself up to the cockpit.

He ran his engine up once to satisfy himself that it was giving full revolutions, then, drawing on his flying gloves, he opened the throttle again. The roar of the engine rose to a high, pulsating, thunderous rhythm, setting the little fighting scout quivering against the chocks.

Eric's gloved hand shot up, and, in response to the signal, the waiting mechanics whipped away the chocks from in front of the tyred wheels of the undercarriage. The scout shot forward like a greyhound from the slips. The tail came up, and, as Eric eased back the control-stick, the machine took the air in a steep upward climb.

Circling once over the hangars, Eric shoved forward the control-stick and dived on the banked-up range at the far side of the aerodrome. Above the roar of his engine there sounded the staccato rattle of his synchronised gun as he fired a test burst.

Then back came the stick, and the scout went up into the blue in a zoom, to flatten out and swing eastwards towards the trenches, climbing as it went.

And at the aerodrome behind the sergeant turned to the watching mechanics.

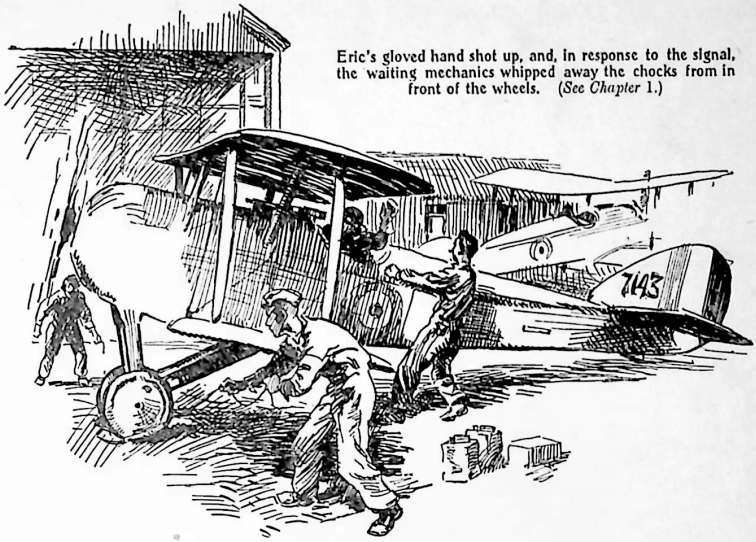
"I'll bet a month's pay," he said, with slow deliberation, "that if ever he meets Von Count there'll be one Boche pilot less on this part of the line!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER
"Fokkers!"

At fifteen thousand feet, Eric passed over the trenches and headed eastwards into Germany. He was tensed in his seat, and continually his watchful eyes swept the sky ahead. More than once, also, he turned to scan the sky behind, for he knew the danger of enemy aircraft coming hurtling down on his tail from out of the blue.

Far below, on the ground, grey-clad columns of the enemy were moving up to the line. Anti-aircraft guns, occupied with the shelling of British artillery observation machines, had little time for the lone scout so high in the morning sky. The Fokkers or the guns farther eastwards would attend to him. He would not return, that Engländer.

On and on thundered the scout, climbing



Eric's gloved hand shot up, and, in response to the signal, the waiting mechanics whipped away the chocks from in front of the wheels. (*See Chapter* 1.)

to eighteen thousand feet. Visibility was good, the sky cloudless. Away to starboard something like a ball of cotton-wool came suddenly into being, and dissolved into white, wraith-like smoke. Another and another appeared, closer now. It was shrapnel.

Eric saw it and smiled grimly. The German gunners had not got his range, and he would be past before they could do so. They'd wait for him coming back, of course, but a lot might happen before then.

Suddenly the boy stiffened in his seat. Instinctively his hand moved towards the trigger of his synchronised gun. Far ahead, high in the sky, were ten machines. Moments passed as, climbing to another thousand feet, Eric watched them closely. Then came certainty as to the identity of the machines which were now heading towards him.

They were Fokker scouts!

It was obvious that they had sighted Eric. But advantage of height lay with the boy, and he continued to climb. Remorselessly, in fighting formation, the Fokker scouts came thundering on towards him. And if the Englander had the momentary advantage of height, what did that matter? Were they not ten to one? The chances were he would turn and run, rather than face certain death by showing fight.

Eric held his fire, keeping the nose of his machine up, until the Fokkers were within a quarter of a mile of him and two thousand feet below him.

Then forward went his control-stick, and his gloved fingers curled round the trigger of his synchronised gun. With engine thundering at full revolutions, he tore down at the Fokker formation. Wind shrieked madly through his flying wires and struts, and above the roar of his engine there sounded the death-snarl of his flaming gun.

Right through the formation he went, and as he pulled back his control-stick to go up, up in a wild, soaring zoom, one Fokker went spinning earthwards in flames.

But the others had broken formation, and were diving in at him from every angle, with guns ablaze.

Bullets ripped and whined through the fabric of his fuselage and planes, and white wood showed vivid beneath the varnish of riven struts. Kicking on the rudder, Eric whipped the control-stick across, and tore to meet the nearest Fokker.

He had a vision of the white-faced German pilot, crouched over his controls, with leather face-mask whipping back in the whirling slipstream of the propeller. Then, when it seemed as though the two machines must crash propeller boss to propeller boss, the German leapt to his feet, hands clutching at his throat.

The control-stick jerked forward of its own volition, and as the Fokker fell away into the death-spin, the pilot crumpled up over the controls, shot through the throat.

But there were eight of his companions left to avenge him. Twisting, diving, looping, rolling, Eric fought desperately against the overwhelming odds. His left arm was hanging uselessly, the shoulder of his flying coat wet with blood. He knew, hemmed in as he was by lurid, flaming guns, that the end was inevitable. Already his machine was lurching drunkenly, and his rudder control wire was hanging by a strand.

But two more Fokkers went spinning earthwards, their pilots limp across the controls, before the end came for the boy. The squadron leader had pulled out of the fight, manœuvring for position. And now he came thundering down on Eric's tail, cartridge-belt whirling madly through the chamber of his Krupp gun.

Eric wheeled to meet this new attack, but as he kicked on the rudder, the control wire snapped, and the bar swung loosely beneath the boy's booted foot. At the same instant he felt a searing pain on his scalp. His world went black about him, and, as he slid forward in his seat, his scout tore earthwards, out of control. Once, the rush of cold air seemed to revive him, and weakly he tried to haul himself off the controls, his gloved fingers groping for the switch on his shattered dashboard. And, high in the sky above him, the Fokker leader wheeled the triumphant remnants of his squadron, and headed back eastwards towards his aerodrome. In future, there would be one roving Englander the less.

THE THIRD CHAPTER
Henri D'Auvignac !

CAPTAIN ERIC MILVAIN slowly opened his eyes and looked about him in dawning wonderment. Swathed in bandages, he was lying in bed in a small, sparsely-furnished room. And by the side of the bed, watching him, was seated an elderly man in shabby civilian dress.

Seeing the boy awake, the man rose and shuffled from the room. He closed the door behind him and a key clicked in the lock. Minutes passed—long minutes, in which jumbled recollection of the fight came to Eric, and in which he made the discovery that his head was throbbing agonisedly, and that he was strangely weak.

Murmured voices on the other side of the door drew his attention. Then suddenly the door opened, and a young man stepped into the room. He also was in civilian dress, but his not unpleasant features were drawn and haggard, as though with long suffering, and his right arm hung withered and misshapen. As he slowly crossed the floor towards the bed where Eric lay, the boy could not help but notice his halting, pitiful limp.

"You are awake, then, m'sieur," he said, speaking in French, and the smile which accompanied the words wiped something of the pain from his face.

"Yes," replied Eric weakly, staring up at him. "But I do not understand. You are French, are you not?"

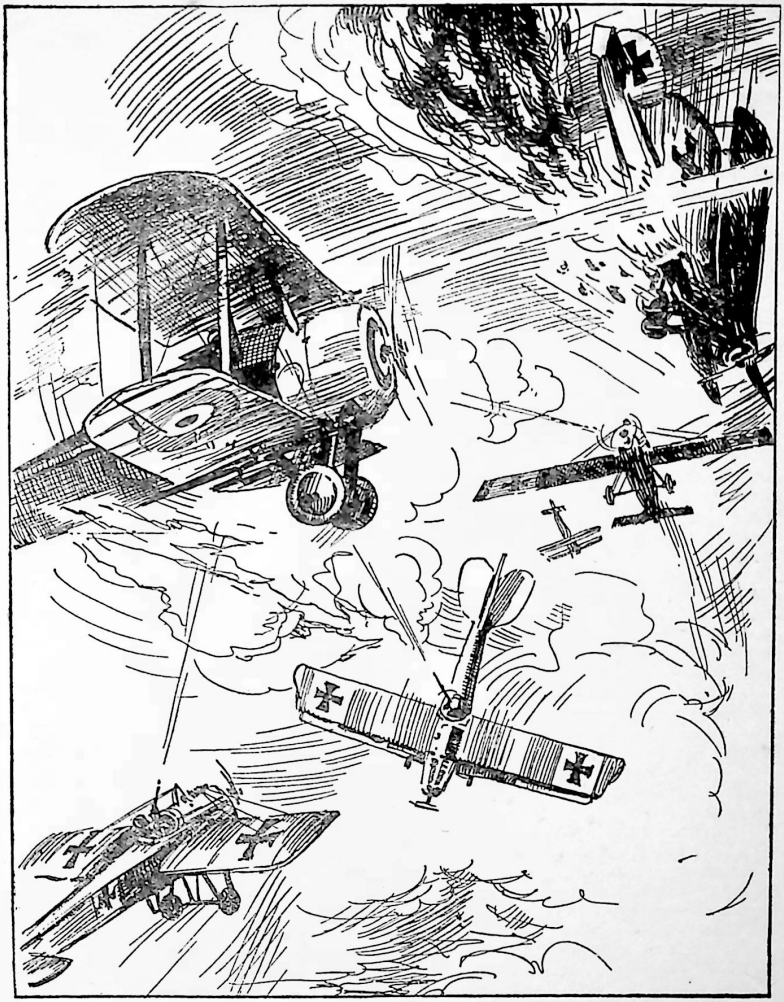
The other inclined his head in assent.

"Yes, I am French, m'sieur," he said softly. "My name is Henri D'Auvignac."

"But," persisted Eric, in a weak and puzzled voice, "I crashed in Germany."

"Pardon, m'sieur," corrected D'Auvignac quietly, "you crashed in Alsace!"

"Which is German territory!" replied Eric.



Right through the Fokker formation Eric hurled his machine, his flaming gun sounding above the roar of their engines. The enemy broke order and one 'plane went spinning earthwards in flames. (*See Chapter* 2.)

"Yes, German territory agreed D'Auvignac, and there was a quiver of emotion in his voice. "A little longer they may hold it, those cursed Junkers. But already their vaunted field-grey heroes fall back, and the shadow of defeat hangs heavy over Germany. Soon we will see the armies of France and England push forward to the Rhine, and once more the Tricolour of France will wave above this province of Alsace!"

Eric was silent. He knew what Henri D'Auvignac meant. He knew that many in Alsace, whilst owing allegiance to the House of Hohenzollern, looked forward in their hearts to the day when their beloved France should once more take possession of Alsace, which had been wrested from her by the mailed fist of Prussia long, weary years ago.

"Will you please tell me how I come to be here?" asked Eric quietly, breaking the sudden silence.

"You crashed near this house of mine, m'sieur, which stands isolated and alone, some twenty kilometres to the south-east of Metz," replied D'Auvignac. "You would undoubtedly have been killed had you not—or so it appeared to Jacques and I—switched off your engine and pulled your machine out of its dive when you were about five hundred feet from the ground. You hit the ground in what I think you call a side-slip, and you were thrown clear of the wreckage Your machine took fire, but Jacques—he is my servant, m'sieur—and I pulled you out of danger, and carried you to the house. I am afraid," he added, with a twisted smile, "that I could not help much. You see, m'sieur, I am paralysed in my arm!"

"What can I say to thank you for what you have done?" murmured Eric.

"Nothing, m'sieur! We require no thanks. For two days we have kept you here and nursed you, and——"

"How long?" exclaimed Eric.

"It is two days since you crashed, m'sieur," explained D'Auvignac. "And during those two days death has hovered very close to you. But you will get better now, and Jacques and I will keep you hidden here till you are strong and well enough to attempt an escape from this country. M'sieur, you must not be taken prisoner. Ah, you do not know the horror of a German prison camp!"

Eric stared up at D'Auvignac in blank amazement.

"Do you mean to say," he demanded, trying to raise himself on his elbow, "that the Boche don't know I'm here?"

"No, m'sieur, they do not!" replied D'Auvignac. "They came, of course, to inspect the wreckage of your machine, but none had seen Jacques and me carry you here, and they think you crawled away to die somewhere. They were very sure you had been badly wounded."

"It is a wonder they didn't search this house," remarked Eric slowly.

"They did, m'sieur, but Jacques and I had hidden you below some sacking in the cellar behind the wine-cellar. They did not search much beyond the wine-cellar, and you, unconscious, never stirred!"

"But, great Scott! Don't you realise you'll be shot for harbouring me if they find me here?" cried Eric.

"That is a risk which I must take, m'sieur," replied D'Auvignac quietly, "and one which I take most willingly. Ah, m'sieur," he went on, his face working strangely, "you do not know how I, a cripple, have thanked the good God from the bottom of my heart that he has given me this opportunity to aid our cause—the cause of France and gallant England. I have not been interned because the Boche does not know that my sympathies are heart and soul with the armies of France. Nor does he, in his arrogance, suspect hurt from a poor cripple such as I. On the eve of war I tried to reach France, but I was too late. The frontiers were closed, and I had to remain here."

"But, D'Auvignac, I cannot allow you to risk your life——" began Eric, in distress.

"Is life, then, so sweet for such as me," cut in D'Auvignac bitterly, "that I should fear to face a German firing squad? And what better death could I die than in the service of my country?"

He turned away his head, and when he

spoke again his voice was almost a whisper.

"One thing only do I ask of life before I die," he said, "and that is to see justice done to the man who murdered my brother!"

He turned again to face Eric.

"You are an airman," he said quietly, "and maybe you have heard of him—that Prussian Junker who killed my brother. He is a German war ace!"

"His name, D'Auvignac?"

"Is Count Gerhard von Platz, m'sieur!"

met his death at the hands of Count Gerhard von Platz.

"M'sieur," D'Auvignac had said, "always the Junker blood flowed in the veins of Gerhard von Platz. He spent his boyhood on a near-by estate, which was owned by his father. Louis and I were boys at the same time as was Von Platz. Often we quarrelled, and often Louis thrashed him, m'sieur, for some cruelty to some poor dumb and defenceless animal. We grew up, and



"You mean that I am a liar?" said Von Platz, pushing back his chair and rising. "Yes!" replied Eric coldly. "And also a swaggering braggart, who is lucky indeed not to have been shot down by a British 'plane before to-day!" (*See Chapter* 5.)

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

The Way of Von Platz I

DAYS drifted on, and, hidden in the attic of D'Auvignac's house, Eric progressed slowly through convalescence to health. D'Auvignac spent long hours with him, and a strange affection for the poor cripple grew in the boy's heart.

Often when he was alone Eric would think of how D'Auvignac's brother, Louis, had

there came the war. Louis was conscripted to the colours and drafted to the flying corps. He became a pilot in the squadron of Gerhard von Platz. But Von Platz had not forgotten the boyhood days, m'sieur, and he hated Louis.

"One night in the mess he taunted Louis about the Alsatian blood which flows in D'Auvignac veins. They quarrelled, and Louis struck him. He did not have Louis court-martialled, m'sieur. No, for he

himself had been indiscreet. He challenged Louis to a duel, for with the war duelling has come again into its own. M'sieur, Von Platz is deadly with the rapier, and Louis had never handled one. Yet this affair of honour demanded clean steel—and Louis died. Ah, m'sieur, the whole thing was but a cunning trap set by Von Platz, who hated Louis, and who, when a boy, had sworn that some day he would repay in full the thrashings Louis had given to him."

"And have you ever seen Von Platz since this happened?" Eric had asked.

"Yes," had been the reply. "I have seen him often. He sometimes operates from the aerodrome on the outskirts of Metz, and he comes here to dine. Yes, you may stare, m'sieur, but it is so. Nothing would give him greater pleasure than for me to refuse him admittance, or to quarrel with him myself. I tell you, m'sieur, he hates the D'Auvignacs, and he knows his presence here is a deadly insult. Yet, if I offend him, he will denounce me as either a traitor or as a pro-Ally, and if I am not shot, then I will be sent to the internment camps. That is what he wants, but I will not give him the satisfaction of putting me away. I wait, m'sieur, for I know in my heart that if I am patient some day I will see Louis avenged. I know my attitude puzzles Von Platz, but he will not trap me as he trapped Louis."

The more Eric pondered on the matter, the more he was convinced that Henri D'Auvignac was acting wisely. After all, as far as the world was aware, Louis D'Auvignac had struck the first blow, and had been killed in clean fight for his presumption. Hostility on the part of Henri could only result in misery, and maybe death, for the poor cripple. No, Henri was wise to bide his time.

There came a day when he brought a German uniform to Eric.

"It was my brother's, m'sieur," he said. "You are almost well now, and in this uniform you will have a better chance of reaching the frontier. Make for Switzerland, but beware of the Swiss frontier guards, many of whom are in German pay! I want you to leave here to-night!"

Eric took the grey, high-necked German uniform and looked steadily at Henri.

"Why do you suggest that I leave to night?" he asked quietly.

"Because, m'sieur, I do not think you will be safe here much longer!"

"Why do you think that?" persisted Eric.

Henri was silent a moment, and when he answered his voice was low.

"Because, m'sieur," he said, "to-night Von Platz comes here again, and brings with him his friends. It will not be safe for you to be in the house!"

"Safe?" echoed Eric, and laughed aloud. "Henri," he went on earnestly, taking D'Auvignac's arm in his firm, strong hand, "ever since you told me your story I've been waiting for this opportunity of meeting Von Platz! Listen! Fortunately, I can speak German like a native. I have a plan, and if all goes well, by to-morrow night you will be back in your beloved France, and Von Platz will be dead! Now, listen carefully!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

The Challenge!

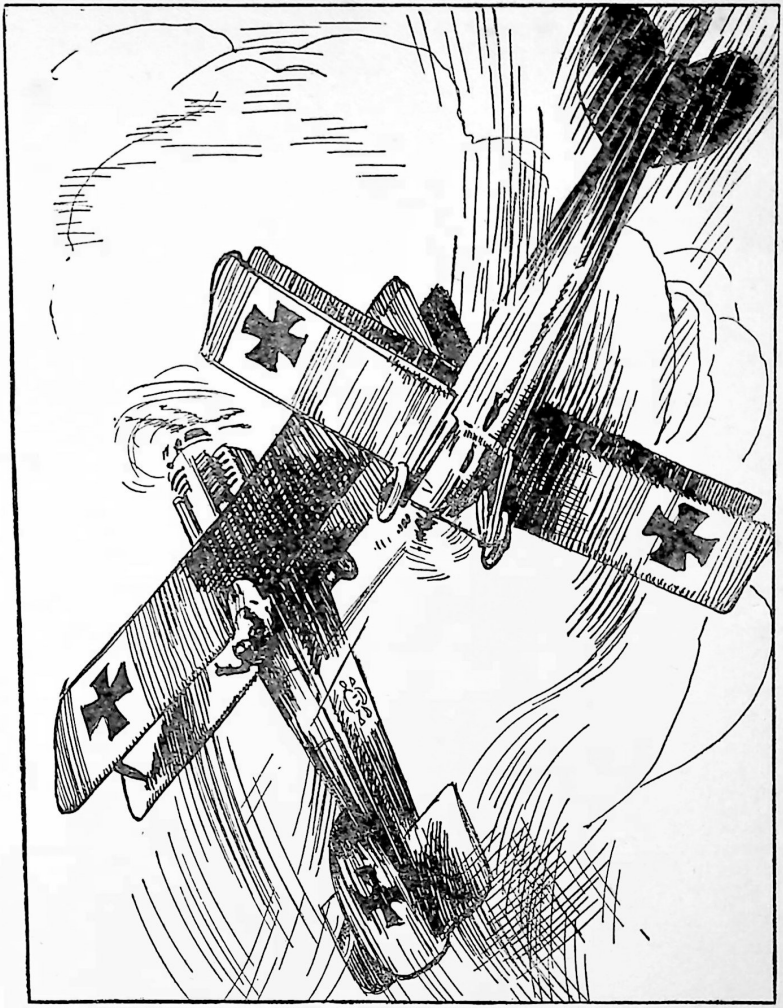
THAT evening, clad in the uniform of the German Air Service, Eric Milvain sat at dinner with Henri D'Auvignac and Count Gerhard von Platz. There were four other officers there, who had flown over from Metz with Von Platz.

Henri had introduced Eric as the Herr Hauptmann Alberich von Federkiel, on leave from the School of Flying Instruction at Dusseldorf. Von Platz and his companions accepted Eric as such, without suspicion. Why should they suspect anything?

Time and again the boy's blood boiled as Von Platz shot some thinly-veiled taunt at Henri D'Auvignac. There was a devilish ingenuity in this subtle form of torture, for torture it was to D'Auvignac to be forced to entertain the man who had killed his brother. Yet refusal to entertain would have resulted in disaster.

It was perfectly obvious that Von Platz was endeavouring to goad Henri into some indiscreet gesture or word, but Henri sat in brooding silence throughout the meal.

More than once Eric could scarcely realise



In the instant that Eric's strategic move brought him above the 'plane of Von Platz, his gun belched flame and lead. As a bullet hit the enemy ace, he flung up his arms and then slumped limply over the controls. (*See Chapter* 5.)

that he was sitting at table with the great German ace who had wrought such havoc amongst Allied machines. He watched the man—tall, fair, arrogant—weighing him carefully up for what was about to come.

It was when coffee was circulating that Von Platz made a remark which gave Eric his cue.

"Prince Rupprecht, in his latest despatch to his father the King of Bavaria," murmured Von Platz, idly watching the blue, drifting smoke of his cigarette, "has, I understand, referred to me as being even greater than the Baron Richtofen!"

"Then he lied!" said Eric quietly.

There was a moment of tense silence. Von Platz turned his cold blue eyes on the boy.

"I beg your pardon?" he said icily.

"I say Prince Rupprecht lied if he said that," replied Eric steadily. "But I do not think he said it. To my mind, the statement exists only in your imagination, in which it was originated!"

"You mean"—Von Platz's voice was under perfect control—"that I am a liar?"

Eric nodded assent.

"And also a swaggering braggart, who is lucky indeed not to have been shot down by some British or French machine before to-day!" he said coldly.

Count Gerhard von Platz pushed back his chair and rose slowly to his feet. His face was pale with passion, and not for an instant did his blazing eyes leave the boy's face.

"You understand," he said thickly, "that there can be only one answer to what you have said?"

"Yes." Eric shrugged his shoulders. "A court-martial for insolence to the Count Gerhard von Platz, who prefers to protect his honour thus!"

There was not one man in the room who did not understand what Eric meant. The words were tantamount to a challenge yet the challenge must come from Von Platz. And it did.

"My honour is in my own safe keeping," he said harshly. "I shall prove that to you one hour after dawn!"

Eric nodded.

"Let us dispense with seconds for the moment," he drawled. "The choice of weapons lies with me!"

"That is so!"

"Then I choose the aeroplane and the synchronised gun!" replied Eric sternly. "And I, the Hauptmann Alberich von Federkiel, will prove my words that the luck in the air has so far lain with you!"

He turned to the others.

"And as for you, gentlemen," he said, "whatever the result of this duel in the air may be, you give your word that the loser died in an accidental crash!"

"That is agreed. We give our word!" was the response.

. . . . . .

High in the morning sky, one hour after dawn the next day, wheeled two Fokker scouts. One was the machine of Count Gerhard von Platz, and the other had been provided for Eric by one of the pilots who had accompanied Von Platz from Metz.

At ten thousand feet they engaged in battle to the death, and for eight minutes they twisted, rolled, looped, and dived, each pilot striving grimly for the mastery. But Eric was fighting grimly, with a threefold motive. The shooting down of Von Platz would mean the avenging of Louis D'Auvignac, whose brother had so heroically aided the boy. It would mean that no longer would Von Platz ride the sky, taking grim toll of Allied machines, and it would mean life and liberty for Eric.

And there came a moment when the boy staked all on one last strategic move. He threw his machine into a spin and went plunging earthwards. Grinning viciously behind his leather face-mask, Von Platz followed, confident that a burst from his flaming gun had got Eric.

He relaxed in his seat as he circled round the spinning Fokker. Then suddenly, with a roar of high-powered engine, the Fokker came out of its spin and tore straight in towards Von Platz, with snarling gun ablaze.

Too late, the war ace saw his danger. The move had come with such terrible swift-

ness that he had but the fraction of a second in which to act. He kicked on the rudder, banking wildly away from the death thundering towards him. And in that instant of time, Eric's Krupp gun raked Von Platz's machine from tail plane to engine cowling.

C-c-c-c-crack!

The stream of death-dealing bullets blazed out with a belch of flame from Eric's synchronised gun. Too late Count Gerhard von Platz realised that he had been caught napping; that he had, indeed, fought his last fight.

He turned an agonised face towards the Nemesis that had overtaken him.

C-c-c-c-crack!

Once more Eric's Krupp gun spoke—for the last time in that memorable encounter.

A tongue of flame licked back from the riven petrol tank, and as Count Gerhard von Platz slumped limply forward over the controls, his machine tore earthwards, a blazing mass, surrounded by an eddying pall of thick black smoke.

Eric glanced down, then swung his Fokker westwards towards the line. He had no difficulty in crossing the German lines, but he was doubtful as to the reception he would receive from the diligent British anti-aircraft gunners.

With this thought in mind, Eric crossed the British lines at a high altitude. When he had left the trenches behind and was nearing an aerodrome, he plunged the Fokker earthwards, as if the engine had suddenly ceased to function. This deceived the anti-aircraft gunners, and, after straightening out, Eric was able to land in a field adjoining the aerodrome. He was taken prisoner immediately, but his identity was established after inquiries had been made, and before noon was back with his own squadron.

And under cover of darkness that night, a Bristol fighter landed near the lonely house of Henri D'Auvignac, and, taking him and Jacques on board, took off and headed westwards towards France.

THE END

The Thin Red Line!

IN these days of khaki-clad troops, the phrase "Thin Red Line" has almost ceased to hold a meaning—but only for those who have forgotten one of the most thrillingly glorious pages that the world's history holds.

It was when a worn-out, battle-exhausted remnant of British troops stood up to massed attacks by overwhelming numbers of French infantry, cavalry, and artillery, and not only beat them off but put them to flight, and in so doing gave a thrashing to the Bully of Europe, that the great Wellington showered warm praise on his red-coated warriors for the bravery and prowess which, as a "thin red line," they showed on that memorable June 18th, 1815, on the field of Waterloo.

British regiments of the Line, garbed in red tunics, blue trousers, and the queer shakos and helmets of the time, were strung out, literally in a thin red line, to meet the full force of the French cavalry.

All day Wellington had held at bay the immense army of Napoleon Buonaparte. Napoleon saw that the time had come for his forces to make the supreme effort to break this obstinate British force. Again and again his cavalry charged the British, but always our sorely-tried troops beat the enemy back.

It was the old 28th Regiment of Foot—now the Gloucestershire Regiment—that bore the brunt of that fierce attack of frantic horsemen. The small squares into which the men had formed were surrounded again and again by the enemy. But they stood adamant.

Then came a lull. There was a waver of steel, a ragged cheer, and the 28th Foot and others of the British were charging. The French were in retreat! It was a perfect rout, and Napoleon's power was broken utterly!

The Thin Red Line of heroes had whipped him, had achieved the "impossible," and Napoleon was captured and sent, a prisoner and an exile, to the lonely rock of St. Helena, there to end his days.



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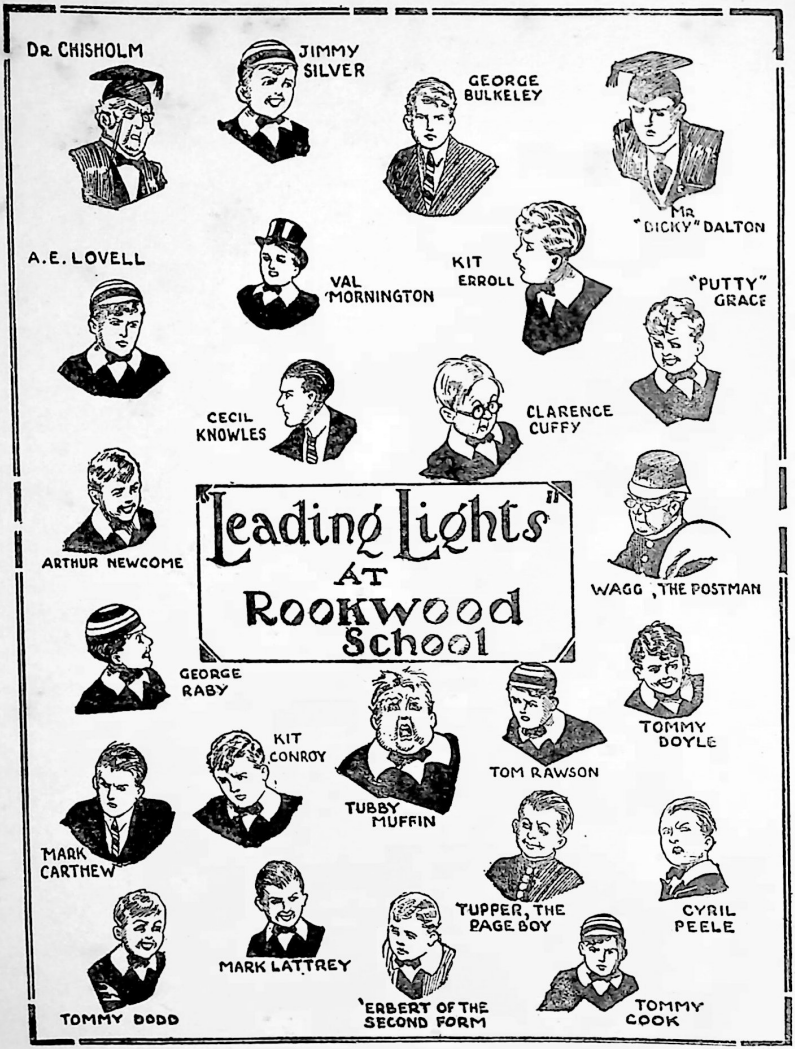
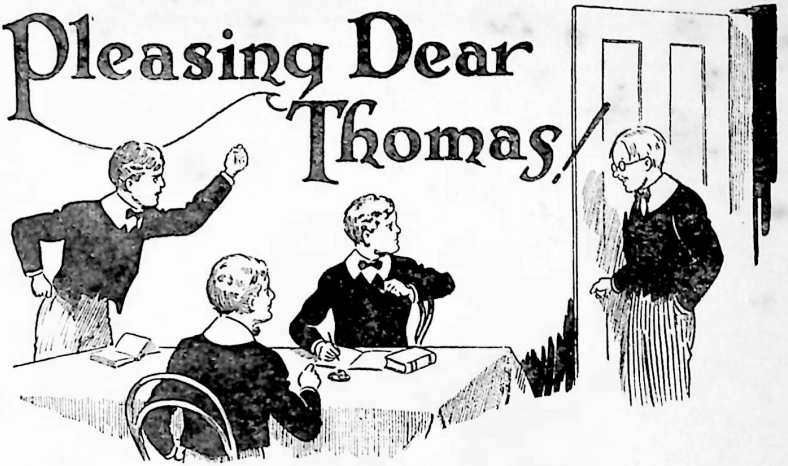
H.A.

"STAND FAST THE TWENTY-EIGHTH!"
An Epic of Waterloo.


DR. CHISHOLM
JIMMY SILVER
GEORGE BULKELEY
MR "DICKY" DALTON
A.E. LOVELL
VAL MORNINGTON
KIT ERROLL
"PUTTY" GRACE
CECIL KNOWLES
CLARENCE CUFFY
ARTHUR NEWCOME
"Leading Lights" AT Rookwood School
WAGG, THE POSTMAN
GEORGE RABY
TOMMY DOYLE
KIT CONROY
TOM RAWSON
TUBBY MUFFIN
MARK CARTHEW
TUPPER, THE PAGE BOY
CYRIL PEELE
MARK LATTREY
TOMMY DODD
'ERBERT OF THE SECOND FORM
TOMMY COOK

Pleasing Dear Thomas!



A Humorous Story of the Chums of Rookwood School

By OWEN CONQUEST

THE FIRST CHAPTER
Cuffy on the Carpet!

TOMMY DODD, of the Modern Fourth at Rookwood, grunted.

It was an expressive grunt.

Tommy was annoyed.

Cook and Doyle, his study-mates, grinned. They knew the cause of Tommy Dodd's annoyance, but they seemed to derive some entertainment from it.

Tommy Dodd looked at them morosely. He had thrown himself into the armchair in the study, with his hands driven deep into his pockets and a frown on his brow.

"All very well for you silly owls to snigger!" he said. "But what would you do if you had a relation like Cuffy?"

"Boil him in oil, bedad!" said Tommy Doyle.

"I think I'd take him out somewhere and lose him," grinned Tommy Cook. "Of all the silly chumps——"

"Of all the frabjous duffers——" said Doyle.

"I'm jolly well going to talk to him," said Tommy Dodd. "I've told the silly owl to come here. I'm going to give him a royal jaw!"

"Better give him a fives bat. He would understand that."

"Br-r-r-r!"

The study door opened, and Clarence Cuffy, of the Modern Fourth, looked in.

There was a genial smile upon the face of the duffer of Rookwood.

"You asked me to come here, my dear Thomas!" he remarked.

"Oh, trot in!"

"Certainly, Thomas!"

"You boiled owl!" said Tommy Dodd. "How often have I told you not to call me Thomas? Can't you make it Tom or Tommy?"

"I am so sorry, my dear Thomas," murmured Clarence. "It really does appear to me somewhat lacking in courtesy to address you by a disrespectful diminutive ——"

"Hark at him!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd, in great exasperation. "I suppose you

know that you are a born idiot, Cuffy!"

Clarence shook his head.

"While extremely unwilling, and indeed decidedly reluctant, to disagree with you, Thomas, I am bound to say that I was totally unaware of that circumstance," he answered.

"Is that the way for a human being to talk?" shrieked Tommy Dodd, with a frenzied look.

"My dear Thomas, I am far from desiring to exacerbate your already excited feelings, but I can only reply in the affirmative."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Cook and Doyle.

"Shut up, you cackling chumps!" said Tommy Dodd ferociously "Now. look here, Cuffy! You've got to chuck it. You're the biggest fool at Rookwood!"

"You forget yourself, Thomas."

"Wha-a-at?"

Cook and Doyle shrieked.

"Now, you've got to turn over a new leaf," said Tommy Dodd. "Understand? You're my relation, and you've got to leave off letting me down. Besides, my pater specially asked me to look after you at Rookwood. I'm going to do it. Are you willing to turn over a new leaf?"

"I am willing to do anything that will afford you even a modicum of satisfaction, my dear Thomas."

"In the first place, you've got to learn to talk like a human being!" yelled Tommy Dodd.

"Good gracious!"

"You're not to say 'good gracious'!" howled Tommy. "Can't you say 'My hat!' or 'Holy smoke!' like any other fellow?"

"Good gracious! I—I mean—holy hat—that is, my—my smoke!" gasped Cuffy, evidently anxious to please, but a little confused

"You've got to stop talking like a dictionary and being as serious as a boiled owl. You've got to cultivate a sense of humour, and stop being taken in by japers—especially Classical japers. It doesn't matter so much on this side, but you've got to stop letting the Classicals pull your leg. You've got to become like other fellows."

Cuffy shook his head.

"I should not care to become like the thoughtless youths who form the bulk of the population of Rookwood, my dear Thomas."

"Well, that's what you've got to do," said Tommy. "I dare say you were sent to Rookwood to get a little sense knocked into you. Now, I'm going to knock some. You've got to change entirely—so entirely that you won't know yourself. If you don't I'm going to lick you. See?"

"I trust you will not be guilty of any departure from the courteous amenities of existence, my dear Thomas."

"Won't I?" howled Tommy Dodd. "You'll see! Stop grinning, you chaps, and collar him!"

Cook and Doyle did not stop grinning; they couldn't. But they collared Clarence Cuffy.

"Lay him over the table!"

"My dear Thomas——"

Tommy Dodd picked up a fives bat. A loud whack echoed through the study, and dust rose from Clarence Cuffy's trousers. And a terrific yell rose from Clarence Cuffy.

"Yaroop!"

"Understand that?" exclaimed Tommy Dodd.

"Ow! Yes!" gasped Cuffy. "Stoppit!"

"You see, it's done you good already," grinned Tommy Dodd. "Five minutes ago you'd have said that the answer was in the affirmative, and requested me to cease."

"Yow-ow!"

Whack!

"Yoooop!"

"Now, that will do to go on with," said Tommy Dodd, laying down the bat. "You understand, Cuffy, that this is for your own good."

"Yow-ow!"

"I'm looking after you, just as my pater told me to. Chuck him off the table!"

Bump!

"Wooooop!"

"Now, Cuffy," said Tommy Dodd, shaking a warning forefinger at the dazed Clarence, as he sat gasping on the carpet.



While Cook and Doyle held Clarence Cuffy flat on the table, Tommy Dodd started in with a fives bat. Loud whacks echoed through the study, and clouds of dust rose from the duffer's trousers. "Yaroooo!" yelled Cuffy. "Ow! Stoppit!" (*See Chapter* 1.)

"That's the first lesson. Now you're going to turn over a new leaf."

"G-g-good gracious!"

"What?" roared Tommy Dodd, clutching up the fives bat again.

"Ow! I—I mean my hat!"

"That's better. Now you can clear out, and begin your reform," said Tommy Dodd. "In future, every time you're spoofed by a practical joker, I shall give you the fives bat. Don't believe everything that's told you. And don't be an owl!"

"B-b-but I am not an owl, my dear Thomas," said the bewildered Cuffy. "I am in total ignorance of possessing any ornithological attributes whatever!"

Whack!

"Yarooooh!"

"Bedad, he understands the fives bat!" said Tommy Doyle. "It's a good idea intirely!"

"Oh, dear!" gasped Cuffy. "M-m-may I go now, Thomas?"

"Cut, you silly ass! And start to-day being like the other fellows," said Tommy Dodd. "Stop being a serious owl. Jape somebody. Pull somebody's leg. Cough up a sense of humour somehow."

"But—but——"

"If you can't, it will be troublesome for you," said Tommy Dodd. "If you don't jape somebody to-day, I'm going to bat you again to-night!"

"Good—good—my hat! Oh, dear! But—but surely the recipient of a practical joke will be somewhat incommoded, and

may even be reduced to a condition of considerable exasperation—— Yaroooooh!"

Clarence Cuffy fled from the study, with the fives bat behind him. Tommy Dodd kicked the door shut.

"I fancy that will do him good!" he remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Clarence Cuffy retired to his own study in a state of great dismay and bewilderment. Cuffy was conscious of the fact that he was not quite like the other Rookwood fellows, but he was rather inclined to pride himself on the difference. He was a serious and thoughtful youth, and he had never played a "jape" in his life. And he did not want to. But he realised that the fives bat was a powerful argument. A request that was backed up by a fives bat was not to be disregarded.

"Good gracious!" murmured Cuffy. "I —I wonder if it is possible that there is some degree of reasonableness in the extraordinary views taken by Thomas? I should certainly like to gratify him, and the application of that obnoxious bat is certainly conducive to extreme personal discomfort. Oh, dear! I—I will try to please Thomas!"

And, having come to that sage resolve, the duffer of Rookwood set his powerful brain to work to discover the easiest and simplest method of pleasing Thomas.

THE SECOND CHAPTER
Startling!

JIMMY SILVER & Co., of the Classical Fourth, were at football practice on Little Side when the three Tommies arrived there. Arthur Edward Lovell bestowed a grin on the Moderns. It had been Arthur Edward's idea to start Clarence Cuffy singing in class that afternoon, and the unsuspecting Cuffy had fallen into the trap, much to the astonishment of the Form-master.

The Classicals still seemed to be extracting amusement from the incident. Which was extremely annoying to Tommy Dodd. Cuffy was his relative, and was under his wing, as it were. Tommy was not proud of his relative, and had often been exasperated by him. He had put his foot down at last; he was going to make Cuffy a bit more like the other fellows, or he was going to use up a fives bat on him. That was Tommy's fixed determination.

He had the satisfaction of banishing the grin from Arthur Edward Lovell's face by landing a muddy football there. Lovell grinned no more.

"You silly ass!" roared Lovell as the football slid off after depositing mud on his features. "Wharrar you playing at, banging a ball in a chap's face?"

"My mistake!" said Tommy Dodd blandly. "I didn't know it was a face! It doesn't look like one!"

"Why, you cheeky Modern worm——"

"You Classical ass!"

"Here, hold on!" roared Jimmy Silver, as Lovell rushed at the Modern junior. "This is footer, not a dog-fight!"

But Lovell did not heed. Apparently he thought that it was a dog-fight, and not footer.

He clasped Tommy Dodd round the neck, and they rolled on the ground together.

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome rushed up and dragged the combatants apart.

"Lemme gerrat him!" roared Lovell.

"Chuck it!"

"I'll smash him!" yelled Tommy Dodd.

"Cheese it, fathead!"

"You Modern dummy!"

"You Classical chump!"

Jimmy and Raby and Newcome walked Lovell off the field.

"Time we got in to tea, anyhow," remarked Jimmy Silver. "Come on, Lovell, old top!"

"I'm going to lick that Modern worm!" howled Lovell.

"You're coming in to tea, fathead!"

"Look here——"

"March!" said Jimmy Silver.

And Arthur Edward Lovell was walked off to the School House by his chums. The three Tommies continued football practice till dusk came on, and then they trotted off cheerfully to the Modern side to change, and repaired to their study for tea.

"Bedad, I'm hungry!" remarked Tommy Doyle, as he threw open the door of the study. "I—— Yaroooooop!"

It was dark in the study. As the door opened and Doyle stepped in, something was detached from the top of the door, and it came down on Tommy Doyle with a crash.

Dodd and Cook jumped back.

"What——" ejaculated Cook.

"Looks like a booby-trap!" grinned Tommy Dodd. "And Doyle's caught it!"

"Yurrrrrgggh!" came from Doyle, in wild accents.

He staggered into the passage, looking like a ghost. Flour was all over him from head to foot. Flour was in his hair, in his eyes, in his nose, down his neck, and sprinkled over his clothes. It was a large paper bag of flour that had rested on top of the door and had plumped on Doyle's head and burst.

Doyle breathed and spluttered flour. He lived and moved and had his being, as it were, in flour.

"My only hat!" gasped Tommy Dodd.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Cook.

"Groogh! You sniggering idiots!" gasped Doyle. "Is there anything funny in this? Grooch! I'm chook-chook-choking! I'm suffocated! Woooch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Who rigged up that bag of flour?" shrieked Doyle. "I want to find him! I'm going to slaughter him! Groooooogh!"

"Some Classical cad must have sneaked over while we were at the footer," said Tommy Dodd, laughing. "Never mind, old fellow, it's all in the game!"

"Yurrrrgggghh!"



Arthur Edward Lovell, incensed by Tommy Dodd's words, rushed at the Modern Junior, clasped him round the neck, and they rolled on the ground together. "Here, hold on!" roared Jimmy Silver. "This is footer, not a dog-fight." (*See Chapter* 2.)

"You do look a picture, old top!" said Cook. "Better get off to the dorm. and clean up. We'll get tea ready."

"Oooch! I — I — I'll slaughter the beast. I'll— I'll——"

Words failed Tommy Doyle. He stamped away to the dormitory to get the flour cleaned off—not an easy or rapid task.

Dodd and Cook grinned as they went into the study. They did not doubt that it was a Classical jape, but they could see the comic side of it, which was quite lost on Doyle himself.



The paper in the grate flared up as Doyle set light to it. The next moment there was a roar. Crack, crack! Bang! Squizz! Doyle recoiled from the terrific explosion, and Dodd and Cook slipped off their chairs and crashed to the floor. (*See Chapter* 2.)

Tommy Dodd struck a match and put it up to the gas. The gas did not catch, however.

"Oh, thump!" said Dodd crossly. "They can't have turned it off at the meter, I suppose."

"It's alight in the other studies," said Cook. "P'r'aps you haven't turned it on!"

"Fathead!"

"Well, you know what you are, old chap!"

"Dummy!" hooted Tommy Dodd.

"I'll try the other burner."

But the other burner did not light.

"Something's wrong with the dashed thing," he said. "Is there a candle anywhere?"

"There was a bit on the mantelpiece."

"Scout for it, then, old bean, if you know where it is."

Tommy Dodd groped on the mantelpiece and uttered an exclamation.

"Hallo! What's the matter now?" asked Cook.

"There's something upset here. I've got my fingers into it. Feels like ink."

"You've knocked the bottle over!"

"I haven't!" yelled Tommy Dodd.

"Well, find the candle, for goodness' sake! We can't sit in darkness like the giddy heathen."

Tommy Dodd breathed hard and groped again. He found the candle-end, and it was lighted. The glimmering light of the candle showed a flood of ink and gum on the mantelpiece, dripping into the fender. Cook stared at it.

"My hat! You've knocked over the gum as well as the ink!" he remarked.

"I tell you I didn't knock anything over!"

"Well, you must have——"

"I tell you——"

"They're knocked over, anyhow."

"You'll be knocked over pretty soon if you don't talk sense, Tommy Cook!"

"Bow-wow! Let's see what's wrong with the gas."

Cook mounted on a chair and examined the gas-burners by candle-light. Then he gave a whistle.

"By gum! They're plugged up!"

"What?"

"With sealing-wax," said Cook. "My only hat!"

The two Modern juniors stared at one another in great exasperation. A jape was all very well—Classicals and Moderns were always japing one another—but this was carrying it a little too far.

"Lovell, of course!" said Dodd.

"Or Jimmy Silver."

"The lot of them, most likely," hissed Tommy Dodd. "That's why they cleared off from the footer before we did. They came over here to muck up our study, the rotters! We'll jolly well make 'em sit up for this!"

"After tea, then," said Cook. "For goodness' sake lend a hand, and let's get a light!"



Jimmy Silver and Co. went sprawling on the floor as the three Modern juniors upended the table; and like a cataract there swept down upon them the cake, the biscuits, the tea, the crockery, and the jam! Crash! (*See Chapter* 4.)

Dodd and Cook were still scraping the gas-burners clean when Doyle came into the study, newly swept and garnished, but still looking floury. He did not seem in a good temper.

"Why the thump haven't you got a light?" he demanded.

"Burners plugged up with sealing-wax," grunted Tommy Dodd crossly. "Bear a hand, instead of jawing, or light the fire. Get the kettle on while we're getting a light, and give your chin a rest."

"Oh, rats!" said Doyle.

He knelt before the fire, which was ready laid, and struck a match.

The paper stuffed in the grate flared up as Doyle set light to it. The next moment there was a roar.

"Crack, crack! Bang! Fizz, fizz! Squizz! Bang, bang!

THE THIRD CHAPTER
Something Like a Rag!

DOYLE rolled backwards from the grate, completely flabbergasted by that terrific explosion. Dodd and Cook spun round and slipped off the chairs they were standing on, and landed on the carpet.

Bang, bang!

Fizz! Crack, crack, crack! Fizz, fizz!

"Oh, my hat!"

"Great Christopher Columbus!"

"What the thump——"

"Fireworks!"

"What burbling idiot——"

"Oh, dear!"

The fireworks spluttered out at last. Fragments of wood and coal were scattered over the study, and the smell of gunpowder was strong and unpleasant. Its fumes filled the study. The three Tommies stared at one another blankly.

"Open the window!" gasped Dodd.

Cook threw open the window. Tommy Dodd staggered to his feet, and his face was a study in indignant wrath.

"Some Classical brute——" he stuttered.

"Ow! I've jolly nearly had my eyebrows singed off!" howled Doyle. "Some crass idiot found the fire laid and stacked fireworks into it! Ow!"

"We'll go over to the Classical side and mop them up!" roared Tommy Dodd. "I'll give 'em japing in our study, the rotters!"

"Oh, dear!"

The gas was lighted at last. The three Tommies stared at the havoc in their study in wrath and dismay. They did not doubt to whom they owed these kind attentions. They thought of the Fistical Four of the Classical Fourth at once.

"The rotters!" growled Tommy Dodd. "We'll make 'em sit up for this! Get that fire going somehow, and let's have tea!"

Doyle started on the fire, this time without explosive results. Tommy Dodd proceeded to turn the cupboard out for tea. He breathed hard as he handed out the teapot.

"That'll want washing!" he said.

"I washed it yesterday!" grunted Cook.

"It's got ink in it now."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Here's the tea-caddy! Great Scott! What's the matter with this tea?" Tommy Dodd stared into the biscuit-tin which was used as a tea-caddy.

The tea was there, but it was mixed with coffee, boot-polish, and gum. As tea, it was no longer desirable.

"They've made a pretty thorough jape of it!" said Tommy Dodd, breathing hard.

"I don't call this a jape!" snapped Cook. "I call this dashed hooliganism! Wrecking a study like this is——"

"Look at the jam!"

"Oh, crikey!"

There was a pound of jam in a three-pound jar. The empty space, however, had been filled up—with cinders and ashes.

"And the marmalade——" breathed Cook.

"My hat! The butter's in it!"

"And the ink——"

"Here's the loaf, anyhow! It's got a queer niff——"

"Some villain has been sprinkling carbide of calcium over it!"

"Oh, dear!"

Tea in Tommy Dodd's study was likely to be a difficult meal that evening. The japer had evidently done his work with



Between the two lines of Classical juniors scudded the three Tommies, while hefty blows rained on them, amid yells of laughter. "Give 'em socks!" roared Lovell. "Make 'em hop! Go it!" (*See Chapter* 4.)

much thoroughness. As they looked round the study, the three Tommies noticed that the clock was not ticking. They were hardly surprised, now, to find that it was filled with flour.

Tommy Dodd, feeling almost overcome, sank down in the armchair. He reposed there for a millionth part of a second, and then leaped to his feet with a fiendish yell.

"Phwat's the matter now?" howled Doyle.

"Ow! Yow! Wow! Tacks!"

"Tacks!" said Cook dazedly. "Oh, dear!"

"I've sat on 'em!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you sniggering dummy——"

"Look here!" exclaimed Doyle. "We're not standing this! They've mucked up our study while we've been at footer, and now they'll be having tea and chortling over it. Let's go over and mop 'em up! There's no tea for us here, anyhow, and it's too late for Hall. Let's go and smash 'em!"

Tommy Dodd's eyes gleamed.

"Good!" he said, between his teeth. "We'll give 'em something else to chortle over! Come on!"

The three Tommies, in a state of boiling rage and exasperation, left the study. There was no tea for them. Nothing, in fact, remained but vengeance. Just then they wanted vengeance more than they wanted their tea.

They hurried down the stairs and slipped out into the dusky quadrangle. They scudded across to the School House.

Bulkeley, of the Sixth, spotted them as they came in, and called out to them.

"Hallo! What do you Modern fags want?"

"Just going to speak to Jimmy Silver!" said Tommy Dodd, with a sweet smile.

"Oh, all right!"

The three Tommies mounted the stairs, and reached the Fourth Form passage.

Most of the Classical Fourth were in their studies at tea. They found only Tubby Muffin loose in the passage. Tubby blinked at them.

"Hallo, you Modern bounders! What —— Yoooooop!"

Tubby Muffin sat down with a bump, and the three Tommies rushed up the passage to the end study, to speak to Jimmy Silver!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER
Only Cuffy!

JIMMY SILVER & Co. were at tea in the end study.

The Fistical Four were in a very cheery mood.

There had been a remittance that day from an uncle of Lovell's, whose name was Arthur Edward. Lovell had been named after that uncle, with excellent results. One of the results was that there was a really tip-top spread in the end study on this occasion. There were three kinds of jam, there was ham and bloater paste, there were biscuits and jellies, and there was a big cake. Lovell, as he surveyed the festive board, felt that his parents had acted with a thoughtfulness unusual in grown-ups, in naming him after Uncle Arthur Edward.

Tubby Muffin, of course, had scented the feed and rolled in. Lovell's boot had persuaded him to roll out again. Now the Fistical Four, hungry after footer in the keen air, were enjoying the spread. It was tip-top, and it was extensive, and they were doing it full justice. It was quite a different scene from that in Tommy Dodd's study over the way. The fire burned brightly, the gaslight glimmered on shining crockery and on four cheery faces.

"Topping!" said Raby, with his mouth full of cake. "Lovell, old man, your uncle is a brick! I've got two I'd swap for him."

"This cake," said Newcome, "is a corker! Good old nunky!"

Arthur Edward Lovell beamed.

And then——

Suddenly, like a bolt from the blue, came the disaster. The study door was hurled open as if by a battering-ram. Three excited and infuriated youths rushed into the study.

Before the Fistical Four even had time to jump up the enemy were upon them.

Then, as in the famous case of the Raven's unhappy master, unmerciful disaster followed fast and followed faster!

Four yelling and astounded juniors went sprawling on the floor amid overturned chairs, and the table was up-ended upon them.

Like a cataract there swept down upon the carpet and upon the sprawling four the cake, the biscuits, the tea, and the crockery, the bloater-paste, and three kinds of jam!

Crash!

It was something like an earthquake, but rather more so. In a moment that cheery study looked as if a cyclone had struck it.

"Give 'em socks!" roared Tommy Dodd.

"Hurrah!"

"Give 'em jip!"

"You Modern rotters!" raved Lovell.

Jimmy Silver sprang to his feet, and jerked the jam-dish out of his waistcoat and the milk-jug out of his neck. The jam and the milk were not so easily detached.

"Pile in on 'em!" roared Jimmy.

The Co. scrambled up furiously. They piled in on their assailants with fury. In a moment there was a record scrap going on in the end study.

Crash! Thud! Bump! Thump! Crash!

There were four Classicals to three Moderns, but Tommy Dodd & Co., full of righteous wrath, were putting up the fight of their lives. The combatants trampled to and fro, struggling and pommelling, trampling over crockery and cake and jam.

The uproar rang the length of the passage, and there was a rush of fellows from other studies to see what was going on. Classical juniors crammed the passage outside the doorway.

"Modern cads!" shouted Mornington. "Give 'em socks!"

"Here, fair play!" yelled Tommy Dodd. "We've come over here to lick this study. Ow—wow!"

"Scrag 'em!" howled Lovell. "They're—they've mucked up the feed! Look at the cake! Look at the jam! Oh, my hat!"

"Rag the rotters!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "Dashed hooligans! This isn't a jape—this is dashed ruffianism! Give 'em the jam!"

"Ow! Yow! Leggo—oooooch!"

The Fistical Four were wrathy, not without reason. That gorgeous spread was gone from their gaze like a beautiful dream. What remained of it was trampled on the carpet. Naturally, they did not stand on ceremony with the reckless invaders.



When the three enraged Tommies had finished with Clarence Cuffy, he sat up in the passage and wondered whether he was still all in one piece. Only one thing was clear in his mind—he had not succeeded in pleasing dear Thomas! (*See Chapter 4.*)

"Give 'em beans!" shouted Tubby Muffin valiantly from the rear. "Go for 'em, you fellows! Lynch 'em!"

There was not much room in the study for more combatants, but Mornington and Conroy, Putty Grace and Oswald and Rawson, crowded in. The Moderns were collared.

The three Moderns were seized and held, and the remains of the jam lathered over them liberally.

"Now we'll make them run the gauntlet in the passage," said Jimmy Silver vengefully. "They've got to learn better manners than this!"

"We'll pulverise 'em!" gasped Lovell. "All the feed mucked up—my hat! The rotten ruffians——"

"Serve you jolly well right!" howled Tommy Dodd. "I'm glad! 'Tain't worse than you've done in our study!"

"What! We've done nothing in your study," said Jimmy Silver. "Haven't been near your mouldy study! What do you mean?"

"Gammon! You've wrecked our study ——"

"We haven't, you ass!"

"I—I say—honest Injun?" gasped Tommy Dodd. He realised that perhaps he had been a little hasty. "We—we thought it was you fellows, of course. The place has been wrecked!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

He understood the cause now of that sudden and infuriated entry into the end study.

"Here, hold on! Let's explain!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd breathlessly. "We—we thought it was you chaps. If it wasn't, we're—we're sorry——"

"Fat lot of good being sorry, isn't it?" hooted Lovell. "Look at what you've done!"

"Look here! Haven't you fellows been in our quarters?" exclaimed Cook.

"No, you Modern ass!"

"Well, it was some Classical rotter if it wasn't you," said Doyle. "Show us what study it was, and we'll mop up that study, man to man."

"Nobody's been raiding you that I know of," said Jimmy Silver.

"Rats!"

Tommy Dodd glanced round at the wreck, and felt a little remorseful. His proceedings had been rather drastic, considering that the Fistical Four were guiltless, after all.

"Well, I'm sorry," he said. "I didn't know—I thought——"

"Think a bit more carefully next time," snorted Lovell. "You're going through it now. It may help you to think another time, with your feeble little Modern brain. Form up, you fellows!"

"You bet!"

"Look here——" began Dodd.

"Go it!"

The grinning Classicals formed up in a double line in the passage. Every fellow grasped a cap, or a cushion, or a fives bat, or something else, and stood ready. In spite of their explanations and expostulations, the three Tommies were hurled out of the end study and started.

There was no help for it. They had to run the gauntlet of the whole Classical Fourth.

They ran as if for their lives.

Down the passage they went scudding, and from either side hefty blows rained on them, amid yells of laughter. The three Tommies yelled, too, but not with laughter by any means.

"Give 'em socks!" roared Arthur Edward Lovell. "Make 'em hop! Go it!"

The Classical juniors were "going it" with a vengeance. The three Tommies ran, and staggered, and lurched, and ran again, and by the time they reached the staircase they hardly knew whether they were on their heads or on their heels.

They went down the stairs three at a time, breathless, with yells and catcalls and hoots following them from above. Glad enough were the three hapless Moderns to dodge out into the quadrangle and escape.

In the dusk of the quad., they stopped at last to pump in breath. They felt in sore need of their second wind.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Tommy Dodd. "What a go! I—I say, we were rather asses to jump to conclusions like that——"

"You were an ass, you mean!" spluttered Cook. "I agree—you were! A thundering ass!"

"Oh, holy Moses!" groaned Doyle. "Don't rag, you dummies! It's bad enough already! I'm bumped all over!"

"Oh, crikey!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

A disconsolate trio limped home to the Modern side. It was some time before Tommy Dodd felt equal to making any further inquiry into the mystery of the

raid. With inquiry, the mystery seemed to deepen. Nobody in the house had seen any Classical juniors about—nobody had seen any raiders near Dodd's study, or in the house at all. It really looked as if the "rag" must have been perpetrated by Modern fellows; but that was impossible, for surely no Modern junior would have dared to raise the heel against Tommy Dodd, the great chief of the Modern juniors, in this way. Dodd was perplexed and puzzled.

It was later that enlightenment came. In a rather dismal mood, the three Tommies were at prep., when their study door opened, and the smiling, beaming face of Clarence Cuffy looked in.

Tommy Dodd waved an impatient hand at him. He was in no mood to be bothered just then by the duffer of Rookwood.

"Cut, Cuffy!" he snapped.

"I have done my best to please you, Thomas!" purred Cuffy. "I hope you were pleased!"

Tommy Dodd stared.

"Why, what have you done?" he asked.

Clarence beamed.

"I have done as you wished, my dear fellow. For the first time in my life, I have played a practical joke! I have been very thorough—very thorough indeed, my dear Thomas!"

Tommy Dodd grinned.

"And who's the happy victim?" he asked.

"You, my dear Thomas!"

Tommy jumped.

"Me? I?" he yelled.

Clarence nodded, with a smile.

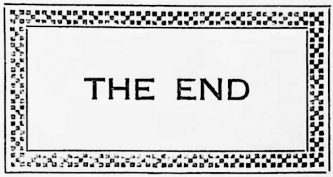
"Yes! I have been playing practical jokes in your study, my dear Thomas, just as you wished. It seemed very strange to me that you should desire me to play practical jokes, but I have always wished to please you, my dear Thomas. I have told the fellows about it, and they are laughing like anything in the Common-room, Thomas. Do you think it was very funny?"

Tommy Dodd stared at the hopeful Cuffy as if paralysed. Cook and Doyle regarded him open-mouthed. They understood at last! It was not a Classical raid on their study, after all! It was Cuffy—only Cuffy!

"You!" Tommy Dodd managed to articulate at last. "You!"

"Little me!" smiled Cuffy. "I was very thorough, was I not, my dear Thomas? I did everything I could think of. I should never have dreamed, dear Thomas, that I possessed such extensive faculties for practical joking, a form of somewhat disagreeable entertainment I have hitherto disregarded and condemned. But in trying to please you——"

Three maddened juniors came at him like three arrows. What happened next was amazing to Cuffy—amazing, confusing, and very, very painful. When he was left in the passage, he sat up and wondered whether he was still all in one piece. Only one thing was clear to his mind, and that was that, after all his patient efforts, he had not succeeded in pleasing dear Thomas! On that point, at least, there was no possible, probable shadow of doubt—no possible doubt whatever!



High Days & Holidays



CHUMS AWHEEL!

MOUNTING our trusty steeds of steel,
We all set off together;
Light-hearted, care-free chums awheel
Defying wind and weather!
And fast and fierce the pedals fly,
And bells clang out in chorus;
And ever we've a watchful eye
On the white road before us.

Wharton and Cherry, Bull and Brown,
Redwing and Rake and Russell,
And other cyclists of renown—
All men of might and muscle!
Softies and slackers do not care
To join our gay excursion;
With drowsy voices they declare,
"Exertion's our aversion!"

Through leafy Kentish lanes we spin,
And bowl along the byways;
Avoiding thus the dust and din
And hubbub of the highways.
And when a farmhouse comes in sight,
With "DAINTY TEAS PROVIDED!"
With one accord we all alight,
On choice cream cakes decided.

And when the sun sinks in the West,
A golden ball of glory;
We pedal home, with song and jest,
And many a merry story.
We cycle through the dusky Close,
Where shades of night fall eerily;
And then retire to our repose
Both wearily and cheerily!

Stepping on The Gas!

ON the last lap of a motor race, the excitement of that most thrilling of all sporting events reaches its climax. For mile after mile the daring drivers have piloted their plunging mounts round the tortuous course of winding roads, driving apparently at reckless speed, yet actually with an iron restraint. No race driver who hopes to win can afford to let his car "all out" in the early stages of a gruelling road race. The engine must be carefully "nursed," and a little bit of extra speed must be kept in hand against the many emergencies which may crop up. Thus engine revolutions must be kept rigidly down below the danger mark, however great the temptation, until the last lap!

The last lap! Every man puts his foot down on the throttle-pedal, and goes "all out" to win! The sorely-tried engines literally scream round; the plunging cars are wrenched round the corners, their tyres slithering and scrabbling on the torn-up road surface. What a thrill for the spectators—and a super-thrill for the drivers themselves!

The last lap of a big road race, such as the International Tourist Trophy Race held by the Royal Automobile Club each year in Northern Ireland, becomes, in motor-racing parlance, a "regular dog-fight." Now or never is the thought in each driver's mind, and every man "steps on the gas" until the chequered flag slashes down as the winning car crosses the line!

Our colour plate shows a spirited "scrap" on the last lap by three cars in close company in the last Tourist Trophy race.

As is the rule in International motor races, the nationality of the different cars is indicated by their colour. Thus the leading car represents Italy, red being the colour allotted to that nation. The blue car lying second is French, while the green car closely pressing the leaders is British.

Let us hope that No. 3 proves the victor in the ding-dong struggle for the Blue Riband of the motor-racing world!



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H.A.

THE LAST LAP!

TAKING THE RISK!



BY
BERT
KEMPSTER

Two hundred miles to go, at the average speed of an express train: and a half-sawn-through steering column lay between young Bob—racing motor-cyclist—and a frightful crash!

THE FIRST CHAPTER
It's the Only Way!

"Mr. Long—look at this!"

Bob Weldon rose with a jerk to his feet from amidst the litter of parts about the racing motor-cycle. Forks and steering column in hand, he beckoned his perspiring, oil-stained companion to him.

"Why, what's the matter?"

Long, tired-eyed and "nervy," came round to where the youngster stood, and, with a trace of impatience that in the circumstances was not unnatural, held out a grimy paw for the forks. "Can't I leave anything to anybody?" he said, frowning as he took the component.

Bob fought down the quick sense of resentment called for by the elder man's manner. Long had had a pretty tough gruelling these last hours and was rattled. Trouble at the last moment, and with little more than an hour to go before the race, was enough to get on anyone's nerves.

"The steering column's cracked, sir. It must have gone during practice. The metal crystallised, or something." Bob placed his finger on a mark just visible through the thick coating on the tube.

Long's grim mouth tightened. With a lump of waste, he wiped the tube clean, then bent over to scrutinise it closely. The next instant he uttered a sharp ejaculation.

"Crystallised! My lad, that's no flaw! Someone's been at this tube with a hacksaw! Look at it—cut half through, and only hanging on by the eyelids!"

Bob stared aghast. The column into which the handlebars fitted was a vital part. Brazed to the forks themselves as it was, there was no time to replace it; and spare forks there was none. The race in an hour—and not a chance to be ready.

"This will mean you can't start, sir!" The lad hardly dared look at his employer as he spoke.

Long, young and a master of "tune," was, as his apprentice knew, pinning everything on the result of the forthcoming two hundred miles race. On a victory would depend Long's business for the season ahead.

If he won, he would sell a number of his special brand of "hotted-up" speedsters—machines turned out with wondrous care and skill in the rear portion of his small, but famous garage. If he lost—well, it would make all the difference.

For a few seconds the racing man stood frowning, his grey eyes on the damaged part. Then he clenched his teeth.

"I shall start, Bob!" he announced, with quiet decision. "I've got to start. My wife needs that operation, and she can't have it if I don't pull this thing off. A win will mean the money I need for it. I'll have to take a chance, and risk it."

"But that tube will go before you've gone ten laps, sir!" Bob protested, with a swift glance at the concrete trackway about the great Brooklands saucer, with its stretches of high banking. "Travelling at a hundred, and with those rough patches on the track!"

"I'll ram a short liner down inside the column. That'll strengthen it a bit." Long cut his junior short. "Gimme that hammer—and that bit of tubing over there!" He held out his hand imperatively.

Bob passed over the tool and tubing. Anxiety on his frank young features, he stood by, watching while his boss dexterously fitted the short length of weldless steel pipe into place.

Desperate as Long might be, to race the machine under such conditions was madness, little short of suicide. The liner would, of course, strengthen the column. But, even so, the latter might give at any moment, the forks collapse, and the bike with them.

And Long, hurtling onwards at terrific speed, would be hurled headlong from the saddle upon the whizzing concrete beneath. It meant a gamble with death; a gamble that the tube held up, or, if it did not, then that the rider's crash helmet would save him.

"But supposing you're killed, sir?" Bob forced himself to speak what he felt he must point out. "What will happen to Mrs. Long then?"

"I'm insured," Long returned laconically, and with the air of one dismissing an objection for good and all. "There'll be plenty of money for the operation."

He put a finishing touch to his task, held the forks and column up to run his eye down them, then changed the subject abruptly.

"I'd like to know who did this!" he said fiercely.

"All the fellows are jolly good sportsmen here, Mr. Long. I can't think of anyone who would stoop to do such an underhand thing. Only——" Bob hesitated, something in his mind that he dared not voice.

"I know what you're thinking." Long took him up in a trice. "There is only one man that would stick at nothing down here—only one man that needs to beat me so badly that he's got to use these sort of methods. And that's Moreton Floyde. Eh?"

Bob said nothing. In his heart he knew that what Long said was true.

Floyde owned just such another business as Long's. All through the previous season there had been keen rivalry between them. The "dusts-up" on the track between Long's "Neptune" racer and Floyde's special "Fulmen" had been the talk of the motor-cycle world. Like Long, Floyde must be depending upon the forthcoming race for his season's sales.

Floyde had a cunning, hang-dog look about him. He had done several mean things in the past, unsportsmanlike things that had not tended to enhance his popularity. Also he hated Long—Bob knew that. And yet——

Sharp practice in riding was a different thing to—yes, it was murder, or attempted murder, this tampering with the column. And, decent-minded young fellow that he was, Bob shrank from an accusation he was in no position to prove.

"I'd like to know how anyone got at the machine, anyhow," Long went on, breaking in upon his junior's chain of thought. "That was your carelessness, Bob. This job could only have been done while the 'bus was 'down'—in pieces. And if you'd been on the spot, as you should have been——"

"I did leave for a few minutes," Bob confessed. "I went to borrow a tool from the Dixie people."

"And—well, we won't say who—*someone* slid in and did the business while your back was turned!" Long clenched his fists in impotent wrath, then added philosophically: "Well, it can't be helped now. Shall

have to chance it." And, with the aid of his young assistant, he rapidly completed the reassembly of the machine.

Bob remained silent. It was useless to try to persuade his employer to change his mind. Long was a dare-devil by nature, and obstinate to the core. His mind made up, nothing would alter it. Bob knew his boss too well to believe anything else.

But if Long feared nothing, Bob did. He had a deep sense of affection for the clever and kindly young rider to whom he was apprenticed, and he viewed the prospects of the race with the gravest anxiety.

What could be done to save Long from the smash that, in his desperation, he was so courageously prepared to face for the sake of his invalid wife?

"Perhaps it was largely my fault," the youngster thought to himself as, under Long's instructions, he stowed the motor-cycle away in the lock-up shed in the paddock and secured the door. "It's up to me. I've got to think of something—something ——"

"I'm going to have a cup of strong coffee, then lie down till the line-up for the start." Long swung round on his junior as they walked away towards the club-house. "I'm dog-tired with this unexpected trouble cropping up at the last minute, and I want to be fresh for the race. I shall rely on you to wake me."

"Very well, sir," Bob answered gloomily, and watched his master disappear through the door leading into the buffet.

"Well, are you Neptune people going to beat me to-day, or are you packing up, by any chance?" A harsh, nasal voice spoke at Bob's elbow, and the lad spun round, to find himself face to face with a short, pasty-cheeked man, from whose pendulous lip there drooped the fag-end of a cigarette.

It was Moreton Floyde.

"Packing up?" Bob echoed, with a quick, searching look at the other's shifty countenance. "What put that idea into your head, Mr. Floyde?"

"Oh, nothin'!" Floyde flicked the ash from his cigarette with a careless gesture. "I saw you'd got the 'bus in bits this morning. Just wondered if you were in trouble, that's all."

"We were in trouble. But we're starting, all the same," Bob replied meaningly. "But perhaps you're disappointed, eh, Mr. Floyde?" Again he watched the other closely.

Floyde frowned, and started almost imperceptibly. A sudden look of fear flecked his bloodshot eyes, a look of terror in face of the unexpected.

"I—oh—er—not at all! Why should I?" He raised his hand to take the cigarette from his mouth, but his fingers shook so that the stump fell to the ground. "I—I'd sooner have a good race than a walk-over, naturally."

And, with a curt nod, he strolled away to the buffet door.

Bob drew a deep breath. He had seen enough. Floyde had given himself away. But if he had done that, he had done something more. That look of fear showed that he was now frightened with the possible results of his own act.

Perhaps it was a last-minute repentance. Or perhaps he had never expected his rival would ride. The saw-cut would be discovered, and Long would be out of the race. What would he do now?

Wondering inwardly, Bob strolled by the buffet window, and out of curiosity paused to glance inside.

Long stood by the counter, a cup of coffee before him. He was talking to another racing man, and his gaze was momentarily averted from the cup.

On his other side stood Floyde, lounging against the buffet, his right hand in his coat pocket. Then the hand rose swiftly, hovered over the coffee cup, and dropped again.

Intuitively Bob sensed what had happened.

Floyde had put something into the hot brown liquid—something that would never taste—something, though, that would make Long sleep like the dead when, a few minutes later, he went, the coffee drunk, to have his nap.

Long took the cup and raised it to his lips.

" Stop !"

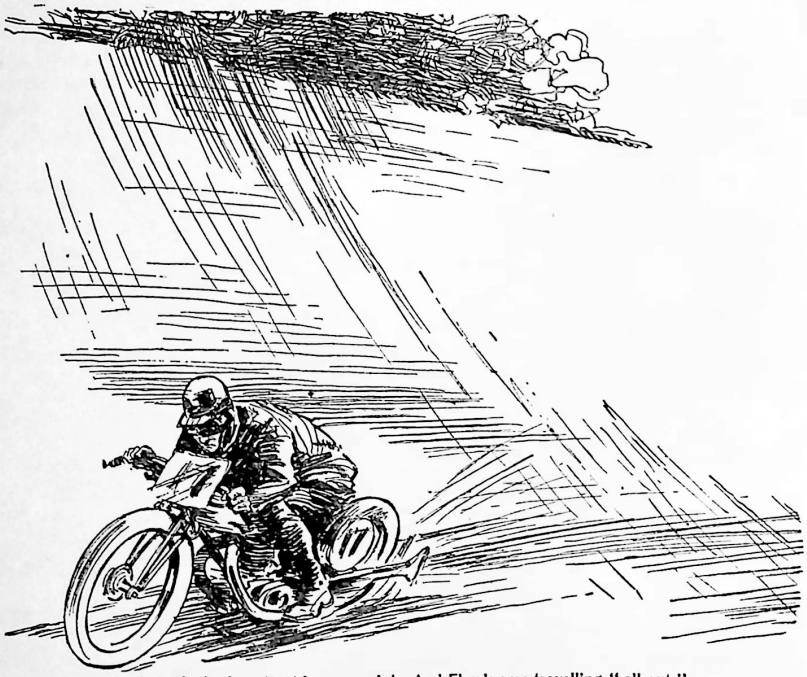
Bob gave a cry of warning, but his voice did not carry through the closed pane. He could never get round to the door in time. The cup was at Long's lips now, and——

Smash in the pane and shout—that was the only way ! And the lad's fist clenched and rose.

Floyde faced the starter, his rival would be missing.

" Yes, it's the only way !" Bob muttered to himself as he passed on, leaving Long to drain the doped coffee to the dregs. " I feel an awful rotter, but—yes, it's got to be done !"

An instant later and his expression



Floyde in the lead—yet not by so much ! And Floyde was travelling " all out "—

But it never fell upon the glass. In that fraction of a second Bob changed his mind. His fingers unclenched themselves, and the hand dropped limply.

He had a plan—a plan that had come to him as quick as a flash of lightning. He would not interfere with Floyde's crafty scheming. Long should sleep. And when

changed. With a sudden hunch, he squared his broad young shoulders, and a look of fierce resolve came into his eyes.

" I wonder if I can put it over ?" was his amazing comment as he walked away.

Another idea had entered his head, and his face reflected that Floyde would not have things all his own way !

THE SECOND CHAPTER
Smashing to Victory !

"WHERE's Long?"

The starter, flag in hand, glanced down the long line of machines that, their riders beside them, stood ready along the black-painted mark, waiting for the stick to drop.

" Mr. Long is not riding, sir. He's fast asleep. I couldn't wake him."

Bob, who had just pushed Long's " Neptune " up to the line, called across to the official an explanation of its owner's absence. As he spoke, he reached for the crash helmet, hooked over the handlebars.

" Not starting?" The official seemed surprised. " Well, if that's so, my lad, you'd better wheel that bike off the track. Sharp, now! Time's all but up."

"Thought your boss might wake up, and dash up at the last second, eh?" Floyde, who lay next in line to the Neptune, peered round with a sneering grin. " Well, you can just shift that old iron out of my way, my lad."

And he jerked a thumb at the machine in Bob's strong young hands.

" Excuse me, sir "—Bob ignored Floyde, and shouted across to the starter—" but I'm riding in Mr. Long's place. He—he's not well. He'd be here to explain otherwise."

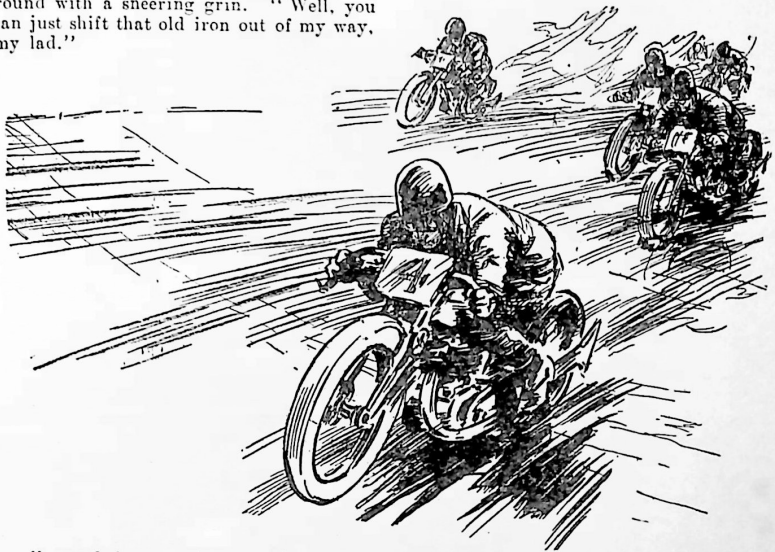
"Rot!" Floyde gave a sudden start, then faced the official. " This kid will only kill himself, Mr. Laweson. You won't allow him to start, surely?"

Laweson, his flag poised, hesitated. And while he hesitated, Bob cut in.

" So you're afraid of the Neptune, Mr. Floyde—no matter who rides it?" he challenged in a loud voice, at which a titter of laughter ran down the waiting line of pilots.

Floyde was not popular.

He flushed angrily, and muttered something inaudible. But the titter decided Laweson. With a slight shrug, he nodded his head.



—He was playing no nursing game. Instead, he had let his motor have its head, forcing the pace all the way—forcing—forcing ! (*See Chapter* 2.)

" All right, Weldon. You can start, since it seems Long wishes it. Buck up with that helmet!"

Astride his machine, Bob strapped on the cushioned headgear, his fingers steady and nerveless, despite the pounding of his heart against his ribs. Then, gripping the bars, he dismounted, and crouched, ready for the push-off.

Swoosh! The flag fell with a slick, and in a flash the harsh crackle of twenty exhausts smote the air. The race was on!

One push, and the Neptune fired, to leap forward with a bound that all but tore it from Bob's unaccustomed hands. But he saved himself by a hair's-breadth, and, with a fearful wobble, righted the 'bus as he swung himself aboard. The next moment, and he was crouching low over the tank, his chin on the bars, the Neptune throbbing beneath him as he whirled off down the track.

He had a vague glimpse of Floyde, getting away beside him; of the others pushing, coaxing, forcing, and mounting their machines. Then the thunder of the barking exhausts came back in smashing reverberation from off the high banking; the hill and the members' bridge spanning the track beyond rushed to meet him, and he forgot the field as he settled down, calmly and methodically, to face the two hundred miles of whirlwind travelling that lay ahead.

Two hundred miles! Two hundred miles to go, at the average speed of an express train!

And that half-sawn-through steering tube was all that lay between him and a frightful crash!

His grim mouth tightened, as well it might. But his teeth gritted indomitably.

Thank Heaven, Long was not riding! He was sleeping on, oblivious of the race, the risks, and the dreadful issue upon which the finish must depend.

Well, he—Bob Weldon—had no invalid wife in dependence upon him. Alone in the world, it mattered little whether he lived or died. And he had given Floyde his chance; he left the Neptune unwatched while the scheming rival stole in and worked his dirty trick.

Yes, it was his " pigeon," Bob thought, as he roared off down the track. That column would probably go, in which case —well, Long would not crash, anyway.

And if the tube held up? What then? A win?

You never knew! Even that was barely possible, despite the field of hardy, experienced pilots riding against him. A hundred to one chance—an impossible chance, almost!

Well, he would take it! He had saved Long from a smash! Could he snatch victory from defeat as well?

Only the long eternity of the desperate, high-speed struggle ahead—only those two hundred miles of nerve-racking torture and ceaseless risk could provide an answer! What would it be?

. . . . . .

One hundred and fifty miles! Some fifty-five circuits of that dazzling white concrete track, of banking and " straight," of never-ending vibration and spine-pounding onrush!

And still the tube held up! Still the quivering thing of aluminium and steel that Herbert Long had fashioned swept onwards round the vast oval track, the roar of its wizard-tune engine unfaltering.

And the field?

For the hundredth time Bob risked a swift backward glance across his shoulder. Many had fallen by the wayside, their machines at rest, in mute protest against the fearful strain of the speed battle, now nearing its finish.

Ahead lay Floyde, flat down upon the tank of his Fulmen racer, leading the struggling chain of rival speedmen strung out behind him. On his heels, Baxter, another redoubtable champion, clung doggedly, astride a well-known mount of mass-production manufacture. And third lay Bob Weldon, his Neptune a-throb with the torrential pulsations of its screaming engine.

Floyde in the lead—yet not by so much! Only a furlong separated him from Baxter.

And less than fifty yards divided Baxter from Bob.

And Floyde was travelling "all out"; he was playing no nursing game. Instead, he had let his motor have its head, forcing the pace all the way—forcing—forcing!

Did he hope to run the field off their legs—or, rather, wheels? Did he plan to shake that sawn-up tubing through by sheer battering of speed shock? Or was he running—running away from the dreadful thing that might happen when the tube gave, running as a man half-demented by terror might flee from the spectre of his own misdoing?

As he lay down to his bars, his wrists and fingers numb with the ceaseless quiver of the whipping grips, Bob wondered. And as he wondered, his eyes set on the track ahead, he found himself gaining.

Baxter, the second man, was growing larger, his bent back nearer. And Floyde?

A little—how long Bob could not tell, for he only counted the laps, and even of their tally he had grown weary—a little, and Baxter fell away, lost in the dust-flung wake astern.

Ahead, Floyde—Floyde and that furlong of intervening space that gulfed him and his projected victim. A furlong, and the race—another twenty-five miles up! Well, if that lead were to be wiped out——

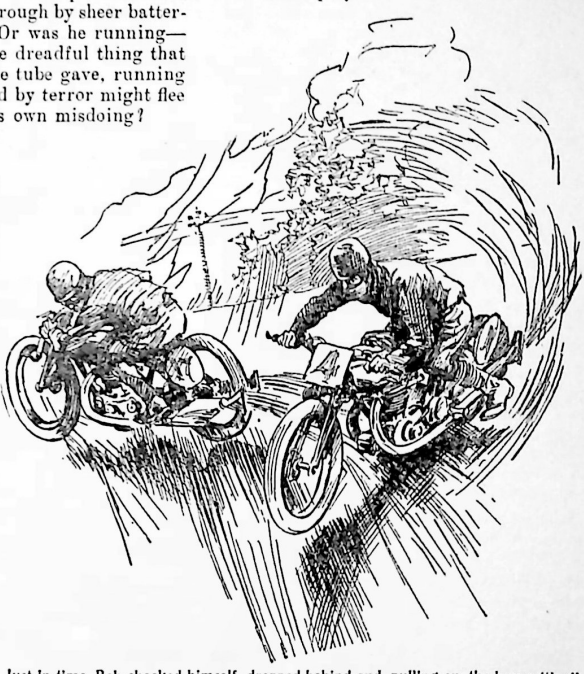
Bob's finger moved to the throttle lever, and in response the engine throbbed to a new note that sent the Neptune shooting forward with a bound.

Down upon the leader it drew, slowly the gap narrowing—narrowing!

Once Floyde looked round, did something that set his mount in swifter motion, then looked again. And at this Bob's finger touched the throttle anew; the gap went on narrowing. And when Floyde tried a second time to quicken up, the distance held.

Another subtle movement of the throttle lever, some play with the air lever, and the Neptune drew on. Now Floyde's back was growing, its number card insistent with the punch of a poster, the black figures of which held Bob's eye in some strange, magnetic lure.

On—on—and the laps piling up! What was that? The seventieth circuit! And but two more to go! Another bare six miles!



Just in time, Bob checked himself, dropped behind and, pulling on the bars with all his might, forced his mount inwards, his front wheel missing the deadly brink by inches! (*See next page.*)

The Neptune crept in on its rival. Now it was level! And as he came up, travelling close on ninety, yet with the seeming crawl of a snail, Bob saw the other turn. For a fleeting moment Floyde's ashen face looked into his, and those frightened, bloodshot eyes blinked across at him in mingled fear and fury!

To be beaten by a boy—a new-comer—an apprentice! And on the Neptune, too! For that one passing instant the mute message of Floyde's narrowed eyes told their own story of hate, despair, and fierce resolve.

He swung outward and upwards. As Bob made to pass him, he thrust over and over, out across the track and up the wide, steep banking, forcing the youngster with him.

Nearer and nearer the top—nearer and nearer! Below, the track, white and whizzing, a thing of streaks and whirling nothingness. Above—no, level here—the edge, with the brink beyond! The brink, and a plunge sheer into the trees below!

Just in time Bob checked himself, dropped behind and, pulling on the bars with all his might, forced his mount inwards, his front wheel missing the deadly brink by inches. Then, throwing the throttle full open, he shot forward down the banking and inside the Fulmen, which was still whirling on, high above him, along the bank-top.

R-r-r-p! As the Neptune took the drop, the speed counter swept upwards, and the engine howled like a thing in pain as it roared to capacity on the fierce downward sweep. Again level with Floyde—this time inside!

Then——

With a sudden, vicious sweep, the other bore inwards down the banking without warning in a mad, headlong plunge that drove Bob to the rails, and bade fair to force him into them. Floyde's eyes, ablaze with the light of murder, glared into his, grim with evil purpose. For a tense, awful moment the two machines swung level, their riders knee to knee, while Bob fought frantically to slip from the trap his rival had laid for him.

A second later, and the Neptune slid clear, with but an inch to spare. Floyde and his mount fell away behind, masked somewhere in the dust of Bob's going. The Byfleet banking and the bend flew past, a stretch of flat followed, and the fork at the head of the kilometre straight shot up.

The last lap! The last of all those grim two hundred miles—with Floyde hanging on behind, how near he could not tell.

And the lead! He had the lead at last!

Bob's pulse quickened; his heart began to thud against his ribs with the relentless pounding of a steam-hammer.

Less than three miles to go, and the Longs depending upon the issue of these next few moments!

Would that tube hold up? Would the engine carry on? That tyre! It had looked worn on the last pull-up for fuel!

His heart in his mouth, Bob crouched over the bars, listening—listening. Surely the deep, purring note of the engine was faltering? Surely that was a miss, a hesitancy, vague but audible, in the full-throated crescendo of its monotonous roar?

But no! The hill—the members' bridge! These came and vanished, and the bike flew on unchecked. Round the turn and on to the high banking athwart the railway, a flying plunge off the bank and down on to the long stretch of "railway straight" beyond.

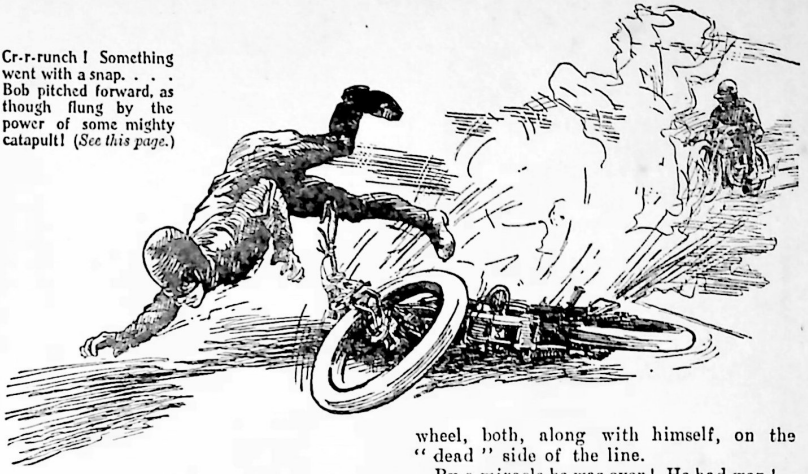
The wind whistling past his ear-rolls, and the wild scream of the "fire" music a-surge behind, he swept on to the straight, the concrete a-rush beneath the plunging wheels of his machine as he tore down upon the finish—that Never-Never Land that called and beckoned, yet seemed so unattainable, so far off!

What was Floyde doing? Where was he? And Baxter?

That menacing growl in the vibrant exhaust blast astern! The engine—was it failing now?

The timing-box ahead—the fork, sweeping up! That line of white, staring faces by the rails! The Vickers sheds, with their flat, black walls!

The finish—but a shade beyond. Yes, the race was his—his!



Cr-r-runch ! Something went with a snap. . . . Bob pitched forward, as though flung by the power of some mighty catapult! (*See this page.*)

Cr-r-runch ! Something went with a snap, lost in the howl of the belching exhaust. The front wheel moved forward—slowly, slowly. It was travelling away from him ! It——

He pitched forward with a swift, dynamic lurch, as though flung by the power of some mighty catapult. The tube—he had forgotten.

Crash ! With a frightful thud he hit the track, head-on to the crown of his helmet, and spun over, to land a-sprawl, flat-chested upon the concrete, and shot madly onwards in a flying, whirling heap.

Lad, motor-cycle, an errant front wheel, with its buckled forks, slewed over the line together in a jazzing series, as spindrift cast upon the shore.

Five seconds later, and Floyde followed, to flash by in a drunken curve as he braked in to finish and avoid the wreckage on the track.

Bob scrambled to his feet, bruised, shocked, and sore—breathless, but unhurt. For a few seconds he stared wildly about him, swaying, dizzy, and uncomprehending.

Then his eyes fell upon the finishing line, upon the wrecked machine and its parted wheel, both, along with himself, on the " dead " side of the line.

By a miracle he was over ! He had won !

Long, sleeping his doped sleep, was saved —and Mrs. Long with him !

Gasping, he staggered forward, to reel into the arms—friendly arms—outstretched to take him.

" Great Scott, young man ! Thank your lucky stars you crashed at about ninety ! If it had been forty-five now——"

But Bob was not interested in the vagaries of crash lore just now. He was full of his astounding victory, and all that it would mean. Of that, and of something he meant to say—and do—to Floyde when he got that worthy alone and to himself !

But the meeting between them never came to pass, for Floyde realised that he had gone too far, and that his best plan was to put as many miles between him and Long and his plucky young apprentice as was possible. All this was to the good, as future events went to prove, for now Long's motor-cycle business is in a very flourishing condition—a circumstance which Long appreciated to the extent of taking a new partner into the business.

And the new partner is Bob Weldon, the boy who took the risk !

THE END


Leading Lights AT GREYFRIARS SCHOOL
MR QUELCH
PETER TODD
HARRY WHARTON
DR. LOCKE
TOM REDWING
BOB CHERRY
JOHNNY BULL
FISHER T. FISH
GEORGE WINGATE
HURREE JAMSET RAM SINGH
LORD MAULEVERER
SIR JIMMY VIVIAN
MR PROUT
FRANK NUGENT
BILLY BUNTER
HAROLD SKINNER
HERBERT VERNON-SMITH
WILLIAM WIBLEY
PERCY BOLSOVER
HORACE COKER



Bunter's Report!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

' The best-laid schemes of mice, men and William George Bunter oft gang agley" as the proverb (new version) says, and once again, In this amusing yarn of Greyfriars School, Billy is taught that lesson!

THE FIRST CHAPTER
A False Report !

"BEAST!"

That epithet came from the fat lips of William George Bunter, of the Remove Form, at Greyfriars.

The Owl of the Remove was standing near the letter-rack, blinking indignantly at the letter which he had just read. Only two minutes previously he had rolled up to the letter-rack, full of hope. Not for the first time in his life he had been expecting a postal-order, but the postal-order had not materialised. And hope had departed from William George Bunter.

Earlier in the week he had written home a pleading letter that should have melted a heart of stone. He had fairly banked on a favourable reply. The reply had come, and in two minutes Billy Bunter had been quite disillusioned. Evidently the heart of Bunter Senior was made of something harder than stone.

"Beast!" repeated Billy Bunter, referring again, in that disrespectful manner, to his unrelenting parent.

He read carefully through the letter again.

"Dear Billy," it ran—"I am astonished that you should have the effrontery to ask me for more money. I have provided you with your regular pocket-money throughout the term, in spite of the very unsatisfactory accounts of you which I have received from your headmaster, and, to my mind, you should consider yourself lucky that I have not stopped the allowance altogether.

"This is the last week of the term, and I may tell you that, unless your school report shows a considerable improvement on that of last term, I have quite made up my mind to take you away from Greyfriars and put you into an office where you will find conditions not quite so easy as at school. Your future therefore rests with your report. As to money, please don't annoy me by mentioning the subject again. I will send on the amount of your railway fare to reach you on breaking-up day.

"Your father,

"SAMUEL BUNTER."

"Beast!" almost groaned Billy Bunter, for the third time. "Threatening me with an office job! Oh, the rotter!"

He rolled off into the quad. in a state of great indignation, not unmixed with alarm. And under the old elms he applied his fat brain to the contents of his father's letter.

Billy Bunter had many complaints to make about his treatment at Greyfriars. The food, he declared, was insufficient in quality and (more particularly) in quantity; Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, seemed to consider, strangely enough, that Bunter was a dunce; and the fellows, in their perversity, seemed to regard Bunter as an egregious duffer. Bunter could have filled a book with complaints about his treatment at Greyfriars.

Notwithstanding that, he was by no means anxious to exchange his present life for one in a City office. Bunter had only a vague idea of what City life meant, but he rightly conjectured that it would give him a good many more reasons for complaint than he had found at Greyfriars. And the more he pondered on his father's threat, the more alarmed and dismayed he grew.

"Blow the blessed report!" muttered Billy Bunter gloomily.

The fat junior realised, as he thoughtfully paced under the elms, that any prospects of his term's report showing an improvement on the last one were very remote indeed. Only the previous day Mr. Quelch had told him that he was more ignorant and slothful than ever. The chances were that the report, far from showing an improvement, would show the very reverse.

"Oh, dear," groaned Bunter, "I wish ——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the matter, old barrel?"

It was Bob Cherry, of the Remove, who came up and interrupted, in his usual cheerful way, the Owl's gloomy thoughts.

"Ow! You made me jump!" growled Bunter. "Can't a fellow have a stroll under the elms now?"

"Not if he's talking to himself all the time!" grinned Bob Cherry. "The right place for him then is the nearest mental home! What's biting you, anyway, old fat man?"

"Nothing, ass!" snorted Bunter, then became a little more polite in his tone. "I —I say, Bob, do you know whether Quelchy has posted off our term's reports yet?"

"Not so far as I know," answered Bob Cherry, looking rather surprised. "Why do you want to know, Bunter?"

"Oh, nothing! I only wondered, that's all," answered Bunter evasively. "Do you know whether Quelchy has gone out this afternoon?"

"Yes. I believe he and Capper have gone down to Friardale to arrange about their luggage," answered Bob. "But what's the merry game, Bunter?"

"Find out!" grunted Bunter.

Having extracted all the information he could get from Bob, the fat junior saw no reason for wasting any more courtesy over him. Politeness, in Bunter's eyes, was a means to an end, always.

He rolled away, leaving Bob Cherry staring after him quite breathlessly.

Billy Bunter rolled across the quad., and made his way up the steps into the School House. His little eyes were gleaming with renewed hope, for an idea had occurred to William George Bunter.

Reaching the House, he mounted the main staircase and made a bee-line for Masters' Passage. It was a half-holiday, and a fine day, and there were very few people about. Bunter was hopeful that there would be even fewer about in Masters' Passage!

He soon gained his objective, and cautiously rolled over to the door that gave access to the celebrated apartment of the Remove Form-master—an apartment which held many painful memories for Bunter.

After a quick look round to assure himself that he was not being watched, he stealthily opened the door and entered Mr. Quelch's room. After that, he closed the door hurriedly behind him, and, with a triumphant grin, stood within the sanctum sanctorum from which on other occasions he had been only too glad to flee.

Bunter was not inactive for long. He realised that Mr. Quelch's end-of-term work



After a quick look round to assure himself that he was not being watched, Bunter stealthily opened the door and entered Mr. Quelch's room (*See Chapter* 1).

would, in all likelihood, bring him back as soon as his business in Friardale was completed, and time was therefore precious. The Owl hardly dared to imagine what would follow if Mr. Quelch caught him in the nefarious act which he contemplated. He was quite certain, anyway, that the results would be exceedingly painful; of that there could be no possible doubt, no possible, probable shadow of doubt whatever. Consequently, Bunter went to work with all speed.

Crossing over to Mr. Quelch's desk, he began to rummage among the piles of examination papers and exercise-books that stood there. He very quickly found what he wanted, and his heart gave a jump at what he saw. Luck was apparently with him. The term's reports were all in their envelopes, ready for sealing and posting.

With his heart almost thumping out of his fat body, Billy Bunter picked out the envelope which was addressed to his father. Apparently the home address of the Bunter family was no longer the celebrated Bunter Court, about which the Owl had so often exercised his fat tongue, for the envelope was addressed to a numbered suburban house such as a common or garden mortal might have lived in. But the envelope contained Bunter's report all right; reading it, Bunter fully appreciated that.

"Beast!" he remarked as he read Mr. Quelch's general remarks on his term's work.

"Beasts!" he muttered venomously as he read the comments of Mr. Lascelles and Monsieur Charpentier on his progress in mathematics and French respectively.

He read down the report, with frowning brows. Undoubtedly, it was far worse than that of the previous term. One glance at it by Bunter Senior would be sufficient to condemn Bunter Junior to a stool in the City—without the option, so to speak. Bunter blinked at the report indignantly.

"Beasts!" he said yet again. "Rotters, every one of 'em! But I'll get the better of them yet!"

He sat down at Mr. Quelch's desk, and began opening drawers and going through papers and stationery with an intentness that seemed to indicate that his life depended on it—as, indeed, in a sense, it did. At last he found what he wanted, and drew it out and set it before himself with a breath of relief. It was an empty report form.

For a quarter of an hour after that Billy Bunter was tremendously busy. He filled sheet after sheet of scrap-paper with odd words and incomplete sentences. To an uninitiated observer, his proceedings would have seemed very mysterious. But Bunter knew what he was doing.

At intervals he carefully filled in a section or two of the blank report form, then he would apply himself industriously to the scrap-paper again.

At last he rose from the desk, with a grunt of satisfaction. The report form was now completely filled in, and Bunter's eyes gleamed triumphantly behind his big spectacles as he held it up to examine it.

Taking into consideration the hurried nature of his work and his lack of skill in the art of the forger, Bunter had not done badly.

He had, to the best of his ability, imitated the handwriting of Mr. Quelch, Mr. Lascelles, and Monsieur Charpentier, and had produced a report on his term's work more in keeping with his own ideas than the real one had been. In something resembling Mr. Quelch's neat hand, he had described himself as "dilijent" and "industryous," and he had caused the other masters to apply equally glowing adjectives to him.

Unfortunately, those same adjectives were also equally badly spelt. But Bunter, whose strong point was not spelling, saw no blemishes, and his fat face wore a look of smug contentment as he folded up his false report and placed it in the envelope. To him, the completed document was the masterly product of an ingenious mind, and he congratulated himself that it would deceive anyone. Whether it was going to deceive Bunter Senior or not, however, remained to be seen!

Grinning cheerfully, Billy Bunter cautiously quitted the Remove Form-master's room, and scuttled away to his own quarters as quickly as his little fat legs would carry him.

THE SECOND CHAPTER
Bunter Senior is Annoyed.

TAP!

"Come in!" called out Mr. Quelch.

Half an hour had passed since Bunter's surreptitious visit to Masters' Passage, and Mr. Quelch had just arrived back in his room again. He had hardly sat down before a tap sounded on the door.

In response to the invitation, Trotter, the page, put his head through the doorway.

"Which Mr. Bunter's in the Visitors' Room, sir," he announced. "Wants to see the 'Ead, and the 'Ead ain't in!"

"Mr. Bunter? That will be the father of Bunter, of my Form, I presume," commented Mr. Quelch. "Kindly request him to come to my room, Trotter."

"Yessir," said Trotter, and vanished.

Mr. Quelch did not look very pleased at the prospect of an interview with Mr. Bunter. End of term was a busy time for the masters at Greyfriars, and Mr. Quelch had a lot of work to do that afternoon. The most charming visitor would not have been very welcome just then, and Mr. Bunter was not particularly charming. Mr. Quelch felt, however, that he, as Bunter's Form-master, was more fitted to deputise for the Head than anyone else, and, with a sigh, he put his work on one side and prepared to receive the unexpected caller.

Mr. Samuel Bunter entered on the heels of Trotter shortly after, and shook hands rather perfunctorily with the Remove Form-master.

"Good-afternoon, sir," he grunted. "You're Billy's Form-master, if I remember rightly. I came to see Dr. Locke, but you'll do!"

The manners of Mr. Bunter, like those of his son, were not exactly of the kind that

stamp the caste of Vere de Vere, and Mr. Quelch regarded him rather grimly for a moment. Parents, however, had to be humoured, and the Remove Form-master, with an effort, put on a more agreeable expression again, and motioned Mr. Bunter to a chair.

"Pray be seated, Mr. Bunter. I presume you wish to discuss some matter connected with your son—or sons," he added, remembering the existence of Sammy Bunter, of the Second Form.

Mr. Bunter nodded.

"Quite right. I've come to talk about my son, Billy. I'm just about tired of the young scallywag."

If Mr. Quelch had expressed his thoughts, he might have said that he didn't wonder at it. But Mr. Quelch contented himself by nodding gravely.

"To put it plainly," said Mr. Bunter, looking sourly at the Remove master, "I'm beginning to wonder what I'm getting in return for the school fees I've been paying for some years now."

"'Hem!" said Mr. Quelch, in a non-committal manner.

"When I sent my son here," continued Mr. Bunter, warming up to his subject, "I expected you to educate him and make a man of him. What do I get? I find that every term he becomes more lazy and mercenary, and more pestering in his demands for money. As to education—why, the boy can hardly spell his own name correctly! Take the letter he wrote me earlier this week."

Bunter Senior drew a dirty-looking sheet of notepaper from his pocket and glanced at it with lowered brows.

"Does it give you any satisfaction to know that a pupil of yours spells 'money' 'm-u-n-n-y'?" he asked scornfully. "Are you content to realise that a member of your Form thinks that 'immediate' is spelt 'i-m-m-e-j-a-t-e'? Because if you are, I'm not!"

"Really, Mr. Bunter——" began Mr. Quelch protestingly.



"No wonder my son can't spell!" hooted Mr. Bunter. "With a master like you to teach him, it's a wonder he can speak decent English!" (*See Chapter* 2.)

"I'm not asking for excuses!" grunted Mr. Bunter. "I know he's lazy and good-for-nothing. But if you're going to tell me you can't teach him better than that, I'm going to tell you you're talking rot!"

"My dear sir——" protested Mr. Quelch, quite shocked.

"Rot!" repeated Mr. Bunter truculently. "That's what I say, and that's what I mean! And I tell you, Mr. Quelch, I'm about fed-up with it!"

"You have made that quite clear," said Mr. Quelch tartly. "Have you come here merely for that purpose, sir, or had you any intention of asking Dr. Locke's opinion on the matter?"

"Well, I'm always willing to listen to reason," grunted Mr. Bunter, growing a little calmer again. "Matter of fact, I really came here this afternoon to see what sort of a report he's going to get this term. I've already told him that unless it shows an improvement on last term's I'm going to take him away, and get him a job where he'll be made to work. I thought I might decide one way or the other this afternoon, and let Dr. Locke know my decision before the school breaks up."

"I see," murmured Mr. Quelch, quite a hopeful light coming into his gimlet eyes at the mention of the possibility of Billy Bunter's being taken away. "In that case, Mr. Bunter, you have called at the right moment. I have your son's report here, ready for posting to you. You may read it now, with pleasure."

He picked out an envelope from the heap on his desk and handed it to Mr. Bunter. Mr. Bunter, with a nod, took the envelope and abstracted the all-important document.

Then he began to read it.

For several seconds he said nothing. But as his little eyes travelled down the report the expression on his podgy face became quite extraordinary.

Mr. Quelch, who had turned to his desk again, did not notice the transformation. The first indication he received of the state of Mr. Bunter's emotions was when that gentleman's voice produced a sort of sudden explosion of wrath and contempt.

"Dear me, Mr. Bunter, are you ill?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch rather anxiously.

"Ill? Huh! Ill?" almost choked Mr. Bunter, glaring at the Remove Form-master with a glare such as the fabled basilisk might have envied. "No, sir, I'm not ill! So this is my son's report! By gad!"

He stared at the report again, as though it fascinated him; then suddenly he jumped to his feet and brought his clenched fist down on the desk with a crash that made Mr. Quelch jump.

"No wonder my son can't spell!" he hooted. "With a master like you to teach him, it's a wonder he can speak decent English!"

"What?" gasped Mr. Quelch, hardly able to believe his own ears for a moment.

"Little did I dream when I sent my boy to Greyfriars that he would be instructed by an ignoramus!" roared Mr. Bunter angrily. "Call yourself a schoolmaster? A man like you is a disgrace to the scholastic profession!"

"What? What?" gasped the horrified master of the Remove, regarding Mr. Bunter in astonishment. "Have you taken leave of your senses, sir? Are you mad?"

"Certainly not!" snorted Mr. Bunter furiously. "Mad, indeed! I should be mad to allow a son of mine to remain in your charge any longer! Where can I find my son?"

"But——" stuttered Mr. Quelch.

Mr. Bunter did not stop to hear any more.

He raged out of the room, slamming the door as he left, with a slam that made the windows rattle.

And, left to himself, Mr. Quelch fairly collapsed into his chair again.

THE THIRD CHAPTER
The Unhappy Ending!

"THE pater! Oh, crumbs!"

Billy Bunter started at the visitor to Study No. 7 in great astonishment. The last person on earth he had expected to walk in was his own father.

"Well, Billy! A surprise for you, eh?" said Bunter Senior, shaking hands in a

High Days & Holidays



SKATING!

THE ice is thick on Friardale Pond,
And off we cycle merrily;
Of skating we are keenly fond,
A ripping sport—yea, verily!
The air is cold and crisp and keen,
The trees are hung with icicles;
With faces sunny and serene
We speed upon our bicycles.

Soon we are circling round the ice
With shouts of mirth and merriment;
And Bunter, spurning our advice,
Is eager to experiment.
To "cut a figure" he resolves,
Such is the Owl's precocity;
Then, like a catherine-wheel, revolves
With sudden wild velocity!

But Billy Bunter fails to keep
The ruthless laws of gravity;
A crash! a splash! he founders deep
Within a yawning cavity!
"Rescue him, boys!" cries Hurree Singh,
"Or he will perish drownfully!
And that would be a shocking thing—
He owes me half-a-crownfully!"

We rescue Bunter from his plight,
But get no word of gratitude;
He glares at us, then speeds from sight,
Such is his selfish attitude.
The rest of us go gaily on
With our light-hearted jollities;
We all agree that skating's "Bon!"
The finest of frivolities!

none too affectionate manner with his celebrated son.

"What the dickens brings you here, pater?" asked Billy Bunter. "Didn't you say——"

"Didn't I say I was waiting to get your report before settling on your future, eh?" finished Mr. Bunter grimly. "Yes, I did. However, I decided to have a run down and look up the school for myself. Don't stare at me like a codfish, boy!"

Billy Bunter nervously put forward the armchair for his ruffled-looking parent.

"I say, pater, don't you feel peckish after your journey?" he asked hopefully.

Any visitor to Greyfriars was fair game for William George Bunter, of the Remove, and the visit of a hungry parent would surely lead to a visit to the tuck-shop—with Billy Bunter very much there, of course! The unexpected appearance of Bunter Senior might not be so unfortunate, after all.

"Peckish?" repeated Mr. Bunter thoughtfully. "Well, now you come to mention it, Billy, I could do with a snack."

"Let's come over to the tuck-shop, then," said Bunter promptly. "No trouble at all, pater! I'll show you the way."

"Nonsense!" grunted Mr. Bunter. "I thought from your manner that you had some food in your study."

"Well, I can soon get some in, if you'd prefer it here, pater," said the Owl of the Remove obligingly. "What do you say to some nice ham patties and sausage-rolls, now? And say a few chocolate eclairs, and a plum cake?"

"Very nice, Billy," said Mr. Bunter, a glimmering of the truth coming to him. "And who is going to pay for this little snack, may I ask?"

"I'm! I will, of course, pater!" said Bunter, blinking rather less enthusiastically at his fond parent. "The only drawback is, as you know, that I haven't any money just now."

"Then how, in the name of all that's wonderful, do you propose to pay?" hooted Mr. Bunter.

"I thought that probably you'd be willing to advance me the cash," answered Billy

Bunter hopefully. "Of course, you can deduct it from my holiday allowance——"

"How do you know you are going to get any holiday allowance?" barked Mr. Bunter.

"Oh, crikey! I—I thought——"

"Well, don't!" snapped Bunter Senior. "I'll manage without the snack, thank you, Billy!"

Billy Bunter blinked indignantly at his father through his big spectacles, and flopped into a chair without pressing the matter further. Apparently the visit of Bunter Senior was not going to provide him with a cheap supply of tuck, after all.

"I have just left your Form-master," announced Mr. Bunter, abruptly switching on to the subject which was chiefly engaging his mind.

Bunter started. With a forged report burdening his fat conscience, the news that his father had seen Mr. Quelch did not exactly fill Bunter with delight.

"I—I say, pater, d-did anything happen?" he said anxiously.

"I don't know exactly what you mean, but certainly something did happen!" grunted Mr. Bunter. "Your Form-master gave me the opportunity of studying your report while I was with him, and——"

"Oh, lor! D-did he see it?" gasped the Owl, his fat jaw dropping at the thought that Mr. Quelch might have seen the document.

"Why should he see it?" asked Bunter Senior irritably. "The man had already written it up and signed it. What are you getting at?"

"Oh, nothing!" said Bunter, greatly relieved. "I say, pater, what sort of a report was it? Pretty good, I should think, wasn't it?"

"I hardly noticed," was Mr. Bunter's unsatisfactory reply. "I was more concerned to notice the extraordinary ignorance of the so-called schoolmaster who drew it up."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"It's a disgrace to Greyfriars and a disgrace to England that an uneducated man like Mr. Quelch should hold a responsible position here!" said Mr. Bunter emphatically. "Small wonder, with a man like that to instruct you, that you are such an ignorant young wretch!"

"Here, I say, pater——" protested the fat junior.

"Your precious Form-master—a Form-master at a public school, by gad!—spelt 'diligent' '-d-i-l-i-j-e-n-t'!" almost choked Mr. Bunter.

"Well, that's how it's spelt, isn't it?" said Billy Bunter, in surprise.

"Of course, you'd think so!" hooted the angry parent, with a glare at his hopeful son. "That's how he teaches you to spell it, of course! And this is what I've paid your fees for! Oh, by gad!"

"B-but——"

"'Steady' he spells 'steddy'! It's a public scandal!"

"Still, it's a good report, pater, isn't it?" persisted Bunter anxiously. "I should think it licks last term's all right, so you'll let me stay on now, won't you?"

"Let you stay on!" roared Mr. Bunter excitedly. "In charge of that man? Never! You're going to get the remainder of your education where I got mine—in the City!"

"Oh, lor'!" gasped Bunter.

He blinked at his father in utter dismay. He had gone to a deal of trouble and exposed himself to grave risks in preparing a report which would redound to his credit, and save him from an uncongenial career in a City office. And all the trouble he had taken had simply brought about the precise state of affairs he had sought to avoid! Bunter was completely dismayed.

"I am going to see Dr. Locke before I leave to-day," said Mr. Bunter grimly, "and Dr. Locke is going to get a piece of my mind, too! I'll tell him exactly what I think of his assistant masters and his school! I'll——"

"I say, don't you think you'd better drop it till after the hols., pater?" interrupted Billy Bunter, in alarm. "And, by the way, you didn't leave that blessed report in Quelchy's study, did you?"

"Certainly not! That is to say——"

Mr. Bunter stopped, and started to search

his pockets, and it was while he was thus engaged that a fresh visitor entered.

When Mr. Quelch had collapsed into his chair, after Mr. Bunter's exit, he had been too perplexed and indignant to do anything for a few minutes.

But as he became calmer, he realised that there must be some simple explanation of his guest's extraordinary outburst. Mr. Bunter was a stolid and reasonable-looking man; it was not to be supposed that he had been seized with a sudden fit of insanity.

Mr. Quelch considered the matter, and as he sat weighing it up, his eyes fell on Bunter's report, which Mr Bunter had unknowingly dropped in his hurried departure.

The Remove Form-master picked it up and glanced down it.

Then he jumped.

He straightened it out and read it intently from beginning to end. His expression as he began was grim. By the time he had finished, it was positively terrifying.

"B-Bless my soul!" he gasped. "Bunter! That incorrigible, deceptive, wicked boy! It is almost incredible!"

For quite a long time. Mr. Quelch stood there holding Bunter's report in his hand. It seemed to mesmerise him.

And then he acted. With his thin lips tightly compressed and his gimlet eyes fairly blazing, the Remove Form-master made a bound for the door, and strode down Masters' Passage in the direction of the Remove quarters. He raced up the stairs two at a time, and the one or two stray Removites who happened to be about got out of his way very quickly. Mr. Quelch often looked angry. But he had rarely looked so angry as he did that afternoon.

When he reached Study No. 7 in the Remove passage, he did not trouble to tap before he walked in. He simply walked in. And he felt a grim satisfaction at finding Bunter Senior and Bunter Junior there.

Billy Bunter's fat knees simply knocked together as he looked up and recognised the visitor.

"G-good-afternoon, sir," he stuttered feebly, with a ghastly effort at an innocent smile. "Th-this is my father, sir!"

"I am aware of that, Bunter!" said Mr.



"Well, Billy! A surprise for you, eh?" said Bunter senior, shaking hands in a none too affectionate manner with his celebrated son. (See Chapter 3.)

Quelch icily. "I am glad he is present to hear what I have to say. Now Mr. Bunter——"

"I say, sir, perhaps you would rather be alone with him," almost groaned Bunter. "I—I've just remembered I promised to meet a fellow, too."

"You will stay where you are!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Now, Mr. Bunter——"

"Well, what's the matter?" grunted Bunter Senior. "I've already told you what I think of you. Isn't that enough?"

"No, sir; it is not," said Mr. Quelch, his eyes glinting. "When I listened to your outburst a few minutes ago, I not unnaturally supposed that you were suffering from a sudden mental attack, and——"

"Mental attack? Me?" roared Mr. Bunter excitedly. "Why, I'll——"

"Please listen to me," interrupted the Remove master. "Not knowing the contents of the document you were reading, my supposition seemed the most obvious explanation."

"Not knowing the contents?" repeated Bunter Senior in astonishment. "But dash it all, sir, didn't you write most of it yourself?"

"I did not!" said Mr. Quelch, in grinding accents. "I wonder at a man of the world like yourself believing for one single moment that I could be responsible for such an extraordinary production."

"But you signed it!" hooted Mr. Bunter. "Your name was at the bottom!"

"Admittedly. But I did not sign it!" said Mr. Quelch, turning his piercing glance on to the terrified Owl of the Remove. "The person responsible for that report is your own son, here!"

"What?" howled Mr. Bunter, his eyes almost starting out of his head. "You mean Billy? What the thunder——"

"I didn't do it!" groaned the fat Removite. "I don't know what you're talking about, sir. I'm as innocent as a babe."

"You dare to tell me you did not fill up this report form?" ground out Mr. Quelch.

"No, sir; that is to say yes, sir," gasped the unhappy Bunter. "I haven't done anything, sir. If you think I went along to your room while you were out and put that in the envelope in place of your report, you're mistaken!"

Mr. Quelch choked, while Mr. Bunter simply gasped at his promising son.

"Is this true, Billy?" muttered Bunter Senior thickly, at last.

"I've told you it's not," mumbled Billy Bunter desperately. "I didn't copy the different handwritings and fill up a blank report form. I wouldn't dream of doing such a thing!"

"Wretched boy! Then how do you know that that is what has happened!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, dear! I don't!"

"What?"

"I don't, sir. I was only guessing," groaned Bunter, mopping the perspiration from his brow.

Mr. Quelch turned to Mr. Bunter, with an eloquent gesture.

"In a sense, I am glad this has happened during your visit," he said coldly. "You brought a number of accusations against me for failing to succeed with your son. Perhaps now you appreciate the difficulty of my task."

"By gad!" breathed Mr. Bunter. "The—the wicked young scoundrel! How was I to guess this? I beg your pardon most humbly, Mr. Quelch. Obviously I was much too hasty. I am more sorry than I can tell you!"

Mr. Quelch nodded, a little mollified.

"Perhaps you could hardly be expected to see the explanation," he said. "At all events, you have now seen for yourself."

"And I was going to take him away from the school on account of a forged report!" muttered Bunter Senior. "The young rascal! I suppose he will be expelled in any case now?"

Mr. Quelch eyed the trembling Removite grimly.

"I am afraid your son's obtuseness is so great that he has received more consideration than a normal lad, otherwise he would have been expelled before," he answered.

"Undoubtedly, however, his offence merits a severe flogging."

Bunter gave a yelp.

"I say, pater, didn't you say you wanted me to start work in an office?" he asked, all his former desire to stay on at Greyfriars vanishing now. "I'm quite willing to, you know, and——"

"You're going to stay on at school!" barked Mr. Bunter. "I can see now that Mr. Quelch understands you better than I do, and I sincerely hope that he will flog some sense into you next term."

Mr. Quelch nodded grimly.

"I will leave you now," he said. "You will entertain your father during the remainder of his visit, Bunter, and report to me immediately he leaves!"



Mr. Quelch raced up the stairs two at a time, and the one or two stray Removites who happened to be about got out of his way very quickly! *(See Chapter 3.)*

The Remove Form-master then shook hands with the elder Bunter and departed.

And William George Bunter, of the Remove, his podgy face the picture of woe, was left with his angry parent. He had plotted and worked to remain on at Greyfriars, and he had succeeded. But now that he had succeeded, he wished from the bottom of his fat heart that his attempts had ended in dismal failure!

THE END

The Luck of the Line!



A bent pin, a length of thread, and a slender branch can perform wonders where elaborate fishing tackle fails!

SOMETIMES it seems to the fisherman that the fish he is so keen on catching will *not* be caught. The weather is right. The tackle is right. The fish are there, plainly to be seen. But the unlucky fisherman gets never a bite. Why? Well, if we look long enough, we can find a reason for most things.

You may have seen a man with a fine rod, expensive tackle, different kinds of bait, landing-net all complete, fish for hours and catch nothing, while a hundred yards away a village boy with a rough stick, a length of twine, and an ancient hook with a worm on it has been getting real good luck. Why?

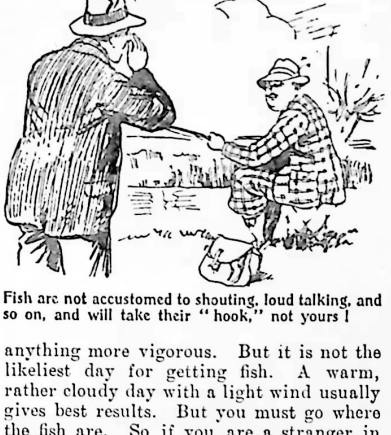
One reason is that the local fisherman knows the best places to go to. Fish are not distributed evenly over a river or lake, making one place as good as another. They have their favourite spots for feeding and playing, very much as human beings. You would not, if you wanted to catch perch, choose a bit of water full in the blazing sunlight; but if there were a nice, shady spot at hand, such as under a bridge, that would be the place to go to, and with good hopes of making a catch. If you *do* hook a perch (you will know him by the four or five dark stripes across his bronze-green body), be careful when taking him off the hook, or one of the spikes in the fin near his head may



A village boy with a rough stick, a length of twine, and an ancient hook with a worm on it, may get all the luck!

run into your hand. Weather, time of year, time of day—all these things have a lot to do with luck in fishing. I have turned out as early as three o'clock in the morning and made a good catch; yet fishing for the rest of the day has given me not a bite!

It is true that the wind has something to do with it. When there is a high, cold wind, fish are cold and sulky, and do not go about looking for something to eat. A sunny, hot day is excellent for the fisherman who tries his hand at catching fish because he doesn't want to exert himself at



Fish are not accustomed to shouting, loud talking, and so on, and will take their "hook," not yours!

anything more vigorous. But it is not the likeliest day for getting fish. A warm, rather cloudy day with a light wind usually gives best results. But you must go where the fish are. So if you are a stranger in the place, get some local person to give you a tip as to where the likeliest places are to be found.

Very coarse lines and big hooks often explain why fish are not caught. The thinner the line and the smaller the hook the better. Why? Because you need to tempt the fish with something that will not scare him. When he goes feeding, naturally he does not find his food fastened to a thick bit of string. You want to use a fine line, so that there is a chance of his not seeing it at all. A fish may not have much of a brain, but he is very easily scared. And anything unusual is liable to scare him.

You might not think, for example, that so simple a matter as a shadow—your shadow—falling upon the water would scare him. But it will. From this you will gather that, instead of pitching down on the bank anywhere when you start fishing, it is as well to choose a spot from which, if there is sunlight, your shadow will not be thrown far across the edge of the bank.

Noise scares fish more than anything else. A fish can and does hear, and any noise to which he is not used will send him darting away like a flash, no matter how tempting a bait you may be dangling about in his neighbourhood.

Habit has accustomed him to the noises made by cows and horses coming down to drink, and by horses tramping along the bank towing barges. He has learned that such noises do not mean harm. But shouting, loud talking, the banging of tin cans, and so forth he is not accustomed to. So he takes *his* "hook"—not yours!

Earth and water carry sounds well, as you know. So noises on the bank or splashing in the water, perhaps fifty yards away, will alarm him.

Perch fishing is encouraging, because if you are careful and get the first fish that jerks your float under the water, you are likely to get all the perch in that particular region. But if, for any reason, you do not hook the first one that bites, you can pack up and go off elsewhere. No other perch there will pay attention to your bait.

Failure when trying to get roach, or other "bottom" fish, is usually due to lowering the bait to the wrong depth. The fish do not swim about *anywhere* in their hunt for food. They are used to finding it at a certain depth, and if you do not lower your bait to the proper depth you can go fishing for hours without luck, though fish may be plentiful. They don't see your bait.

So find out (by means of a lead on your line) just how much line you must have in the water to convey the bait to the bottom, or an inch or so above it, and fix your float accordingly.

A Deserted Picnic!



Puzzle—Find the Greyfriars Party!

THE CEDAR CREEK DETECTIVE!



An Amusing Story dealing with Frank Richards' Schooldays at the Backwoods School in British Columbia.—By Martin Clifford.

THE FIRST CHAPTER
Foxy Ferrett's Rival!

"WELL?"

Frank Richards and his chums, Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc, asked that question together.

They were surprised.

The three chums had come upon Chunky Todgers in a corner of the playground at Cedar Creek School, in British Columbia, after morning lessons.

A big cedar-tree grew in that corner, and under the shade of the cedar sat Master Todgers, who was both fat and fatuous, with a book in his hand.

Chunky Todgers had been reading, devouring the volume with glued eyes, which was proof enough that it was one of the most thrilling volumes from Gunten's Circulating Library, in Thompson Town.

But as the Co. came strolling along, Chunky looked up from his book, and fixed his eyes upon them with an intent gaze.

He did not speak. He simply eyed the three chums, staring at them with a watchful intentness that was rather surprising. Frank and Bob and Beauclerc stopped, and returned Chunky's gaze, wondering what was the cause of that fixed and searching stare.

"Well?" they repeated interrogatively.

But Chunky didn't answer. He only gazed.

"What's biting you now, Fatty?" inquired Bob Lawless.

"Eh?"

"Why are you blinking like a blessed gargoyle?" asked Frank Richards. "Is anything the matter?"

"Eh? No!"

"Then what——" began Beauclerc.

"I think I can do it all right," said Chunky Todgers, evidently following out a train of thought, though what that train of thought was was hidden in the depths of his powerful brain.

"Can you?" queried Bob Lawless. "And what can you do? Not your lessons. Miss Meadows seemed to think that you couldn't this morning."

Snort from Chunky Todgers.

"Blow lessons!" he answered. "I say, I think I can manage it all right; in fact, Foxy Ferrett is a fool to me."

"Who? Which?"

"Foxy Ferrett, the galoot I've been reading about in this book," said Chunky Todgers, tapping the volume on his knee with a fat finger. "I wonder I never thought of it before. It's really a gift, and there's no doubt I've got the gift."

Frank Richards & Co. grinned. They did not know what Chunky was driving at yet, but evidently a new stunt was developing in his fertile fat brain.

"What's the book?" asked Beauclerc.

"It's one of the latest volumes at Gunten's," explained Chunky Todgers. "Almost new, from Chicago, you know. It's called 'Foxy Ferrett: Detective.' Jolly interesting, I can tell you! The way Foxy Ferrett bowled out Colonel Blood, who murdered the millionaire by putting flypapers into his cigar-case, was wonderful —really wonderful, you know. But I think I could have done it."

"Quite as much as Foxy Ferrett could, I have no doubt," chuckled Frank Richards.

"It's queer," continued Chunky, "that it never occurred to me before, especially as I can see now that I've got the gift!"

"Your stunts never do occur to you till you've read some silly rot in a two-dollar shocker!" remarked Bob Lawless.

"Of course, a galoot don't have much chance here," observed Chunky Todgers, unheeding. "Nobody ever commits a mysterious crime in the Thompson Valley. Even the rowdies at the Red Dog Saloon only kick up a row every now and then, and the sheriff's man runs them into the calabooze. No tracking out required, no sifting of mysterious clues. Still, when a fellow has the gift——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cut the cackle!" said Chunky crossly. "Look here, I guess I'm giving you straight goods. I can work the riffle, just like Foxy Ferrett in the novel, you know. It only needs a cool head, a clear judgment, a calm and penetrating intellect, an eagle eye that nothing escapes—well, that's me all over!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"If you like, I'll give you a sample," said Chunky carelessly. "That's what I was looking at you for. I was sizing you up."

"Sizing us up!" repeated Frank.

"That's it. Foxy Ferrett used to fix his cool, glittering eye on a galoot and size him up. Then he knew. I guess I could tell you something that would surprise you, Richards."

"Go ahead!"

"F'rinstance," said Chunky, fixing his round eyes on Frank, apparently in imitation of Mr. Ferrett's cool, glittering glance, "I can read clues about you, same as Ferrett in the story. I'll tell you what you've done this morning. You didn't come straight to school from the ranch by the timber trail."

"Didn't I?" ejaculated Frank.

"Surprised you, what?" chuckled Todgers.

"Yes, rather. How can you tell that I didn't come straight to school?" asked Frank, with interest.

Chunky smiled in a very lofty way. It was agreeable to the fat youth to make a surprising impression like this.

"Of course, you wouldn't know how I did it," he said. "You see, it's a gift—the detective instinct. I've got it, and you haven't—that's the difference. But I don't mind explaining. Foxy Ferrett always explains in the last chapter."

"Then suppose we're in his last chapter, and explain," said Bob Lawless, with a chuckle.

"I don't mind. Instead of coming straight to school, Franky, you rode round to the Beauclercs' cabin——"

"Did I?"

"You did, to call for the Cherub. I'll tell you the clues I've worked on," said Todgers. "You've got a daub of mud on your boot!"

Frank glanced down.

"That's right," he assented.

"There's no mud in the playground here,

and none on the timber trail. It's as hard as flint to-day. But Beau's cabin is on the creek, and there's plenty of mud there. So I deduce that you rode round by the Cherub's place to call for him, and dismounted there. See?"

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Frank Richards.

Chunky waved a fat hand.

"Nothing to what I could do," he replied.

"But there's a slight error in your theory, Chunky."

"I'd like to know what it is," said Chunky disdainfully.

"You see, I didn't ride round by Beau's cabin this morning," explained Frank Richards.

"Eh?"

"I came straight to school, and Beau met us on the trail, at the fork, as usual."

"Oh!"

"And this mud on my boot is left from yesterday, because I forgot to brush it off."

"Ah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Lawless. "Try again, Mr. Detective!"

"I—I——" stammered Chunky.

The amateur detective of Cedar Creek looked quite crestfallen. Frank Richards & Co. strolled on, laughing, and Chunky Todgers returned to his book. Evidently he required to study the methods of Mr. Ferrett a little more thoroughly before he started out to emulate that wonderful gentleman.



Chunky Todgers came back to Miss Meadows with the missing pointer, a fat smirk on his face. "Here it is, ma'am!" (*See Chapter 2.*)

THE SECOND CHAPTER
The Detective at Work I

"DEAR me!" said Miss Meadows.

The schoolmistress of Cedar Creek was looking over her desk with a frown of annoyance.

Afternoon lessons were going on in the big school-room, with the three classes of Miss Meadows, Mr. Slimmey, and Mr. Shepherd. The lesson for Miss Meadows' class was geography. The recent gold discoveries on the Yukon River had been heard of in the Thompson Valley, as in every other part of Canada, and Miss Meadows was giving instruction on the Yukon district with the aid of a large wall-map. For once the Cedar Creek fellows were quite interested in their geography lesson. They were quite keen on learning about the frozen Yukon, and the Klondyke River, and Dawson City, and the gold belt that stretched from the extreme north-west of British Columbia across the border into the American territory of Alaska.

Instructing by means of a wall-map required a pointer, and the pointer was missing from Miss Meadows' desk.

If Miss Meadows' pointer had been used only to point out places of interest on maps, probably it would never have been missing. But it was sometimes used to rap the

knuckles of inattentive pupils, gently but effectively, especially the fat knuckles of Chunky Todgers, whose wonderful abilities never showed to advantage in his lessons.

For that reason Miss Meadows' pointer was sometimes missing from its place. So it was on the present occasion.

Miss Meadows looked on the desk, and under the desk, and on the pine-plank floor round the desk. But the pointer was conspicuous only by its absence.

"Dear me!" repeated the schoolmistress of Cedar Creek. "My pointer is not here. Has anyone seen my pointer?"

There was no reply from the class, but there were smiles. Miss Meadows did not seem to guess that nefarious hands had been laid on the pointer, but some of her pupils did.

Bob Lawless nudged Chunky.

"Chance for you, old man!" he whispered.

"Eh?"

"This is where you put in your Ferrett stunt. The Mystery of the Missing Pointer, you know."

Frank and Beauclerc chuckled.

"Blow the pointer!" said Chunky Todgers. "I jolly well hope she won't find it. I don't like that pointer."

"Go it, Chunky!" murmured Frank Richards. "Can't you deduce from the shape of the desk, or the colour of the map, who it was that bagged the pointer?"

Chunky grunted.

"I dare say I could——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence in class!" exclaimed Miss Meadows sharply. "If anyone has taken my pointer——"

Chunky Todgers jumped up, with a defiant look at Frank Richards & Co. Chunky had taken the hint, and he was going to display his prowess as a detective.

"Please, Miss Meadows——"

"Do you know where the pointer is, Todgers?"

"I think I could find it, ma'am."

"Kindly do so at once, then."

"Certainly, ma'am."

Chunky Todgers left his place in class, with the eyes of the fellows upon him.

"The silly ass!" murmured Frank. "How does he think he is going to find it?"

"Watch him!" grinned Bob.

Chunky Todgers was worth watching. He approached the schoolmistress' desk in the manner of Mr. Ferrett approaching the scene of a crime. He blinked over it with what he apparently intended for a searching, penetrating gaze. Then he wrinkled his fat brows in a very thoughtful manner.

Miss Meadows, being quite unconscious of the fact that Master Joseph Todgers was an amateur detective, gazed at him in surprise and annoyance.

"What are you doing, Todgers?" she exclaimed.

"Looking for the pointer, ma'am."

"It is not on the desk."

"I'm finding a clue."

"A what?"

"A clue, ma'am."

"Whatever do you mean, Todgers?"

Chunky was not at all loath to explain.

"You see, ma'am, I've discovered that I've got a lot of ability as a detective——"

"A—a—a detective!" ejaculated Miss Meadows faintly.

"That's it. I'm going to discover where the pointer is and——"

"Don't be ridiculous, Todgers!"

"Eh?"

"You may go back to your place."

"But I can find the pointer, ma'am."

"Find it at once, then, and do not be silly!" said Miss Meadows crossly.

Chunky had failed to impress the headmistress of Cedar Creek, that was clear.

But he was not dismayed. All eyes in the class were upon him, and the boys and girls were smiling.

To the surprise of the class, however, Chunky's words did not prove to be vain. He left the desk, and moved slowly towards the big stove where the logs burned on cold days. The class watched him as he rummaged behind the stove, and there was general astonishment as he rose, with the pointer in his hand.

He came back to Miss Meadows with a fat smirk.

"Here it is, ma'am!"

"Thank you, Todgers!"

Chunky Todgers went back to his place. still smirking. Frank Richards & Co. eyed him as he sat down.

"How did you——" began Frank.

"My ability, you know. I'm a born detective!"

"Rats!"

"Look here, Richards——"

"Silence! Keep your eyes on the map, please. Now, here is the course of the Yukon River——"

And attention had to be given to the Arctic geography of the Klondyke region.

THE THIRD CHAPTER
Not Very Surprising!

"I guess you fellows were surprised."

Thus spoke Joseph Todgers as the Cedar Creek fellows came out of the lumber school-house after lessons.

Joseph Todgers was looking and feeling well satisfied with himself.

It was only that day that he had made his claim to be a wonderful amateur detective, in the style of Foxy Ferrett, of the two-dollar novel, and chance had already enabled him to surprise the doubting Thomases. Frank Richards & Co. could not help feeling puzzled.

"But how did you find the dashed pointer, Chunky?" Frank Richards demanded.

Chunky smiled.

"You see, I found clues, and deduced the facts from the clues, and found the missing article. Simple as A B C to a fellow like me," he explained.

Some of the Cedar Creek fellows gathered round to hear Chunky explain. Chunky smirked with satisfaction to find that he had an audience.

"And what were the clues?" asked Bob.

Chunky reflected.

"I don't mind explaining," he said loftily. "I'm glad of the chance to convince you fellows of my abilities. The fact is, I'm thinking of setting up in business as a detective."

"Eh?"

"They never commit any crimes in the Thompson Valley, worse luck!" said Chunky. "I shall never have a chance with a mysterious murder. Now, over the border, in the States, it's different. I should have a chance there. Still, a fellow must do what he can. Farmers miss a steer sometimes, and galoots bag the fruit in the orchards in the summer, and there's been pilferings at the places on the creeks. I dare say I shall get a lot of cases—small cases, you know. My idea is to have a standing advertisement in the 'Thompson Press.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Advertisements have to be paid for!" remarked Bob.

"That's all right. Richards can advance the money——"

"Can I!" ejaculated Frank.

"Sure! You've got money in the bank, and it couldn't be used for a more useful purpose. Now I've proved that I'm a really clever detective, I suppose you won't object to financing me?" exclaimed Chunky warmly.

"Financing you! Oh, my hat!"

"But we haven't heard the history of the mystery yet," said Beauclerc. "How did you find a clue to the missing pointer, Chunky?"

"Well, you—you see——"

"We don't see! Explain."

"I—I found a clue, you know." Chunky seemed to hesitate a little. "A—a spot of soot on the desk——"

"What did that imply?"

"My dear chap, that was enough for a detective. Soot came from the stove Therefore, the chap who had taken the pointer had hidden it near the stove. See?"

"I don't quite see," answered Frank Richards. "If he took the pointer from the desk to the stove, he would be at the desk first, and at the stove second, and so he couldn't leave a spot of soot on the desk."

"Well, he—he did, you know, and that put me on the scent."

"Bow-wow!"

"Well, I found the pointer, didn't I?" demanded Chunky.

"Yes, and I'm blessed if I know how——"

"Me know!" murmured the soft voice of Yen Chin, the Chinee.

"Hallo! What do you know about it, heathen?" asked Bob Lawless.

"Me watchee fat Chunkee hidee pointee!"

"What?" yelled the schoolboys.

Chunky Todgers crimsoned.

"I—I say, the heathen doesn't know anything about it!" he exclaimed hastily. "You shut up, Yen Chin!"

"Me knowee——"

"Shut up, I tell you, you pesky heathen!"

"Let Yen Chin alone!" exclaimed Bob. "Now, then, heathen, you tell us. You watched Chunky——"

"Before dinnee," said Yen Chin, grinning. "Me see fat Chunkee sneakee into school-loom, and hidee pointee behind stovee. Chunkee findee because Chunkee hidee!"

"I—I——" stammered Chunky Todgers, quite taken aback.

"You fat fraud!" roared Bob Lawless, in great wrath. "You found the pointer behind the stove because you'd hidden it there yourself."

"I—I——"

Chunky Todgers' crimson face was as good as a confession.

Evidently he had been unaware that any eyes had been upon him when he was hiding the schoolmistress' pointer.

The mystery was quite explained now. It was only an exemplification of the proverb that those who hide can find!

"You blessed fraud!" exclaimed Frank Richards, in great disgust. "And you were making out that you'd found a clue!"

"I—I guess——"

"You've been telling whoppers all——"

"I—I meant if—if there had been a clue, I—I should have found it——"

"Roll him over!"

"Yarooooh!"

Chunky Todgers went rolling in the playground as a reward for his unveracity, and Frank Richards & Co. walked away to the corral. They had been surprised by Chunky's success in finding the missing article; but they were not surprised by the explanation. It was just like Chunky!

But as the chums of Cedar Creek came out at the gates, Chunky Todgers met them again.

"I say, Franky——"

"Shurrup!"

"The advertisement ought to be taken in to-day, if Penrose is going to print it this week——"

"What advertisement, ass?"

"Mine, you know—about my detective work——"

"You silly chump!" exclaimed Frank Richards.

"I hope you're not going to be mean, Richards. You've got money in the bank—you know you have——"

"And I know it's going to stay there," said Frank, laughing.

And he rode out on the trail, leaving Chunky Todgers' further remarks to be addressed to the pine-trees.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER
A Very Lucky Detective!

"WHAT'S the matter, Molly?"

Frank Richards came upon Molly Lawrence in the playground a couple of days later, looking very dismayed and distressed. Her brother Tom was trying to comfort her, in a brotherly way, with the remark:

"Well, it can't be helped, old girl!" A remark from which Molly did not seem to derive much comfort.

"Anything up?" queried Bob Lawless.

"It's my watch!" explained Molly. "The watch my uncle sent me from Montreal on my birthday. I've lost it!"

"Oh, that's too bad!" exclaimed Beauclerc.

"Let's all search for it," suggested Frank Richards. "Got any idea where you lost it, Molly?"

Molly shook her head dolefully.

"I wore it on my wrist, you know, and the strap became unfastened. I missed it when I got home yesterday. Nobody has seen it about the school anywhere. I may

have dropped it riding, or along the creek somewhere."

Frank whistled.

"That's rather a big order," he remarked. "Along the creek, most likely, as it's grassy. You might have heard it if it had fallen on the trail."

"We've hunted along the creek," said Tom Lawrence. "I keep on telling Molly that it can't be helped."

"But I want my watch!" said Molly.

Tom made a grimace, as who should say: "Isn't that like a girl?"

"I say, here's a chance for Chunky Todgers, detective!" remarked Eben Hacke, with a grin.

"Chunky hasn't hidden it this time, so he couldn't find it!" said Bob Lawless.



"What time did you miss the watch, Molly?" asked Chunky, taking out a little notebook and pencil. The chums stood by grinning. *(See Chapter 4.)*

"Hallo! What's that?" Chunky Todgers rolled up to the interested group surrounding Miss Lawrence. "Something lost?"

"My watch," said Molly.

"I'm your man!" announced Todgers. "Now, then, you give me some details——"

"Don't be an ass, Chunky," advised Bob Lawless.

"You dry up, Bob! This is my business! I want a few details——"

"A few what?" asked Molly, puzzled.

"Foxy Ferrett always asks for the details first, you know. Then he looks for clues," explained Chunky Todgers. "You rely on me to find your watch, Molly! I'm your mutton, with the wool on."

"Stuff!" said Molly.

Chunky Todgers looked reproachful. This was really quite ungrateful on the part of the young lady, when Todgers was prepared to place his vast abilities at her service without demanding fee or reward.

"Oh, give Chunky a chance," said Tom

Lawrence, grinning. "He may as well look for it. The exercise will do him good, at any rate."

"I'll guarantee to find it, if it's still in existence," said Chunky. "With my methods, failure is impossible."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You give me some details, Molly, and leave it to me," said Chunky encouragingly. "When did you miss the watch?"

"Yesterday."

"What time?" asked Chunky, taking out a little notebook, which he had apparently laid in, at a cost of fifty cents, for his detective work. He moistened a stump of pencil with his lips.

"When I got home!"

"Sure you brought it to school with you yesterday?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Then you must have lost it while you were away from home," said Chunky Todgers, in a thoughtful way.

"I knew that already, silly!"

Chunky frowned. Foxy Ferrett's clients did not address him as "silly." But Chunky had his reputation yet to make.

"Did you hear it fall when it dropped off your wrist?" he inquired.

"If I had I should have picked it up."

"Answer the question," said Chunky severely. "No beating about the bush. Did you hear it fall?"

"No."

"Then it must have fallen on something soft."

"Did it fall on your head, by any chance, Chunky?" inquired Bob Lawless.

Chunky did not heed that frivolous question. His fat forehead was wrinkled in a frown of almost terrific thoughtfulness.

"I guess it didn't fall on the trail. You would have heard it drop," he said. "It fell on soft grass, I should say."

"Just what Frank has just said," answered Bob Lawless. "Why, you fat jay, you heard him——"

"Don't interrupt, Bob Lawless! This is a serious matter. You went along the creek yesterday, Molly?"

"Oh, yes!"

"You didn't notice——"

"I didn't notice anything," said Molly crossly. "And I haven't time to keep on talking nonsense! I'm going to look for my watch!"

And she went.

Most of the Cedar Creek fellows went to help, and there was a great going to and fro, and searching and hunting, in the school grounds. But Chunky Todgers caught Frank Richards by the sleeve.

"I say, Franky——"

"Let go! I'm going to help Molly find her——"

"The case is in my hands," said Chunky loftily. "Look here, Richards! I'm going to find that watch. I've got several clues already, and——"

"What are they, fathead?"

"You wouldn't understand. But I say, if I discover the missing watch, will you pay for my advertisement in the 'Thompson Press'?"

Frank Richards laughed.

"Certainly!" he answered.

"That's a cinch?" asked Chunky.

"Yes."

Frank Richards jerked himself away and hurried off to help his chums in searching the school grounds. Chunky Todgers did not join them. He remained for some time in thought, and then strolled out of the gates.

As a matter of absolute fact, Chunky's mind was a beautiful blank on the subject. He had not even the faintest idea of what might possibly have become of the watch. He rolled along the creek, keeping his eyes well about him on the grass and thickets. It was as likely as not that the watch had fallen there, and the fact that Tom Lawrence had searched did not amount to much, for in the grasses and herbage any number of watches might have defied search. Even the ticking was not a guide, for no doubt the watch was run down.

Chunky was thinking it over as he rolled along by the shining creek, but, although he did not confess it to himself, he had no idea of being able to find the watch. He

hugged the delusion that a clue would crop up in his mind and put him on the track.

Suddenly, however, his thoughts were taken from the subject of the missing watch. On the other side of the creek three fellows came in sight—Dicky Bird, Blumpy, and Fisher, of Hillcrest School.

Chunky was glad they were on the other side of the creek. He did not want to be rolled in the grass by the playful Hillcresters.

"Hallo, Fat Jack!" bawled Blumpy, across the stream.

"When are they going to melt you down for tallow?" Dicky Bird wanted to know.

Safe in the knowledge that the stream flowed between, Chunky Todgers snapped his fat fingers scornfully at the Hillcrest fellows.

Whiz!

A soft turf came whizzing across the creek, and it smote Chunky Todgers on his plump chest unexpectedly.

Bump!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Dicky Bird & Co. roared as Chunky Todgers sat down on the bank. He did not remain sitting. The grassy bank sloped into the wood at this point, and Chunky rolled down the slope.

"Oh! Ow! Yow! Oooooch!" gasped Todgers as he rolled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oooooooop!"

Chunky stopped at last, having rolled into the thicket. He sat up, gasping, and groped round him for some missile to hurl at the yelling Hillcresters on the other side of the creek. His fat hand closed on a hard object in the grass, and he grasped it, for the moment taking it for a stone. He jumped up and raised his hand, but he did not hurl the missile. Stone-throwing was rather too mean in return for a practical joke, and Chunky paused, and shouted "Yah!" instead.

Dicky Bird & Co. walked on their way along the creek, laughing. Chunky Todgers shouted "Yah!" again with lofty defiance, and then——

Then he realised that what he held in his hand was not a stone. It was much too smooth for a stone.

He opened his fat hand and looked.

"The—the watch!"

Chunky Todgers fairly stuttered.

In his fat palm reposed a pretty little silver watch!

By the sheerest, blindest chance Chunky Todgers had found the missing article!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER
Chunky's Triumph!

"THE—the watch!"

Chunky blinked at it.

It was Molly Lawrence's little watch; there was no doubt about that. He knew it well enough by sight.

"By gum!" stuttered Chunky. "I—I—I've found it! If those Hillcrest galoots hadn't pitched that turf at me I'd never have found it."

That was Chunky's first reflection, but it vanished from his fat mind at once.

"I've found it! I told them I would, and I've done it! I wonder what they'll say now?"

That was Chunky's second reflection.

It is said that second thoughts are best, but in this case it was probable that Joseph Todgers' second thoughts would lead him from the straight and narrow path of truthfulness.

There was a grin on his fat face as he turned his steps in the direction of Cedar Creek.

Chunky had started out to find the watch, and he had found it, and he was going to claim the credit thereof. Even Bob Lawless would not be able to deny now that Chunky Todgers shared the marvellous gifts of Foxy Ferrett, the detective!

There was still a search going on in the playground when Chunky Todgers came in at the gates.

"Molly!" called out Todgers.

"Hallo! Had any luck, Chunky?" chuckled Bob Lawless.

"Luck!" repeated Todgers. "Oh, no! Luck isn't what a detective wants. He has to use cool, penetrating brain-power——"

"Fathead!"

"Here's your watch, Molly," said Chunky Todgers coolly.

"Wha-at?"

"You've found it!" yelled Bob.

Chunky Todgers held up the silver watch, which glistened in the sunshine.

Molly Lawrence ran up breathlessly.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "That is it! Where did you find it, Chunky? How did you find it? I'm so glad!"

"Well, Jerusalem crickets!" ejaculated Bob Lawless blankly.

Molly thanked the fat and smiling Chunky warmly as she took the watch and fastened it on her wrist.

"How did you find it, Fatty?" asked Dick Dawson.

"Just happened on it?" inquired Frank Richards.

Chunky sniffed.

"Happened on it!" he repeated scornfully. "I found it because—because I'd taken up the case as a detective, you know, and I was bound to find it with my vast abilities."

"Cheese it!"

"There's the watch!" howled Chunky indignantly.

"I guess it was lying on the grass," said Bob.

"It wasn't, for I've looked all along the creek for it. It was jolly well out of sight somewhere," said Lawrence. "I'm blessed if I know how Todgers found it."

Chunky beamed again.

"Well, how did you spot it, Chunky?" asked Frank.

"I tracked it out."

"How?"

"Following up a clue, you know."

"But what was the clue?"

"You wouldn't understand," said Chunky Todgers loftily. "You see, you haven't the brain for it. Your brains are a bit different from mine, Frank Richards."

"I hope so," said Frank, laughing.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I tracked down the missing watch," said Chunky Todgers, disdainfully. "You fellows all hunted where it wasn't; I just noseyed along to where it was, and bagged it. Facts speak for themselves, you know. The fact is that I'm a born detective, and Foxy Ferrett was a fool to me." By this time Joseph Todgers almost believed that he had found the watch by some transcendent exercise of his own wonderful abilities. "I'm going to start as a detective——"

"My hat!"

"And take up cases," said Chunky. "What I've done once I can do again. If it's a success, I shall leave school and make a regular business of it. You watch out!"

"Well, you're a very clever boy for finding my watch," said Molly Lawrence, "and I'm ever so much obliged, Chunky."

"Not at all," said Chunky, with a wave of his fat hand. "Any time you lose anything you come to me! I'm your antelope! I only wish somebody would commit a murder somewhere! I'd jolly soon nail the villain, I can tell you! But we never get any murders in the Thompson Valley!" said Chunky sadly. "If a chap was over the border, in the States, he would have a chance. I may set up in Chicago later. I say, Franky, you can ride with me to Thompson after school."

"What for?"

"To put the advertisement in the 'Press.'"

Frank Richards laughed.

"A bargain's a bargain, old chap," he said, "but hadn't you better have some maple sugar instead?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Chunky Todgers did not deign to reply to that question. And after lessons that day Frank Richards called at Mr. Penrose's office with Chunky, and the advertisement was duly inserted. Mr. Penrose received all sorts and conditions of advertisements for his paper, but Chunky's advertisement seemed to give him a surprise. However, the dollar fee was forthcoming, and the advertisement was booked. As the two schoolboys left the office, Mr. Penrose doubled up over his typecase, apparently in a state of great merriment.

Apparently he saw something comic in

Chunky Todgers, detective! Frank Richards was grinning, too. But Master Todgers was quite serious.

"You think it's funny!" he snapped, as they came out.

"Well, a little," admitted Frank.

Chunky sniffed.

"You watch out!" he said.

And with that Chunky trotted off on his fat pony. There was no doubt that Frank Richards & Co. would "watch out." They were keenly interested in the progress of Chunky Todgers' remarkable new stunt!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER
Chunky Starts!

"It's out!"

Chunky Todgers met Frank Richards & Co. as they arrived at Cedar Creek School one sunny morning with that announcement. There was a beaming smile on Chunky's fat face, and he held up a paper in his podgy hand—the latest number of the "Thompson Press."

"What's out?" inquired Frank Richards.

"My advertisement!" said Chunky Todgers loftily.

"Oh!" ejaculated the three chums.

Important as that advertisement was to Master Joseph Todgers, it had been quite forgotten by Frank Richards & Co. Now, as Chunky held up the paper for inspection, they chuckled.

The advertisement was really striking. Mr. Penrose had put it quite prominently in the "Thompson Press," perhaps looking upon it as a good joke. It ran, in evident imitation of advertisements Chunky had seen in newspapers from Chicago:

"THE DETECTIVE YOU WANT!

TODGERS!

DO YOU WANT ANYBODY WATCHED?

LOST YOUR WATCH? LOST YOUR BONDS? LOST YOUR PET RABBIT?

CALL ON TODGERS!

TODGERS DELIVERS THE GOODS!

Any Kind of Detective Business Taken Up and Put Through.

Write to Todgers, or Look In.

TODGERS, CEDAR CREEK SCHOOL."



In his fat palm reposed a pretty little silver watch! By the sheerest, blindest chance Chunky Todgers had found the missing article! (*See Chapter 4.*)

Frank Richards & Co. chuckled loud and long. How Chunky could possibly expect anybody to come to a school for a detective was a mystery to them. Any citizen of the Thompson Valley who happened to want a detective was not likely to look for one in Miss Meadows' class at Cedar Creek. But that obvious fact seemed to be lost on Joseph Todgers.

"What are you cackling at, you silly jays?" Chunky demanded warmly. "Isn't that a jolly good advertisement?"

"Oh, ripping!" said Frank, laughing.

"Doesn't it touch the spot?" demanded Chunky.

"Ha, ha! Sure!" roared Bob Lawless. "Ha, ha, ha! Fancy Chunky watching anybody when he can be seen a mile off! You're rather too fat for a shadower, Chunky. You're more substance than shadow."

"You watch out!" said Chunky disdainfully. "You wait till I get my chance. There may be a robbery at the bank in Thompson, or the Red Dog crowd may go on the rampage and shoot somebody; then you'll see me wade in and nail the man. You watch out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess I'm expecting some answers to this advertisement. I'll take up any case to begin. Of course, I can't expect a murder to happen around here just to please me."

"Nunno! That would be expecting a lot," chuckled Frank Richards.

"I—I suppose you fellows haven't missed anything lately?" asked Chunky.

"Missed anything?"

"Yes. I guess I'll undertake to find any lost property for you—at the usual fees."

"The usual fees!" grinned Bob Lawless. "What are they?"

"Ten dollars and expenses. But I'll do it cheaper for personal friends. If you fellows have missed anything, I'll take on the case, and charge you only half fees. There!"

"You're too generous, Chunky," said Frank Richards, as seriously as he could.

"The fact is, I mean to be generous," said Chunky Todgers. "Besides, I want to show what I can do. Now, is there anything doing? Have you fellows missed anything?"

Frank Richards closed one eye at his comrades.

"Well, I missed something yesterday," he said slowly.

Chunky's eyes glistened.

He jerked out a notebook and a stump of pencil, being already provided with those indispensable adjuncts of a detective.

"I'm your man!" he said briskly. "Let's have the details. You missed something yesterday?"

"Yes."

"Where, and when?" asked Chunky, in the brisk, snappy manner that was Foxy Ferrett to the life.

"After I got home yesterday," said Frank.

"What time?"

"About six."

"Where did it happen?"

"About a hundred yards from the ranch-house, on the prairie."

"What did you miss—some property?"

"Yes; not mine. It belongs to Mr. Lawless, my uncle."

"That's all right. I'll find it for him," said Chunky Todgers. "Now, give me an exact description of the article missed."

"It was round," said Frank Richards gravely, while his comrades chuckled. "About eighteen inches in circumference."

"Yes?"

"Marked with painted circles."

"What on earth was it, then?"

"A target."

"A—a what?"

"A target," said Frank Richards cheerfully. "Bob stuck it up, you know, and we were practising with our rifles. I missed it."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Lawless.

Chunky Todgers' face was a study for a moment.

"You—you pesky jay!" he exclaimed at last. "Do you mean that you were shooting at a target and missed it?"

"Exactly."

"You silly ass!" roared Chunky. "That wasn't what I meant at all."

"It was what I meant," said Frank, chuckling. "You asked me if I'd missed anything, and I told you. Aren't you going to take up the case?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Chunky Todgers jammed the notebook and pencil back into his pocket, with a withering look.

"You silly chump!"

"Hallo! There's the bell!" said Vere Beauclerc.

And Frank Richards & Co. strolled on to the lumber school-house, smiling, and the amateur detective of Cedar Creek followed, with a snort.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER
A Very Injured Youth!

CHUNKY TODGERS' latest stunt caused a good deal of merriment at Cedar Creek, and for some days there was much laughter on the subject, and Chunky received plenty of chipping from his schoolfellows. He bore it all with lofty serenity. He was waiting for his chance to come, and when that chance came he was going to show these doubting Thomases what his quality really was.

Unfortunately, the chance seemed a long time coming.

No doubt Chunky's famous advertisement had been read by a good many of the Thompson folk, most of them, probably, taking it for a joke of the editor of the "Thompson Press."

If anyone took it seriously, he did not call on Chunky for his services. Indeed, if any Thompson "galoot" had wanted a detective, it was very improbable that he would have called at Cedar Creek for one.

The week slipped by, and Detective Todgers had not had a "case" placed in his hands.

For some days Chunky lived in hope, but as day followed day without the advertisement bearing fruit, he became rather more serious.

It was true that there were no murders or bank robberies in the Thompson Valley, nothing that Foxy Ferrett would have cared to handle. But Chunky was prepared to take up the case of a lost dog or a missing shirt. Even such trifling cases did not come his way. It really began to look as if the Cedar Creek detective was born to blush unseen and waste his sweetness on the desert air.

Frank Richards & Co. inquired every now and then how the detective work was getting on, and whether Chunky had put Foxy Ferrett into the deep shade. But Chunky only replied with grunts. He had no news for them.

But on Friday, the last school-day of the week, he tackled Frank Richards & Co. after lessons.

"I haven't had an answer to my advertisement yet, you galoots," he told them in the playground, with a very serious visage.

"Not really?" asked Frank.

"Nope!"

"Did you expect any, you chump?" inquired Bob Lawless.

"The fact is, one advertisement isn't much good," explained Chunky. "You have to keep it up. You've got some money in the bank, Richards. I'm relying on you to see me through."

"Oh, my hat!"

Frank Richards' money in the bank seemed to haunt Chunky Todgers. Somehow Chunky seemed convinced that if a fellow had any money in the bank he, Joseph Todgers, had a good claim to some of it. Chunky was a little bit of a Socialist without knowing it.

"My idea is this," said Chunky. "You come along with me to Penrose's office and fix it up. We'll arrange for a standing advertisement for six months——"

"Will we, by Jove?" ejaculated Frank Richards.

"Yep. That will only cost you about twenty-five dollars."

"It won't!" answered Frank.

"If you're going to be mean——"

"I am, old scout!"

"Of course, if you wanted to do the really proper thing, you'd stand me, say, a thousand dollars," said Chunky. "What I

really want is to take an office in Main Street at Thompson, and——"

"Phew!"

"And furnish it with a roll-top desk, and so on, from Montreal, and engage a clerk——"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"And a typist. Then I could start in proper style."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"'Tain't easy, beginning a serious business while a galoot's still at school, you know," said Chunky.

"Has that just occurred to you?" said Beauclerc, with a laugh.

"And—and I can't begin at home," said Chunky. "I couldn't have my clients calling there——"

"Your what?" yelled Bob Lawless.

"My clients. I couldn't have them calling there. Popper wouldn't understand. He might give me the cowhide——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And it looks a bit unbusinesslike to give the school as my address in an advertisement, doesn't it?"

"Ha, ha! Just a bit!"

"So if Frank will do the decent thing and start me in an office in Main Street——"

"Fathead!"

"Do you mean to say you won't, Frank Richards?" demanded Todgers, with deep and sorrowful reproach.

"Yes, rather!"

"You've got money in the bank, and——"

"It's staying there!" answered Frank Richards cheerfully. "Good-night, Chunky!"

"Hold on! I haven't finished yet, you know——"

"We have!" answered Frank.

And the chums of Cedar Creek departed.

They did not see Chunky Todgers again till Monday.

On Monday at Cedar Creek the fat youth was looking less cheery than of yore.

He met the Co. with a reproachful look, more of sorrow than of anger. Evidently he looked upon himself as an injured party.

There was no advertisement of Todgers, Detective, in the current number of the "Thompson Press." And Frank Richards had money in the bank! Those two facts taken together impressed Joseph Todgers with a deep sense of injury.

His wonderful gifts could not find free play and bring him fame and fortune because Frank was keeping his money in the bank, instead of handing it over to Chunky! No wonder Master Todgers looked sorrowful and reproachful.

Naturally, Chunky was not silent about his injuries, especially as he was much given to chinwag.

The following day Frank was surprised when Molly Lawrence asked him:

"What have you been doing to Chunky?"

"Nothing that I'm aware of," answered Frank. "Is anything the matter with Chunky?"

"He says you've treated him badly."

"Does he?" ejaculated Frank.

"He's telling all the school," said Molly. "I suppose it is only his nonsense!"

Frank stared.

"I'm blessed if I know that I've done anything!" he said. "I'll ask the fat duffer. Thank you for telling me."

And Frank Richards looked for Chunky.

He found him addressing two or three fellows by the porch of the lumber schoolhouse, and as Frank came up, Chunky was saying:

"Mean, I call it! I'd never really have thought it of Frank Richards; but he's treated me very meanly—jolly near dishonestly, in fact——"

"What's that?" roared Frank.

Todgers jumped.

"Oh, I didn't see you, old chap!" he stammered. "I—I was just telling these fellows that—that——"

"That Richards treated you meanly and swindled you!" grinned Eben Hacke.

"Now, what have I done, you fat idiot?" demanded Frank, glaring at Chunky.

Chunky glared back.

"You know what you've done!" he retorted. "Keeping money locked up in the bank when a chap's badly in need of the use of it——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed Shylock, I call you!" said Todgers.

"Why, you — you——" gasped Frank.

"I'm only asking for a thousand dollars——"

"Only!" roared Hacke. "Only a thousand dollars? Is that all, Chunky?"

"That's all. And, of course, I should pay it back in a few weeks. But Richards is so jolly mean —— Yaroooooh!"

Chunky was cut short as the exasperated Frank caught him by the collar.

Rap, rap, rap!

Chunky's bullet head was rapped on the porch three times, and there were three separate and fiendish yells from Joseph Todgers.

Then Frank walked away, with a flushed face.

Chunky rubbed his head.

"Ow! Wow! Oh, dear!"

And for some time Chunky was too busy rubbing his head to proceed with his recital of the sins of Frank Richards.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER
A Client at Last!

"HALLO! What's the row?"

"Anything up, Frank?"

Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc spoke together as they met Frank in the playground. Frank Richards' face was flushed, and for once he was looking quite angry.

"That idiot Todgers——" growled Frank.

Bob chuckled.

"What's he up to now?"

Frank Richards explained, and, rather to his annoyance, his chums burst into a roar of laughter at such a huge joke.

"It's not such a joke," he exclaimed. "That silly ass is going round telling everybody that I've treated him meanly, because I don't take my money from the bank and give it to him! Jevver hear of such an ass?"



"That for me, Injun Dick?" exclaimed Todgers eagerly. The Apache nodded. "Letter for little white chief," he said. "You give Injun half-dollar!" (*See Chapter* 8.)

"Just like Chunky!" chuckled Bob.

"The silly ass!" said Beauclerc. "He can't help being a born idiot! He will get fed-up with this stunt in the long run. He always does."

"I guess I've been thinking about that," said Bob Lawless. "Chunky hasn't had any answers to his advertisement. Nobody has put any cases into his hands. It's rather a shame. I've been thinking that it's about time he had a case."

"Fathead! How could he have a case?"

"We might find him one."

"Ass! Nobody would give a schoolboy a case, would he, even if there was anything doing?"

"Yes, we might. My dear chap, you're dense!" said Bob. "Lend me your ears, as we say in the play. It's some time since the Cedar Creek Thespians did any stunts. We used to be rather strong on theatricals."

"What the dickens——"

"You can make up, old chap. Why not make up as a client for Chunky Todgers, and give him a case?"

Frank started.

"My hat! What a wheeze!"

"If it fed him up with his detective stunt, it would be all to the good. And it would be fun, anyway."

Frank Richards chuckled.

The three chums strolled out to the bank of the creek, there to discuss the scheme, unheard by other ears.

They were smiling when they came in to afternoon lessons.

They smiled still more when they saw Chunky Todgers, unimpressed by his reproachful and scornful looks. Chunky was still labouring under his deep sense of injury.

The next day there was a surprise for Chunky Todgers.

Cedar Creek School had been dismissed from morning lessons, and most of the fellows were in the playground, when a tattered figure stalked in at the gates. It was Injun Dick, an old Apache, who carried half the messages for the citizens of Thompson Town. The old Redskin looked round the crowded playground, and came towards Jcaeph Todgers.

There was an envelope in his dusky hand.

Chunky Todgers started as he saw him, and his face flushed with new-born hope. Was it possible——

"That for me, Injun Dick?" he exclaimed eagerly.

The Apache nodded.

"Letter for little white chief," he said. "You give Injun half-dollar!"

"I—I say, I'll—I'll settle later. Give me the letter!"

Injun Dick drew the letter back from Chunky's eager grasp.

"No pay, no letter," he said tersely.

"Oh, dear! Frank Richards! I say, Franky, old chap, lend me half a dollar!" gasped Chunky. "There's a letter for me. I feel certain it's from a client!"

"Right-ho!" said Frank, with a laugh. "Here you are!"

He tossed a couple of quarters to Chunky, who handed them to the Redskin and took the letter. Injun Dick draped his tattered blanket round him and strode away. Chunky tore open the envelope with eager fingers.

Half a dozen fellows gathered round him as he read the letter.

"Well, what's the news?" asked Bob Lawless. "Is it a client at last?"

Chunky looked up with a serene countenance.

"Yep!" he answered.

"Gammon!" said Eben Hacke incredulously.

"You'll see later!" said Chunky Todgers haughtily. "At present I'm bound to keep this letter a secret. My client insists upon secrecy."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Hacke.

"You can cackle!" snorted Chunky Todgers. "You watch out, that's all."

And Chunky rolled away, to peruse the precious epistle again in privacy.

Frank Richards & Co. looked at one another and grinned. Evidently the bait had taken.

Chunky Todgers withdrew to a secluded quarter of the playground, and read his letter with gloating eyes.

It was a "case" at last.



Two masked men rushed in at the doorway and crashed into him, and Todgers went spinning to the floor. (*See Chapter 9.*)

There can be no doubt about that, for the letter ran:

"Dear Sir,—Seeing your advertisement in the 'Thompson Press,' I should be very glad if you would grant me an interview on important business. It is a matter of life or death, and the strictest secrecy must be maintained. I dare not come to the school, for reasons which I will explain later. Can you meet me after school, say, at six o'clock in the timber? I will wait for you in the old clearing, near the school. Then you can tell me if you are willing to take up the case.

"Yours truly,
N. O. Boddie."

"Oh, Jerusalem!" murmured Chunky Todgers, almost in ecstasy. "I wonder what Bob Lawless would say if I showed him this? Isn't it ripping? I've a good mind to show him, too, but Mr. Boddie says it must be strictly secret. I've a good mind, though. But I'll show him later. I —I wonder what fee I shall get?"

When the bell rang for afternoon lessons Chunky Todgers seemed to be walking on air as he entered the lumber school-house.

The Cedar Creek detective was in the seventh heaven of delight.

Not only was there a "case" in his hands at last, but it was a deeply mysterious case, involving the strictest secrecy.

If Chunky had selected a case for himself, according to his taste, he could not have selected a more agreeable one.

Who Mr. Boddie was he had no idea. He pictured some hapless person beset by secret enemies, or involved in the mazes of some fearful mystery, exactly the kind of case that Chunky was keen to handle!

It was not easy to put his mind into

lessons that afternoon. In fact, he could scarcely keep patience with Miss Meadows.

Lessons seemed a shocking waste of time in the mysterious and exciting circumstances.

But school was over at last, and the detective of Cedar Creek was free.

Frank Richards tapped him on the shoulder as he rolled out of the school-house.

"You're looking very chirpy, old fellow," Frank remarked, with a smile.

Chunky Todgers gave him a lofty look.

He was not in need of assistance now to begin his career as a detective. His first case, which was going to be a great success, would start him, and Chunky already saw fame and fortune ahead of him in his mind's eye!

"Don't stop me, Richards," he said. "I'm rather busy!"

"Why, what's on?"

"I've got a client to see," answered Chunky Todgers calmly.

"Oh, my hat!"

"A chap in difficulties, rather mysterious circumstances," said Chunky carelessly. "I may tell you all about it later. At present I'm bound to keep the strictest secrecy."

"Gammon!" murmured Bob Lawless.

Snort from Chunky Todgers.

"You'll see whether it's gammon!" he said. "Later on I may be able to tell you. At present, mum's the word! Go and chop chips!"

And Chunky Todgers rolled away, with his fat little nose very high in the air.

Bob Lawless chuckled.

"May as well get a move on," he remarked. "It will take some time getting ready for dear old Chunky."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Frank Richards & Co. did not ride home as usual after school. They led their horses out on the trail, and rode about a quarter of a mile, and then turned into the timber.

Meanwhile, Chunky Todgers was hanging about Cedar Creek.

As his mysterious appointment at the old clearing was not till six, he had plenty of time on his hands.

It was not till the last fellow had gone that Chunky Todgers led his pony out of the gates, and walked through the timber towards the old clearing, at a short distance from the school. He left his pony tied on the trail, and tramped into the clearing on foot. His heart was thumping with excitement as he approached the ruined hut in the clearing. And at the sound of a movement in the hut he jumped.

THE NINTH CHAPTER
A Very Thrilling Case!

"HA!"

It was a sudden exclamation.

In the doorway of the old cabin a figure suddenly appeared, and Chunky Todgers started back a little.

He saw rather a short, stout "galoot," dressed in shabby buckskin, his face almost hidden by a thick red beard, moustache, whiskers, and eyebrows. A ragged Stetson hat was pulled down over the brows.

"Ha! Todgers, the detective!" exclaimed the stranger.

"That's me!" said Chunky.

"Enter!"

The red-bearded pilgrim stepped back from the doorway, and Chunky Todgers went into the cabin.

His heart was still thumping.

As a matter of fact, Chunky was feeling a little nervous. The red-bearded man did not look a very pleasant or peaceable individual, and Chunky noted with some uneasiness that a big Colt revolver was sticking in a leather holster attached to his belt.

But, after all, what was there to be afraid of? This was his client—the mysterious client who was in need of his professional assistance. Surely there was nothing to be afraid of.

"Todgers, the detective," repeated the red-bearded pilgrim, fixing his eyes upon Chunky.

"Sure!" answered Todgers. "I've kept the appointment, you see." Out came the notebook and pencil. "Now, let me have a few details, Mr. Boddie."

He sat down on a log in an easy attitude, and wetted the stump of pencil, ready for business.

"Listen!" said the red-bearded man in a deep voice. "Listen, Todgers! I am in peril! Deadly foes are seeking me!"

"Good!"

"What?"

"I—I mean, I'm just the man you want," said Chunky. "Give me the details of the case. Who are you?"

"I am the rightful heir to a dukedom in the Old Country. My wicked uncle seeks my life!"

Chunky's eyes glistened.

He could not possibly have been offered a case more to his taste. From the novels in Gunten's Circulating Library, he knew all about rightful heirs and wicked uncles.

"Even now," continued the ducal heir—"even at this moment, while we speak, they are seeking me! Did you see any masked men in the wood?"

"Nunno."

"I am assured that they are at hand. At any moment they may find me—and you! Your life will not be worth a moment's purchase!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Chunky.

The Cedar Creek detective cast a rather uneasy glance round him.

A thrilling and mysterious case was very attractive, but it seemed to have its drawbacks, too. Chunky Todgers was prepared to solve any mystery, big or little, but he had no desire whatever to fall in with a gang of blood-thirsty emissaries of a wicked uncle. Chunky placed a very high value upon his skin.

"But you are not afraid?" exclaimed the red-bearded man.

"Nunno! N-n-not at all!"

"Then hear my story."

"G-g-go it!"

The red-bearded man gave a sudden start.

"Ah! They are here! I fly!"

With a bound he was through the window aperture of the ruined cabin and disappearing into the wood.

Chunky Todgers jumped to his feet.

Two masked men rushed in at the doorway and crashed into him, and Todgers went spinning to the floor.

"We have him!"

"Slay him!"

"Yarooooh!" roared Chunky Todgers. "Help!"

He sprawled on his back, with a heavy boot planted on his chest, pinning him there.

His startled eyes blinked up at two masked faces that looked down on him.

Two men in rough homespun, with crêpe masks over their faces, through the eyeholes of which their eyes glittered, were bending over him, and two revolvers glistened over him. Thick black beards showed underneath the crêpe masks.

"Yoop! Keep off! I—I say——"

"'Tis not he!" exclaimed one of the masked men. "'Tis not the heir to the Dukedom of Ditchwater! 'Tis another!"

"Slay him!"

"Yow-ow-ow! D-d-don't do anything of the kind!" howled Chunky Todgers. "I can tell you the sheriff will jolly soon be after you."

"Who are you?"

"I—I—I——"

"'Tis Todgers, the detective!"

"Slay him!"

"I—I—I ain't a detective!" howled Chunky Todgers. "Honest injun, I ain't! I—I—I'm a schoolboy!"

"You lie!" exclaimed one of the masked men fiercely. "You are Todgers, the detective—the rival of Foxy Ferrett! You must die!"

"Slay him!" repeated the other masked man, whose vocabulary seemed to be somewhat limited. "Slay him!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Tell me!" The masked man knelt on Todgers' plump chest. "Tell me, you dog! Whither is he fled—your client? The heir to the Dukedom of Ditchwater must die! Whither is he fled?"

It was certainly Chunky Todgers' duty, as a detective, not to betray his client, but the Cedar Creek detective was too terrified to remember that just then. He pointed to the window.

"He—he's vamoosed that way!" gasped Chunky. "I—I say, you get after him,

and leave me alone! I—I'm giving up the case! I am, really!"

"Slay him!"

"You must die, Todgers!" said the masked man solemnly. "We dare not let you live! With your wonderful abilities, your astounding sagacity, you will soon track us down, and bring us to justice——"

"I—I won't! I swear I won't!" howled Chunky. "I'll let you off! I will, really! Oh, dear!"

"Say your prayers!"

"Yaroooop!"

The masked man rose from Chunky's chest.

"You have one minute to live!" he said. "Make the most of it!"

"Slay him!"

"Yow-ow-wow!"

The two masked men stepped to the window, apparently forgetful of Chunky Todgers for the moment.

Chunky did not lose the opportunity.

With one bound he was upon his feet; with another he had bundled out of the doorway, and was fleeing for his life.

"Ha! He has escaped——"

"Slay him!"

There was a rush of heavy footsteps in pursuit.

Chunky fled frantically.

Through bush and briar he fled, breathless, panting, towards the trail, his heart thumping. His hat was gone, his hair blew out in the wind. Still behind him sounded those heavy footsteps.

Never had Chunky Todgers put on such a burst of speed before.

He came bouncing out of the timber upon the trail, and staggered and fell from sheer breathlessness. From the trees behind him came a yell:

"Slay him!"

Chunky scrambled up wildly.

His fat pony, tethered on the trail, was browsing a few yards from him. Chunky bounded to the pony, dragged the trail-rope loose, and clambered frantically on the animal's back.

Without even stopping to get into the saddle, he howled to the pony, and started at a gallop up the trail.

Thud, thud, thud!

The frightened pony galloped off at full speed, with Chunky clinging breathlessly to his back. He had covered half a mile before he was able to drag himself into the saddle.

By that time there was no sound of pursuit behind.

The Cedar Creek detective had escaped!

Whether his client also had escaped was a question Chunky Todgers did not even ask himself till he was safe within the fence of the Todgers' homestead.

. . . . .

And while the Cedar Creek detective was fleeing breathlessly for his life, two masked men and a red-bearded pilgrim joined in the shadow of the timber, and roared with laughter.

They laughed so much that their masks and beards came off, and if the Cedar Creek detective had been present then, he would not have needed the penetration of Foxy Ferrett to recognise Frank Richards & Co.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Bob Lawless.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Frank Richards took off his red moustache and eyebrows, and wiped his eyes.

"Oh, dear! Poor old Chunky! I wonder if he will go to the sheriff and tell him there are assassins around in——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Looking for the rightful heir to the Dukedom of Ditchwater——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'd better clear," said Beauclerc, laughing. "Poor old Chunky!"

And, having peeled off their outward garb and become Cedar Creek schoolboys again, Frank Richards & Co. quitted the clearing. They had left their horses near at hand in the wood, and they mounted in a merry mood and rode homeward, feeling pretty certain that they had cured the Cedar Creek detective!

And they were right.

There was no search for the masked ruffians. Chunky Todgers told his thrilling tale, but his thrilling tale was not believed. As Chunky persisted that it was true, Mr.

Todgers had recourse to the family cowhide—and then Chunky held his peace.

But the next day, at Cedar Creek, Chunky told the tale again, amid roars of laughter. Of all Cedar Creek, Chunky was the only fellow who believed in the existence of the mysterious masked men and the rightful heir to the Dukedom of Ditchwater.

But he did not follow up the case. He had had quite enough, and he was content to leave the case just where it was, and to let the rightful heir take his chance without professional assistance. And he did not ask Frank Richards again to finance his start as a detective.



The frightened pony galloped off at full speed, with Chunky clinging breathlessly to his back. (*See Chapter 9.*)

But it was a long time before Chunky heard the end of his short career as a detective. The Cedar Creek fellows chipped him unmercifully; even the younger children found amusement in following Chunky to school, and yelling after him:

"Look out, Todgers! They're after you!"

Which was sufficient to cause instant alarm in Chunky's podgy breast. Even when Frank Richards & Co., thinking that the jape had gone far enough, told Todgers of their share in the plot, Chunky would not believe them. He was as convinced of the real existence of the rightful heir to the Dukedom of Ditchwater and the mysterious masked men as he was convinced that the sun would rise in the east and sink in the west. But the chipping Chunky received on the subject had one good result—it effectively cured him of his ambition to beat Foxy Ferrett at his own game.

Chunky Todgers was tired of detective work—and Chunky's first case was also his last!

THE END

Incidents in the Life of a "Mountie"!



"FROM INFORMATION RECEIVED."



A PRISONER!



IN ESKIMO DRESS



TRANSPORTING THE MAILS—

—WITH "HUSKY" TEAMS



THE END OF THE CHASE



A POLICE BARRACKS

The Royal Canadian Mounted Policeman always "gets his man," and his life is as dangerous as it is thrilling and romantic.

HOME, SWEET HOME!

By VERNON-SMITH

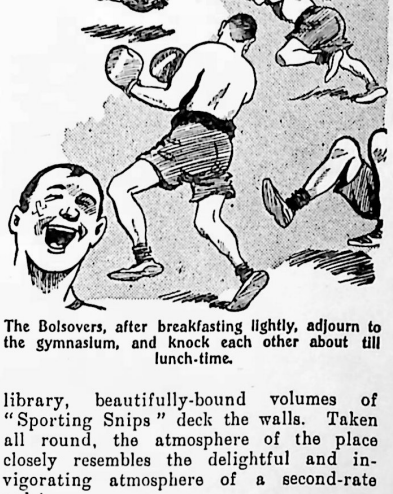
HOLIDAY ANNUAL readers will, I am sure, be interested in the home life of the chaps about whose school life they know so much already. I am therefore giving here one or two notes on the subject. I have never been home with any of the fellows, so I really don't know much about them. But there's nothing to prevent me indulging in a bit of guesswork, is there? I assure you, anyway, that my guesswork is based on what I've seen of the fellows at school, so here goes!

Harry Wharton. Simplicity is the keynote of Wharton's home. The house is simple, the furniture is simple, and the occupants match their surroundings! Pretty little cardboard mottoes are hung up in all the rooms, bearing such slogans as "Be Dutiful!" or "Scorn to Deceive!"

Billy Bunter. Think of a magnificent old Tudor mansion, standing in miles of park-land, bearing over its portals the sign: "Bunter Court." And then have another think, for the first one is nowhere near the mark! Bunter lives in a suburban villa, built on fairly generous lines, solely in order to give the family room to move about. The chief features, apart from the presence of a magnificent pantry and the absence of a bath, are: (1) a desk used by Bunter's pater for the purpose of making out postal-orders to his son, and (2) a fine tiddley-winks and blow-football court, where titled relations are entertained whenever they drop in.

Percy Bolsover. The Spartan life is lived, chez Bolsover! The Bolsovers, after breakfasting lightly on brown bread and pen-nibs, adjourn to the gymnasium, and knock each other about till lunch-time. After a lunch of raw potatoes and iron nails, they issue forth and practise deportment in the streets. This consists chiefly in barging into pedestrians, and kicking errand-boys. A light supper of iron filings and celery concludes the strenuous day.

Harold Skinner. In Skinner's house, the haze of innumerable cigarettes fills the air, the click of the merry billiards-balls and the shuffling sound of the jolly old card-pack resound through the rooms. In the stately



The Bolsovers, after breakfasting lightly, adjourn to the gymnasium, and knock each other about till lunch-time.

library, beautifully-bound volumes of "Sporting Snips" deck the walls. Taken all round, the atmosphere of the place closely resembles the delightful and invigorating atmosphere of a second-rate pub!

Wun Lung. Picture an old Chinese pagoda, on the banks of the Chin-Chen-Chin, just where it joins the waters of the



People run about like ants. Nobody knows what all the hurry is about, but it looks good, and Fishy loves it.

Chen-Chin-Chen. The smell of mimosa mixes with the savoury odour of stewing rats' tails, and dragon-flies are playing hide-and-seek all round the water-lilies. In the shadow of the bamboo-trees, Wun Lung's father, Ting-Ling-Ling, a retired tram-conductor from Peking, passes the happy hours making willow-pattern china. I haven't the faintest notion whether this is anything like Wun Lung's home or not; but, anyway, just picture it!

Fisher T. Fish. Fish hails from a little apartment on the 86th floor of No. 7132, East 986th Street, New York City. Elevated electric trains tear madly backwards and forwards outside his bed-room window, express lifts dash up and down the building, and people run about like ants down below. Nobody knows what all the hurry is about, but it looks good, and Fishy loves it. After a breakfast of peanuts and ice-cream, the Fish family begin to run about all over the place, like everyone else. With just an interval of two minutes for lunch—two spoonfuls of corn-flakes and syrup—they keep on rushing about till dinner-time, when baked beans and chewing-gum are served. The evening is spent at Coney Island, playing skee-ball, after which the Fish family tear home to prepare for another day.

H. Vernon-Smith. But no; modesty forbids!

THE END

HEALTH HINTS

Specially contributed by "Dr." Monty Lowther.

DEBILITY.—If the patient has a weak chest, a weak heart, and weak knees, he should be sent away to the seaside for three weeks.

INDIGESTION.—The patient must avoid all food beginning with "P" (such as pastry, porridge, and puddings) and "T" (such as turnips, tomatoes, and toffee). Ptarmigan must never be eaten, as it begins with both.

KLEPTOMANIA (a morbid desire to steal).—There is only one certain cure for this complaint: "Take nothing!"

WRITER'S CRAMP (caused by writing too many impots).—The remedy for this complaint is to persuade your Form-master to write your impots for you!

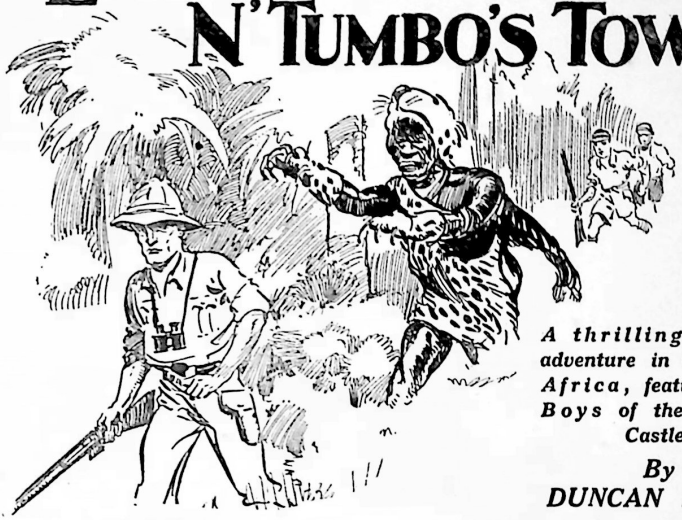
SLEEPLESSNESS.—Recite the famous poem, "Oft in the Stilly Night," ten thousand times, and see if you can get as far as ten thousand by rising-bell.

TOOTHACHE.—The cure for this is to hurry at once to the nearest dentist's. The pain will promptly disappear on his doorstep!

BILIOUSNESS.—Eat a good-sized, fatty pork chop three times a day, after meals.

MUMPS.—Cover each swelling with a mixture of tar, ink, glue, and treacle. If it disappears, all's well; if it does not, it's still all swell! Should a swelling appear on the back of your neck, it is rather serious, and you must keep your eye on it!

THE LEOPARDS OF N'TUMBO'S TOWN!



A thrilling yarn of adventure in Central Africa, featuring the Boys of the Bombay Castle.

By
DUNCAN STORM

THE FIRST CHAPTER
The Signal Drums!

Boom! Boom!

The native drums were talking to-night, signalling from village to village, over three hundred miles of the dark sherry-coloured river which Mr. Pugsley, the celebrated boatswain of the Bombay Castle, called the "Sewer of Africa."

"Stinks of fever," said Mr Pugsley, looking at the dark banks of the forest which were sliding by, a quarter of a mile distant on each side of the long, grey launch.

The boys of the Bombay Castle had been plugging up the dark M'Bongo River for six days now, but they were all as cheerful as when they started. In spite of Mr. Pugsley's gloomy foreboding, they declared that they were fever proof, and laughed at malaria.

"You'll laugh on the other side of your Seven Dials when you get it!" said Mr. Pugsley, shaking his head. "Well, never mind! In for a penny, in for a pound, and the more we are together the merrier we will be!"

"Cheer up, Puggo!" said Dick Dorrington, who, stowed in a snug corner close by the engine, was looking to the oil feeds.

Mr. Pugsley shook his head.

"I'd sooner be navigating up to the Ring in the Blackfriars Road," said he, "to see a nice bit of sparring, in a nice Carncil tram, with the ole Elephant an' Castle to starboard, and not a mosquito within hail!"

"Peep!" whispered a mosquito in Mr. Pugsley's ear, and was knocked flat by a practised hand as large as a ham.

"That's another skeeter gone to glory!" mumbled Mr. Pugsley, lighting a pipe of shag calculated to make every mosquito within hail cough himself inside out. "But I don't like the sound of these drums, Master Dick!"

"Why not?" asked Dick Dorrington.

"Why," replied Mr. Pugsley, steering

round the tail end of a sandbank which showed white in the glare of the strong acetylene headlamps of the launch. "Don't you notice that we haven't seen a nigger about on the banks of this river for the past two days. And not a canoe coming down river!"

"Well," said Dick, "what about it?"

"There's something wrong up at the cross-roads," said Mr Pugsley. "We haven't seen a blackbird out netting fish. And what's the meaning of all this drumming going on in the woods?"

"Perhaps all the niggers have gone dancing," suggested Dick. "Maybe there's a sort of nigger bank holiday on!"

"Niggers don't dance for three hundred miles," said Mr. Pugsley. "They don't all go out on the toot at once. And they dance to the little land drums, not to the big war drums. Those are all chief's drums that are sounding along the river. They are signalling. That's what they are doing. Signalling us all up the river. And there's something doing up the river, somewhere about Fort Victoria."

"Perhaps we shall see some fun!" said Dick hopefully.

"I don't know what you call fun," replied Mr. Pugsley, "but I don't call it fun to be pushed through with a fish spear jagged all the way down like a circular saw, with the teeth set the wrong way. The sort of spear that goes in easy and comes out hard, so that they have to put their feet on your chest to pull it out. And if it comes to shootin', I don't want to be shot with the brass knob off a second-hand bedstead either. It's a silly idea, I call it, coming up the M'Bongo at all!"

"But Dr. Crabhunter particularly wanted to see the ruins of these ancient African cities," said Dick.

"That's what I say," replied Puggo gloomily. "One fool makes many. Your worthy 'eadmaster 'll find himself a master without an' 'ead, if 'e don't watch it! These niggers up here are a funny lot, and they won't think any more of choppin' the headmaster of a public school than they would of doing in a two-pound nigger!"

Dick stared at Mr. Pugsley by the dim light of the shaded binnacle-lamp.

"You don't mean to say——" he began.

"I mean to say that you can buy a pretty good nigger up 'ere for a couple of quid," said Mr. Pugsley, "and not many questions asked either!"

"But it's under British government!" said Dick.

"As much government as a couple of orficers with a hundred nigger soldiers can give a bit of country as big as England, and full of swamps and rivers!" said Mr. Pugsley. "Lummy, Master Dick, it would take half the Navy to properly patrol what we've seen on the trip. You could turn every rozzer in England loose in this country, and you wouldn't meet a policeman once in six months. They do what they can up here, and leave the rest. And if it gets too thick, they send for an expedition from the Coast. Then they 'ang a king or two to encourage the others, and there's quiet on the ole Potomac for a year or two. Then off they go again!"

"I begin to understand, Puggo," said Dick more soberly. "But Dr. Crabhunter has got a letter of introduction to a king up the river—N'Tumbo. We ought to be all right."

"What?" demanded Mr. Pugsley, in a voice of unbelief. "Old Crab'unter got an intro. to N'Tumbo?"

"That's what Mr. Lal Tata told me this morning," said Dick.

"Who gave it to him?" demanded Mr. Pugsley.

"A society in London," replied Dick. "The Society for Something or Other Amongst the Native Tribes. Crabbo told old Lal that N'Tumbo is a most enlightened nigger, and that he's hoping to have a long and instructive talk with him."

"He'll get that all right!" said Mr. Pugsley drily. "I never 'eard of such a thing in my life! If I'd only known, I'd have told old Crabhunter a bit or two about his pal. I know a thing or two, because a mate o' mine was up this way!"

"What do you know about N'Tumbo?" asked Dick.

"Why," answered Mr. Pugsley, standing the launch a bit off the white gleam of the sandbank. "This 'ere N'Tumbo is one of those smooth-tongued, plausible sort of niggers that's playing coddams all the time with everyone, white and black. All things to all men, N'Tumbo is, and he's biding his time till he can throw off the mask and show his real face. He palavers and argybargeys with every stray missionary and trader that comes up the river, and they all go away saying: 'What a nice man!' But that's only one side of N'Tumbo's ugly dial," added Mr Pugsley. "'Is real name is Mr Cross, of the Cross-roads, and this nice talk is only a blind-oh for the biggest arrant robber and slave trader and ivory pincher in all Africa. And it was my mate's belief that he was in with them Lepers—that 'e was a Leper 'imself!"

"A leper!" exclaimed Dick. "We don't want to go and see a leper!"

"I mean a Leopard," replied Mr. Pugsley. "When I say Leper, I mean Leopard."

"What's a Leopard?" asked Dick.

Mr. Pugsley lowered his voice as he looked almost timidly at the dark, mysterious banks of the river.

"Don't shout it, Master Dick," said he. "No one dares talk about the Leopards in this and in many other parts of Africa."

"Lummy!" exclaimed Dick. "They sound pretty awful!"



There was a whoop of triumph, and a moment later they saw Sleeping Bear coming along the sands, leading a smallish nigger by the ear, whilst his friends all danced round, whooping and swinging their tomahawks. (*See Chapter* 1.)

"They are!" replied Mr Pugsley. "And a lot of people would like to know a bit more about them than they do. But to put the Leopard Society in a nutshell, Master Dick, it's a sort of secret society that stretches from one side of Africa to the other, and which works from the Niger down to the Cape. It pops up now and then, and then it disappears underground. There's wild niggers, half-wild niggers, and tame niggers in it, and they do say that it reaches out as

far as London, Marseilles, Shanghai, Valparaiso, Singapore—everywhere. But it's mostly in this part of Africa that the Leopards go strong. It was started in these parts, and it spread to Nigeria, and gave the authorities a lot of trouble."

"But what is it?" asked Dick.

"My dear boy," replied Mr. Pugsley, "nobody can tell you that. Once a Leopard always a Leopard. It's arf religious, arf Vudu, and all crime. It's mixed up with Obi and Black Magic, and there's no end to its ramifications. It's the cancer of Africa, and they keep it dark!"

"Why?" asked Dick.

"Because that's the only way of tackling it," replied Mr. Pugsley. "Didn't you read in the papers about that poor French rozzer that was found down by a wood pile in the old 'arbour at Marseilles, just at the bottom of Rue Cannebiere, where the motor-boats start for the excursions round the 'arbour—the one wiv 'is froat torn out?"

"No," replied Dick.

"Well, I did," answered Mr. Pugsley. "They thought it was some wild beast what done it—escaped from a ship. A ship's pet maybe. One o' them mascots, y' know. But I know better. And the French police know better—the 'eads. That was a two-legged leopard what done that, I'll bet a week's pay!"

Mr. Pugsley tapped his pipe out and filled it again.

"The Belgians got half a dozen of 'em a few years back," he continued. "Up the Congo, that was. They 'ung the lot after offering free pardons to anyone that'd turn King's Evidence. But not a word! Every man jack o' them chaps what was 'ung—and they were all chiefs, mind you—died without giving 'is pals away. Game, as you might say."

"Why?" asked Dick.

"Because they was all more afraid of squealing than of getting 'ung!" replied Mr. Pugsley. "Stands to reason. Every one of them chaps knew that if 'e squealed 'e'd only be saving himself up for a worse death than hanging. Why, hangin' would be a treat to what the rest would give him!"

"But couldn't he hide away?" asked Dick.

"Hide away!" replied Mr. Pugsley. "You can't hide away from a click that's got their spies everywhere. Why, in these countries the very boy what's giving you your chop may be one of these Leopards. And if you was up against his society, 'e'd very soon slip you something that'd disagree with you—the red berry, or powdered glass in the ground rice, or you might be found in your bed one morning wiv a sore froat that couldn't be cured by any pastilles or gargles. That's the Leopard's trade mark when they want to show who did the victim in."

"But why do they call 'em Leopards?" asked Dick, immensely interested, for he loved stories of mysterious crime.

"Well, first of all, Master Dick," replied Mr. Pugsley, blowing through his pipe, "if you find a gent. with a pair o' leopard gloves on 'im, like a pair of garden gloves, and with sharp steel claws sewn on the fingers that cut like lancets, you can shoot 'im or 'ang 'im, and no authority of any nationality will ask you any questions. Any chap found with a pair of those gloves in 'is 'ut, or on 'is person, is condemned outright. That's what they think about Leopards in these parts!"

"Why, they are like the Thugs, that used to scare India!" said Dick.

"You've said it," answered Puggo. "But what the Thugs used to do with a silk string these chaps do by springing on the unfortunate victim, as you might call 'im, and taking 'is tonsils out for 'im through 'is neck. They work like the head-hunters of the Solomons. They dress up like leopards in leopard skins, and they hunt their man in parties of six to nine. They hide up in trees over the native paths and drop on him!"

Mr. Pugsley wiped the perspiration from his forehead with a nice clean piece of cotton waste.

"I tell you it's a bit of all right," said he, with a slight shudder. "Imagine yourself a nigger, Master Dick—a quiet, easy-going nigger, that's never done anyone any 'arm, and who's paid his 'ut tax, and played the

game all is puff, not thinking that 'e's got an enemy in the world."

"Yes," said Dick. "I can imagine myself that sort of nigger."

"Well," continued Mr. Pugsley, "just think of yourself coming along one of these native paths through the woods with a nice pot of pombe, or native beer, on your 'ead, thinking only of sitting up with your neighbours, and asking a few nice friends in for a song and dance. And then, just because some dirty dorg has named you in the Leopards' meeting, a silent devil, dressed in these ere leopard gloves, with a leopard's tail 'anging down be'ind 'im where 'e oughter be kicked, drops down on your back and gets 'is gloves in on your Adam's apple an' makes a mortuary jorb of you!"

"I should call that rotten!" said Dick.

"Well, that's what these Leopards do," said Mr. Pugsley. "And you can well understand that all the big Powers that, more or less, manage Darkest Africa are doing their best to stamp it out! But listen to those young nibs be'ind. They are not thinking about Leopards!"

The echoes of the dark M'Bongo River were awakened by a merry chorus, "The more we are together the merrier we will be," led by the mouth-organ of Chip Prodgers.

All the old companions were there in the canoes, towing behind the powerful launch as she plugged doggedly up against the swift, dark current of the M'Bongo, or Mother of Waters.

There was Chip Prodgers, fluent in Hindustani, and a champion player of the mouth-organ; Arty Dove, the strongest boy of his size in England; Algy Cuff and Willie Waffles, who set all the latest fashions in the Bombay Castle, and who shuddered when they saw a soft collar fastened with a safety-pin. There was Jim Handyman, the son of Captain Handyman, the commander of the famous school ship. There were Angus Macpherson and Hamish MacCosh, the Scotch members, who hated porridge worse than they hated poison, and who could play ragtime on the bagpipes. And, theoretically in charge of this canoe which was towing astern of the launch, was Mr. Chatterjee Lal Tata, the Master of Hindustani and Mathematics of the school ship.

Lashed alongside this canoe was a large trading-canoe, filled with stores, and carrying a load of galvanised sheeting, a present from Dr. Crabhunter to one or two native chiefs, including N'Tumbo.

Dr. Crabhunter had heard that the native chiefs liked galvanised iron, and found it an acceptable present. He thought they wanted it for building meeting-houses. He had yet to learn that galvanised sheets cut up nicely into war shields that will stop any spear or arrow, and will even flatten a soft lead bullet, projected by the dud native powder.

But Dr. Crabhunter had yet a lot of things to learn about Darkest Africa.

Seated in this canoe was a silent group of dark figures.

These were pure-blooded Red Indians, sent out on the famous school ship to see the world by the paternal Government of the United States.

There was Ta-ton-ka-ig-oton-ka, or Chief Sitting Bull, of the Sioux Nation, a stolid, hatchet-faced youth, with dark, beady eyes that shone like diamonds in his copper-coloured face. He was great-grandson of the famous Sitting Bull, the old enemy of the equally famous Buffalo Bill.

Sitting Bull, when he joined the Bombay Castle, did not know much about his illustrious great-grandfather. But since then he had acquired the finest library of Buffalo Bills in the ship, and now knew more about Red Indians than he had ever known in his life before. Sitting alongside him on the sheets of corrugated iron was Ta-num-nha-wit-to-hay, which, being translated into Paleface words, means Wolf-Who-Never-Smiles.

Wolf-Who-Never-Smiles was quite a cheerful sort of chap, but his stern face was like that of the King of England who never smiled again. None the less, there was no boy who enjoyed more the antics of Pongo Walker, the finest monkey impersonator in the school.

When Pongo was pulling his mugs and

giving his famous imitation of a sick monkey who has just been given a dose of castor oil, Wolf-Who-Never-Smiles would watch his schoolfellow in rapt enjoyment. But he would never relax a muscle of his face. All he would say was: "Heap good! Do um again, Pongo. I have spoken."

In the canoe, perched on the sheets of iron, were likewise Sleeping Bear, chief of the Pawnees; Tired Horse, chief of the Apache Nation; Chief Deer-Who-Leaps, of the Soshones, who range upon the salt deserts of Nevada and California; and Chief Ba-ooo-kish, or Closed Hand, the young Chief Paramount of the Crows.

They were a silent group, and they sat in a circle, handing round the great carved stone pipe of peace, taking a puff, one after the other, of a mixture of shag tobacco and willow bark, which from time immemorial has been smoked by the Nations.

They listened to the singing in the other canoes without joining in. None of them could sing. They could only howl. And in their charmed circle sat Cecil—rare old Cecil, the orang-outang mascot of the Bombay Castle, who had lived so long in the company of boys that he had long forgotten that he was ever an orang-outang.

Cecil was very fond of the company of the Redskins. He knew that, by the custom of their nations, they were allowed to smoke the pipe of peace, and Cecil always liked to be where there was a bit of quiet company and tobacco, for he hated being alone, and he liked a smoke.

Mr. Pugsley nodded at the group in the darkness as they sat hunched up in their blankets, solemnly sending the peace pipe round.

"I'm glad we've got those Redskins here, Master Dick," said he. "If it comes to bush fightin', I'll back one of them against a dozen Leopards for artfulness. The nigger ain't in it with them Red Indians! How long d'ye think this sandbank is going to be?"

"I should say we've passed about three miles of it now," said Dick, peering into the darkness at the long white line of the sandbank which here divided the river.

There were dark shapes on the bank which looked like logs, but which, at the glare of the launch's powerful headlamp, slid swiftly into the dark waters of the river.

"See them crocodiles dropping off the bank there!" said Mr. Pugsley, looking at a huge cricket bag that was strapped along the after deck of the launch. "I don't like them things! I'd like to let ole Gus loose amongst them. I back he'd put paid to some of 'em."

In the cricket bag reposed the first mascot of the Glory Hole gang of the Bombay Castle. Years ago they had caught Gus in a tiddler net in the Nile, above Khartoum. And he had been thrust into a cricket bag of ordinary size, which they were then carrying. They had carried Gus off to see the world, and, what with high living and sea air, old Gus had now grown to a huge brute, twelve feet long.

They had shoved him in the London Zoo between trips, but Gus always pined, and would not eat, though he would scrap any other crocodile he came near, chewing them up like rubber inner tubes. He had outgrown his cricket bag years ago. But he was accustomed to be carried about in a cricket bag, and was happy in no other form of box or cage. Gus would lie happy in his cricket bag for weeks so long as he could hear the boys about him. He knew that he was no ordinary crocodile.

The boys had had him painted up in China and Japan by native artists till he was the most magnificent reptile in the world. His hideous head was sky blue, picked out with vermilion, and scrolls of the best gold leaf to give him the look of a real, old-fashioned Chinese dragon. His legs and stomach were orange and vermilion, picked out in scales of pure gold, and his body was decorated in the bold black-and-white stripes of Newcastle United, to which team the Glory Hole Gang had always been faithful since the Bombay Castle had taken her refit in Newcastle.

The boys reckoned that there were two hundred books of gold leaf varnished down to Gus's hide. And as it costs half-a-crown a book, Gus was a regular millionaire.

And alongside Gus, tied up in a canvas bag to keep him quiet, was the other great mascot of the Bombay Castle, Horace, the powerful Egyptian goat, who had stuck to them through all weathers, and who had seen more trouble than any goat on earth.

Horace was not in a good mind. He did not like being tied up in the great canvas sack, with the mouth lashed about his neck with a strong lashing of tarred rope. It was not good enough to try to secure Horace with a bit of cotton or manilla, for he would eat rope like sugar-sticks. But he hated the taste of Stockholm tar. So tarred rope was his.

Horace's eyes were gleaming green in the darkness as he sat in his sack, and Mr. Pugsley, smitten by a sudden pity, gave him a plug of Irish roll chewing tobacco. Horace liked that, and the green devil died out of his eyes.

"We'll let that goat have a run ashore when we can," said Mr. Pugsley as he steered round a floating snag, which came bobbing down on the swift current. "His coat is coming out something awful, and he's looking as if 'e'd got the morth. Now, Master Dick, I think I can see the end of the sandbank ahead, with the usual pile of snags. So we'll just drop the killick for ten minutes, and get them Redskins ashore to cut up a bit of that driftwood for firewood at the camp. Oil-stoves are all right, but they don't keep off mosquitoes!"

He steered the launch and her tow to an eddy at the head of the bank, and Dick let the anchor go, the chain rattling up from the chain locker with a rush that set something howling dismally in the forest ashore.

"Is anything wrong with the launch, Mr. Pugsley?" called the voice of Dr. Crabhunter from the sternmost canoe.

"Now, cough it up, cocky!" said Mr. Pugsley, in reassuring tones. "Tell us all about it!" Partly by dialect, mostly by sympathy, Mr. Pugsley got a correct report from the native fisherman inside two minutes. (*See Chapter* 1.)

"No, sir," answered Mr. Pugsley. "She's runnin' as sweet as a sewin'-machine. We are just stopping to get a bit of firewood off this bunch of old snags at the head of the bank."

"I am glad to hear that," replied Dr. Crabhunter. "I am very anxious to get to my friend N'Tumbo's town to-night some time. He will doubtless be expecting us, as I hear the sound of drums signalling our coming up the river."

"Yes, sir," agreed Mr. Pugsley, as he ordered the crew of smoking Redskins to cast off from their company canoe and to haul up on their tow-rope to the launch.

"It is a very delicate compliment, Mr. Pugsley," continued Dr. Crabhunter, "to herald our coming in this fashion."

"Yes, sir," agreed Mr. Pugsley as he unlashed the ten-pound axe from the launch and prepared to join the wooding party.

"I don't think!" he added sotto voce, as he stepped into the canoe, followed by Dick.

"Now, O great Red men," he added, turning to the Indians, "I want you to push ashore with your tommy 'awks and 'elp me to cut a bit o' kindling. And mind where you land the canoe. I don't want to 'ole 'er on a snag! I 'ave spoken!"

"We hear thee, O Great Chief Puggo!" replied Wolf-Who-Never-Smiles, without a change of his immovable face. "We will give the big axe to Cecil. He will cut heap plenty wood, plenty quick. The Red man will sit and smoke the pipe of peace."

"Yus," replied Mr. Pugsley. "You Red men are very good at smoking the pipe of peace. Never knew a Red yet that was fond of work. Sooner lie in bed arf the day spottin' the winners and readin' abart the flying men in the 'Daily Mirror' picters! Shove ashore!"

He took the steering paddle, and the Redskins paddled and poled the canoe to the wild tangle of naked tree-trunks which the river had piled up in the last rise at the head of the sandbank.

Bleached and dried by the sun, these snag branches made splendid kindling and firewood. Old Cecil was soon at work, swinging the ten-pound axe like a feather.

There was no need for the rest to do anything. They stood in the white glare of the launch's headlight, watching Cecil as he lopped off log after log, each five inches thick, with a single stroke of the mighty axe, sending the chips flying afar, and piling his logs neatly in cords as he cut them.

Plonk! plonk! plonk! went the axe, waking the echoes of the river. Grumble, grumble, grumble went the distant throbbing of the signal drums.

Mr. Pugsley listened to their sinister note throbbing through the dark forest like the pulsation of a fever pulse.

"I think ole Crabbo's off his nut," said he, "thinkin' of callin' on this nigger king afore we've got up to Fort Victoria, to see how the land lies!"

"Why don't you tell him about it?" said Dick, standing with his hands in his pockets and watching Cecil at work.

"What's the good of me giving 'im the wire?" demanded Mr. Pugsley. "'E got 'is rag out when I kicked them couple of thievin' niggers down the side on the Coast. They got past the quartermaster on the gangway, saying that they was missionaries. And I knew the sort of missionaries they was—a couple of light 'orsemen what had sneaked aboard to get a chance of pinchin' from the deck cabins. And when I kicked 'em down the accommodation ladder, ole Crabbo didn't arf crack on. And when I told 'im a thing or two about these coast niggers, 'e said that I was narrow-minded and prejudiced, and that a black man was just as good as a white man. Now, there's a silly thing to say!" added Mr. Pugsley helplessly. "What can you do with a man of education, mind you, that tells you that a nigger is as good as a white man? Stands to reason! 'E's off 'is chump!"

Dick laughed. He knew about the fashion in which Mr. Pugsley would discuss the colour question with the worthy headmaster of the Bombay Castle.

"But that need not prevent you from warning him that you don't think everything is all right with N'Tumbo!" said he.

"It'll prevent him listening to me," said Mr. Pugsley. "Thinks I got a fair down on niggers now, 'e does. And, of course, I 'ave to go a bit slow, wiv ole Lal Tata always 'angin' about, 'cause Mr. Lal Tata ain't exactly what you call a white man, is 'e!"

"Lal doesn't mind being called a nigger," laughed Dick. "What he don't like is for a nigger to call him 'hubshee,' or black man. That gives him the spike at once. But why don't you speak to the doctor, Puggo?"

"Look 'ere, my boy!" replied Mr. Pugsley. "There's nothin' in the world so obstinate as a learned man when he gets a maggit in 'is 'ead. Some goes potty on spiritualism, some goes potty on brown bread, some goes potty on niggers. And ole Crabbo is the last sort of looney. He's taken the niggers to 'is 'eart, and all his niggers is white angels! And that is that!"

The Redskin boys were beginning to drift over the sandbank. It was their nature to hunt about at once for trails and spoors, and they were moving like shadows, their needle eyes fixed on the sandbank and the debris that littered it from the last rise of the river.

"Look at them Apacheys," said Mr. Pugsley indulgently. "'Avin' a look round, they are! What's born in the bone comes out in the flesh, and they can no more 'elp smelling about in the dark than a lot o' blood'ounds."

Then he raised his voice.

"Hey, you Red men!" he cried. "Come back along 'ere at once! Don't want you driftin' all over the sandbanks among them logs. Some of 'em ain't logs. They're crockydiles, and you'll get pulled into the river afore you know where you are!"

But Sleeping Bear was moving swiftly across the bank, crouching low. Soon he dropped and disappeared in a shadow of the sand as if it had opened and swallowed him up.

"Now, what's young Charley Peace up to now?" demanded Mr. Pugsley. "I'd sooner be a keeper in a loonatic asylum than 'ave to look after such a click!"

As he spoke, Sleeping Bear gave a war-whoop which brought all his pals racing to the spot.

"Coo, lummy!" exclaimed Mr. Pugsley. "'E's trod on a crockydile!"

But Dick knew better. The whoop was a whoop of triumph, and a moment later they saw Sleeping Bear coming along the sands, leading a smallish nigger by the ear, whilst his friends all danced round, whooping and swinging their tomahawks.

"'Ere, stop that mobbin'!" yelled Mr. Pugsley.

And there was silence as Sleeping Bear led his prisoner up to Mr. Pugsley.

"Me catch 'um nigger!" said Sleeping Bear proudly.

"That's all right, young fly-by-night," said Mr. Pugsley. "But you mustn't go picking up friendly niggers as if they was enemies. If this party was dossing out in the sand, 'e's got a perfect right to do so without being disturbed by a Buffaler Bill show. You got no right to go pulling the Wild West stuff on him. 'E can bring you before the magistrate, you know. And the beak only comes round ere once in six months. You might 'ave to stop in quod for six months afore they bring you into court. An' that'd be a nice thing, that would!"

The light now shone on the nigger the boys had brought in. He was unarmed, and Mr. Pugsley saw that what he had thought was perspiration was blood, which was flowing from a number of small cuts.

Mr. Pugsley turned with sudden suspicion on the Redskins.

"You dirty little dorgs!" said he severely. "You been choppin' this poor beggar!"

"Red Man no chop!" said Sleeping Bear quickly. "Man chop himself with shell. I have spoken."

The nigger was crying, and there were wood ashes in his woolly head, and, on examination, Mr Pugsley found that in his hand he held the shell of a river clam, which has an edge as sharp as a razor.

"Beg your pardon, boys," said he handsomely. "My mistake. This chap's got family trouble of some sort!

"Hey, Sambo," he added to the weeping native, "what's your trouble? You M'Bongo man?"

The nigger nodded, the tears running down his black face. He had been badly frightened by the Redskins. He knew they were savages of some sort, but they were a new sort of savage to him. And he had suffered from savages enough in his time. But he was not frightened by Mr. Pugsley or by Dick. They were white, and English.

He was a river man. His short stature, his long body, and his undeveloped legs showed him as a fisherman, one of those river beachcombers who get their living by catching the small fish of the rivers in fine nets and potting them in jars with nut oil, which they sell to the more war-like niggers of the forest.

As a rule, the fishermen are harmless folk, and are looked down on by their more powerful neighbours, who sometimes buy their native sardines, and sometimes pinch them and the owner as well.

"Now, cough it up, cocky!" said Mr. Pugsley, in tones that would have reassured a frightened horse. "Tell us all about it! Stand back, boys, and give the chap air. 'E's got a bit of trouble on at 'ome. He don't want you staring at 'im as if 'e was a street accident. Stand back! I'm ashamed of yer!"

The boys stood back, and the nigger, reassured, poured out a flood of guttural M'Bongo dialect.

And Mr. Pugsley, who had an extraordinary smattering of all the native dialects of the world, got his story in a few seconds. Partly by dialect, mostly by sympathy, Mr. Pugsley had as correct a report as any policemen in two minutes.

"It's all right, boys. I told you so. 'Is brother's been murdered and chucked in the river, and this chap's come down in 'is little canoe to find 'is body. And he's found it caught up in the branches of one of them big snag trees at the head of the bank. But, poor chap, 'e couldn't get it out with his old trade axe, and he was working on it when he heard us, an' 'e was frightened and hid.

"What's yer name, Archibald?" asked Mr. Pugsley of the nigger, who was no longer trembling.

"O great white chief," replied the man, "I see you. The name of your slave is Umtutu."

"Right, Too-Too!" replied Mr. Pugsley. "Come along, and we'll get your pore brother's corpse out of the snag for you. Then we'll tow you up the river with your canoe."

The man leaped back as he saw Cecil approaching the group, huge, magnificent, and terrible, as he marched up with the great, gleaming axe-blade on his shoulder.

"Umbimzulu!" he cried, and he fell on his face. "Umbimzulu!"

Mr. Pugsley regarded Dick meaningly.

"There's more in this than meets the merry optic, Master Dick!" he muttered.

He lifted the little nigger man to his feet, but Umtutu hid his gashed face in his hands, not daring to look at Cecil.

"Umbimzulu!" he cried again. "Oh, mercy, O great one!"

"Look 'ere, Too-Too!" said Mr. Pugsley. "This ain't Umbimzulu! This is only ole Cecil, our ship-mate. Come 'ere, Cecil, and shake 'ands with this little okeyblo. 'E's frightened of you!"

Cecil, thinking that the nigger was afraid of his axe, laid down that weapon, and came up friendly and grinning, with his great, hairy paw outstretched, making pleasant whickering noises, as though he had swallowed a horse.

But the little nigger nearly went mad with fear.

"'Orlright, Cecil!" muttered Mr. Pugsley. "Stand back! Don't worry 'im! It's plain there's something about you 'e don't like. I think it's yer face!"

Cecil picked up his axe, and the little man threw himself on the ground at his feet in an attitude of abasement and of worship.

"Now, that's a rum 'un, Master Dick!" said Mr. Pugsley. "Too-Too is worshipping Cecil. Now, I can understand Cecil frightening one of these niggers to fits, 'cause they never seen an orang-outang afore. They've heard of the gorilla, but a 'rang-

'tang is more of a man than a gorilla. There's something be'ind this. I tell you this Africa is a land of mystery.

"Come on, Cecil! Let's come and 'ave a look at 'is pore brother's body. I know what it's like to lose a brother myself," added Mr. Pugsley. "My poor brother Fred died of conwulsions when 'e was only a month old. If 'e'd grown up he'd have been a 'eavyweight champeen by now!"

With these remembrances of his deceased brother, Mr. Pugsley led the way to the enormous abattis of dead trees which had piled up at the head of the bank.

These were large trees, which had fallen in with the caving banks of the river up above in the recent rise. They had been swept down, and had caught up here so that the water, receding, had left a pile of naked, gnarled branches and bleached trunks twenty feet high.

No human being could have worked his way into this. But old Cecil, after a look at it, started climbing into the tangle, swinging his mighty axe.

Mr. Pugsley told the boys not to take any notice of Too-Too.

"Let 'im foller if 'e likes, poor feller!" said Mr. Pugsley.

And Too-Too timidly followed at a distance, creeping up slowly as Cecil disappeared into the terrible tangle and started chopping with his axe.

In five minutes he emerged, bearing in his arms a body, which he laid at the feet of the nigger.

Umtutu nodded with all the sorrowful patience of a race of slaves.

Then he kneeled and rubbed his head in the sand before Cecil.

"O great Umbimzulu!" he cried. "Thou hast been given my brother, and thou hast given him back to me! Great and dread one!"

Mr. Pugsley looked at Dick meaningly. Then he pointed to the throat of the poor corpse.

"Who done that?" he demanded.

Too-Too looked up. He was not afraid of Mr. Pugsley now. His answer came clear and direct.

"N'Tumbo!" he answered.

"There you are, Master Dick," said Mr. Pugsley. "I told you so. That's the dirty dorg what's done it! A Leopard! That's what 'e is. Wrap up that poor chap in a bit of sailcloth, boys. This chap's got a light canoe on the other side of the bank. Carry it over, and put this poor deceased party in it. I want him for King's Evidence."

And these things were done.

THE SECOND CHAPTER
The Temple of the Leopards!

"WHAT have you got in that canoe, Mr. Pugsley?" called Dr. Crabhunter as the big canoe, with the little canoe of death lashed alongside, pushed out on the dark river, and came floating back to her station behind the launch.

"A corpse, sir," replied Mr. Pugsley.

"A corpse!" exclaimed Dr. Crabhunter, with horror.

"I got 'is brother 'ere, too, sir," reported Mr. Pugsley through the darkness. "Tells me that 'is brother was done in by that black gentleman you are going to visit to-night—N'Tumbo!"

"Nonsense!" replied Dr. Crabhunter.

"Well, I don't want to argue the matter, sir," replied Mr. Pugsley patiently. "But it looks to me uncommonly like it."

"My dear Mr. Pugsley!" replied Dr. Crabhunter, in tones of protest. "You must not bring these terrible charges against a gentleman whom I have every reason to hold in the highest esteem, a gentleman to whom I carry a personal letter of introduction from one of the most learned societies of Great Britain."

"Well, sir, I should want to know a bit more about 'is ticket afore I presented any letter of introduction to 'im," replied Mr. Pugsley. "In these parts, when a corpse, with its froat all torn same as if a wild beast had got it, comes floating down the river, the first thing you arsks yourself is: 'Who lives up the river?' and the answer is N'Tumbo. Stands to reason, now, don't it?"

"I will have a look at this poor man," said Dr. Crabhunter.

The canoe was floated down to Dr. Crabhunter's canoe, and a light was thrown upon it.

"That is the work of an animal, not of a man," said Dr Crabhunter decisively. "This unfortunate man has been killed by a leopard!"

"You've said it, sir," answered Mr Pugsley as he stood in the little canoe, looking down on the poor remnants of mortality. "It is the work of an animal, and that animal is your pal N'Tumbo. And it's the work of a Leopard. That's the trade mark of N'Tumbo's secret society on this poor chap's neck!"

"Upon my word, Mr. Pugsley, you are incorrigible!" exclaimed Dr. Crabhunter, who had one of his obstinate moods on him. "You use every possible means of maligning the negro!"

"I'd malign that particular nigger with a bullet if he came my way!" said Mr. Pugsley. "And if you'll take my advice, sir, you won't stop at N'Tumbo's town at all, but you'll keep on all through the night, following the other bank and out of shot, till you make Fort Victoria. We can make it soon after dawn. The engine's running beautiful!"

"Fiddle-dee-dee!" exclaimed Dr. Crabhunter. "Do you realise, Mr. Pugsley, that this particular chief knows the secret paths to the very thing which we have come here to see, a sight not yet opened to any white man, the foundations of three ancient cities, more venerable than the Moabite remains? Are you aware that the discovery of these cities is enough to make us all famous? Do you understand, Mr Pugsley, that if we pass up the river in the night, sneaking—yes, sneaking—past the town of this admirable chief, to whom I am properly accredited by a letter of introduction——"

"And arf a bargeload of corrugated iron," added Mr. Pugsley.

"And half a bargeload of corrugated iron, if you care to put it that way—the chief may well take umbrage, and refuse to conduct us to the sites of these wonderful cities? Pray consider that, Mr. Pugsley, and do not bring me any more cock-and-bull stories of murder and of Leopards! It is not just! It is not kind! It is not in the spirit of a great public school to suspect one's host before one has met him, on the evidence of a stray fisherman of low caste," added Dr. Crabhunter.

Mr. Pugsley pulled the saileloth over Too-Too's brother.

"These are things which we must all deplore," said Dr Crabhunter, pointing to the canoe. "But you have not a tittle of evidence to support this other man's suggestion. For all we know, he may not be the man's brother at all, and he may have murdered him himself."

"Well, sir," replied Mr Pugsley, "in the first place, 'e couldn't 'ave put the corpse where it was found. Only Cecil could get it out. It 'ad been put there by the river. In the second place, I know that they are brothers—and twin brothers, too—of the Bungwe branch of the M'Bongo tribe."

"How?" asked Dr. Crabhunter, always ready to acquire information.

It was Mr. Pugsley's turn to become obstinate.

"I know, and that is enough, sir," said he. "You think I don't know anything about niggers. And you are very fond of telling me so. But I 'ad a M'Bongo man as lampman for six trips, one of this very tribe, what had been washed down the river and got to sea in ships. And 'e would 'ave been on the Bombay Castle with me now, but 'e married a 'arf-caste woman what kept a tobacco and minerals shop up in Hoxton, and now 'e's actin' on the films. You wouldn't believe me. So what's the good? 'Ave it your own way. I don't know nothink, I don't!"

And Mr. Pugsley paddled the little canoe back to the Redskins' canoe, and climbed on to the launch, where he settled down with Dick.

"Schoolmasters," said Mr Pugsley bitterly when Dick had got up the anchor and the flotilla was once more chugging up the dark river—"schoolmasters are a pig'eaded, obstinate lot. They get so used to tickin' orf boys what can't answer back that they

want to tick orf grown men, and men of experience, and men of the world! Why, what's ole Crabbo ever done but chase shrimps and put whelks in spirits o' wine? Why, nothin'! And 'ere's me been knocking round the sea, man and boy, for forty years, seein' life and meetin' all sorts of people! Lummy, it makes me sick!"

"Don't lose your wool about old Crabbo, Pug," pleaded Dick. "I think his liver's a bit wonkey. That's what makes him so obstinate. And he's fearfully keen on seeing these old ruins, or whatever they are—just heaps of dirt. He'll get the F.R.S. for the paper he writes on them!"

"'E'll get 'is bloomin' sheep's 'ead off 'is shoulders if 'e don't watch it!" said Mr. Pugsley. "Strikes me 'e'll get 'isself elected a member of the Royal Society o' Stiffuns, like poor old Bill towing along in that canoe. But, Lor' bless yer, Master Dick," added Mr. Pugsley, lowering his voice as the launch clove through a clear stretch of dark waters—"bless you, it's always the same on these African rivers. There's something in the air that turns good men into devils. Stanley found it when 'e was working up the Congo, and you remember the Congo atrocities that there was such a song about! The chaps what did that was white men, good enough men when they came out, but the climate got at them, and the ways of the dark river got 'em. Lummy, I wish we 'adn't come up 'ere!"



Old Cecil, after a look at it, started climbing into the terrible tangle swinging his mighty axe. (*See Chapter* 1.)

And just at the moment that Mr. Pugsley uttered this sentiment, it was echoed by another white man sixty miles farther up the river.

In the mud-walled orderly-room of Fort Victoria, Major Hatteras was standing by his junior officer, Lieutenant Gilbard-Jones, a red-headed young man, with a single eyeglass sustained in his eye, without a cord, in a manner which would have aroused the admiration of Algy Cuff and Willie Waffles.

The lieutenant was exactly what Algy and Willie would grow into when a few short years had passed over their immaculate heads.

He was taking in a message on a Morse telegraph, and the major anxiously watched the tape as it reeled off the machine.

The message was coming through badly, for it was being transmitted by a sergeant of Hausas, who, in the depths of the forest between Fort Victoria and N'Tumbo's town, had tapped a cut wire.

"'Found three bodies of friendlies, all chopped,'" read Lieutenant Gilbard-Jones, ticking the message down on a form with a rapid pencil. "'Wire cut five miles from N'Tumbo's town. Retiring on the fort.'

"What does that mean, sir?" added the lieutenant, turning in his rush-seated chair, and handing the paper to his commanding officer.

Major Hatteras read the message with a grim look on his fever-worn face.

"It means what I have warned our people about for a long time, and what they would never believe," said he. "That double-faced scoundrel N'Tumbo has declared war!"

"Bai Jove, sir!" said the lieutenant. "And that tow of school kids from the Bombay Castle are coming up here! They are due at least by noon to-morrow. They will get chopped, sure as sure!"

"That's what has been worrying me," said his chief. "Tried to intercept them, and to tell the silly old fool who has them in charge that the river is not looking healthy just now. I sent him a very guarded wire to Banana Crossing, and got no answer. I sent him another to Tunga. But I have an idea that both messages have been suppressed by that black-and-tan clerk in the office at Tunga. If anything happens to these boys, he will be for it! I have long suspected him of being one of N'Tumbo's spies down the river, and I have collected near enough evidence to get him."

The lieutenant leaned back in his chair and stared thoughtfully at a lamp that was burning dimly in the veranda.

"What's this old bean coming up the river for, sir?" he asked.

"Why, I have had a letter," replied Major Hatteras. "He wants to see the buried cities, and go digging about amongst them for history."

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed the lieutenant in alarm. "Why, sir, if N'Tumbo suspects that he wants to get into those old ruins, that's as good as asking for a chopping!"

"Of course it is," answered the major fretfully. "The old innocent does not dream that the scoundrel uses those taboo sites for stowing his plunder, and if he goes asking N'Tumbo to take him to his cities, N'Tumbo will think that he has found out all, and will chop him and all his party to prevent them giving evidence. This is a pretty kettle of fish!"

"Of course, sir," said the lieutenant reasonably, "we can't very well be peevish with the old chap for butting in when we only got the information two days ago. But it makes it very awkward. I think I'd better take the steamer and twenty Hausas and get down the river. I might be in time to prevent them from calling on N'Tumbo. If not, I shall be in time to pick up the pieces. And, coming to think of it, I have heard a bit about this school ship. I have a young cousin called Dick Dorrington aboard her. If I remember rightly, they are rather a brainy lot of boys, and N'Tumbo may find trouble on his hands if he tries to fight them or to make them prisoners!"

"I am glad to hear it," replied Major Hatteras. "Take the sternwheeler and a couple of Maxims and thirty men. If, by any chance, N'Tumbo moves to attack us we can stall him off with the rest of the garrison. It leaves us very short. And since he has declared war, there is nothing to prevent you attacking him from the river. In any case, you can sink all his canoes on sight. Get things moving, and I will prepare your orders."

The major sat himself down at the typewriter, and started typing rapidly, whilst the lieutenant hastened forth to call up his little army.

Thus were things up-river as Mr Pugsley steered the launch up the dark M'Bongo, at eight-thirty in the evening.

Looking at the rough map he had made under the instruction of a river pilot, he calculated that they would reach N'Tumbo Town, as they called it, about eleven at night.

Mr. Pugsley was by no means easy in his mind.

"I got a foreboding, Master Dick," said he. "I've just got the same sort of feeling as I had the night when my Uncle William fell through a cellar flap and broke both his

legs. The ole man says to me: 'I'm just goin' down the street for arf-ounce o' Norton's. I won't be long.' 'Let me go,' says I, 'cause I got a 'unch that if you go out to-night you'll get into trouble—knocked down by a motor-bicycle or somethink.' But no, Uncle William was an obstinate ole cuss. Would 'ave 'is way. And 'e got it. Fell through the cellar flap at the Coach an' 'Orses, and was laid up in the infirmary for months an' months. Cost me a lot of money, Uncle William did, in grapes and 'bacca," added Mr. Pugsley gloomily. "Never got any of it back, I didn't, neither. When 'e died we found 'e'd bought 'imself an annuity, and 'e lef' nothin' be'ind 'im but an ole horsehair sofa with morth in it"

Mr. Pugsley remained gloomy

They pulled up for supper on a sandbank, and the crocodiles in the river were scared by the lighting of great cooking fires and the loud songs of the boys, whilst a long-suffering gramophone blared out: "It made you happy when you made me cry," and "Bye-bye, Blackbird," and "When the red, red robin comes bob, bob, bobbing along."

And all the time, far away through the forest boomed the great village drums, trunks of hollowed wood that are hung under a thatched pent-house, and will send their warning messages flying over ten miles.

"Let 'Orace out of his sack, Master Dick," said Mr. Pugsley. "'E wants to stretch his legs, pore thing! And I like to 'ave 'Orace loose when there's niggers about. That's one thing that me and 'Orace has got in common. We can't abide niggers!"

Horace was very good when the boys released him from his sack. He was a bit stiff and grumpy, but he took no notice of the strange nigger, Too-Too, but browsed hungrily on the leaves of the bushes that were growing in the crown of the sandbank.

Dr. Crabhunter did not ask Mr. Pugsley why he had moored at a sandbank in the middle of the river instead of on the bank, which was much handier for getting ashore. He sat in dignified silence at the central fire, whilst Mr. Pugsley kept himself to himself, as he put it, making his coffee at another fire, and giving Too-Too a tin of bully beef to cheer him up.

"There you are, Too-Too," said he, giving the nigger the bully beef and a bag of biscuits "Get that under your pinny, and you will feel better."

Too-Too gazed at Mr Pugsley with adoration in his eyes. It was plain that he thought Mr Pugsley the greatest man in the world.

He was not afraid when Horace strayed up to him and pinched a biscuit out of his bag. He patted Horace's nose, and, strange to say, Horace did not biff him into the middle of next week.

"I never see anyone get on with Horace like that before," said Mr. Pugsley, sitting down by Too-Too on a tree-stump and eating a large sandwich of bread and meat. "Now, tell me, O Too-Too," he added, in Umtutu's own tongue—"tell me something of this great chief, N'Tumbo."

Too-Too started to gabble away in his dialect, and Mr. Pugsley sat and nodded, and noted all that he said, like a policeman taking evidence for a police-court case.

No one heard what passed between him and Umtutu, but before supper was finished Mr. Pugsley discreetly retired to the flotilla with Cecil, and when the party returned to the canoes again they found each canoe nicely shuttered with sheets of corrugated iron, so placed that they would protect the occupants from arrow shots and spears without impeding their navigation.

"What does this mean, Mr. Pugsley?" asked Dr. Crabhunter, rather sternly.

"It means reasonable precautions, sir," replied Mr. Pugsley. "And I am in charge of these craft!"

Dr. Crabhunter gave an exclamation that sounded rather like "Tush!" But Mr. Pugsley was, indeed, in charge of the canoes, and round the gunwale of each canoe he had nailed strips of canvas before starting, just the sort of strips which are used in boat-work for covering weapons from spray, dew, and observation.

Not a word more was said as the flotilla held on its way up the river, and Mr. Pugs-

ley held his peace, keeping a watchful eye on the river till the flotilla entered the long four-mile reach on which N'Tumbo's town was situated.

A glare of fires showed red on the fringe of the forest, and, like a telephone, the water brought down the sullen, monotonous sound of drums.

There were lights like the lights of a fishing fleet strung out right across the half-mile width of the river.

"Ha, Mr. Pugsley," called Dr. Crabhunter, who had forgotten his little grouch, "I see we are expected!"

"Oh, yes, sir," called Mr. Pugsley from the launch. "No doubt about that! They ain't closed the pubs yet!"

"And we shall get a warm welcome!" said Dr. Crabhunter.

"Oh, yes, sir, we shall get a warm welcome!" replied Mr. Pugsley. "A very warm welcome! Shouldn't wonder if they don't bring out their jazz band to meet us!"

Then he whispered to Dick as Dr. Crabhunter loudly admired what he called the "illuminations," strung across the river.

"Silly olo josser! Those are not illuminations. That's a string o' canoes with palm oil cressets, put across the river to stop us going up. I think it's about time, Master Dick, that you gave the lads the wire to man and arm ship."

And Dr. Crabhunter never knew what happened in the flotilla when, through the music of "The more we are together," Dick whistled a clear call, understandable by every member of the Glory Hole Gang.

The boys of the Bombay Castle were not supposed to carry arms. Even Pongo Walker had had his Little Wonder air-gun taken away from him when he had tickled up a few of the crocodiles sleeping on the mudflats below.

But at Dick's secret call there was a slight stir in the dark canoes, so slight that it was unperceived by Dr. Crabhunter and unnoticed by Mr. Lal Tata.

But from cricket bags and golf bags rifles were quietly drawn and laid under the canvas flaps, with bags of ammunition, and the Redskins, fishing out their bowstrings from their pouches, where they kept them to guard against damp, strung them into the notches, all ready for action.

But the singing kept on, and presently, tuned into its strains, there came from all the boats the code whistle of the Glory Hole Gang.

"Manœuvre completed, sir," reported Dick. "They are all armed!"

"Well done!" said Mr. Pugsley. "They got more sense than their master, what's playin' 'Will you walk into my parlour? said the spider to the fly' with Mr. N'Tumbo."

As they drew nearer to the town, they saw a low bank crowned with white mud walls and a large archway. There was a wharf of piling along the river front, and to the canoe stakes here were moored a number of large canoes. Right across the river, a little farther up, were stretched a whole line of smaller canoes.

"That's N'Tumbo's navy," said Mr. Pugsley, in a low voice—"light cruisers across the river, the heavy war canoes alongside, ready to go for us if we showed fight. We are going into the lions' den proper!"

There was no lu'luing or sound of welcome as the launch sheered towards the wharf, and there were no women or children about. Anyone versed in African affairs might have seen that their reception was not friendly.

A crowd of silent niggers lined the wharf, armed with spears and arrows and trade guns, lit ruddy red by the flares of the palm oil cressets, which made the whole of the white walls of N'Tumbo's town look as if they were stained in blood.

Most of the party were struck by the sinister look of N'Tumbo's town, with the exception of Dr. Crabhunter, who, full of his one idea, thought only of interviewing N'Tumbo, and seeking guides to his hidden cities.

Poor Dr. Crabhunter did not realise that his request was something like walking into a burglars' kitchen and asking to be shown the last lot of swag.

Mr. Pugsley sheered his tow along the red-lit waters by the wharf skilfully, so as to

bring Dr. Crabhunter's canoe close alongside a small projection.

"That's N'Tumbo," he whispered, and he indicated an enormous fat nigger, seated on a barrel. N'Tumbo was white-robed, but, to Mr. Pugsley's horror, he wore a cocked hat which was plainly some discarded uniform of the British Navy.

courtiers, watched with sullen eyes the launch and the canoes as they ranged alongside the wharf, Mr. Pugsley skilfully avoiding any mooring by bringing Dr. Crabhunter's canoe close along by the landing.

There was an evil-looking old witch doctor at N'Tumbo's elbow, a filthy figure, wrapped in a leopard skin, and strung all over with



The eyes of N'Gama nearly started from his head as Cecil leaned over him. "O mercy, O great one!" he panted. (*See Chapter* 2.)

"That N'Tumbo?" asked Dick, in horror. "What an awful-looking brute!"

"Keep down, Cecil!" whispered Mr. Pugsley to Cecil, who was crouching under a tarpaulin, holding Horace, the goat, in a grip of iron. "We don't want any of these nibs to see you yet."

N'Tumbo, surrounded by a group of

feathers and dried snake skins, which formed a pendant to a skull.

This was N'Gama, who was the evil genius to N'Tumbo. He had whispered to the suspicious chief that these were spies, and that they had come too late to learn that the great N'Tumbo had declared war against the British. They must all be

killed, but first N'Tumbo must learn the cause of their coming.

N'Tumbo, full of suspicion, waited for Dr. Crabhunter to land on the little projecting platform.

Even now the worthy Doctor was not suspicious of his host. He leaped lightly on to the pier, and approached N'Tumbo with outstretched hand.

"My dear chief," he exclaimed, "this is indeed a happy moment! I have so long wanted to meet you! I bring you greetings from your friends in London, and this letter of introduction!"

N'Tumbo tried to grin a friendly smile, and succeeded in looking as if he had a pain in his stomach.

He took the envelope, ripped it open, and held the letter upside down, muzzily pretending to read it. Then he rose from the stool on which he was seated, and waved his hand towards the gate, indicating by a gesture to Dr. Crabhunter that affairs of State were too exalted to be conducted on the wharf.

The Doctor tamely followed him through the city gate, to be saluted by the roll of a hundred hand drums and the deep booming of the great war drum, which was hung under a roof by the great Speak House.

"We make palaver inside," said the witch doctor, N'Gama, as he limped along by Dr. Crabhunter. "Me big doctor, like you," he added.

"Certainly, my dear sir," replied Dr Crabhunter, though he could not help taking a side-glance at N'Gama, and thinking that he was the dirtiest beggar he had ever clapped eyes on.

The groups in the canoes watched the Doctor disappear through the doorway, and Mr. Lal Tata called to Dick.

"I say, Dick, dear boy, I do not like looks of this place too much. But the Doctor would insist to pay visits to his Excellency."

Dick laid his finger on his lips to urge Lal to silence. The Redskins sat stolidly on their perch of corrugated iron sheets, smoking the pipe of peace, but all the same fingering the razor edges of their tomahawks under their blankets.

Only Sleeping Bear made any comment upon the sullen armed crowd who were watching the string of canoes.

"Plenty nice friend, I don't think!" said Sleeping Bear.

Mr. Pugsley was quietly performing a very remarkable feat. His engine, running slow, was holding the fleet of canoes alongside the wharf against the swift current of the river, so that their position was not shifted by six inches. He kept the canoe from which Dr. Crabhunter had landed exactly opposite the landing-place.

And at the same moment he was whispering to Umtutu, who lay flat on the deck of the launch in the shadow of the tarpaulin which was stretched over the engine.

"O man, I see you!" said he.

"O great chief, I see you!" mumbled Too-Too, who was lying face down on the deck.

"Over the side quietly. Dive under the keel, get up amongst those piles, and find out what has become of the great chief who has just landed!" ordered Mr. Pugsley.

"I hear and obey," answered Umtutu, and, like a shadow, he slipped over the far side of the launch and under her keel.

Umtutu could swim like a fish, and soon he was moving like a water rat under the slimy piles of the wharf.

There is nothing to teach a M'Bongo man in working his way along the rotten banks of a river, and in a few minutes Umtutu had worked round the town ditch to a spot where a wash-out had occurred in the great wall of mud. Here the wall had cracked through subsidence, and through the crack the spare little nigger climbed like a rat into the squalid town of mud huts.

Mr. Pugsley waited the longest ten minutes he had ever waited in his life. Then a woolly head popped up under the shadowy side of the launch, and Too-Too climbed aboard. His report was brief and to the point.

"Lord," he whispered, and he drew himself up dripping and flopped like a sea-lion on to the plankway of the launch, "the Leopards have got the great chief in the Speak House. There will be dancing, and he will be sacrificed to Umbimzulu the

Mighty, and to Mwangana, the great crocodile, even as happened to my brother. But the great chief is a great prize, and there will first be dancing."

"Hey?" demanded Mr. Pugsley, his brain working overtime.

"There will first be dancing," replied Too-Too. "And, further, these people have declared war against the white men, and they have cut the magic wire through which the white men talk through the forests!"

"Ho!" said Mr. Pugsley, rubbing his chin as he translated the news to Dick. "Now, let me see where we are! N'Tumbo is at war with the British. He's cut the telegraft lines, which is a declaration o' war in itself. And 'e's pinched ole Crabbo and is goin' to sacrifice 'im, in the Leopard's Lodge, afore Umbimzulu. Now, Cecil was taken by our good friend 'ere for Umbimzulu. So Umbimzulu in the Speak 'Ouse must be the statue of a monkey that they've fished up out of them old ruins! So far, so good! And when they've done ole Crabbo in, they propose to throw 'im to the river to Mwangana, who is the crocodile god, supposed to protect them from inundations and to favour the crops. Lummy, but ole Crabbo ain't arf got 'imself into a prize-packet o' trouble—and us, too!"

"We've got to get him out of it," said Dick.

"You've said it," replied Mr. Pugsley. "We will declare war at once on N'Tumbo, and, as they teach in the Navy that the essence o' strategy is attack, we will attack straightway as soon as we see their hand. Pass the word to the boys to get a spanner in every canoe, and unscrew the caps of twelve tins o' petrol. These will be passed to the stern canoe and poured on the water, giving time for it to float well down on N'Tumbo's navy astern. Then chuck a match on the river, and the enemy's fleet is, as you might say, done in!"

"Oh. Puggo," whispered Dick, "that's splendid!"

"Not arf what I got in my 'ead," answered Mr. Pugsley, calmly lighting his pipe and keeping his station as he kept the launch running against the river. "But mind that light does not go till I sound the 'orn!"

"Right-ho!" said Dick, and he passed the message to the canoes astern.

The order came back, confirmed in proper style.

"Nex' thing, Master Dick, is to hand over the military command to you," said Mr. Pugsley. "There's only one person what can keep this string lying exactly where it is. And that's me. I must 'ave the canoes ready for you to do a quick pierhead jump. I am the Navy covering your land operations. Savvy? Now, we will wait till that witch doctor comes out at the gate to invite us in, as 'e will do in a few minutes."

Mr. Pugsley had hardly spoken the word when N'Gama came hobbling out of the gate, and advanced to the end of the pier.

Mr. Pugsley let his string of canoes fall back, and brought the launch alongside the platform as N'Gama advanced, with a persuasive grin on his ugly dial.

"This is where we declare war, Master Dick," he whispered. "When ole Loby Toby comes to the end of the platform and starts 'is palaver, swop him one just be'ind the knees with a good 'ard swing of the boat'ook, and that'll drop 'im on 'is coker-nut in the well 'ere. 'E's our 'ostage for ole Crabbo. Fair exchange is no robbery. They've taken our ole blighter, we'll take theirs! Are the straps loose on the cricket bag?"

"Yes," breathed Dick, getting a hold of the boathook.

"Two toots of the 'orn, and you shove Gus ashore, and let 'im run!" was the order.

"Right-ho!" said Dick.

In the red glare of the fires the treacherous N'Gama came limping down the projecting gangway to the launch.

He stood looking down on Mr. Pugsley, and his grin was the grin of a devil.

"O man," he began in greeting, "I see you."

"O man," said Mr. Pugsley in reply, "I see you."

"It is the will of my lord N'Tumbo that these white boys shall come to his Speak House and feast with their great master,"

said N'Gama. "And it is the will of my lord N'Tumbo that these canoes shall be moored to his piers, and that his guards shall be placed aboard, so that there shall be no stealing from his friends, who come" —and here N'Gama gave an awful leer— "to see the buried cities."

"Right-ho!" replied Mr. Pugsley, in English. "Sock him, Dick! Quick! 'E's jus' set right."

N'Gama, delivering his message, had advanced to the very edge of the platform, and, quick and suspicious though he was, he was not looking out for the swipe of the heavy boathook behind his crooked knees that sent him flying on his head into the launch below.

"We ain't all suckers in Suckerville, y' know, N'Gama!" said Mr. Pugsley as he snicked a pair of handcuffs on to his prisoner, whilst Cecil, under the tarpaulin, lashed his legs.

The eyes of N'Gama nearly stared from his head as Cecil leaned over him.

"Umbimzulu!" he panted. "O mercy, O great one!"

"We got the clue!" called Mr. Pugsley in triumph as an angry roar broke from the crowd on the shore.

He leaped up on the bows of the launch, his hands in his pockets on the butts of two Service revolvers.

"O people," he cried, "thy lord has declared war on the British, wherefore thy gods are angered! The great Umbimzulu hath spoken, and the great Mwangana hath spoken. They are angered because of the treachery of N'Gama, and they are angered wherefore—behold, thy river burns!"

Mr. Pugsley sounded his foghorn.

The crowd, who were rushing forward, suddenly stopped, aghast. They saw a lick of blue flame run along the dark waters of the river, and then a huge sheet of flame rising on the water which was held by the hulls of the great war canoes, enveloped these in a furnace. These were rubbed over with a varnish of resin and lampblack, and as the petrol flames leaped up around them, they caught and flared up like torches, that could have been seen for miles around.

A yell of anger and fear went up from the mob as Mr. Pugsley executed his first naval manœuvre, which was to pull up a little and let another flood of flaring petrol go flying down the river on to N'Tumbo's war canoes.

These were large vessels and of great price, and they went up like fireworks, sending showers of sparks, which fell like golden rain upon the thatched roofs within the walls of the town.

There was a rush towards the canoes and a rush back. Then the crowds stood irresolute.

"Behold Umbimzulu the Mighty!" roared Mr. Pugsley, in a voice of thunder.

Something like a wail went up from the armed mob as Cecil, huge, grim, and terrible, rose from the launch and leaped on to the platform of the pier.

"Behold Mwangana!" cried Mr. Pugsley.

There was a howl as old Gus was shot out of the cricket bag on to the pier.

There was a rough wooden carving of Mwangana in the Temple of the Leopards, painted up in rough daubed colours. But this were nothing like rare old Gus, painted up fit to kill by the best artists of China and Japan, golden, blue-headed, and striped with the black-and-white stripes of Newcastle United.

Spears were dropped and guns were dropped, and the cry went up:

"Lo, our gods are angered! Let us run, brothers, to our women and children in the woods!"

Gus did one of his little runs forward, which always gave him a quaint resemblance to those little tin crocodiles which are sold on the streets.

Cecil stood there, swinging the great club which had been presented to him down in the Solomon Island. Gone was his glossy top hat, his Eton jacket, and his posh striped trousers. Cecil was naked as he was born, grim, terrible, and primitive.

The niggers took one look at him, and there was a rush into the gate of the town and a fighting jam of black bodies. It was like the gallery door of the Splendide Picture Palace on a Saturday night.

Then Mr. Pugsley handed over.

"There you are, Master Dick! They are on the run," said he. "Straight to the Speak 'Ouse! And if you see any lads in leopard-skin gloves, shoot 'em for the vermin they are!"

Dick leaped ashore, and Mr. Pugsley neatly drew up the canoes as Horace, bounding after Dick, landed on the platform. It was a masterpiece of navigation when Mr. Pugsley landed his party. Mr. Chatterjee Lal Tata was still bewildered.

"What is happening, my dear Dick?" he demanded. "This is terrible, and I am a timid man!"

"Don't worry," said Dick as they pressed forward into the gate of the town. "They've got old Crabby in their Speak House, and if we don't get him out quick, he'll be murdered!"

"I tried to persuade him," said Mr. Lal Tata. "I hate these foolish expeditions, and I don't like adventures—except in books."

The thatches had caught inside the mud walls, and the town was brightly illuminated as Dick and the boys of the Bombay Castle raced across the great square, with four hundred niggers flying before them.

There was no mistake as to the Speak House. It was a huge barn, as distinct as the Houses of Parliament, in London town.

No one resisted them. No nigger stood before them, for on one side of Dick stalked Cecil, grim and terrible, club in hand, and on the other side scuttled old Gus, frisking like a two-year-old to find himself free of his cricket bag.

The niggers who ran saw in these only their outraged gods, Umbimzulu of the Forests and Mwangana of the Rivers, the givers of all prosperity and good luck.

They hardly stopped to look, for to look on the gods is death. They went through the town and over the walls, and raced for the forest, to tell of the disaster which had fallen upon N'Tumbo and his capital city. N'Tumbo, who had dared to raise his hand against the white men!

They went over the walls like cats, falling into the ditch beyond and racing for the forest, covered with mud.

Dick led on to the door of the Speak House. Drumming was going on inside—a terrible, ominous drumming, which drowned the ears to those in the Temple of the Leopards against all that was passing outside.

Dick pointed to the great closed doors, and called to Horace, the goat.

"Horace!" he called.

Horace took one glance at the doors from his shining green eyes, that glowed like starboard lights. He measured his distance, and retreated a few paces.

Horace had measured his biffing powers against some rough stuff in his time, but the gates of the Speak House were the roughest proposition he had ever tackled.

But Horace was not downhearted.

Down went his head and up went his tail, and, with a superb bound, he hit the centre of those closed doors of murder with a biff that sounded like the crack of doom.

The doors flew open, and Horace recoiled, sorting himself out in penny numbers, and the boys were brought to a halt for an instant at the sight before them, a sight for which the rulers of Africa would have paid a king's ransom.

For there, lashed on a wooden log before the grim statue of an orang-outang, carved by a Greek hand, lay Dr. Crabhunter, and at the base of the statue sat N'Tumbo, his supposed pal, looking scared to death at the earthquake which had just taken place.

And, frozen in the act of dancing round their victim, were twelve evil-looking niggers, dressed in leopards' skins and tails, each bearing on his hands the death sentence of the steel-clawed gloves of the Leopards' Society.

Old Crabbo was still keeping his end up, even in this awful strait.

"I protest, Mr. N'Tumbo," he was saying—"I protest!"

"At 'em, Cecil!" cried Dick.

There was hardly need to call on Cecil. At the sight of Dr. Crabhunter lashed there Cecil seemed to go mad, and at the sight of

the statue of himself, lit by the red glow of the palm oil braziers, Cecil was transported.

He sprang at the frightened Leopards, who raised a howl of terror. He picked them up and hurled them one after another at the statue, toppling it over from its base. And when he had finished, there were twelve badly-damaged Leopards on the ground, and N'Tumbo lying on the floor before the empty pedestal, with about as much backbone in him as a Chivers' jelly. In fact, all that N'Tumbo wanted to complete him was the raspberry flavour He had got the lemon all right.

"Quick! Out of it, boys!" called Dick. "They may come back. Pick up those twelve chaps—they don't want any more—and shove old N'Tumbo along! Come along, Doctor! You are all right, sir. A miss is as good as a mile. Quick—to the wharf!"

And they pushed back through the blazing town, shoving N'Tumbo in front of them.

Mr. Pugsley gave a yell of triumph as he saw them come out at the gate of the blazing city.

"Well done, boys! Well done!" he cried. "And look! Here they come from Fort Victoria!"

There was the rattle of a Maxim gun as the sternwheeler from Fort Victoria came crashing through the chain of canoes which guarded the river.

"I believe that's my cousin bringing her down," said Dick, his eyes shining. "Isn't he pasting them?"

"We'll go and meet 'im," said Mr. Pugsley, "and let 'im 'ave ole Tumbo and his young cubs!"

As the flotilla pushed off, Dr. Crabhunter grasped Mr. Pugsley's hand.

"Mr. Pugsley," said he, "I have been a foolish man. I——"

But Mr. Pugsley cut him short.

"Hush, Doctor!" said he. "Not a word! All's well that ends well."



The boys were brought to a halt, for there, lashed to a wooden log before the statue of an orang-outang, lay Dr. Crabhunter. "At 'em, Cecil!" cried Dick. *(See Chapter 2.)*

A DAY in the LIFE OF A PAGE!

By TOBY MARSH

(Of St Jim's).



It was a bad day for me when I chose the perfession of page-boy at a public school. It's an overworked and under-paid job, with more kicks than pence. I'd much rather have a job like Taggles, the porter's—overpaid and underworked, with more pence than kicks! Old Taggles thinks he's hard done by, but his job's a sinnycure compared with mine. All he has to do is to crawl out of bed and ring the risin'-bell, and then crawl back between the sheets again and snooze until breakfast-time. For the rest of the day he just dawdles and dithers about jinglin' a bunch of keys, and moanin' that he's the hardest-worked cove in the wide world!

Taggles is up with the sparrow, but I'm up with the lark! My first job is to clean dozens of pairs of boots and shoes; for I'm not only a "buttons," but a bootblack, an errand-boy, a window-cleaner, a groom, a valley, and a "maid-of-all-work"—all rolled into one!

It's a perfect nightmare, cleanin' all the boots and shoes. Young gents like Master D'Arcy always insists on havin' a prize polish put on their shoes, so that they can see their faces in 'em. And by the time breakfast comes I'm sufferin' from "bootblack's elbow," which is like "tennis elbow," only a jolly sight more paneful!

Breakfast with me is a lightnin' snack. I have to take it standin' up; and I marvel at myself for takin' it lyin' down! A page-boy ought to have his breakfast in peace and comfort, like everybody else.

All the mornin' you'll see me racin' and chasin' all over the place, runnin' errands for all and sundery. It's "Toby, just pop here," and "Toby, just pop there," until I wonder I don't pop off altogether, and find a better job! If I dare to dawdle, and wander along the road readin' my favourite paper, "The Gem," it's a cuff or a lecture—or both!—waitin' for me when I get back.

Dinner is another lightnin' meal, taken in the servants' quarters. And then it's more errands and more odd jobs, such as riskin' my neck cleanin' the dormitory windows, or caddyin' on the links for one of the masters, or cleanin' the silver, or beatin' the carpets, or spring-cleanin' the Head's study. The Head's got quite a mania for havin' his study spring-cleaned. He seems to think that spring comes every week!

Not until the evenin' can I call my time my own. And then I make my miserable life happy by visitin' the Wayland Cinema, and forgettin' the cares and burdens of the day. Or I stay at St. Jim's and listen-in to a wireless concert. Master Merry has lent me THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL, and it's a really rippin' book when a fellow is in the dollars. (I don't mean rollin' in money, but down in the dumps!)

I retire to roost early, and it seems that my head has scarcely touched the pillow when it's time to get up and start a new day of toil and trouble.

Pity the poor page-boy!

THREE SMART TRICKS

Next time you give a party, amuse your audience with these tricks. They are very effective, easy to perform, and will be sure to go off well.

THE LOCKED AND ROPED BOX ESCAPE.

ONE of the most baffling and interesting illusions is the escape of a "magician" from a locked and roped box. It never fails to impress you; and yet, when the secret is known, the clever trick is one which any boy or girl might do. Here is a description of the illusion as it appears to the audience.

A large box is brought forward, and anyone is allowed to examine it. Particular attention is drawn to the fact that the box has *not* got a false bottom. Then the illusionist enters the box, which is at once closed and locked. A strong rope is then tied all round it, and the knots are sealed. The illusionist's assistant draws a curtain round the box, and in a few moments the illusionist himself appears, pulls back the curtain, and shows the box, from which he has just escaped, still securely corded and sealed!

Anyone who is at all handy with tools can construct one of these boxes in this way. The box certainly has no false bottom, but one of its sides works on a pivot. When the rope is tied around the box, the assistant, who, of course, is looking after the illusionist's interests while the latter is in the box, sees to it that the rope goes round the box in the same direction as the pivot works.

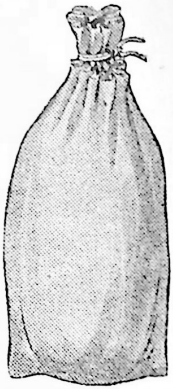


Fig. 3. This shows how the bags are arranged one inside the other, the innermost bag then being tied and sealed.

You make the box as shown at Fig. 1, leaving a space where the false side is to go. Cut a piece of wood of exactly the same size and appearance as the corresponding side of the box. That makes the false side. Fasten this in position with two very large nails, which between them will act as the pivot.

Be careful to see that the box is large enough to enable you to crawl through one half of the false side, for that is all the space you have.

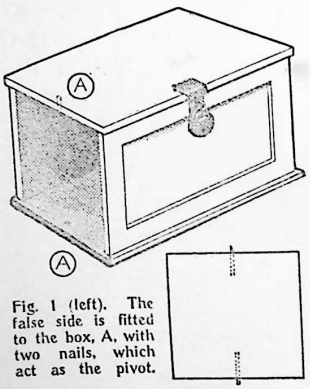


Fig. 1 (left). The false side is fitted to the box, A, with two nails, which act as the pivot.

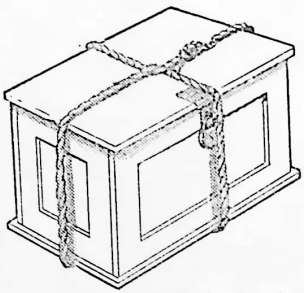


Fig. 2. The box (right) locked and bound with rope.

Once you are inside the box, lie in it with your head towards the false side. Your assistant must see that the rope is fastened around the box as shown at Fig. 2, and he should rap on the box just as he draws the curtain in front of it as a signal to you that you can begin to "escape."

When the curtain is drawn, simply push the false side open, and worm your way out! Of course, you will close the false side after you are out. Let people examine the box as much as they wish, but take care that you stand all the time by the false side, just in *case* someone should start prying there!

ESCAPING FROM A SEALED BAG.

ANOTHER simple trick is the escape from a bag which has been tied and sealed by the audience, after the illusionist has got into it. The curtains are drawn, and in a few moments the illusionist reappears, bearing with him the bag, which is still tied and sealed.

For this trick, you need two bags, exactly similar to each other, and both big enough for you to get into. One bag is placed inside the other—without the audience being aware of the fact, of course. When you get into the bag, you grip the second bag and push the top of it up through the open neck of the one in which you are. Your assistant conceals this by gathering the top of the bag in his hands. When members of the audience are asked to tie and seal it, they do not realise that they are tying and sealing another bag—*not* the one which really contains you!

When the curtain is drawn, you simply step from your bag, and hide it or leave it behind the curtain, showing the sealed (the second) bag to the audience. Fig. 3 shows you how the tops of the bags are arranged, and where they should be held by your assistant, who must see that the audience do not notice what he is up to when the tying and sealing is being done.

AN EFFECTIVE CHAIN ESCAPE.

FOR our third simple escape, you require a short length of chain, with a ring at one end and a padlock at the other. This is an "escape" that can be done without a curtain to screen you from your audience, for you can manage it by merely turning your back on them.

Any person from the audience is invited to fasten your hands together with the chain, as tightly as they possibly can. No matter how tightly the chain is fastened on your wrists, you simply turn your back for a moment, then face around again with your hands free and the padlock still locked!



Fig. 4. How an "escape" is made from manacled wrists.

The whole trick depends on the way in which your hands are fastened. You must see that the audience fasten the chain in the manner you desire, which is as follows: First of all you slip one end of the chain through the ring, and thus make a noose of it. This is slipped over one wrist and pulled tight. Take care that the ring comes at the top of your wrist, as at Fig. 4. Then allow the chain to drop between the wrists, give it a swing, and bring it over the top of the right wrist.

This done, the person who is manacling you may wrap the chain as tightly as he wishes around your wrists, and padlock it. All you have to do when you turn your back is to raise your left hand slightly, turn it palm downwards, slip it over the right, and the chain will have become so slack that it is an easy matter to slip it right off your wrists.

MR. PROUT'S PLUM PUDDING



A Play in Verse for Amateur Actors

Characters

Mr. Paul Prout	Master of the Fifth
Billy Bunter	The Fat boy of Greyfriars
Harry Wharton	Juniors of the Greyfriars Remove
Bob Cherry	
Hurree Singh	
Fisher T. Fish	
Wun Lung	
Doctor Locke	Headmaster of Greyfriars
Mr. Quelch	Master of the Remove
Mr. Hacker	Master of the Shell

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.

MR. PROUT'S PLUM PUDDING

By the Greyfriars Rhymester.

ACT I.

SCENE.—*Mr. Prout's Study.*

(*The Master of the Fifth is seated at his table, writing. Suddenly there is a loud commotion "off." Excited voices are raised, and six juniors, all trying to enter the study at the same time, become wedged in the doorway.*)

BUNTER:
I say, you fellows! Stop your barging!

WHARTON:
Go easy! Where's the sense in charging?

CHERRY:
Yow-ow! That's my pet corn you're crushing!

FISH:
I'm first, you jays! It's no use rushing!

HURREE SINGH:
You've kicked my shinfulness! Oh, golly!

WUN LUNG:
An accident! Me velly solly!

(*The stampede continues,* BILLY BUNTER'S *ample form blocking the entrance. Suddenly* BUNTER, *under pressure from behind, shoots into the study, landing on all fours. The others come tumbling after, to alight in various sprawling attitudes.*)

MR. PROUT (*rising angrily to his feet*):
How dare you! Really, this is shocking!
How dare you enter without knocking?
Pray, what has happened to occasion
So fierce and sudden an invasion?

(*The juniors scramble to their feet, all trying to speak at once.*)

FISH:
Say, Mr. Prout——

HURREE SINGH:
Most worthy teacher——

CHERRY:
We've come about——

BUNTER:
Shut up, you screecher!

WUN LUNG:
We wishee shout——

MR. PROUT:
Be silent, creature!
One at a time, in strict rotation,
I'll listen to your explanation.

WHARTON:
We saw a notice on your door—
"WANTED—A FAG! Apply at 4
Knowledge of cooking is essential:
Fag must be smart and deferential.
Removites only need apply,
I don't desire the smaller fry.



With voices raised in excitement, six juniors tried to enter Mr. Prout's study at the same time. Suddenly Bunter shot into the room and landed on all fours, the others tumbling in after him.

The duties will be light and genial,
My fag shall be no slave or menial.
He shall be studied, do not doubt:
Apply within, to Mr. Prout."

MR. PROUT:
Ah! That accounts for this intrusion

Upon my scholarly seclusion.
I need a fag; I'm in a fix;
But not the services of *six!*
This sudden rush of applications
Is causing awkward complications!

FISH:
I kinder guess and calculate
That I should suit you, sir, first-rate!
I'll sweep your study, wash your crocks,
Prepare your grub, and darn your socks!
These other boobies—more's the pity—
Were never raised in Noo York City.
You'd find in them, sir, a deficiency
Of "pep," and hustle, and efficiency.
I guess that you could never wish
A finer fag than F. T. Fish.
I'll serve you faithfully and meekly
For payment of two dollars weekly!



As Bob Cherry passed with the pile of books in his arms, Wun Lung furtively put out his foot. The result was disastrous. Bob sprawled to the floor amidst the numerous volumes.

MR. PROUT (*sternly*):
Fish! You are mercenary-minded!
A fact to which I am not blinded.
You wish to be my fag for payment
Including, doubtless, food and raiment!
I scorn your money-making tricks——

FISH:
Amurricans don't work for nix!

MR. PROUT (*pointing to the exit*):
Quit my presence, you young monkey!
(*Exit* FISH, *scowling.*)

CHERRY:
Sir! May I be your fag and flunkey?

MR. PROUT:
What are your qualifications?

CHERRY:
I'd cook at jollifications.

MR. PROUT:
Can you make pies and patties?

CHERRY:
Just my handwriting, that is!

MR. PROUT:
Would you wash plates and dishes?

CHERRY:
Yes—and obey your wishes.

MR. PROUT:
Are you alert and sprightly?

CHERRY:
No fairy moves more lightly!
(*In order to test* BOB CHERRY'S *claim,* MR. PROUT *hands him a large pile of books.*)

MR. PROUT:
Walk round my study with these!

CHERRY:
Yes—with the greatest ease!

(Bob Cherry *walks round the study, balancing the pile of books in his arms.* Wun Lung *furtively puts out his foot and trips* Bob, *with disastrous results. The volumes go crashing to the floor, with* Bob Cherry *sprawling on top of them.*)

Mr. Prout (*wrathfully*):

Cherry, you clumsy, careless Vandal!
Your antics are a perfect scandal!
You are less graceful than a bull!
Get up at once, ungainly fool!

Cherry (*rising*):

Somebody tripped me—sent me sprawling——

Mr. Prout:

Your clumsiness is most appalling!
Your "fairy movements" are a mockery!
Suppose those volumes had been crockery?
Gather them up at once—and go!

(*Exit* Bob Cherry *ruefully, after picking up the books.*)

Bunter (*as* Bob *passes out*):

You've lost the job; I told you so!

Mr. Prout (*turning to* Harry Wharton):

Wharton! You'd better follow Cherry.
I know you would be useful—very.
You are a smart and willing worker,
You scorn the slacker and the shirker.
But you are captain of your Form,
And cares and duties, in a swarm,
Beset your daily path, my lad;
And though, no doubt, you would be glad
To cook my meals and sweep my floor,
I can't increase your burdens more.

Wharton:

Fagging for you, sir, would be pleasure——

Mr. Prout:

Yes; but you have so little leisure.
I could not dream of giving you
The duties of a fag to do.
Still, I am grateful for your offer——

Bunter (*gleefully*): Turned down, old chap!

Wharton:

Dry up, you scoffer!

(*Exit* Wharton.)

Mr. Prout:

Three applicants remain, I see.

Bunter:

And *I'm* the pick, sir, of the three!

Hurree Singh:

Most worthy, wiseful sahib teacher,
Ignore this fat and fatuous creature!
He cannot bake the cakefulness,
Nor stew the juicy steakfulness.
The chopful chop he cannot grill,
He has no culinary skill.
His fads and fancies are the oddest.
But I, good sahib, though so modest,
Can cook the finest dishes ever!
I am so capable and clever.
Should you be wanting, in a hurry,
A dish of appetising curry,
I could concoct it in a minute,
With lots of fire and flavour in it!

Mr. Prout:

I never eat such peppery things!

Hurree Singh:

Why, curry is a dish for kings!
Sometimes I make it in the study,
When fellows come in cold and muddy
From taking part in football fray.
They smack their lipfulness and say:
"This is the stuff to give 'em, Hurree!
You are hot-stuff—and so's your curry!"

Mr. Prout (*smiling*):

It really seems to me incredible
That boys could find your curry edible!
I hardly think your Indian dishes
Would gratify my needs and wishes.
Something more English I desire;
So, Hurree Singh, you may retire!

(*Exit* Hurree Singh.)

Bunter (*aside*):

That only leaves Wun Lung and me!
I shall be chosen! He, he, he!

Wun Lung (*to* Mr. Prout):

If you are looking for a cookee
Farther than me you need not lookee.
Of all the cooks, from here to China,
Than li'l Wun Lung there's not a finer!
Me velly muchee clever chapee.
Me makee master velly happy.
Me makee pie, all nicee-nicee,
With rabbits, rats, or micee—micee!

MR. PROUT (*in horror*):
What! Rats and mice inside a pie!
You heathen rascal! I should die!

WUN LUNG:
Micee have flavour most delicious——

MR. PROUT:
Wun Lung, your tastes are most pernicious!

WUN LUNG:
Me makee stew, with lovely snails!

MR. PROUT:
Go! Go, before my temper fails!
(*Exit* WUN LUNG.)

BUNTER:
There's only little me remaining!
Sir, I will work without complaining.
I shall be charmed to fill the post,
I'll make delicious rounds of toast,
And fry your morning eggs and bacon
To greet your gaze when you awaken.
I'll light your fire, and sweep your floor,
And run your errands by the score;
And buy your groceries and baccy,
And be your willing slave and lackey!

MR. PROUT:
H'm! Such avowals of devotion
Quite fail to move me to emotion!

BUNTER:
My cooking will be gladly eaten.
Why, even Beeton would be beaten
If she competed, sir, with me.
I'm such a stunning cook, you see!

MR. PROUT:
People who loudly blow their trumpets——

BUNTER:
Sir, you should taste my lovely crumpets!

MR. PROUT:
Who laud their prowess to the skies!

BUNTER:
Sir, you should sample my pork-pies!

MR. PROUT:
Who boast of their abilities——

BUNTER:
Just give me the facilities,
And I'll prepare you, sir, a spread
Fit for a king—or even a Head!

MR. PROUT:
Well, Bunter, you shall have your chance.

BUNTER:
Hurrah! Excuse me while I dance!
(*He waltzes gaily round the study.*)

MR. PROUT:
To-night, my boy, at seven o'clock,
I have invited Doctor Locke,
And Mr. Quelch and Mr. Hacker,
To come and pull a festive cracker,
And share a merry meal with me.
It is my birthday.

BUNTER:
Eighty-three?

MR. PROUT (*angrily*):
Your statement stabs me like a knife!



Mr. Prout: "Three applicants remain, I see."
Bunter: "And I'm the pick, sir, of the three!"

Boy, I am in the prime of life!
I'm just as sprightly and as sporty
As when I was a lad of forty!
And if you dare, sir, to suggest——

BUNTER:
I'm sorry, sir; I merely guessed.
Forgive me, sir, for my remark,
But you look such a patriarch!

MR. PROUT (*suppressing his anger*):
Will you prepare this meal for me?

BUNTER:
With pleasure, sir! And you'll agree,
And so will Quelchy and the Head,
There never was a finer spread!
In choosing me to cook your dinner,

You'll find that you have backed a winner.
I'll introduce you, sir, at seven,
Into a gorger's seventh heaven!
(*Exit* BUNTER, *beaming.*)

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE.—*Billy Bunter's study, which has been turned into a temporary kitchen.* BUNTER *is in his shirtsleeves, busy rolling out dough. He is surrounded by pots and pans, and other kitchen utensils.*

BUNTER:
See, I am working like a nigger!
I'm putting all my vim and vigour
Into the task of rolling dough!
(*Busily brandishes the rolling-pin.*)
Prout's feed will be the finest ever!
And he'll admit that he has never
In all his eighty years gone past
Tasted so ripping a repast!
(*Enter* WUN LUNG.)

BUNTER:
Buzz off, you pig-tailed little Chink!

WUN LUNG (*eagerly*):
Me helpee Bunter! What you tink?

BUNTER (*scornfully*):
How can a heathen from the East
Help in the making of a feast?
Besides, this pie is nearly finished.
I've worked with vigour undiminished.
I've made a stew that's so entrancing
That it will set the masters dancing!
And then, to follow, there's a pie—
Prouty will laud it to the sky!
The pie contains good English rabbit;
I don't possess your horrid habit
Of making pies containing cats,
And beastly things like mice and rats!

WUN LUNG:
Micee taste nicee in a pie——

BUNTER:
Ugh! Well, I'm not disposed to try!

WUN LUNG:
Can Wun Lung helpee makee pudden?
Me sure it will be velly good 'un!

BUNTER:
Hand me that flour-bag from the shelf;
I'm too much occupied myself.
(WUN LUNG *mounts a chair in order to reach down a big bag of flour from the shelf. He is looking very mischievous. The bag bursts open, and a shower of flour descends upon* BILLY BUNTER, *smothering him from head to foot.*)

BUNTER (*spluttering wildly*):
Ow! Oooooch! I'm smothered! Gug-gug-gug!

WUN LUNG:
Ha, ha! You ought to see your mug!



Bunter: "See, I'm working like a nigger!
I'm putting all my vim and vigour
Into the task of rolling dough!"

BUNTER:
You cackling, pig-tailed Oriental——

WUN LUNG:
Me solly! It was accidental!

BUNTER:
I'll give you accident, you duffer!
I'll make you squirm and squeal and suffer!
(*Snatching up the rolling-pin,* BUNTER *chases* WUN LUNG *round the table. But the Chinee is too crafty to be caught, and* BUNTER *at last desists, panting for breath.*)

BUNTER :

Look what a ghastly state I'm in!
My hair, my eyes, my nose, my chin,
Are simply smothered with this stuff!

WUN LUNG :

They'll tink you've used a powder-puff!

BUNTER :

Well, anyway, I shan't be able
To serve the masters at their table.
They'd take me for an apparition,
And I'd be sacked from my position.
I'll have to spend a busy hour
In getting rid of all this flour.

WUN LUNG :

Me finish Bunter's job meanwhile!

BUNTER :

Can you make puddings in good style?

WUN LUNG :

Me makee excellent plum-duff!
Masters will vote it "hotee-stuff"!

BUNTER :

Righto, Wun Lung; I'll leave you to it.
Scoop up that flour; and here's the suet.
And all the other things are handy,
Including just a dash of brandy.
You've got enough ingredients there
To make *two* puddings, I declare!
One for old Prouty's birthday spree,
The other—(extra good!)—for ME!
Now, I'll leave everything to you——

WUN LUNG :

Me savvy, Bunter! Toodle-oo!

(*Exit* BUNTER.)

(WUN LUNG *gets busy. He soon finishes the pudding which* BUNTER *had been making, and, tying it into a cloth, puts it into one of the pots.*)

WUN LUNG :

That pudding will turn out a treatee,
Fit for an emperor to eatee!
The masters, eating it with cream,
Will say, "This pudding is a dream!"
But *Bunter's* pudding, when I makee,
Will give fat rascal tummy-achee!
A special pudding it will be,
For Bunter's benefit. He, he!

(*Chuckling gleefully,* WUN LUNG *commences to mix the flour for* BUNTER'S "*special*" *pudding.*)

(*Enter* HARRY WHARTON, BOB CHERRY, *and* HURREE SINGH.)

CHERRY :

Hallo! What's going on in here?

WUN LUNG :

Me velly busy! Kindly clear!

WHARTON :

Making a pudding for old Prout?

WUN LUNG :

Nunno! For Bunter, while he's out.

HURREE SINGH :

The helping handfulness we'll render,
And make a pudding, soft and tender,
Delightful, dainty, and delicious,
Nourishing, noble, and nutritious!

CHERRY (*laughing*) :

When Bunter tastes it, he'll be vicious!

(*The juniors cheerfully help* WUN LUNG, *putting into the pudding all the ingredients, both suitable and unsuitable, they can find.*)

WHARTON :

Here's raisins—they will not need stoning—

CHERRY :

I fancy they'll set Bunter groaning!

HURREE SINGH :

Here is some curry powder, chums——

WHARTON :

And here's a bag of unstoned plums!

CHERRY :

Red pepper here! The very stuff
To give a "bite" to Bunter's duff!

WUN LUNG :

Please passee me that pot of paste—
It will improve the pudding's taste!

WHARTON :

I think we ought to add some glue
To make the pudding stick. Don't you?

HURREE SINGH :

A tablespoon of soot's expedient——

CHERRY :

A very "sootable" ingredient!

WUN LUNG :

Me add a bottle of black inkee
To give a flavour. What you tinkee?

WHARTON :

Here are some peppercorns and chillies
To whet that appetite of Billy's!

CHERRY :

A very special pudding, this!

A treat that Bunter must not miss.
A just reward for all his crimes!
Stir up, boys!

WHARTON:

These are "stirring" times!

(*The juniors gather round to stir the pudding, which is eventually tied into a cloth and put on to boil.*)

WHARTON:

The queerest pudding I recall!
It will be like a cannon-ball!

HURREE SINGH:

Bunter, the plump and supercilious,
Is bound to be a trifle bilious!

CHERRY:

It won't upset his constitution—
Just an internal revolution!

ALL:

Ha, ha, ha!

WHARTON:

I fancy that completes our toil;
We'll leave Wun Lung to watch it boil.

(*Exit* WHARTON, CHERRY, *and* HURREE SINGH. *The curtain falls at this juncture, to give the impression of time elapsing whilst the puddings are being cooked. When the curtain rises again, a moment later,* WUN LUNG *is in the act of turning out the two puddings on to dishes.*)

WUN LUNG:

The masters' pudding is delightful!
But Bunter's—pouf! the smell is frightful!
It knockee little Chinee back!
Poor Bunter won't enjoy his snack!

(*Enter* BILLY BUNTER, *fresh and clean after removing all traces of the flour.*)

BUNTER:

The birthday party's going strong!
I knew that nothing would go wrong.
The masters *did* enjoy their stew;
The pie was just perfection, too!
"Bunter," said Prout, "you are a wonder!
The finest cook alive, by thunder!"
And Quelchy mumbled, "That is so!"
And Dr. Locke exclaimed, "What-ho!"
And Mr. Hacker said, "Why, gents,
Those are my very sentiments!"
They're full of joy and jubilation
At that most happy celebration.
And soon you'll hear 'em chant, in chorus,
"We wish the pudding set before us!"
Has it turned out all right, Wun Lung?
Speak up! Or have you lost your tongue?

WUN LUNG:

The pudding has turned out a treatee
It would be velly hard to beatee.



Bunter: "Ow! Ooooch! I'm smothered! Gug-gug-gug!"
Wun Lung: "Ha, ha! You ought to see your mug!"

BUNTER (*inspecting the two puddings*):

Which is the masters'? Which is mine?

WUN LUNG:

Yours is the big one, fat and fine!

BUNTER:

I think I'll sample just a bite.
I've got a fearful appetite!

(*He sits down, and draws the bigger of the two puddings towards him.*)

WUN LUNG:

You are as greedy as a hog——

BUNTER:

Pass me a spoon and fork, you dog!

(WUN LUNG *hands a spoon and fork to* BUNTER, *who sniffs suspiciously at the pudding.*)

BUNTER :

By Jove ! This pudding *does* smell funny !

WUN LUNG :

But it will taste as sweet as honey !

BUNTER :

Poof ! This aroma seems suspicious.

WUN LUNG :

The pudding, though, will be delicious !

BUNTER :

I hope you followed the instructions ;
If not, I warn you there'll be ructions !

WUN LUNG :

Proofee of pudding is in eatee.
Taste it ! You'll find it nice and sweetee.

(BUNTER *is about to start on the pudding when the voice of* MR. PROUT *is heard "off."*)

Bunter ! Is my fag Bunter there ?

BUNTER :

Yessir ! You gave me quite a scare !

MR. PROUT :

Pray serve the pudding, boy, this minute !
My guests are eager to begin it !

BUNTER :

I'll bring it up, sir, right away !

MR. PROUT :

Splendid, my boy ! Do not delay !

(BUNTER *snatches up the dish containing his own pudding, and hurries out of study.*)

WUN LUNG (*in great alarm*) :

Bunter ! Come back ! You make mistakee !
That's the wrong pudding that you takee !

(*No answer.* BUNTER *does not return, and* WUN LUNG *wrings his hands in despair.*)

Help ! Bunter's fairly done it now !
There's bound to be a fearful row !
When Prouty and the masters tastee
That pudding, made of glue and pastee,
They will be velly vexy-vexy,



Wun Lung : "Me add a bottle of black inkee
To give a flavour. What you tinkee ?"

And in a state of apoplexy !
They'll slaughter Bunter for that dishee !
I hear their canes go swishy-swishy !

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE.—*Mr. Prout's Study.*

(DR. LOCKE, MR. QUELCH, *and* MR. HACKER *are seated at the table, awaiting the last course of their dinner—the plum pudding. The three gentlemen are in excellent spirits.*)

DR. LOCKE :

Prout, as a host, has no superior.

MR. QUELCH :

No celebration could be cheerier !

MR. HACKER (*placing his hand on his waistcoat*) :

All is at peace in my interior !

DR. LOCKE :

Frankly, I was surprised to find
A sumptuous dinner of this kind.
I thought that Prout, an old campaigner,
Was an indifferent entertainer.
For old campaigners, you're aware,
Prefer a rough and ready fare.
They cook in billy-cans, you know
Over a camp-fire's ruddy glow.

The green grass is their tablecloth;
Their coffee always tastes like broth!
Their knives and forks are Nature's own;
With *fingers* they dissect a bone.
And I had hardly realised
That Prout is now quite civilised!

MR. QUELCH:
His stew was certainly delightful!
I had expected something frightful.

MR. HACKER:
His rabbit-pie was just perfection!
When first we carved it, for inspection,
I viewed with doubtings the comestible,
Thinking it might be indigestible.
But I have neither pang nor pain.
Why, I could eat the same again!

DR. LOCKE:
I, too, upon this festal night,
Have quite a schoolboy's appetite!
I feel that years have slipped away,
And I'm a fag, care-free and gay.

MR. QUELCH:
I trust the pudding will be nice.
If so, I'll take an extra slice.

MR. HACKER:
Unless it's sweet and succulent,
I shall feel rather truculent.
But I've no doubt 'twill be delicious,
Tasty and tempting, and nutritious!

(*Footsteps without. Enter* MR. PROUT, *followed by* BILLY BUNTER, *bearing the pudding on a dish.*)

MR. PROUT:
Gentlemen, I regret to say
That there has been a slight delay.
But you will find this pudding prime
Will compensate the loss of time.

BUNTER (*setting the pudding on the table*):
This pudding is a rare variety,
The sort they eat in high society.
I made it from a recipe
My titled uncle gave to me.
He is a waiter at the Ritz—
They often tip him threepenny-bits.

DR. LOCKE (*smiling*):
A titled waiter! Bless my soul!

BUNTER:
Yes; but at present on the dole.

MR. QUELCH:
Bunter is fond of fabrications——

BUNTER:
Why, I've a host of swell relations!
And this rich uncle—Uncle Ted—
Sent me the recipe, and said:
"You'll find the pudding more than eatable;
In fact, the flavour is unbeatable!"
A pudding fit for Heads—and Crowned Heads;
It was invented by the Roundheads.
Oliver Cromwell, sick of soups,
Said: "That's the stuff to give the troops!"
He served it to his men and cattle
Upon the eve of every battle.
It made them feel so full of fight
The Cavaliers were put to flight.
A later Oliver—known as Twist—
Cried: "Give me more—I must insist!"
You'll find the incident in Dickens——

MR. PROUT:
Silence! Your fairy story sickens!

DR. LOCKE:
Bunter, you are a clever cook;



Wun Lung: "Bunter! Come back! You make mistakee! That's the wrong pudding that you takee!"

Doubtless you've studied Beeton's book.
Your pies are poems; and your stews
Not e'en dyspeptics could abuse.
But tell us no more fairy stories——

MR. HACKER:
Or we will show you where the door is!

MR. QUELCH (*sniffing*):
I seem to sense an odour curious,
Horrid, obnoxious, and injurious!

DR. LOCKE (*putting his handkerchief to his nose*):
How strange! I sense the very same!

BUNTER:
Please, sir, the pudding's not to blame!

MR. PROUT:
It is a most peculiar smell—
Like burning glue, and soot as well!
The scent is certainly offensive.
No need, though, to be apprehensive.
This pudding is like Cæsar's wife,
Beyond reproach.
Pray pass the knife!

(*A knife and fork are passed to* MR. PROUT, *who proceeds to carve the pudding. He finds great difficulty in doing so, and puffs and pants from his exertions.*)

MR. PROUT:
Dear me! This knife is blunt, I fear;
But I will nobly persevere.

(*He succeeds at last in carving four portions, which he distributes. His guests examine their pudding, and then wait for each other to sample it, so that a verdict may be obtained. But nobody starts.*)

MR. PROUT:
Don't wait for me, but pray proceed!

MR. QUELCH:
Ahem! I fear I'm off my feed!

MR. PROUT:
But you can find sufficient room
For *that* small portion, I presume?

MR. QUELCH (*cautiously*):
I'll try a little by-and-by——

MR. PROUT:
Why all this hesitancy? Why?

MR. HACKER:
My portion, Prout, is piping hot;
When it cools off, I'll eat the lot.

DR. LOCKE:
The same remark applies to me;
Hot pudding never did agree
With my digestion; so I'll wait
Until the clouds of steam abate.

MR. PROUT:
Your conduct, gentlemen, is queer!
You have a perfect pudding here;



Mr. Prout: "It is a most peculiar smell—
Like burning glue, and soot as well!"

Yet, though your portions are but meagre,
You do not seem the least bit eager
To eat them up, then come again,
Like very valiant trenchermen!

MR. QUELCH:
Prout, why not eat *your* portion first?
Then you can let us know the worst!

(MR. PROUT *blinks rather nervously at his pudding, but he feels he ought to accept the challenge.*)

MR. PROUT:

Oh, certainly! I'll try a sample.

MR. QUELCH (*aside*):

I think he'll find one sample ample!

(MR. PROUT *takes a spoonful of the pudding and raises it to his mouth, his guests watching him anxiously. There is a breathless hush, and then* MR. PROUT *leaps to his feet with a wild yell, overturning his chair.*)

MR. PROUT:

Ow! Yow! Yaroooo! My mouth's on fire!

A glass of water I desire!

(BUNTER *hastily picks up a glass of water and hands it to* MR. PROUT.)

DR. LOCKE:

Really, dear Prout, why all this fuss?

MR. PROUT:

That pudding, sir, was nauseous!

MR. HACKER:

Was it not tasty and delicious?

MR. PROUT:

Sir, it was *not!* I feel quite vicious!

MR. QUELCH (*smiling*):

Perhaps your youthful cook put in
Some special kind of vitamin?

BUNTER (*to* MR. PROUT):

I'm sorry, sir, for this disaster——

MR. PROUT (*furiously*):

You've tried to poison me—a master!

BUNTER:

Oh, really, sir, I wouldn't dare!
The law would hang me by my hair!

MR. PROUT:

Ugh! Let me take another drink!
I've tasted soot, and glue, and ink,
And lots of other dreadful things!
Oh, how my palate smarts and stings!

DR. LOCKE:

Prout, I suggest you cease complaining,
And give this wretched boy a caning!
Bunter has played a wicked hoax——

MR. PROUT (*snatching up a cane*):

And I'll administer six strokes!

BUNTER (*backing away in alarm*):

Help! Save me! Stop this execution!
Think of my feeble constitution!
It's all a blunder, I'm afraid—
That's not the pudding that I made!

(MR. PROUT *is about to wield the cane when there is a knocking without. Enter* WUN LUNG, *carrying a pudding on a dish.*)

WUN LUNG:

Bunter make velly sad mistakee!
Wrong pudding, gentlemen, he takee!
Please believe little Oriental
That it was purely accidental!
He left the rightee one behind;
It will taste beautiful, you'll find!

(*Sets the pudding on the table.*)

DR. LOCKE:

Ah, this new pudding smells delightful!

MR. QUELCH:

Its predecessor, sir, was frightful!

(DR. LOCKE *cuts himself a slice of the new pudding, and takes a spoonful very gingerly. Then he smiles.*)

DR. LOCKE:

A pudding of the finest quality!
A fitting climax to our jollity.
Bunter is vindicated, quite!
This pudding is a sheer delight!

WUN LUNG:

It meltee in the mouthee—what?

BUNTER:

I made that pudding. You did not!

(DR. LOCKE *carves the pudding, and distributes portions to the masters, who eat it with obvious relish.* BUNTER *and* WUN LUNG *look on, with beaming faces.*)

DR. LOCKE (*rising to his feet*):

Dear Prout, upon this happy function
I can declare, without compunction,
Of feasts I've never had a finer!
I offer you congratulations.
And my sincere felicitations.

MR. PROUT:

I thank you, sir, with cordiality,
On this occasion of hilarity!

DR. LOCKE:

A vote of thanks I now propose
To this plump cook of yours, who shows
That he's a culinary artist;
Of cooks, undoubtedly the smartest!

MR. QUELCH:

That vote is seconded——

MR. HACKER:

Hear, hear!

BUNTER :

Your words are music to my ear!
I now will make an answering speech
To each and all, and all and each.
I shan't be more than half-an hour,
Speaking with eloquence and power.
Now, first of all——

DR. LOCKE (*hastily*) :

I must depart!
I have some urgent work to start.

(*Exit* DR. LOCKE.)

MR. QUELCH :

I have to lecture, now, on Venice——

MR. HACKER :

And I have promised to play tennis!

(*Exit Messrs.* QUELCH *and* HACKER.)

MR. PROUT :

I must be going, too, I fear——

WUN LUNG :

And I'll Wun Lung must disappear!

(*Exit* MR. PROUT *and* WUN LUNG, *leaving* BILLY BUNTER *alone in the study, with his half-hour speech undelivered.*)



After taking a spoonful of the pudding, Mr. Prout leapt to his feet with a wild yell, overturning a chair. "Ow! Yow! My mouth's on fire! A glass of water I desire!"

BUNTER :

Beasts! Fancy clearing off like that,
Just as I had my speech all pat!
They've missed a wonderful oration.
However, I've one consolation—
There's lots of pudding still left over,
So Prouty's cook will be in clover!

(BUNTER *seats himself at the table, and, with beaming face, proceeds to demolish the pudding.*)

CURTAIN.

AU REVOIR—

No, this doesn't mean a long parting with all the cheery schoolboy characters you have met in the preceding pages, for they appear each week in the Companion Papers *set out below:*

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