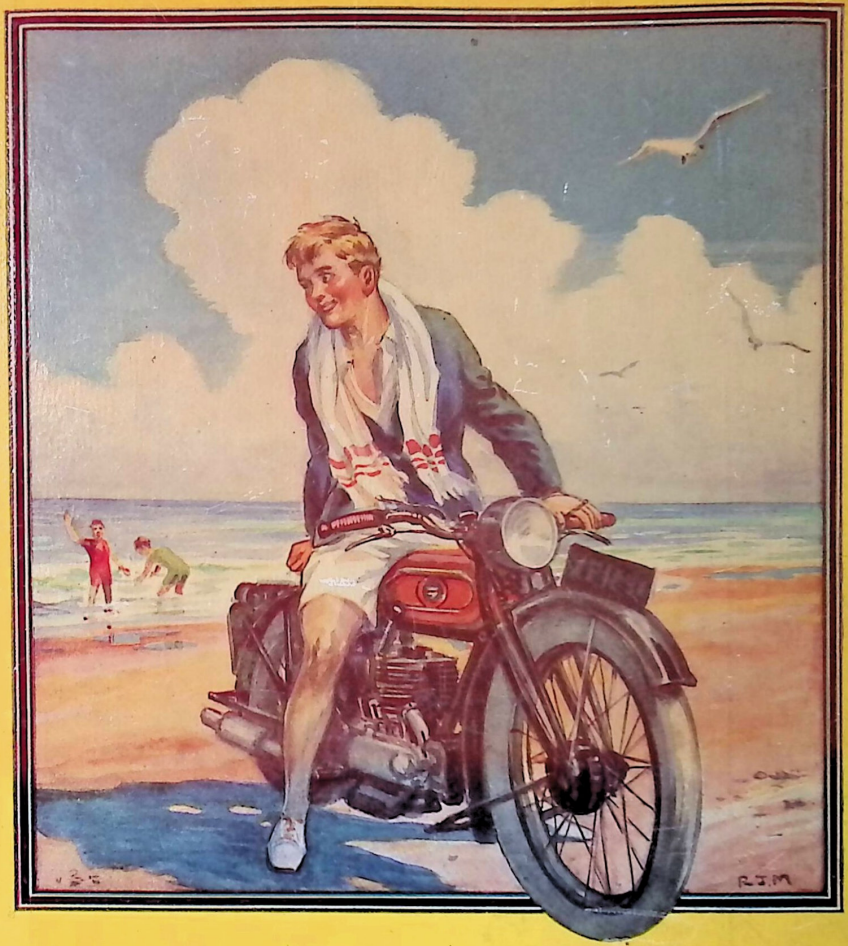
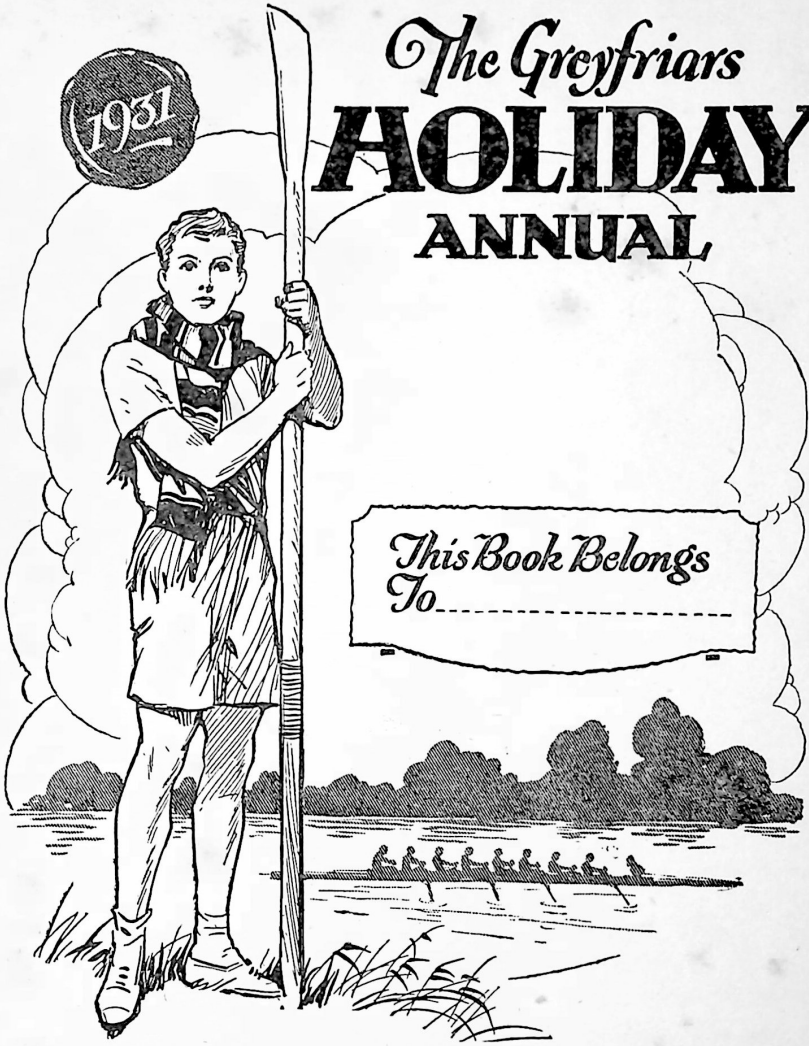
THE GREYFRIARS

HOLIDAY

1931 ANNUAL 1931

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS





Issued from The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.



Frontispiece H.A.

CAUGHT!

Your Editor to his Friends

YEAR by year the task of compiling the pages of the HOLIDAY ANNUAL is lightened and made pleasanter by the ever increasing enthusiasm with which each successive volume is received by a great army of British boys and girls.

To your Editor it is a sheer labour of love which affords him as much pleasure as the finished product brings to his readers.

In the ensuing pages will be found a host of stories, colour plates, pictures cleverly reproduced in photogravure, and drawings in black and white, all contributed by the leading authors and artists of the day. No trouble or expense has been spared to make this issue of what has come to be regarded as the leading boys' annual "better than ever."

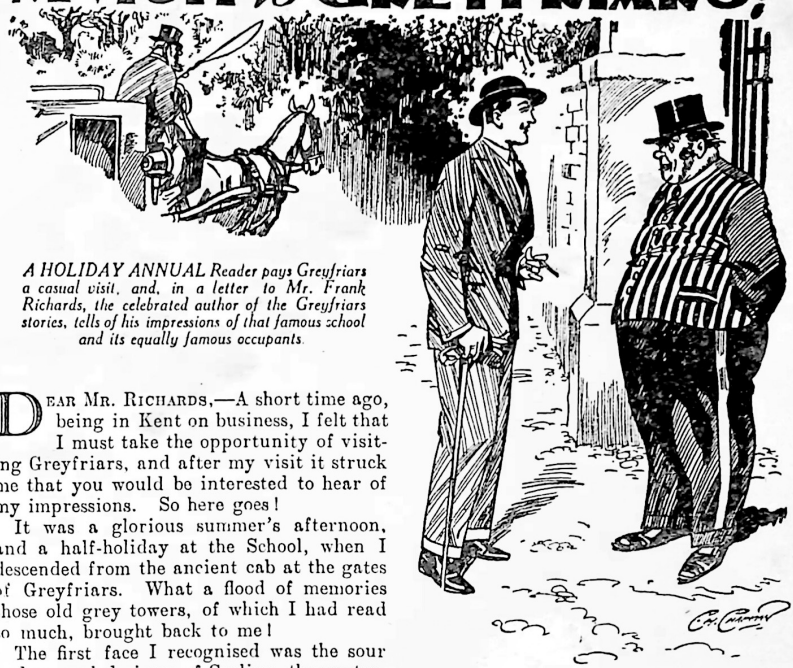
The wide range of subjects, deftly treated for readers of all tastes, will find favour with the most critical. Herein will be found a budget of stories dealing with the most famous schoolboy characters in the world; vigorous adventure tales of thrills on land and sea and in the air; jaunty poems, vivid articles and a clever playlet for amateur actors; all of which good things combine to give that manly, healthy note of quality for which the HOLIDAY ANNUAL has rightly become famous.

It is without fear, therefore, that I place this bumper issue of fun and fiction before you; assured that, from the moment it passes into your possession, I shall have made another friend.

THE EDITOR.

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

A VISIT to GREYFRIARS!



A HOLIDAY ANNUAL Reader pays Greyfriars a casual visit, and, in a letter to Mr. Frank Richards, the celebrated author of the Greyfriars stories, tells of his impressions of that famous school and its equally famous occupants.

DEAR MR. RICHARDS,—A short time ago, being in Kent on business, I felt that I must take the opportunity of visiting Greyfriars, and after my visit it struck me that you would be interested to hear of my impressions. So here goes!

It was a glorious summer's afternoon, and a half-holiday at the School, when I descended from the ancient cab at the gates of Greyfriars. What a flood of memories those old grey towers, of which I had read so much, brought back to me!

The first face I recognised was the sour and crumpled visage of Gosling, the porter. He greeted me with the somewhat vague remark:

"Wot I ses is, wot's all this 'ere?"

A small silver coin pressed into his horny palm seemed to provide a satisfactory answer.

Having passed the Guardian of the Gates, I hurried up the drive towards the School House, gazing round me as I did so. It being a half-holiday, there were few Greyfriars men to be seen; but from the direction of Little Side came the click of leather meeting willow, and the merry shouts of the cricketers.

I easily recognised from the descriptions in "The Magnet" the shady Close, the Gym., and the Tuck-shop.

Entering the House, the first fellow I met was one whom it would be impossible not to identify: William George Bunter! Fatter than even my wildest imaginings, and with spectacles agleam with curiosity, he waddled towards me. On asking for Mr. Quelch's whereabouts, he retaliated by requesting me to change a postal-order. As this time-honoured and mythical piece of paper was well known to me, however, there was nothing doing. Whereupon he rolled away in high dudgeon, leaving my question unanswered.

Trotter, the page boy, who appeared a moment after, proved more obliging, and I was soon chatting pleasantly with the



Entering the School House, the first fellow I met was one whom it would be impossible not to identify—William George Bunter.

Remove master. For all his stern discipline towards his pupils, I found "Quelchy" to be a most engaging and interesting personality. On learning of my desire to have a short tour of Greyfriars, he at once volunteered to conduct me personally. And I could not have had a better guide.

He showed me round the Form-rooms, the Remove passage, dormitories, Common-rooms, and Big Hall. Although this was my first visit, I could easily recognise all these places, so well have you described them in your stories.

Leaving the House, we paid a visit to the ruined Priory, the Cloisters, and the Crypt, and then made a brief survey of the historic playing-fields. On Little Side I was introduced to Harry Wharton and his friends, who were engaged in the pleasant task of "wiping the floor," as they put it, with Cecil Temple of the Fourth and his side.

The Famous Five were much as I had expected them to be, 100 per cent. thorough-going British schoolboys.

Time was now fleeting, however, so that, after thanking Mr. Quelch for his kindness and exchanging a few words with that fine old scholar and gentleman, Dr. Locke, I had to bid farewell to Greyfriars.

I walked down to the gates, accompanied by a lively crowd of Removites, amongst whom I spotted Redwing, Mark Linley, Bulstrode, Tom Brown, "Squiff," Hazeldene, Penfold, and many others.

Their hail-fellow-well-met attitude towards a perfect stranger was truly amazing, several of them pressing me to pay them another and longer visit in the near future. As for myself, I seemed to have known the Remove fellows for years. And so with parting adieux—may they be merely "aux revoirs"—I rolled away in the rickety old cab.

As I realised that only through your tales could I have known of Greyfriars and all its varying personalities, I felt that I must express my gratitude in some shape or form. Hence this letter. With renewed thanks, and hopes that you will long write for "The Magnet,"

I remain, yours sincerely,

Frank Caterham



After thanking Mr. Quelch for his kindness and exchanging a few words with Dr. Locke, I bade farewell to Greyfriars.

PULLING— COKER'S LEG!

By FRANK RICHARDS



Horace James Coker's leg was made to be pulled, but never has it been pulled to such good purpose as in this lively, humorous story of Greyfriars School!

THE FIRST CHAPTER
Putting His Foot Down!

WHIZ!

Thud!

"Yarooop!"

That was all, but it signified a lot.

The "whiz" was the sound of a snowball hurtling across the quadrangle at Greyfriars one wintry morn. The "thud" was the sound of the same snowball coming into violent contact with something solid.

The yell was from Horace James Coker, of the Fifth, who was, as a matter of fact, the solid object with which the snowball had collided.

Coker collapsed into the snow.

Coker had fallen!

To Coker himself, that was almost tantamount to saying that the heavens had fallen. The fall of the mighty Roman Empire was a rather important affair. The fall from his high estate of Lucifer, Son of the Morning, was quite noteworthy. But neither of those occurrences was half so noteworthy or important as the fall of Horace James Coker.

That was how Coker felt about it, anyway. He picked himself up and glared round with a glare which combined rage and astonishment in equal proportions.

He had been hit by a snowball. He—Horace Coker, the great and far-famed Horace, of the Fifth—had actually been hit by a snowball! It was preposterous—almost incredible. But it was true.

The only possible inference was that a passing junior had the extraordinary and amazing "nerve" to use Coker's hefty person as a target. It would have been unreasonable to imagine that a spherical object could form itself out of the snow and attack Coker of its own volition. Coker was not over-endowed with brains, but he had sufficient to see that that hypothesis was absurd.

With a grim and set expression on his rugged face, the great man of the Fifth scrambled to his feet. He was just in time to see a figure in Etons disappearing into the House. The miscreant had flown from the scene of his crime!

But the matter couldn't end there. Obviously something had to be done. Coker

tramped back towards the School House, grimly determined that something should be done.

The culprit was, of course, almost certain to be a Remove fellow. The disappearing junior had had the " cut " of a Removite about him. Outrages of this kind were always the work of Remove fellows, anyway. Coker's first impulse, therefore, was to hasten to the Remove quarters and mop up the floor with the entire Form, on the principle that he would thereby be certain of punishing the guilty party.

On second thoughts, he decided not to do that. It was barely possible, of course, that instead of Coker mopping up the floor with the Remove, the Remove might mop up the floor with Coker. Coker didn't exactly admit that possibility to himself, but he subconsciously realised that there were drawbacks about such hasty action.

The situation, however, was one demanding drastic treatment. And an orgy of assault and battery among the Remove being inexpedient, Coker decided on another plan. So far, although he had had " scraps " galore with the Remove, he had never really explained to that disrespectful Form just what code of etiquette and behaviour he demanded from them. The thought came to him now that the time was ripe for the issue of an exact statement of his position, so that the juniors should have no excuse for being disrespectful in future.

Perhaps, after all, he had acted rather hastily at times. It might be that the outrageous behaviour of the Remove arose out of ignorance of Coker's greatness and importance. Possibly, if the facts were explained to them, they would understand, and treat him with his due amount of respect and awe in future.

Coker decided to see Harry Wharton, and issue a sort of command. or ukase, or ultimatum to him, as captain of the Remove. That would be Coker's last word on the subject. Any " cheek " he received after that, he mentally vowed, would be treated without mercy.

He entered the House, sprinted up the stairs three at a time, and tramped towards the Remove quarters.

Fortunately, the Remove passage was almost deserted when he reached it. If half a dozen Removites had been there to observe the arrival of Coker, no doubt the course of events after that would have been very different from what actually happened. Ribald greetings would have been addressed to the invader. Coker would have stopped, and all his previous resolutions would speedily have been forgotten.

But the passage was clear. And Coker reached Study No. 1 without having cause to change his ideas.

Without bothering about the formality of knocking on the door, the great man of the Fifth entered the study.

Five juniors were there when Coker tramped in—the Famous Five of the Remove. They looked round at the opening of the door, and five separate and distinct glances were bestowed on Horace Coker.

" Forgotten something, Coker?" asked Johnny Bull.

" Eh? Not that I know of. What do you think I've forgotten, young Bull?"

" Thought perhaps for a moment you'd forgotten to knock on the door. But I've just remembered, of course, the Fifth pride themselves on their pigsty manners, don't they?" finished Johnny Bull, with a nod.

The rest of the Co. chuckled. Coker turned red.

" If you're trying to be funny, young Bull, I warn you that you're in danger of getting something that won't strike you as a bit funny!"

" Dear me! So Coker's come all the way here to ask for trouble!" remarked Bob Cherry reflectively. " I rather fancy we can oblige him, can't we, you chaps?"

" What ho!"

Harry Wharton rose from the armchair and took his hands out of his pockets. Nugent slid off his perch on the edge of the table, and Hurree Singh, with a dusky smile, got up from the window-ledge.

Coker eyed them grimly and clenched his fists. Then, with an effort, he overcame his temptation to wade in, and unclenched them again.

" Don't be silly young asses!" he said gruffly. " I haven't come here to give you

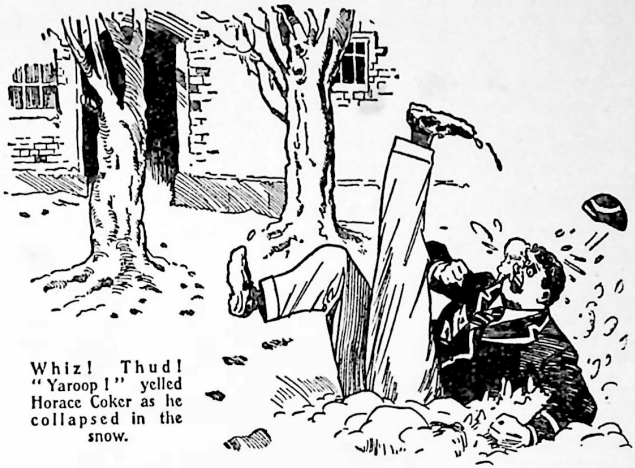
a licking. Dare say you deserve it, but that's not what I've come for."

"Oh, thank you, Coker! You don't know how relieved we all are!" gasped Bob Cherry, with a well-feigned sob of relief.

"The thankfulness to the esteemed and ludicrous Coker is terrific!" said Hurree Singh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Matter of fact, I've come to speak to you, young Wharton, about a rather serious matter."



Whiz! Thud! "Yaroop!" yelled Horace Coker as he collapsed in the snow.

"Fire away, old bean!" said the captain of the Remove good-humouredly.

"I've just been hit by a snowball. Somebody's had the infernal cheek to bash a snowball at me! Me, you know!" said Coker impressively.

"Awful!" said Johnny Bull gravely.

"Dreadful!" remarked Nugent.

"Horrible!" grinned Bob Cherry.

Coker looked a little dubious.

"Well, I'm not saying it's horrible," he admitted. "Perhaps that would be going too far. But it's dashed rotten when a senior occupying a position like I occupy in the School has to stand being snowballed like a scrubby little Second Form fag. So I'm going to speak to you rather plainly about it, Wharton."

"To me?" asked Harry Wharton, in surprise.

Coker nodded.

"I've come to the conclusion that it must have been a Remove chap, and as I believe you're the sort of gang-leader of the Form——"

"The what?" asked Wharton sharply.

"Well, the Form captain, then, if that's what you call yourself," said Coker impatiently. "As you're the Form captain, I've come to you about it, see?"

"Oh!"

"I shall overlook the particular matter of the snowball. But I'm going to make you personally responsible for the future treatment I get from the Remove Form!"

"You are, are you?" murmured Harry Wharton, closing one eye gently to his grinning chums.

"There seems to be a misunderstanding among you fags as to my exact status in the School," said Coker solemnly. "How it arose, I can't for the life of me understand. But it's undoubtedly there, and I'm going to get rid of it. See?"

"I see!" smiled Wharton.

"So that there can be no misunderstanding in the future, I'll just explain briefly why I'm entitled to the same respect you give to Wingate and the other blessed prefects," said Coker, his lip curling slightly. "In the first place, I'm in the Fifth. And the Fifth, as a Form, are as good as the Sixth—and a dashed sight better! Get that?"

"Oh, quite!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But, apart from that," said Coker, disdainfully ignoring the laugh, "I myself am at least the equal of the prefects in this

School in every respect. Take footer, for instance. Among fellows who know it's recognised that I'm the best centre-forward at Greyfriars."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Wharton involuntarily.

Coker paused and looked at the skipper of the Remove for an instant. Then he went on:

"Again, at cricket. Any chap with a knowledge of cricket will tell you that there's nobody else here who is able to play quite like I can."

"Well, that's true enough, anyway!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Glad you've got the sense to see it, young Cherry," said Coker unsuspiciously. "Anyway, to cut a long story short—seeing that in every way I'm at least the equal, and in most cases the superior, of anybody else at Greyfriars, it seems to me that it's up to you fags to behave to me as you do to a prefect. I'm here to tell you that I jolly well expect it, and that there's going to be a thumping big row if you don't toe the line. Savvy?"

Johnny Bull and the rest closed round, ready to wade in and frog's-march their distinguished visitor back to his native haunts as soon as their leader gave the signal.

But, to their surprise, Harry Wharton did not give the signal.

Instead, he eyed Coker rather thoughtfully.

"You mean that, Coker?" he asked.

"Of course I mean it, you young ass!"

"You want us in future to treat you with great respect?"

"Precisely!"

"Even deference?" suggested Wharton.

"Well, why not? You can't have too much of a good thing, after all."

"Right! It's a deal, then," said Wharton.

"Look here, Harry——" said Bob Cherry.

"All right, Bob. It's settled," said Wharton, turning an expressionless face to the astonished Bob Cherry. "Coker wants to be treated with respect. Well, we'll oblige him."

"Good! It's a change to hear a fag talking sense for once!" remarked Coker, with satisfaction. "You quite understand, then?"

"Absolutely! We've got to treat you with respect and deference. That right?"

"Just it!" nodded Coker. "See that you do it, then. Mind, I shall keep an eye on you!"

With that, the great man of the Fifth, his nose elevated several degrees higher in the air, stalked out of the study.

Four surprised and rather indignant juniors surrounded their leader as the door slammed behind Coker, and demanded the why and the wherefore.

Apparently Harry Wharton's explanation satisfied them, for a couple of minutes later there was a burst of laughter from Study No. 1.

By that time, of course, Coker was out of earshot.

THE SECOND CHAPTER
Changing Coker's Mind!

"Good morning, sir!"

Coker jumped.

He was just walking into the School tuckshop on the day following his visit to No. 1. Potter and Greene, his study-mates, were with him. Potter and Greene usually were with him when he visited the tuck-shop. Unkind critics had even voiced the opinion that it was chiefly on account of Coker's liberal tuck-shop expenditure that Potter and Greene chummed in with him at all!

Coker had just put forward the suggestion that they adjourn to the tuck-shop and indulge in a snack. Potter and Greene had both voted the suggestion an excellent one. Accordingly, they had adjourned.

There were half a dozen or more juniors occupying the high stools at the counter of Mrs. Mimble's little shop. Coker passed them by like the idle wind which he regarded not. The great man of the Fifth was not in the habit of noticing juniors unless circumstances forced him to do so.

That, however, was what happened on this occasion. Hardly had Coker reached

the counter before his attention was directed to them by a most surprising happening.

Instead of greeting Coker with bland indifference, or, as sometimes happened, with ribald remarks, every junior in the shop doffed his cap and gave utterance to the polite and respectful salutation:

"Good-morning, sir!"

"Eh?"

"Good-morning, sir!"

Coker looked astonished. Potter and Greene fairly blinked.

"Are you speaking to me?" asked Coker, evidently still unable to understand this strange phenomenon.

"Yes, sir!"

"And—and you're calling me 'sir'?" stuttered Coker.

"That's right, sir!" answered Bob Cherry gravely. "Nothing wrong with that, is there, sir?"

"Privilege to be allowed to speak to you at all, sir!" said Frank Nugent, raising his cap again.

"Well, my hat!"

For a moment the great man of the Fifth scarcely knew what to say. Then a smile appeared on his rugged countenance—a lofty, condescending sort of smile, but one that seemed to express a good deal of satisfaction.

That smile broadened almost to a grin when Tom Brown and Squiff, two other Removites, came in and raised their caps with elaborate politeness.

"Good-morning, sir!" said the newcomers simultaneously.

"Hem! Good-morning!" acknowledged Coker. "Good-morning all, in fact! I must say, this rather pleases me. Seems that you fags are learning manners at last! Dish out some tarts to these kids, and put it down to me, Mrs. Mimble!"

"Oh, thank you, sir!" came in a respectful chorus from the crowd of Removites.

And they waded into jam-tarts at Coker's expense with great cheerfulness. Apparently there were compensations attaching to the business of behaving politely towards Coker!

Coker and his two satellites partook of their snack and strolled out of the tuckshop. Their departure was the signal for a general doffing of caps and a chorus of "Good-day, sir!"

Coker bestowed a condescending nod on the surprisingly polite juniors, and left the tuck-shop, beaming.

"Well, what do you think of that?" he asked triumphantly, outside the tuck-shop. "Those kids are beginning to knuckle under, what?"

"Hem!"

"Hum!"

"I always thought they'd come round in time, you know. Goodness knows I've had to put them in their places times enough. Now my patience is being rewarded at last. They've become respectful and polite—I'm satisfied."

"Hem!"

"Got a cough, Potter?" asked Coker, with a frown.

"Nunno! But I was just thinking——"

"Don't attempt things that are beyond your powers, old chap," said Coker, with heavy sarcasm.

"Hem! I was just thinking that those Remove chaps were almost too polite to carry conviction," said Potter. "Dunno how it struck you, Greene, but I got the idea that either they'd all gone off their rockers——"

"What?" roared Coker.

"Or else that they were indulging in some deep rag," concluded Potter. "What did you think, Greeney?"

"Just the same as you, old man!"

"Why, you silly cuckoos," roared Coker furiously, "haven't either of you got the sense to see that those kids were simply behaving properly for once?"

"Can't say it occurred to me at all," admitted Greene. "When Remove kids start addressing you as 'sir'——"

"Well, quite right, too!" snorted Coker. "I know it's an unusual way for juniors to speak to seniors. But, after all, what's wrong with it?"

"Hum!"

"To my mind, it's only fit and proper that they should use some courtesy title in talking to seniors. Now that they've started it, I'm going to keep 'em up to it,

anyway!" said Coker. "Got anything to say to that, you fatheads?"

The fatheads had nothing to say to it. They came to the conclusion that experience might change Coker's mind more easily than all the argument in the world, and they let it go at that.

Potter and Greene were right. Coker eventually learned that they were right, but it took two or three days of illuminating experience to convince him.

It was all right at first. Coker's feelings on being "capped" and addressed as "sir" in all quarters were very agreeable indeed. It was quite exhilarating to stroll about, receiving the salutations of the Remove, on the first day.

True, the reactions caused among other Forms were not altogether favourable from Coker's point of view. In the Fifth, for instance, the Remove's new departure was greeted at first with amazement and then with unrestrained mirth. Coker felt slightly disappointed over that circumstance, but it did not affect him very deeply. He consoled himself with the thought that the prophet is proverbially without honour in his own country, and then dismissed the Fifth from his mind.

On the second day of the new regime the Remove were even more polite than before. They seemed to have come to a common agreement to abandon the title "sir" in favour of "excellency." Coker, having recovered from his first shock, decided that that was all to the good. After all, the masters were entitled to "sir," and Coker didn't think a great deal of the Greyfriars masters. "Excellency," in the circumstances, was a better title; a little grandiose, perhaps, but distinctive and, on the whole, very suitable.

It was on the third day that Coker felt his first doubts.

Coming downstairs, full of joie de vivre and good will to all men, Coker ran into Peter Todd, of the Remove. Todd, as a rule, was among the cheekiest of his cheeky Form, but he seemed to have become infected with the general wave of remorse which had swept over the Remove recently.

Coker paused on seeing him, expecting to receive a respectful bow and a polite "Good-morning, excellency!"

His expectations were fully realised. In fact, they were surpassed. Instead of merely bowing, Peter Todd made a deep obeisance. And instead of contenting himself with a mere "Good-morning, excellency!" he went considerably better with:

"Hail, your highness!"

"What?" gasped Coker, aghast.

"Hail, your highness!" repeated Todd, making another obeisance.

Several other Removites, coming up together, joined him, with a solemn chorus of:

"All hail, your highness!"

"Hail, great one!"

Coker pinched himself to make sure that he was not dreaming.

"Look here, you young asses, I'm not 'your highness'!" he exclaimed, half pleased and half vexed. "No need for you to say 'your highness' to me."

"But there is," said Wibley. "Isn't your highness the most important man at Greyfriars?"

"Isn't your highness far greater than the prefects and masters?" asked Frank Nugent seriously.

"Well, that's true, of course," admitted Coker, frowning. "But——"

"Then why not 'your highness'?" asked Bob Cherry. "Very appropriate, I think!"

"Oh, rather!"

Coker smiled.

"Well, all right, then. Have it your own way," he said indulgently, and went on his way.

But it seemed, by the expression on his rugged face, that he was beginning, for the first time, to entertain doubts. Even Horace found that it required an effort to swallow "your highness."

It was when "your highness" gave place to "your majesty" and "your exalted majesty" that Coker began to feel the urge of inward reaction. The thing had definitely gone too far now. He saw, for the first time, that it was, after all, possible to have too much of a good thing. Respect and politeness and obedience were

all very well; but when they led to fellows addressing him as "your exalted majesty," they were almost as bad as the disrespect and impoliteness and disobedience from which Coker had suffered before.

By dinner-time that day Coker's temper was in a decidedly ruffled condition. By tea-time he was raging. Disillusionment had come to the great man of the Fifth. It had been a long time coming, but it had come at last. And a bitter disillusionment it was.

He realised now that the whole School was laughing over him. His appearance in the Hall, the quad., the Games Study in the Fifth passage, and anywhere else where two or three fellows were gathered together was the signal for roars of laughter. Nobody now had any doubt as to the meaning of the Remove's astonishing display of politeness towards Coker, of the Fifth. It was all a "rag"—a tremendous and entirely successful "rag." Even Coker began to see that now.

The climax was reached after tea, when practically the entire Remove marched en masse to the Fifth Form passage. It was a sort of procession, led by Bob Cherry and Bolsover, playing a mouth-organ and a tin-whistle respectively, and it attracted quite a lot of attention on its way to the quarters of the Fifth.

Heedless of the protests of the outraged Fifth, the Removites invaded the Games Study at the end of the passage. Coker was in that apartment, laying down the law to a group of bored Fifth Formers. He looked round with a start as the door was flung open.

"What the dickens——" he exclaimed, frowning.

There was a roar from the doorway.

"Hail, great Coker!"

"All hail, your most excellent majesty!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"



"Please, your majesty," said Harry Wharton meekly, "we've come to award you a medal."

"Look here——" roared Coker, his face becoming a deep and wrathful red.

"Please, your majesty," said Harry Wharton meekly, "we've come to award you a medal."

"A—a medal?" stuttered Coker.

"To award you a medal as a token of our most humble respect and esteem," went on Wharton solemnly. "Your majesty, on this most auspicious occasion it behoves your humble servant to say a few words ——"

But Coker's humble servant's few words were never spoken. Coker should, of course, have been delighted to receive such a respectful deputation. But he wasn't. For once in a way, respect and humility from the Remove gave him no pleasure

whatever. On the contrary, they seemed to inspire him to wrath. Coker saw red.

With an unintelligible growl, Coker rushed at the humble captain of the Remove.

Apparently that rush was not altogether unexpected. In the single second that elapsed during Coker's passage across the Games Study, a dozen Removites lined up to receive him. Coker had anticipated wiping Wharton off the map. Instead of which he found that the person who actually experienced the sensation of being wiped off the map was Horace James Coker!

Coker roared.

"You—you—I'll smash you! I'll pulverise you! I'll—— Yaroooop!"

"Bump him!" roared a dozen voices.

"He doesn't appreciate politeness!" grinned Peter Todd. "Give him a bumping instead!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here's a brainwave! Bump him till he asks us to treat him with disrespect in future!" yelled Vernon Smith above the din.

"Good egg! Up with him!" grinned Wharton.

Bump!

"Whoooop! Look here——" shrieked Coker.

"Do you want us to be disrespectful in future, Coker?" asked Wharton.

"No, you rotters! Yaroooop!"

"Sure?"

"Oh crikey! Lemme go!" groaned Coker. "All right, then, you young beasts! I'll agree!"

"Then it's distinctly understood that for the future we treat you with as much disrespect as we like?" asked Wharton.

"Ow! Yes. Anything you like, blow you!"

"Good! Let him go, then, chaps!"

The grinning Removites released their unhappy captive and departed. Great were the rejoicings in the quarters of the Remove that night. Coker himself had agreed to be treated for the future with disrespect. And with treatment of that kind the Remove were most happy to oblige him!

THE END

THE SLACKER'S ALPHABET

By LORD MAULEVERER

The Slacker of the Greyfriars Remove

A is the ARM-CHAIR drawn up to the fire.

B is for BED, without which I'd expire!

C is for CUSHION, so downy and soft.

D is for DREAMS when I snooze "up aloft."

E is for EASE as I quietly muse.

F is the FOOTSTOOL supporting my shoes.

G's the "GOO'-NIGHT" which I drowsily sigh.

H is for HAMMOCK. Oh, there let me lie!

I is for IDLENESS. What could be nicer?

J's the JAPER. (Sleep's gone in a trice, sir.)

K is the KICKS bestowed on my person.

L's LETHARGY—some chaps show aversion.

M's for MORPHEUS, with arms so caressing!

N's the NIGHTMARE—a subject depressing!

O is for OPTICS, with eyelids like lead.

P is the PILLOW tucked under my head.

Q's for QUIET, essential for rest.

R's RIP VAN WINKLE, the chap who knew best.

S is for SNORES—the windows are shaken!

T's for TORTURE—in class when I waken!

U is the UPROAR of Cherry's big feet.

V's for VIGOUR when he upsets my seat.

W is for WORK—long may I abstain!

X is 'XERCISE—it gives me a pain!

Y is for YAWNS. I'm needing sleep sorely!

Z's ZEPHYRS on the brow of

Yours,

MAULY.



BEHIND The THROTTLE!

by **BARRY PEROWNE**

Young "Strap" Hales' ambition is to drive an M.N.E.R. express—and his chance comes sooner than he expects!

THE FIRST CHAPTER
Two Mysteries!

YOUNG "Strap" Hales wiped his hands on a scrap of oily waste, tucked the waste into the pocket of his dungarees, and leaped down from the cab of Locomotive No. 407. Standing back a little from the engine, he looked at it critically.

Number 407 was one of the Metropolitan and North of England Railway's newest type locomotives—a thing of delight to the eyes of an expert. With its huge driving-wheels, its gleaming rods, its long boiler, squat smoke-stack and streamlined tender, the engine was the embodiment of grace and speed, an enduring tribute to the brains of many inventors and to the skilled hands of countless craftsmen.

"You'll do," said Strap, grinning. "You can go on living up to your name, Bright and Shining!"

A sudden hiss of escaping steam made him turn quickly. The slow-moving bulk of an

old type shunting engine loomed up before him on the rails of the locomotive shed. The face of the engineer grinned at Strap round the edge of the cab.

"That made ye jump, Strap—hey?"

"Jump yourself!" said Strap good-humouredly, moving out of the shunter's way. "Run that old can out of here, Bill, or I'll take a tin-opener to it!"

The engineer laughed, and halted his shunter alongside the gleaming length of Number 407.

"She may be an old can, Strap, but she's an engine, anyway. I bet you wish you was runnin' her, instead o' just bein' an oiler in the sheds here."

"I do, Bill," said Strap truthfully. "But I shall get an engine one day all right."

"How'd you like to be drivin' old Bright an' Shinin'?" asked the engineer, nodding at No. 407.

Strap grinned, but the sudden eagerness in his grey eyes betrayed the fact that the driver had touched on a sensitive spot.

"How'd I like to be driving 'The Flying Scotsman'? You'll ask me that next! Have a heart, Bill—putting ideas into my young head like that!"

"Well, tastes differ," said the engineer. "I tell you this, Strap—I ain't got no ambition to drive Bright an' Shinin'! She ain't bin on the rails a month—an' look what she's bin in already. I got a feelin' creepin' over me that 407's goin' to turn out one o' them hoodoo engines. What's happened to the bloke who was drivin' her—Sam Palmer, hey?"

Before Strap could make any reply, a voice bellowed from the end of the shed:

"Hey, you, Bill! Come on here! What d'ye think this is—a debatin' society?"

The engineer grinned at Strap, and withdrew into the cab of his shunter. The old engine chugged along to the end of the shed.

Strap stood looking after it thoughtfully. His lean, brown young face had become suddenly grim. The engineer, he reflected, had been right. It was a strange thing that Locomotive 407 should have been connected with the only two incidents that had marred the smooth running of the M. and N.E.R. for some time past. There was something in the mysterious quality of those two incidents which fascinated Strap. What exactly *had* happened to Sam Palmer, the driver of 407?

The vast, hollow cavern of the locomotive shed was clangorous with the rumble of engines, the hissing of open steam-cocks, the metallic ring of hammers, the rattle of tube-expanders, the voices of men. But Strap was unconscious of the activity all about him. He was thinking of Sam Palmer, and of what had happened to him. He was imagining himself on the footplate of 407, at Sam Palmer's side, rocketing northwards through the roaring dark, with the hot breath of the fire-box in his face and the belch from the smoke-stack streaking the night with flame. What *had* happened to Sam Palmer?

"Hi, Strap!"

The calling of his name brought Strap's thoughts back abruptly to the present. He looked toward the great, arched entrance of the locomotive shed, beyond which, in the grey winter daylight, was an intricate tangle of shining rails, a forest of signal posts, and a slow-moving mass of shunting goods trains, tankers, and passenger carriages. A youngster of about his own age, clad in dungarees, and with a shock of red hair and a freckled face, stood in the entrance of the shed, beckoning to him.

Strap strolled forward.

"Hallo, Nervous! What's up?"

"Nervous" Hobson chuckled softly, winking at Strap. Nervous was about the most indefatigable trouble-seeker on the M. and N.E.R.'s pay-sheet. Wherever there was a rough-and-tumble, Nervous was on the spot; if there was ever a job to be done that promised to provide thrills or danger, Nervous was there to volunteer for it. But that was only because Nervous suffered from the delusion that he was a highly timid person, and was convinced that the only way he could cure his timidity was to seek trouble in every form, thereby making himself so accustomed to it that it would cease to hold any horrors for him.

Strap, whose friend and fellow-oiler Nervous was, had tried many times to make Nervous understand that in reality he had the courage of a tiger, but it was waste of time. Nervous was timid; he said so himself, and, if anybody contradicted him, he blacked their eye for them.

"Strap," said Nervous, "there's something in the wind. You're wanted up at the old man's office."

"Me?" Strap exclaimed. "What on earth for?"

"Dunno," said Nervous, "but it looks like trouble to me." His blue eyes gleamed. "Strap, if it is trouble, count me in on your side. I shall be scared stiff, but—count me in!"

"O.K., Nervous," said Strap, grinning, and headed for the traffic superintendent's office.

Outside the door he ran his hand through his crisp, short brown hair, and then tapped decorously on the glass-panelled door marked: "Vernon Hales, Traffic Superintendent."

"Come in," said a voice.

Strap went in. The tall, grey-haired man who was standing by the window of the sparsely-furnished office, looking out at the passing trains, turned round slowly.

"Hallo, Tom!"

"Hallo, dad!" said Strap. "You sent for me?"

"Yes." There were little lines of strain about Mr. Hales' mouth. Strap saw that he was worried and uncertain. "You've heard about what happened to 407 last night, Tom, of course?" Mr. Hales said.

"Sam Palmer's fireman has put it all over the junction," said Strap, smiling. "It was too choice a bit of sensation to keep quiet about." He became grave. "But what *is* the truth of it, dad?"

Mr. Hales sat down at his desk, fidgeting uncomfortably with his watch-chain.

"Tom, I'll be darned if I know. I've just been talking to a fellow who came round from Scotland Yard, and he's as mystified as I am. All that we can be certain about is the story told us by Sam Palmer's fireman. You know that 407 was on the night run from Edinburgh to London?"

"Yes," Strap said.

"Well, between Darlington and York there's a stretch of pretty wild, lonely country. It was a foul night—a high wind and a stinging sleet; real dirty weather. Number 407 was going at a pretty good bat. We're proud of our Edinburgh-London express run, as you know, and Sam was trying to reach York on time, the fireman says, being a bit late leaving Newcastle. They passed through Darlington at about two o'clock. That means that it would be about two-thirty when it happened. A long, long way ahead they saw a red light waving from side to side on the line. Sam braked at once, naturally, slowing down for all he was worth. They came to a stop within about twenty-five yards of the light. It all happened very quickly and quietly. A man came alongside the engine. The fireman said he couldn't see much of him; it was so dark. But he said that he had an automatic, and was holding something—a scarf or a muffler—against his face. He said to Sam: 'I've got you covered. Climb down—and no tricks.' Sam obeyed; he had no choice. Then the bandit told the fireman he could go on."

Mr. Hales made a little helpless gesture with his hand.

"And that's all there is to it. The fireman ran 407 into York single-handed, informed the station-master there of what had happened, picked up a driver, and arrived here seventeen minutes late."

Strap drew a deep breath. His eyes glittered with excitement.

"And what about Sam Palmer?"

"He's gone—disappeared—*kidnapped!* I've a wire here"—he touched a pink slip on his desk—"from the police at York. They've been out to the scene of the hold-up, but there's absolutely no clue to the whereabouts or the identity of the bandits. They've put the matter into the hands of Scotland Yard. But the mystery is—what did the bandits want with Sam Palmer? What possible reason can they have had for taking the colossal risk of holding up an express on an English railway merely to kidnap the driver?"

Strap shook his head.

"I don't know, dad; but what sort of a record has that fireman got? It was Trevor, wasn't it?"

"Trevor—yes. And his record's first-class. He's been with M. and N.E.R. all his life," said Mr. Hales. "Why do you ask?"

"Just an idea," said Strap. "And what about Sam Palmer?"

"His record's first-class, too. He was with us for years before the War. He went into the Army, and then, in 1923, he re-applied for a job with us, and we took him on. He's an A 1 man." Mr. Hales lighted a cigarette, and then went on: "Tom, what I'm worried about is the publicity. You can bet the evening papers'll be out with an extra almost any minute. The news was too late for the dailies."

"You're thinking of that theft three days ago?" said Strap. "It was on the very same run, wasn't it? Same engine and everything?"

"Yes," said Mr. Hales. "And the sort of publicity we've been getting lately is going to do the M. and N.E.R. no good. Take that business three days ago. The police seem to be no nearer solving it. We know only the bare details. A man called Hanbury got into the train at Doncaster, carrying a brief-case containing five thousand pounds in notes. He was to sign a certain contract in London here which called for a cash payment of that amount. He has a first-class compartment to himself; most of the first-class passengers, of course, had taken sleeping-berths. He is drowsing in his seat when he is struck a blow on the head by someone whom he does not even see. He comes to himself about ten miles the other side of Peterborough—and his money's gone. He pulls the communication-cord, and stops the train, frightening everybody. But nothing can be done, of course. The train runs into Peterborough, to find the police there, waiting.

"They've had the tip from Doncaster that there are three crooks on board, and have been advised to watch out for trouble. Of course, as soon as they're told of the theft, they weed out the crooks and arrest them on suspicion. But there's nothing on them, and nothing in the way of evidence against them. The police have to let them go. And the point is," said Mr. Hales hopelessly, "that the train runs non-stop from Doncaster to Peterborough, so that they couldn't have got rid of the stuff to any confederate waiting at an intermediate station."

Strap nodded slowly.

"Two distinct and separate crimes on the M. and N.E.R. within three days," he said. "I see why you're down on the publicity, dad."

"It's pretty obvious," said his father dryly. "But look here! I didn't send for you to talk about our troubles. I sent for you because you're going to take 407 to Edinburgh to-night!"

"*Me?*" Strap gasped.

His excitement and his incredulity were so obvious that, in spite of his worry, Mr. Hales smiled.

"Yes. Why not? You're a qualified driver, although you're only working as an oiler at present. We're pretty short of drivers just now, but your foreman guarantees you absolutely capable. And you've done some short runs, haven't you?"

"Once or twice," said Strap, "but only as a last-minute substitute."

"That's what you are this time," said Mr. Hales. "Don't think you're being promoted definitely to a driver's job. You'll have to prove yourself mighty good before that happens to you."

"I understand," said Strap, grinning. But almost at once he became serious. "I say, dad, there's no question of—well, favouritism about this? You know what our bargain was. I'll work my way up from the bottom, fair and square, like everybody else, and if I can't do it, I'll stay down at the bottom. I shall belong there."

His father nodded gravely.

"There's no favouritism, Strap. We're short of drivers, you're the senior in Shed A, and your foreman says it's your turn. Will you take it on?"



Strap Hales sent the shovel hurtling through the air, for it to crash on to the raider on the second step.

"I will." said Strap. "Can I have Nervous to fire for me?"

"You can," said Mr. Hales. "And you'll be given your schedule in the ordinary way. Now, clear out! And good luck to you, son!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER

"Gaolbird!"

THE twelve o'clock hooter had blown nearly half an hour ago before Strap Hales and Nervous Hobson left the station to seek a meal at their lodgings. They had spent that half-hour's overtime in putting the finishing touches to Number 407's toilet, for it is not every day that two young and ambitious railwaymen are entrusted with the safe conduct of such a monster as Bright and Shining, and to Strap and his ally a successful run was profoundly important. The slightest hitch might mean a black mark against their names as driver and fireman.

"Strap," Nervous said as they walked down the street outside the station, "you don't think that—well, that there's anything in the talk that's going round, about 407 being a hoodoo engine?"

Strap's lips tightened grimly.

"It's come to that already, has it? The chaps are definitely labelling it 'hoodoo'?"

"They are," said Nervous. "You know that railwaymen are apt to be a bit on the superstitious side. I heard some of 'em saying this morning that there's something rum about 407. The only robbery the M. and N.E.R.'s had for ages occurred on a train pulled by 407; the only kidnapping in the history of the company took place on the footplate of 407. The chaps are saying that the next thing 407'll be mixed up in is a smash!"

"Rot!" said Strap briefly.

"Rot it may be," said Nervous, "but, all the same——"

He broke off as a news-boy trotted out of a side-street, shouting:

"Extra! Extra! Express train driver kidnapped! Another railway mystery! Extra!"

"Dad was right," Strap said grimly. "The papers were on to things pretty quick!"

He stopped the news-boy, bought a paper, and stood on the kerb with Nervous, reading the report.

The door of the public-house before which they were standing swung open suddenly. A man, emerging, lurched into Nervous.

"Sorry, mate," Nervous said politely.

The man stood swaying, peering at him. Unshaven and ill-clad, his eyes bloodshot, and a greasy cap pulled far down over his brow, the man was obviously drunk.

"Sorry nothin'!" he grunted. "You barged into me a-purpose! You railway skunks thinks you own the earth, don't ye —huh? Dirty gaolbirds!"

He put a hand on Nervous Hobson's chest, pushing him back. Strap saw the sudden flare of anger in his pal's eyes.

"Keep your hands off me!" Nervous gritted. "You're bigger'n me, and I'm scared stiff of you, but if I get any more out of you, I'll dot you one in the eye!"

Strap smiled inwardly. It was his pal's way always to declare himself frightened, but Strap knew that Nervous wanted nothing better than a rough-and-tumble with the man in the greasy cap. If a man-eating lion had been stalking him, Nervous would first of all have declared himself so scared he could hardly stand, and then he would have sailed in and tried to settle the lion with his bare hands. That was Hobson's way.

The man was peering at Nervous truculently.

"Huh! I knows ye, now! I thought I recognised ye! Nervous Hobson, ain't it?"

"It is," said Nervous. "And if you want trouble, I'm here to oblige, in spite of my weak nerves!"

But the man's desire for battle seemed to be fading from him; obviously he knew of Nervous' reputation as a fighter. Muttering sullenly, he made to turn away, but Strap checked him quickly.

"Half a minute! You're Dan Yemm, aren't you, who used to be one of the repair gang up at the junction?"

"What if I am?" the man growled. "I ain't no gaolbird of a railwayman now!"

"No," said Strap pleasantly. "If I remember rightly, the M. and N.E.R. decided they could manage to totter along without you!"

The man glared viciously.

"I don't want none o' your lip—*gaolbird!*"

"You're very keen on that word," Strap said easily. "Who's a gaolbird, anyway?"

"You railway coves," Dan Yemm snarled—"or, at any rate, that there Sam Palmer is, who a lot o' your railway friends is talkin' about in the pub. there."

Strap's lips tightened. The man's use of the word "gaolbird" had puzzled him from the first; he had deliberately followed the matter up.

"Who says Sam Palmer was ever in gaol?" he demanded.

"*I* do," said Dan Yemm. "Not many knows it, but Sam Palmer done two separate stretches, soon after he come out of the Army. Burglary they was for, an' I was told about it by a feller who was servin' a long term in the same quod. An', if you ask *me*," added Dan Yemm sneeringly, "there's somethin' crooked behind this here alleged kidnappin' o' Sam Palmer that all you railway blokes is talkin' about!"

Growling under his breath, he moved away, going somewhat uncertainly.

"I ought to have downed him, Strap," Nervous said wistfully. "A bit of an up-and-downer with a husky like him would've helped toward curing this nervousness of mine."

But Strap said nothing. As they walked on to their lodgings and made a hasty meal, he was very quiet and thoughtful. So Sam Palmer had been in prison, had he? That gap in his record between 1918 and 1923 was explained by the fact that he had gone

in for a profession where he had thought the money was come by more easily than it was in the railway business.

The theft, three days ago, of the five thousand pounds from the first-class passenger; the hold-up of the night express from Edinburgh, and the kidnapping of Sam Palmer; the revelation that Sam Palmer was an ex-gaolbird—were there any connecting links between those three things?

Strap was beginning to wonder.

THE THIRD CHAPTER
Neck or Nothing!

The night train from London to Edinburgh pulled out slowly from the great echoing cavern of the metropolis station. Going cautiously, like a powerful, monstrous dog held firmly on the leash, it threaded its way through the complicated network of lines which sprawls far and wide among the environs of London. Slowly the myriad signal lights, glittering in the dark like a stupendous constellation of stars, fell behind. Locomotive Number 407 quickened speed.

Peering round the edge of the cab, his peaked cap drawn far down over his eyes and the rush of the icy wind stinging his cheeks, Strap Hales peered forward into the dark. Reaching up his left hand, he pulled the whistle-cord three times; then he opened the throttle a little more, sending a rush of steam into the steam-chest. Locomotive Number 407 leaped forward like a giant released.

His hand resting lightly on the throttle control, Strap looked at Nervous Hobson. The door of the fire-box was open; the roaring furnace within lighted the cab with a flickering red glare. Nervous was shovelling coal down from the tender into a heap on the steel footplate. He scrambled down from the tender, replenished the fires, and slammed shut the door of the fire-box. Pushing back his peaked cap, he mopped his sweating forehead with a coal-grimed handkerchief.

"Well, we're off now!" he grinned. "Hey, Strap?"

Strap nodded, saying nothing. Every nerve in his body was taut with excitement, but his brain was cool, clear, and alert. He was behind the throttle at last, the man upon whose courage, whose self-control in an emergency, depended the lives of the hundreds of people who slept, ate, read, or talked in the speeding carriages behind.

He was behind the throttle of a hurtling mass of machinery which, for all its power, was obedient to the lightest touch of his hand, leaping ahead or slowing down as he saw fit. He was behind the engine of which men said: "It's hoodooed! The next thing it'll be in is a smash!" But Strap Hales, born and bred on the railway, was cool, confident, and unafraid.

Watching for his signals, and alert on the steam-gauge and the throttle control, he sent Locomotive 407 thundering northward through the night.

A successful run—for Strap Hales everything depended on that. If anything were to happen, if he were to fail to do all that was expected of him, he might be ruined for ever as a railwayman.

Belching flame and sparks from her smoke-stack, Locomotive 407 roared northward through the dark.

They left Peterborough behind, well up to schedule—Doncaster, York. And so, with thundering wheels and roaring fires, Number 407 came out on to the lonely stretch of country between York and Darlington.

Without realising it, Strap, peering ahead round the edge of the cab, was taut with suspense. Subconsciously, under his concentration on driving, he had been thinking about the hold-up of Sam Palmer, and about the robbery between Peterborough and Doncaster.

The obvious thing, of course, was to believe in the guilt of the three men who had got into the train at Doncaster, and of whom the Peterborough police had been warned. But the police at Peterborough had found nothing incriminating on the three men, and had been forced to release them. The train being non-stop between Doncaster and Peterborough, how had the men, if indeed they *had* stolen the bank-notes, got rid of them?

A confederate among the passengers was

unlikely; the Doncaster police had notified Peterborough of three suspicious characters only. What had happened to that five thousand pounds' worth of bank-notes? Had their disappearance any connection with the kidnapping of Sam Palmer on this very stretch of country? What significance was there in the fact that Sam Palmer had been in gaol for burglary?

Those three questions hammered in Strap Hales' mind as Locomotive Number 407 pounded ahead over the wide moorland, dragging behind it a long string of carriages, which flickered through the dark like the tail of a comet.

No wonder, Strap thought, that the bandits had chosen this stretch of country for their hold-up! For miles on end there was not so much as a signal-hut; no glimmering light showed in the darkness ahead. The moorland was lonely and desolate. Locomotive 407, snorting northward under her banner of flying sparks, seemed the only living thing in the darkness.

And then, suddenly, unexpectedly, Strap saw the light!

It hung motionless, far ahead in the darkness—a tiny red eye, close down over the rails.

Strap stiffened, peering round the edge of the cab, one hand on the throttle control. He felt his heart leap; for a moment the blood drummed in his head. Then at once he was cool again, thinking swiftly.

Was this another hold-up? Was it possible that there was some immense and terrible plot in existence to capture the drivers of express trains? Or was that light a genuine warning of peril ahead?

What ought he to do?

Nervous was shouting in his ear:

"What is it, Strap? What is it, man?"

And suddenly Strap knew what he must do. His duty was to the passengers in the carriages behind, sleeping there, all unwitting of the drama that was being played in the night.

He must stop! Even though it might be a trap into which he was running, he must stop, for the red light on the line might be a warning of genuine danger, and the lives of those hundreds of passengers were his responsibility. He must stop!

Carefully, with the cool judgment and the firm touch of an expert, he throttled down, applying the powerful hydraulic brakes.

In the red glare from the fire-box, Nervous was staring at him incredulously.

"What's the idea, Strap? What is it?"

Strap gripped his arm. The glare from the fire showed his face, grim with purpose.

"There's a red light ahead! It might be—it just *might* be another hold-up! If it is"—his voice was stern—"if it is, Nervous, we'll fight! Understand? Lay hold of some handy lumps of coal, and if I give the word, then it's *neck or nothing!*"

His pal's eyes blazed.

"Man, I'm so scared I can't keep my knees still—but I'm with you, Strap! We'll fight through or bust!"

He snatched up two great lumps of coal, one in each hand. He stood ready, a dark, tense form against the glow of the fires.

Locomotive Number 407 slowed down; its speed dropped slowly to a mere crawl.

Peering round the edge of the cab, Strap saw that the red light had disappeared. Only the glow from 407's smoke-stack broke the thick, cold, starless dark.

The engine was scarcely moving now. The darkness was intense. Behind, in the carriages, the passengers slept peacefully, unaware of that red warning of danger which had showed so fleetingly and had so swiftly disappeared.

What had happened to that light?

If the warning had been genuine, where was the man who had shown it?

The conviction came suddenly to Strap Hales that this was a trap. He whirled round from the controls, snatching up a shovel from the footplate.

"Neck or nothing, Nervous!"

Even as he spoke, a figure leaped up out of the dark, gripping the rail of the cab. In the glare of the fires, Strap saw the figure of a man in a heavy motor-coat. Goggles covered his eyes, and a black muffler was tied about the lower half of his face. An automatic in his hand menaced the young railwaymen.

"Put up your hands! You're covered from behind as well!"

Involuntarily, Nervous Hobson half-turned. On the other step of the cab there was a second raider; his pistol covered Nervous.

"Drop that coal, you!"

Nervous obeyed, but almost as he did so Strap Hales sent his shovel hurtling through the air. It crashed against the wrist of the raider on the left step. The man fell back, with a shout.



Strap Hales went down, fighting, the man on top of him. "Nervous" Hobson leaped to his aid, a huge spanner upraised.

His confederate's pistol roared, but Strap was too quick. He leaped, knocking up the weapon. The bullet flattened itself viciously against the roof of the cab. Strap and the raider crashed down, fighting, on to the rails.

Strap was up first, driving his fist to the man's jaw. The raider reeled backward. Strap leaped for the footplate.

"Quick, Nervous! There may be more of 'em!"

He released the brakes, opening the throttle a notch. Locomotive 407 snorted deep down in its steam-chest, and began to move slowly.

A pistol barked—twice, in quick succession. The circle of plate-glass near Strap's head was shattered to splinters. There was a sudden, hot sting at Strap's cheek.

But Number 407 was gathering way. Within a minute it was gliding forward under half-throttle, its mighty driving-rods quickening under the growing pressure. With a sudden roar, the full force of steam made itself felt. Number 407 leaped forward like a straining monster.

They were through!

. . . . .

As the grey dawn came up out of the east, the night train from London glided, with a hissing of steam, into the M. and N.E.R. station at Edinburgh.

Strap Hales, glancing at the station clock, grinned slightly. They were up to schedule! He turned a tired, strained face

to Nervous Hobson, on the footplate beside him.

"Well, we're through, Nervous!"

"We are," said Nervous. "And now for the superintendent, I suppose? We've got something worth reporting, by golly! And when that's done, I'm for some sleep! We leave at midnight to take the night train back to London, and, man, I'm frightened rigid!"

Strap shook his head. His grey eyes, for all their weariness, were keen with excitement.

"I don't think we're in for much sleep to-day. I've got an idea, and if there's anything in it, we're going to have a hectic time!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER
One Hour to Go!

THE hands of the station clock pointed to ten minutes past ten. Save for a few porters, waiting for the rush for the midnight train to London, the platforms were practically deserted.

In Locomotive Shed B Number 407 stood in the berth it always occupied between its dawn arrival at Edinburgh and its midnight departure therefrom. In exactly one hour and forty minutes Number 407 would draw alongside Platform 1 of the station to commence its long night journey to London.

The interior of the locomotive shed was in darkness. But it was not, as it seemed, entirely deserted. Crouching in one corner, motionless and alert, were two shadowy figures.

Officially the driver and the fireman of Locomotive Number 407 were at supper, preparing for the strain of the journey which lay before them. But Strap Hales and Nervous Hobson had other and more urgent business than supper on their hands.

"Man," Nervous whispered, "I'm so scared my teeth are rattling like an 1880 model tanker! Do you think we're on the right track?"

"Can it, Nervous!" Strap chuckled. "Listen! That's what we've got to do—keep our ears open! If my theory's anything like right, they'll be here by eleven o'clock. Got that spanner tight?"

"You bet!" said Nervous softly.

They were silent then, waiting. The minutes went by with what seemed to be maddening slowness. Away in the station the great clock struck eleven.

"One hour to go," Strap breathed. "If they aren't——"

He checked abruptly, his hand tightening on his pal's arm.

They were tense and ready, there in the darkness of the shed.

From outside there came the sound of a stumble. A man's voice said softly:

"Quiet, you fool! D'you want to wake the whole town?"

Silhouetted in the great arched entrance to the shed, there appeared the black figure of a man. In the dim light from a nearby signal he seemed to be wearing dungarees and the peaked cap of a railwayman. Another figure joined him—yet another. They stood in a small group in the entrance of the shed, talking swiftly and softly.

Listening intently, the two young railwaymen could catch only an occasional word:

"Dark as pitch. Palmer said—steam up—Shed B. At supper. Yes. Coast clear. Third plate—steam-gauge. Ready?"

Swiftly and quietly, the three dark figures moved forward into the blackness of the shed. The watchers could see them no longer. They were hidden by the great, panting bulk of Number 407. Strap's hand was tight on his pal's arm. The two were motionless, listening.

From the stealthy sounds in the dark before them, they knew that the three men were climbing into the cab of Number 407. For a second, there flashed out the white ray of an electric torch. It was gone at once. A voice said harshly:

"Here!"

There was the sound of whispering, the clatter instantly checked, of steel on steel.

"Third plate—here—steam-gauge."

The voice fell silent. There was a soft, scraping sound. Then suddenly a voice snarled:



"407 did stop between Doncaster and Peterborough," said Strap to his father—"when the man who was robbed pulled the communication cord!"

"Gone!"

Simultaneously, Strap Hales leaped to his feet, pressing a whistle to his lips. Three shrill blasts split the quiet. From the cab of the engine a dark form leaped at him like a springing tiger.

He went down, fighting, the dark form on top of him, panting, cursing.

"A trap! A trap!"

Nervous Hobson's hand went up. There was a dull thud. The man on top of Strap went limp suddenly, rolling sideways. Strap leaped to his feet.

Even as he did so, there was the sound of running feet from outside the shed. Great arc-lights high up in the roof flared out suddenly. Four policemen stood in the entrance of the shed, covering the way of escape.

Two men in the dungarees and peaked caps of railway workers, who stood beside the long, shining bulk of Number 407, over the still form of their stunned confederate, put up their hands slowly. One of them—a dark, lean man with a diamond-shaped scar on his cheek—shrugged slightly, looking at the policemen.

"Well, I suppose you win, officers," he sneered.

One of the policemen moved forward. There sounded the double click of handcuffs. The policeman, smiling, nodded at Strap Hales.

"Here's the lad who beat you, Diamond Kelly!"

The man with the scar looked viciously at Strap.

"Him!" He gave a short, bitter laugh. "I suppose he stumbled on the five thousand by chance, eh?"

Strap grinned.

"I found it all right—behind the third steel plate to the left of the steam-gauge, where Sam Palmer hid it! But"—his smile broadened—"I didn't find it by chance, Diamond Kelly!"

* * * * *

Back again at the M. and N.E.R. headquarters, Strap was explaining to his father.

"You see, dad, from the very first the theft of that money and the kidnapping of Sam Palmer seemed to me to be connected, and when I heard that Palmer had been in prison, I began to wonder if, perhaps, those crooks hadn't been pals of his back in the days when he was playing the crooked game."

Mr. Hales nodded, intent on every word.

"It seemed probable to me," Strap continued, "that those crooks had followed the chap with the money to the station, and then, by chance, had seen their old pal, Sam Palmer, in the cab of the engine. Knowing the police at Doncaster might be watching 'em, and might warn the Peterborough and London police to look out for trouble, they had a word with Palmer, and arranged to pass on the stolen money to him. The problem was that the train was non-stop from Doncaster to Peterborough, so—how did they get the money to Palmer?"

Mr. Hales looked at him blankly.

"Well, how did they do it?"

"It was the simplest thing in the world," Strap grinned. "I knew I was on the right track when I remembered that, as a matter of fact, 407 *did* stop between Doncaster and Peterborough."

"But," began Mr. Hales, "I tell you ——"

"One minute!" said Strap quickly. "*What about when the man who was robbed pulled the communication cord?*"

For a moment Mr. Hales sat looking blankly at his son; then he drew a deep, deep breath and thumped the desk with his fist.

"Of course! Palmer got out of the engine and walked along the side of the train to see what was the matter, and——"

"And the crooks handed him the money out of the window," said Strap. "Exactly! Don't you see, dad? The crooks absolutely relied on the robbed man coming to and doing the natural thing—in other words, pulling the cord!"

"But why the kidnapping of Palmer?" his father asked.

"That's what I wondered," said Strap, "till it struck me that probably Palmer, having got the five thousand pounds, wanted to keep the lot! See what I mean, dad? Palmer didn't turn up at the place where he'd probably arranged to meet the crooks. He kept the money, and went on driving 407, so as not to make things look fishy by chucking up his job all of a sudden."

"I see," said Mr. Hales. "And the crooks kidnapped him to get the money back. Quite! But why the second hold-up?"

Strap smiled.

"That's what gave me the key to the whole thing, dad. Palmer had hidden the money, while the fireman was out of the way, actually on 407! The crooks forced him to tell 'em where he'd hidden it, and—thus the second hold-up attempt! I thought it all out between Darlington and Edinburgh, and at Edinburgh Nervous and I searched 407 thoroughly. We found that the third plate to the left of the steam-gauge was loose. We took it off—and there was Locomotive 407's hoodoo—five thousand pounds in notes!"

"Phew!" said Mr. Hales.

"It occurred to me then," Strap went on, "that, their second hold-up attempt having failed, probably the crooks, getting desperate, would try to reach 407 in the sheds at Edinburgh. I argued that, with Palmer in their hands, they'd force him to tell them where 407 would be berthed, and when would be the best time to make the attempt. So I went to the police at Edinburgh, and—we laid that trap! The rest you know."

"And now the crooks and Palmer are coming up for trial next week," said Mr. Hales, "and that 'tec from the Yard is wondering how you boys did it! Tom, my son, without any question of favouritism, I've an idea the M. and N.E.R.'s going to lose a couple of oilers!"

Strap looked at him eagerly.

"What d'you mean, dad?"

"You and Nervous watch the list of full-blown drivers and firemen," chuckled Mr. Hales, "and perhaps you'll see!"

THE END

A Rousing Story of Olden Time.



AN ENGLISHMAN FROM FRANCE!

by PHILIP HARDY

The coming of an Englishman from France to the Courtney home is the beginning of an all-too-stirring time for that household—and develops into a matter of life and death for young Dick Courtney . . . and others!

THE FIRST CHAPTER
What Happened on the Highway!

"HERE'S a health unto his Majesty,
With a fa la la, la la la, la!
Confusion to his enemies——"

Dick Courtney broke off his song and pulled his mare to the side of the road.

"Someone in haste, Swallow!" he exclaimed, listening to the clatter of hoofs, which rapidly drew nearer and nearer upon the deserted highway. "Friend or foe? Heigho! We'd best wait and see!"

Dick carefully cocked his pistol—a necessary precaution in these days of civil war, when a chance meeting might end in grim, red fighting.

Far away he could see a moving speck, which soon resolved itself into the form of a galloping horse. He watched it as it approached, and noted with some surprise that the saddle was empty.

"A runaway," he commented, with a frown upon his boyish face. "And a cavalier's mount, by the trappings."

A moment later, and the terrified creature had swept past him; but as it passed, Dick Courtney saw something that fired him with horror and rage. Trailing behind the runaway, from thongs which were fastened to its saddle, was a rough hurdle, such as was used to convey criminals to the scaffold; and bound to it, his long cavalier curls sweeping the dusty road, lay a young man.

For a moment Dick sat his mare by the

hedge, transfixed; then he wheeled her round, and, mounting the stretch of grass by the roadside, set her at a mad gallop in pursuit. Dick had caught a glimpse of a white face and closed eyes as the hurdle swept past him, and he urged Swallow on with voice and spur, straining every nerve to overtake the terrified horse.

Fifty yards—thirty—ten!

He drew alongside at last, and, stooping from his saddle, grasped the trailing bridle. The frantic animal reared, almost dragging him from his mare; but Dick Courtney had ridden ever since he could toddle, and Swallow knew every intonation of her master's voice. Between them they steadied the runaway, and presently Dick was standing in the road, soothing and stroking the horse into quietness, while Swallow watched with interest.

When Dick was sure that there would be no further danger of the horse bolting, he turned his attention to the unconscious man, lying helpless upon the hurdle. He loosened the thongs, and allowed the horses to stray to the roadside while he untied the cords which bound the unfortunate cavalier.

As he pulled at the knots, he looked curiously at the white face. It was handsome and refined, but dark shadows beneath the eyes spoke of sufferings and privations endured, while purple bruises encircling the slender wrists caused Dick to set his lips, his eyes flashing angrily. He knew the marks of the rack when he saw them! Torture was not dead, although it had long been forbidden in the prisons.

He looked round, wondering if he could obtain water, but while he hesitated the cavalier stirred and opened his eyes.

"Where—what has happened?" he stammered; then: "Ah! I remember now! They dragged me to the scaffold, and Chestnut bolted."

The cavalier shuddered, and closed his eyes for a moment. Then he opened them, to look inquiringly at the kindly face bent over him.

"How did you release me, monsieur?"

The form of address and a certain intonation betrayed his nationality; but many gentlemen of France were fighting for the Stuarts' cause, and Dick felt no surprise at the discovery. There was something about the young man which he liked. Dick judged him to be about his own age, which was barely twenty-one. The Englishman related briefly what had happened, making light of his own actions.

The Frenchman was not to be deceived, however. His dark eyes shone with gratitude as he took the other's hand.

"You saved my life, monsieur," he said brokenly. "You risked your own to do so. Ah, how empty would all my thanks seem!" He made to press the hand he held, and in the action winced and uttered a faint gasp.

Dick Courtney's eyes flashed again at this proof of the torture which the unfortunate man had suffered, and he slipped his arm about the Frenchman's shoulders, supporting him until he raised himself, with an apologetic gesture.

"I had forgotten," he said simply. "The rack, monsieur, does not allow forgetfulness. I fear me I cannot stand."

"Then I will lift you upon my horse and support you to my home," replied Dick. "You will be safe there, and you can rest until you are recovered."

The dark eyes shone once more, eloquent of the deep gratitude which the Frenchman felt. He remained silent a moment, and then spoke:

"You would do this for an unknown, monsieur?"

"I would do the same for any follower of his Majesty," answered Dick gravely.

"You know me for a cavalier?"

Dick Courtney laughed, and glanced at the torn lace ruffles and tarnished gold with which the Frenchman's suit was embroidered.

"You hardly look a crop-ear, sir!" he exclaimed.

"But no, you are right. I am a humble servant of Charles Stuart, and you shall at least know my name. I am Philippe de Valois, Duc de Nemours. My mother was an English lady, and I was myself born in Bath; so, you see, I am nearly English!"

"And I am Dick Courtney—Sir Richard Courtney," corrected Dick, a shade passing



Trailing behind the runaway horse was a rough hurdle, and bound to it lay a young cavalier !

over his face at the remembrance that he bore the title now. His father had fallen at Naseby, leaving him sole protector of his widowed mother and twelve-year-old brother. "My home is not far away," he continued, "and the sooner you are safely there the better, monsieur, since search is bound to be made for you."

He called Swallow to him, and made the other horse's bridle secure to her saddle. Then, with the Frenchman exerting what strength the torturers had left in his strained muscles, Dick managed to get the Duc ensconced in his saddle, and got up behind him.

The journey to Courtney Manor was of necessity slow, since every movement caused the Frenchman intense suffering; but at last Dick turned Swallow into the gates, and so it was that Philippe de Valois, Duc de Nemours, entered the home of the Courtneys. Much was destined to occur ere he left that hospitable shade!

THE SECOND CHAPTER

A Perilous Enterprise!

"You say it was Colonel Payne?" queried Dick.

He was sitting on the edge of the couch where Philippe de Valois lay, and his young face was set in hard lines, for the Frenchman had been relating the circumstances which had placed him in the position from which his new friend had rescued him.

Philippe inclined his head.

"He was in command of the garrison, and it was before him I was taken as prisoner. I had papers on me which proved that I knew the whereabouts of his Majesty, and Colonel Payne sought to obtain that information." The Duc looked down at his bruised wrists. "He used every diabolical means he knew, but"—he raised his dark head proudly—"the De Nemours do not sell their friends. So he had me bound to a hurdle like a common criminal, and dragged to the scaffold by my own horse! Hélas! His pretty plans did not work out as he would have wished!" He laughed and his eyes sparkled. "But no! Chestnut had not been accustomed to dragging anything, and so he bolted, and I escaped." He laughed again, and then grew serious, laying his slender hand over the brown hand of Dick. "Thanks to you, dear friend!"

"Tush! I am only thankful I happened upon taking that particular road," replied Dick. "By the way, you have not told me to whom I should communicate the news of your safety. Surely there are those who will be anxious to hear."

The Frenchman was silent for a while, his brow wrinkled, and his eyes plainly revealing the trouble he felt. Dick waited for him to speak, and at last he said slowly:

"There is one who will be consumed with anxiety, monsieur. But—but I cannot ask you to risk your life for me again, and it would be a great risk."

"If anyone is worrying for you, they should be reassured," answered Dick decidedly. "Never mind the risk—tell me who it is."

"My sister. Her husband fighteth for his Majesty, and I am her only relation. She was expecting me home—indeed, I was on my way to her when I was captured."

"Then she must certainly be told of your safety. Where shall I find her?"

Philippe de Valois laughed at the very British decision in Dick's voice. Then he pressed that strong brown hand, and his dark eyes told clearly the gratitude that was in his heart.

"She dwelleth in Taunton. It is a great risk, monsieur."

Dick whistled softly. The Duc was right. It *was* a great risk for a cavalier to venture into that nest of crop-ears.

Unlike Bath, Taunton was all for the Parliament, and best avoided by Royalists in these days.

"But how came your sister in that crop-eared community?" he asked, with puzzled eyes.

"Sir John Grenville's home was there, and his wife—my sister, who was educated in England—will not desert that home," replied Philippe. "Madness, no doubt; but, ma foi, *what will not a woman risk for her home?*"

"The name of the house?" asked Dick.

"Grenville Lodge. But listen! It is

guarded everywhere, and you would not be admitted. I will write a message, telling her you are a friend and have news, and I will secure it to my signet."

Dick fetched paper and ink, and Philippe de Valois wrote a short message, forming each letter with difficulty, since his hands were still numbed from his recent sufferings upon the rack.

Dick looked down at him, and the veins in his forehead swelled with sudden, ungovernable fury.

"By Heaven, I'd give ten years of my life to meet Colonel Payne alone, and with a good sword at my side, monsieur!"

The words were hissed between clenched teeth, and the young face was transformed for a moment.

Then Philippe de Valois handed Dick the pathetically courageous note, and the Englishman placed it and the ring within his doublet.

"This house—it is well protected?" asked the Frenchman.

"Yes, monsieur. We have a score of men within the walls and a hundred about the estate. There is no fear of danger here."

Philippe gave a sigh of relief.

"I would not have harm come to your sweet mother, and to Monsieur Harree," he said. "I shall feel responsible in your absence—though I am a poor protector," he added wistfully.

"Why, you will be strong enough in a day or two, monsieur," Dick assured him. "And there is no cause for worry—we have ample guard."

At this moment the door opened, and a tall, beautiful woman entered the room, followed by Dick's young brother. The Duc raised himself to salute her, and nodded and smiled to Harry.

"I trust you are recovering, monsieur," said Lady Courtney. "You must rest for a few days, and you will soon regain your strength. Dick hath told me of your sufferings."

Dick took his mother's hand and patted it, preparatory to breaking the unwelcome news of his journey to Taunton.

"Mother mine," he began, "monsieur hath a sister who awaiteth him in sore anxiety, since he was on his way to her when he was captured. It would be rank cruelty to cause her such unnecessary suffering, and——"

"And so Sir Richard Courtney rideth to her relief!" finished his mother, with a smile that strove to hide quivering lips. "He could do no less. Go, my son—prepare yourself for your journey."

Dick Courtney kissed his mother's hand and went forth blithely, rejoicing at the prospect of adventure; but the Duc, more observant than his friend, had seen that bravely-suppressed quiver of the lips that forced themselves to smile, and he stretched out his hand to Lady Courtney, exclaiming:

"Ah, madam, what grief am I causing you! It would seem but poor recompense for your goodness in sheltering me."

The quiet voice of Lady Courtney broke in upon his words, and silenced his self-reproaches:

"We are surrounded by foes, monsieur. Should we not cling together—we who are espoused to the same dear cause? You have suffered nobly for the King. We are in the position to help you now. Who knows when that position may be reversed?"

. . . . . .

Early the next morning Dick set out upon his journey, light-hearted, and with a song on his lips. The sun was bright and the sky cloudless, while the coolness of the June morning kept the dew upon the grass and on the hedges. Swallow was fresh and spirited, ready for a canter, and eager to feel the meadow-grass beneath her hoofs; so that when she found she must keep to the road, she expressed her disapproval by side-stepping and dancing, until at last Dick decided to let her have her way, and turned off the road on to a stretch of common.

Swallow did not need any spur to send her off into a merry canter, which soon became a gallop, interspersed with splendid jumps when hedges obstructed the way. Dick thoroughly enjoyed himself. His brown curls floated out under his hat, and his cheeks glowed with exhilaration.

It was good to be young and strong! Good to feel the springy turf under his

mare's hoofs and the warm breeze in his face! He took another hedge, and came out on to the highway once more, where he slowed up and paced forward for a few yards. And then he suddenly drew rein, and sat rigid, listening intently.

A rattle of hoofs came to his ears, mingled with the jingle of steel.

"Soldiers!" he muttered. "Best take shelter."

He turned Swallow into a coppice which bordered the highway, and waited for the unseen horsemen to pass.

The noise grew louder, and into the range of his vision rode a company of stern-faced men, clad in leathern jackets and with round steel caps upon their heads.

Dick held his breath as they came level with him, and his hand instinctively sought the pocket in which reposed the ring and the message he was bearing to Lady Grenville.

The Roundheads were passing now, and Dick drew in his breath, with a silent sigh of relief. But he was too early with his rejoicings. As they passed, one of the horses gave a loud whinny, and Swallow threw up her head and replied.

There came to Dick's ears a sharp order, and even as he wheeled Swallow for a dash through the coppice, the Roundheads hurriedly turned their mounts into the small wood.

Unfortunately, Dick's mare, usually so sure-footed, put one of her fore-hoofs into a rabbit-hole and stumbled. Ere she had recovered her balance, the Roundheads were upon the young cavalier. In a moment he was grasped on both sides and made a prisoner.

A few minutes later, with his hands tied and still mounted upon his horse, Dick was being led, in the midst of the Roundheads, towards the home of Colonel Payne!

THE THIRD CHAPTER

Forced to Surrender!

COLONEL PAYNE leaned his elbows upon the plain deal table, and, placing the tips of his fingers carefully together, stared at the upright figure of his prisoner.

"Philippe de Valois is a consummate actor, my dear young sir," he drawled. "I dare swear you supposed him to be in great agony when he penned this letter, but agony is easily assumed, and bruised wrists not difficult to attain."

Dick's eyes flashed and his lips set themselves tightly.

"You do not believe me?" Colonel Payne went on. "No, of course you do not. No one ever does, and so the Royalist rebels fall into the same trap one after another. This pathetic message never fails to melt their hearts." He tapped the letter which had been taken from Dick's pocket by the soldiers when he was searched. "However, you shall see for yourself."

He called a cadaverous-looking man to him, a man whose suit of rusty black matched the doleful expression upon his long, pointed face.

"Get the proofs, Praise-the-Lord-with-thy-Voice Barnabas," he said, holding out the letter, which the owner of that name took and walked slowly out of the room.

Dick started forward.

"What have you done with my letter?"

Colonel Payne smiled sourly.

"You will not have much use for it, Sir Richard! We have many such letters, all kept for reference. Our spies have to be watched, you know."

"You scoundrel—it is false! I would stake my life on the Duc's honour!" burst out Dick, his face white now with fury.

"Duc, is it? It was Comte when Lord Heath was captured."

Dick was silent this time, but it was the silence of suppressed passion. Not for one moment did he believe the Colonel's tales, for his faith in the Frenchman was absolute. He stood in silence until Praise-the-Lord-with-thy-Voice Barnabas returned with a parchment, which he placed on the table before the Colonel.

"Read!" commanded Payne, pushing the parchment across, so that Dick could see it from where he stood.

It was a formal agreement to work under the direction of Colonel Payne, and it was signed with the name of Philippe de Valois.



In the shelter of the coppice, Dick held his breath as the Roundheads came level with him.

Payne watched his prisoner's face, but only scorn was to be seen there. Dick raised his eyes and laughed.

"You are vastly clumsy, Colonel. Think you I cannot recognise a forgery when I see one?"

The Roundhead almost betrayed his chagrin, but he checked himself in time. There were other ways of fooling this impudent young puppy of a cavalier!

"You imagine yourself clever, Sir Richard," he said smoothly. "We will see. Sergeant, take the prisoner to a cell until I summon him to-morrow morning!"

He leaned back in his chair and watched the soldiers march out of the room with the upright young figure in their midst. Then, as the door shut, he chuckled to himself.

Of the young baronet he cared little. It was the Frenchman and his sister upon whom he was longing to revenge himself; on Philippe de Valois, who had laughed in his face from the very rack itself; on Alice

Grenville, who had accounted for a score of his best soldiers when he had endeavoured to enter Grenville Lodge by force. Could he but prove to Sir Richard Courtney that the Duc was a spy, he might persuade the young man to help them to enter Grenville Lodge, and, once within, they would have captured the one hostile spot in Taunton.

For a long while he pondered on ways and means, but presently he rose and summoned his sergeant.

. . . . . .

So it happened that there came thunderous blows upon the gates of Courtney Manor, and old Brent rushed into the drawing-room with scant ceremony, bearing the news that a company of Roundhead soldiers demanded entrance.

"Bar the gates!" cried Lady Courtney boldly. But Philippe de Valois laid one hand upon her arm.

"Would it not be better to admit them, madam? Mayhap I could be concealed, and if they found no one it would save you further interference. Sir Richard is from home, and there is none they would trouble to capture."

"You are right, monsieur," replied Lady Courtney. "Brent, the picture!"

Old Brent hastened to a large painting which hung near the fireplace, and passed his hands over the necklace which formed part of the portrait of a dead-and-gone Courtney. The great picture swung slowly outwards, leaving a large opening visible.

Into this Lady Courtney threw cushions, and Philippe, aided by his hostess and the old servant, climbed into it, leaning back upon the cushions.

"Are you quite comfortable, monsieur?" asked the lady anxiously, and Philippe assured her that all was well.

"There is another way out into the dining-hall, but do not attempt it unless you are sure it is safe. Indeed, 'twere best you waited until we released you," said Lady Courtney.

Then she closed the picture and dispatched Brent to open the great doors.

"Mother—the couch!" cried Harry, in dismay.

But his mother was not so easily put at a loss. She hastily laid herself down, bidding her son to sit beside her.

"Remember, I have a bad headache," she counselled, and the child caught up a fan, waving it gently above his mother's head, as though it was the only thing that mattered in all the world.

Colonel Payne strode into the room, making a great clatter with his spurs, and was met by a fierce "Hush!" from Harry, who had thrown himself whole-heartedly into the part he was to play.

But the Colonel had small sympathy for headaches, and he shouted his orders to his men with as little ceremony as may be.

"Search every corner of this nest of spies—I'll see that the woman plays no tricks!"

But this was too much for Harry. He sprang up with fists clenched and faced the bullying Colonel.

"How dare you! How dare you!" he cried. "My mother is Lady Courtney—how dare you insult her!"

"Hush—hush, dear!" implored Lady Courtney, terrified what the result of such an outburst might be.

Philippe, within the picture, rejoiced inwardly at the boy's pluck, even though he, also, dreaded the consequences. But Colonel Payne controlled his temper for the time being. His turn would come!

After a long and futile search, the soldiers returned to report their failure. Colonel Payne turned to Lady Courtney, and his face was a mask of cruelty.

"It will be best for you to tell us where the Duc lieth hidden, madam," he said. "I like not to be thwarted."

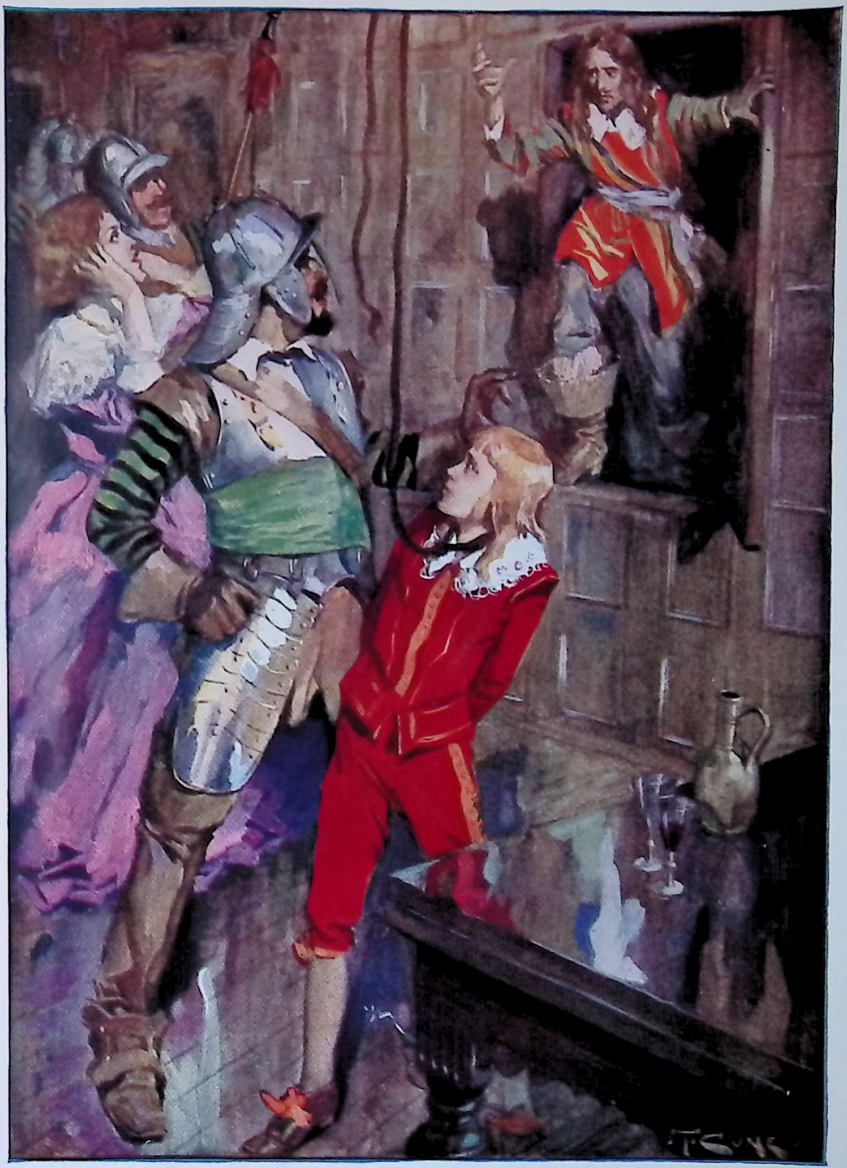
The Royalist lady raised her head proudly.

"We do not betray our friends to torturers!" she replied.

Colonel Payne sneered.

"A swiftly made friend," he remarked, "and a mistaken friendship, I fear. Are you aware that your son, Sir Richard Courtney, lieth in my own dungeons, betrayed into my hands by Philippe de Valois?"

Lady Courtney turned white as death



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"GENTLEMEN—AT YOUR SERVICE!"

H.A.

itself, but Harry, springing forward, cried passionately:

"It is not true—it is not true! The Duc is a gallant gentleman!"

"Colonel Payne, though my son may have fallen into your cruel hands—but I pray to Heaven you lie—I am perfectly assured that Philippe de Valois had nothing whatever to do with it," said Lady Courtney, with quiet dignity. "I may not have known the Duc for a great time, but I have known him sufficiently long to realise his integrity."

Colonel Payne shrugged his shoulders and paused for a moment, wondering which would be his best move. Then his eyes happened to light upon Master Harry, who stood beside his mother, watching the Roundhead with smouldering eyes.

A cruel smile dawned on the Colonel's lips, and he turned to his sergeant.

"Methinks I see a way out of our dilemma," he said. "Bring the young brat to the dining-hall—there are beams there——"

His unfinished speech sent a cold thrill through the mother's heart, but she followed in silence as the soldiers, accompanied by their brutal officer, led the boy into the oak-ceilinged dining-hall.

"Now, Bring - Peace - into - the - World Simon, I saw a good rope as we passed the gates—fetch it!"

His order was obeyed with alacrity, and at his further command a noose was formed, and the rope was thrown over one of the heavy beams. Master Harry's hands were bound behind him, he was dragged beneath the beam, and the noose fitted round his throat.

It was then that the first cry escaped Lady Courtney—a cry of anguish that brought a smile of triumph to the Colonel's face.

"Yes, madam!" he exclaimed. "You understand my intention, I see. Unless you tell me where Philippe de Valois is hidden, I'll string your son up like a felon!"

In his hiding-place, the Frenchman was torn with conflicting emotions. He was not sure that the Colonel would dare to carry out his diabolical threat. Indeed, had he been sure he would not have hesitated for one second; but he feared that further torture might wring his precious secret from him, for human flesh is weak, whatever courage may inhabit the soul.

As he wondered what he should do, Master Harry's voice came to him, clear and bold, despite the quiver which the boy could not entirely conceal.

"Do not speak, mother—I am not afraid!"

"Oh, gallant, brave, noble!" murmured Philippe, his eyes suddenly misty. "These English—they are heroes—every one!"

The strident voice of Colonel Payne broke in upon his thoughts.

"I give you one minute, madam, and the brat swings!"

Philippe de Valois heard the sobbing breath which the poor mother drew, heard the broken:

"I cannot—I cannot!"

Then his hands were frantically seeking the hidden spring.

Colonel Payne fixed his eyes upon the great clock, and silence reigned until the relentless hand had crossed a space between the small black minute-strokes.

"Once more—where is Philippe de Valois?" he hissed, and Lady Courtney covered her face, with a low moan.

Then through the stillness rang a gay, loud voice, causing the Colonel to swing round, with a gasp of astonishment.

"Gentlemen—at your service!"

Out of a large panel in the wall stepped the debonair figure of Philippe de Valois!

Colonel Payne smiled.

"Ah! So my brave young Frenchman hath not the courage to permit his hostess' son to hang like a felon," he said mockingly. Then he turned to his sergeant. "Release that brat, and bring the prisoner along!"

And, with a taunting bow to Lady Courtney, the Roundhead colonel strode out of the room, to be quickly followed by his men, bearing with them the gallant Duc de Nemours.

So it was that Philippe de Valois found himself once more in the relentless power of Colonel Payne!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

At Grenville Lodge !

DICK COURTNEY raised his head as the key grated in the lock of his prison door. A shaft of sunlight cut through the gloom of the cell, and the stern voice of the Parliamentary sergeant bade him rise and follow.

He was conducted to the room in which he had been interviewed by Colonel Payne, and the first person upon whom his eyes rested was Philippe de Valois.

Dick Courtney started forward, a dreadful fear in his heart.

"Monsieur ! They have taken you ?"

Philippe made no reply. He was deathly pale, and his slender hands were clenched tightly. It was the Colonel himself who answered the agonised question.

"There is no case of the—er—Duc being taken, Sir Richard. He is here to correct some errors into which you have fallen."

Payne turned to the Frenchman, with a gesture of invitation.

"Now, monsieur, let us hear what you have to say."

Philippe did not raise his eyes; he did not move; but slowly, like a child repeating a lesson, he spoke.

"I have deceived you, Sir Richard," he said. "You thought me the victim of the Parliament when I was merely its servant. I have never been tortured—it was all a blind in order to gain access to your home."

"Monsieur ! This is false ! The fiends have compelled you in some way to say all this !" Dick's voice was hoarse and broken. He did not believe—he could not. It was all some diabolical plot.

But Philippe was speaking again, and, perforce, he must listen.

"I am speaking the truth. I fooled you from the first. I am not even what I pretend to be, but just an adventurer. I repented my actions when you had departed on the errand I sent you, but it was too late then."

The last sentence awakened doubts in the Englishman's heart. Philippe de Valois seemed to be in earnest—he could see that. Was it true, then ? Was the man he had admired for a hero no more than a despicable traitor ? He put another question, a question full of despair, since his faith in the Frenchman was wavering.

"That parchment—was it your signature, after all ?"

"Yes."

"Monsieur Philippe !" The name slipped out unconsciously as Dick spoke, for in their short friendship the two cavaliers had grown attached to one another. "It is true, then ? You are——"

"A spy !" The word was so faint that it hardly reached the Englishman's ears, but it was enough to change his agonised doubts into a still more agonising certainty.

With a cry, he covered his face with his hands, which were loosely manacled, and leaned against the table for support. Then another terrible thought seared his brain, and he turned fiercely upon the Frenchman.

"My mother—Harry—what of them ?"

There was a moment's pause. Philippe de Valois was standing as though he had been stricken by some awful calamity. But when Dick repeated the question he started and raised his head.

"Colonel Payne hath command over the Manor."

"You have betrayed them, too ? You spy ! You traitor !"

Dick Courtney started forward, his manacled hands upraised and a terrible fury distorting his young face. Philippe did not move. It seemed that he would have welcomed the blows that were threatened. But they never reached him. The soldiers dragged the Englishman back, and Colonel Payne waved his hand towards the door, saying calmly :

"You may go, De Valois."

Philippe walked to the door with dragging steps, and, passing through, closed it behind him.

Then the Colonel dismissed his soldiers and addressed himself to his prisoner.

"You are satisfied ?"

The white face and burning eyes were sufficient answer, and he continued smoothly :

"Now, Sir Richard, I offer you your liberty, the liberty of your family, and the



"It is not true!" cried Harry, springing forward. "The Duc is a gallant gentleman!"

chance of revenging yourself upon the man who hath brought you to this position. Alice Grenville is a Royalist. She hath defied every attempt to assail her home. We would have Grenville Lodge for the Parliament——"

"And so you would have me betray it into your hands?" finished Dick scornfully. "I am not a traitor! You had best seek the aid of Philippe de Valois!"

"That I have already sought, but there seemeth an affection between them, and I cannot persuade De Valois to help me."

Quick as a flash came the question:

"Why, then, was he so ready to send me to her? He knew the message would be filched from me."

"Even with the message we could not enter. Only a cavalier would be admitted, and De Valois trusts to the honour of his enemies."

The last words stung Dick Courtney, and he flushed angrily.

"'Tis strange for a spy to trust anyone's honour!" he said. "But his trust shall be merited. I betray no woman!"

"Very well. We must try other methods," said the Colonel, with ominous quiet, and Dick braced himself for the torture he felt was to come.

But Colonel Payne had different plans. He knew the endurance of the Royalists too well to hope to gain his end by causing the young cavalier to suffer himself; it must be others whom he must threaten.

"Lady Courtney and Master Harry are at present guarded by my men, Sir Richard," he went on presently, watching the resolute face with his cruel eyes. "I think it best you agree to do my bidding—best for them!"

Dick started.

"What do you mean?"

"Simply that unless you lead us to Grenville Lodge, your brother shall hang from the beams of your own dining-hall!"

Sir Richard Courtney uttered a cry of horror and stared at the smiling face before him as he might have stared at a snake which had prepared itself to strike.

His young brother Harry, with his bright eyes and irrepressible spirits, to die a felon's death ere he had reached the threshold of manhood!

It was too horrible to think of. Dick's eyes sought for a gleam of mercy in the cruel face before him, but found none. It was to be one or the other—the unknown woman or Harry.

"I submit," he said at last.

His cheeks burned with the shame of what he was doing, but he could not condemn Harry to a death of agony—could not break his mother's heart for the sake of a stranger. And at the remembrance of the faith he had had in Philippe de Valois, anger returned to thrust aside all other feelings.

Dick's bitterness might have been lessened had he been able to look upon the Frenchman at that moment.

Seated in the cell to which he had been dragged immediately he had closed the door behind him, racked with the pain which his ride from Courtney Manor had set up in his strained muscles, Philippe de Valois could hardly have been mistaken for a servant of the Roundhead colonel.

The threat which had caused Dick to consent to the betrayal of Alice Grenville had been equally successful in forcing Philippe to brand himself as a spy; and now he crouched upon a rough stool, wondering what motive Payne could possibly have for wishing to make the young Englishman hate and despise him.

Yet even this uncertainty as to the Colonel's motives was swallowed up by the misery in his heart.

. . . . . .

Sir Richard Courtney rode to Taunton apparently alone, but in reality under the eye of Colonel Payne and his men.

He drew rein outside the small gate which pierced the high wall surrounding Grenville Lodge, pulled the bell-chain, and waited.

After a while the grid was thrust back and an elderly man peered through.

"I bring a message from Monsieur de Valois," said Dick, feeling that the piercing eyes could read the falseness of his heart. "Here it is, fastened to his signet."

Alice Grenville, so Colonel Payne had told him, was in ignorance of her brother's treachery, and so, evidently, were her servants, since the man took the signet and the message and disappeared.

After what seemed an interminable wait, he returned. Bolts were drawn, and Dick soon found himself inside the wall.

He was well acquainted with his business. He was to feign knowledge of an attack, and beg leave to bring some cavalier soldiers into the lodge. These, of course, would be Colonel Payne and his men, who would burst in directly the gates were open.

The young man rehearsed what he was to say a dozen times within himself on the way to the house, and then stood tongue-tied before the level gaze of Lady Alice Grenville.

She had come out on to the terrace to greet him, filled with anxiety for her brother and eager for news.

"Philippe—what hath come to him? He is hurt?"

Sir Richard almost laughed at the irony of the question, but he checked himself in time and bowed.

" Monsieur is safe at present, madam, but I have come upon a graver mission. The crop-ears are contemplating an attack on this house. There is a large company of them—more than you could well defend yourself against. I have a company of men without who would protect you——" He stopped short, silenced by the gentle eyes fixed upon his face.

" I am ready to place myself in your hands, sir. You saved my brother—though he does not say from what—and I trust you absolutely."

She trusted him! And he was about to open her doors to the vilest wretch that ever disgraced a military uniform!

He could not do it—not even to save Harry! To betray this woman would be like betraying a trusting child! His father would haunt him for his crime. Harry would call him coward to his face, if he did so black a deed.

" No, no! I cannot—I cannot!" he cried in despair, and Alice Grenville stared at him in amazement.

" What do you mean, sir? Are you ill?"

Her voice was sympathetic and gentle, and, hardly knowing how, Dick Courtney told her the whole miserable story.

She listened in silence to the end, and then, as he sank upon a stone bench, his head in his hands, she spoke pitifully, without anger.

" But do you not see it was all false, sir? Do you not see that my brother was speaking under compulsion? Maybe the Colonel threatened him as he threatened you. I can swear to Philippe's honour, for he hath fought in every fight since Naseby—ay, and before. My brother is no traitor, sir!"

But now came the servant, in haste and alarm.

" There is a company o' crop-ears demanding entrance, m'lady!" he gasped. " They are led by Colonel Payne."

" Defy them!"

The gentle childishness had vanished from Alice Grenville's face. She was a soldier's wife and a soldier's daughter, ready to defend her home against the world. But almost as the brave words were uttered, she called the man back.

" I had forgotten something. Wait over there, Jackson." Then, as the servant obeyed, my lady turned to Dick, who had risen and was standing by, his head bowed in shame. " We cannot let your brother die, sir!" she cried. " We must save him —but how? I have many men on my estate —but a company of crop-ears——"

" There is your brother, too. Heaven knoweth what they will do to him!" exclaimed Dick, from whose mind all suspicions had been wiped.

A moment's pause, and then Alice Grenville uttered a little cry of satisfaction.

" We will meet guile with guile, sir. Jackson!" The man came forward respectfully. " Admit these soldiers, but see that they are given wine to refresh themselves after their long ride. There is a phial in the still-room—you know the one. Do you understand?"

" Yes, m'lady."

" Very well. Hasten, ere they grow impatient."

And Alice Grenville turned a smiling face to Sir Richard Courtney as her servant departed to do her bidding.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

Face to Face!

COLONEL PAYNE stretched his legs under the great table and chuckled.

It hardly seemed possible that he was actually dining in the hall of Grenville Lodge, with Lady Alice, mute and terrified, at one end of the table, and that puppy Courtney at the other. Yet it was true. He had been admitted without trouble.

The ease with which he had entered might have aroused suspicion in a less conceited man; but though brutal, and, in some ways, crafty, Colonel Payne was too self-satisfied to be really keen; and, to be sure, Alice Grenville was a fine actress.

" Have my men been given wine?" he bellowed at Jackson as that worthy brought the port and filled his glass.

" Yes, sir."

Jackson did not add that at this moment they were sprawling across the kitchen tables in heavy, drugged sleep.

When the servant had quitted the hall, he turned to Dick, who was playing with his glass of wine.

"I'll keep my word, young whipper-snapper! You can get back to your family as soon as you like," he said.

Dick continued to finger his glass, speaking without raising his eyes.

"I also have my word to keep, Colonel Payne. When Philippe de Valois cramped his tortured hand to pen that message to his sister, I vowed that if ever I met Colonel Payne face to face, with a good sword at my hip, I would have vengeance. My debt hath grown since then, and the time hath come when it shall be paid!"

He looked up suddenly, and, lifting his glass, dashed the wine in the Colonel's face.

The Cromwellian sat quite motionless for a brief moment, the red wine trickling down his leathern doublet. Then he sprang to his feet and strode to the door. It was locked. He flung across to the window, and caught a gleam of steel from one of my lady's men-at-arms. Then he laughed uproariously.

"A pretty game! Why, you fools, I have but to call, and my men will batter down your foxes' den about your ears!"

He banged the floor with his chair and lifted his voice in raucous shouting. But there was no response.

"It is you that are fooled, Colonel Payne," came the soft voice of Alice Grenville. "Your men are drugged, you are caught in a trap, and unless you choose to accept Sir Richard Courtney's challenge, I will have you hanged even as you would hang that innocent child at Courtney Manor!"

For a moment Colonel Payne stood transfixed, unable to realise that those he thought conquered were in reality the conquerors. Then, with an oath, he pushed back the chairs that were near and dragged out his sword.

It was met by that of the young cavalier, and in another second a fierce fight was raging in the dining-hall.

Lady Alice pulled the bell, and Jackson opened the door.

A few words were exchanged, a sharp order was given, and after a while there was the clang of iron-shod hoofs on the courtyard stones. But the two men, face to face at last, heard nothing save the ring of their own steel and the thud of their boots on the polished floor.

Alice was a soldier's wife, but she was very anxious as she watched that duel, for Dick was slight, and his sword a slender rapier in comparison with the Colonel's great service weapon. More than once it seemed that Payne must conquer by sheer weight, and my lady wished with all her heart she had not allowed the young cavalier to have his way, but had drugged the master with the men.

And then the Colonel began to lose his temper. He had thought to finish the fight ere it was well begun, but the lithe, active figure was never in the place it should have been, and always were his deadly thrusts turned aside by that absurdly light blade.

He lost his temper, and the duellist who loses his temper is not an adversary to fear. Dick, cool and unflurried, watched his face as it grew ever more and more flushed, saw the wildness of his lunges, and waited.

When the end came, it came with startling suddenness. The Colonel made a particularly wild lunge, there was a flurry of steel a lightning flash of the cavalier's sword, and Dick stood staring down at the motionless form of his enemy, staring down at the spreading crimson over the Colonel's heart.

When Jackson knelt to ascertain the extent of his wound, he found his aid unnecessary. Colonel Payne had gone to his account.

Sir Richard Courtney led Lady Alice out of the hall and into the parlour, while the servants removed the body of the Roundhead and set things in order.

"I must go to seek your brother," said Dick, when he was sure that my lady would not swoon from the shock of the duel. "He will be imprisoned, I am certain, and I must beg his forgiveness for my distrust," he added wistfully. "Think you he will ever pardon me? I was a dense fool, or I should have known."

"Men have not the intuition of women,

Sir Richard," smiled Lady Alice. "Do not fear — Philippe will understand."

"Then I must bid you farewell, madam——"

Dick's words were interrupted by the clatter of hoofs outside in the courtyard, and his hand went to his sword; but Lady Alice smiled again.

"It is my husband, with a goodly company of cavaliers, Sir Richard," she said. "His regiment was stationed at Weston Zoyland, and I sent for his aid when first the duel commenced. He will help you to release Philippe and win back your own home from the hands of the crop-ears."



There was a lightning flash of Dick's sword, and Colonel Payne staggered back, his hand to his heart!

And so it came about that Sir Richard Courtney and Sir John Grenville rode back towards Bath side by side. At the house where Dick had interviewed the Colonel a halt was called, and there was a smart skirmish before the Roundheads were routed.

Dick was soon unlocking the manacles which fettered Philippe's wrists, pouring out his self-reproaches, and begging the Frenchman to forgive him.

Pardon was readily granted, since, as Lady Alice had promised, her brother understood. Then the company went on towards Courtney Manor, Philippe up before Dick as he had been on the memorable day when Chestnut had bolted from the place of execution.

There were more soldiers at the Manor, and there was another skirmish; but soon Lady Courtney was in her son's arms, while Harry was reaping a full reward for his courage in the praise of the cavaliers.

Philippe, resting upon the couch, watched with glowing eyes, and presently it was his turn to share the warm congratulations and the thanks of those for whom he had borne so much.

"I wish you were all English!" exclaimed Harry, with childish candour. Then, as an afterthought, he said to Philippe: "But you are, too—even if you do talk like a Frenchman—an Englishman from France!"

THE END

Champions of the Wheel!





The great roads, these days and nights, are never short of romance, but it may be doubted whether they are the scene of anything so marked with good sportsmanship, as when an attempt is being made to break a cycling record.

IT is fascinating to see how the great cycling record-makers go about their work, mounted on the newest pattern racing bicycles or tricycles, and well able to maintain an average of 18 to 20 m.p.h. for ten and twelve hours on end.

The racing cyclist is made of heroic stuff, and presents as magnificent an example of endurance, enthusiasm, and pluck as can be found in any branch of sport.

Attempts to break records are planned with very great exactitude, and members of famous cycling clubs, all picked men, turn out to lend their aid. And the work of the checkers and helpers is not light, for there are long vigils at given points, where trained control agents are on the *qui vive* for hours.

Take a single or tandem London-to-Bath-and-back record attempt, with the racers rivalling a swift motor on points and average. This has to be at night, when the town streets and country roads are clear, or fairly so. The whole track is marked out by men who know every stone of the highway which runs via Maidenhead and Marlborough to Bath.

There may be a moon, but the moon is uncertain, and there will be misty stretches in the Kennet Valley for sure. The time-keeper and his helpers are at their posts. About every eight or ten miles are pickets, or checkers, with extra look-out men, for the old Bath Road has some awkward bends.



Chosen men are stationed at intervals along the route to provide the cyclist with refreshment.

The worst of those are at Thatcham, Marlborough, and Chippenham. Here special watchers have to be ready to warn any traffic, so that the racing wheelmen can take the hairpin curve on the off side, and so avoid a spill.

Racing events usually commence soon after dawn, the riders being started at minute intervals. Nothing is overlooked. The racing bike is fitted with quick-release wheels; if a puncture occurs, then the wheel can be slipped out in lightning style and a new tyre fixed, the whole operation occupying under three minutes.

At every five, six, or ten miles down the route, which may be 25, 50, or 100 miles, or even more in a time trial such as a 12-hour handicap ride, are the helpers with hot tea, lemonade and claret, or other drinks, handed up in aluminium bottles with wide necks.



Another helper is the look-out man, whose job is to warn cyclists when taking a bend, of approaching traffic.

There is the man with the liquid refreshment who runs alongside the cyclist and thrusts the bottle into the rider's hand; the racer does not slacken speed, but he gets the drink. All refreshments have to be handed in by men on foot.

A second doughty helper hands the champion a big chunk of stiff rice pudding, served on a piece of paper! The rider takes this and eats it, dropping the paper tray as he swings on his way. The bottle is also heaved "overboard." Meantime a third energetic personage has filled the cyclist's pockets with sandwiches, bananas, and so on.

On the watch there is a fourth man, who has a wet sponge ready for the competitor to pass over his face and sweating wrists. The used sponge discarded like the other "helps," the rider goes flying on, his light little racing bike eating up the miles as he glides away through the night. He may be troubled by night-moving lorries, or by cattle or sheep; but as a rule his road is clear.

The checkers wait at key-points, and sign time-check papers in the case of record attempts. Perhaps, in some cases when record attempts are being made, there will be a long vigil with the watcher, "ticker" in hand, suspecting something is wrong. So-and-so is a minute behind scheduled time. The observers are all alert. Not a sound breaks the stillness. A thin mist over all, the world is a shadowy place of romance.

Then far away down the road appears a light, which comes nearer and nearer. It is So-and-so—only three minutes behind on the schedule, after all!

Only three minutes! It is a lot, but the helpers race by his side, swift as hares, and he is speeded on his way refreshed, while the patrol stands ready for the next!

GREYFRIARS CHARACTERS IN FANCY DRESS.

"Leading lights" at Greyfriars characteristically attired, as seen by the HOLIDAY ANNUAL artist.



1. Dicky Nugent.
2. Harry Wharton.
3. Tom Brown.
4. Bob Cherry.
5. Horace Coker.
6. Hobson.
7. Billy Bunter.
8. H. Skinner.
9. Alonzo Todd.
10. L. Potter.
11. W. Greene.
12. George Tubb.



MARK LINLEY AT THE CROSS-ROADS!

by FRANK RICHARDS

An enthralling long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars School, featuring in a role of human interest Mark Linley, the Lancashire lad.

THE FIRST CHAPTER

Waiting !

"Got the news yet?"

"No."

"How are you feeling?"

Mark Linley smiled in rather a strained way.

"Anxious," he said.

And he resumed his tramping up and down the passage. He could not keep still. Up and down, up and down the flagged passage he went, his hands thrust deep into his trousers' pockets, and his brow corrugated in a deep frown.

Mark Linley was usually one of the quietest and most composed members of the Remove Form at Greyfriars. He had had more troubles than generally fall to the lot of a lad of his age; but he bore them all quietly, without complaint; and the heavier the burden, the more stoutly he squared his shoulders to it.

But for once he seemed shaken out of his reserve.

He was waiting in the passage outside the Head's study, waiting to be called in to see the Head. Fellows who passed glanced curiously at him, and some of them grinned. They knew the cause of his anxiety, though most of them were surprised to see him show it in this way.

Tramp ! Tramp !

Mark Linley seemed to have to keep in movement. Every time he turned, his eye went towards the Head's study door.

Would the call never come?

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry, of the Remove, came down the passage, and they paused to speak to Mark.

"Heard yet?"

The Lancashire lad shook his head.

"Not yet."

"Time the wire was in," said Harry Wharton, looking at his watch.

"Yes, I should think so."

"Cheer-ho !" said Bob Cherry, patting Mark on the shoulder. "There's not the slightest doubt about it, you know."

Mark smiled faintly.

"I wish I could think so," he said.

Bob stared at him in surprise. Bob Cherry's admiration for the attainments of his chum was unbounded. Mark Linley was a fellow who took Greek as an extra, of his own free will, and a fellow who could

do that could do anything in the scholastic line; that was Bob's fixed opinion.

"My dear chap," said Bob, "you're an ass! There isn't the slightest doubt about it. Why, there were only four entered for the Founder's Prize."

"Well, that's three against me," said Mark. "And there would have been another, only Wharton stood out on purpose to give me a chance."

Wharton laughed.

"That's all right," he said. "I was going in for the prize, just to please my uncle if I could carry it off. But I wouldn't go in for it against a chap who needed the tin. You don't mind my saying so?"

"Not at all. It's no secret that I need the tin," said Mark. "A chap who comes here on a scholarship, after working in a factory for a living, is not likely to be overburdened with money, I suppose. Although I have no fees to pay here, and the scholarship money helps me out, it's not easy for my people to keep me at a school like Greyfriars."

"I suppose so," said Bob. "But you'll make it all up to them some day, when you become a judge, or a bishop, or something."

Mark laughed, forgetting his anxiety for the moment, as Bob intended that he should.

"I don't think that's ever likely to come to pass," he said. "But I hope I shall have some chance of showing father and mother how grateful I feel for what they've done for me. There are few fellows who have so much to be thankful for as I have. And—and my poor old dad——"

He broke off.

"How is he now?" asked Harry.

Mark gulped something down.

"He's all right," he said. "Getting on as well as could be expected after his accident. Thanks for asking! Oh, I wish that wire would come!"

He turned away towards the door of the Head's study again.

But it remained shut.

"You'll see Trotter bring in the wire when it comes." said Harry.

Mark nodded.

"Yes, so I shall."

"It's bound to be all right. There isn't a chap in the four who had any chance against you, especially on the Greek paper. That's what kept a crowd out, you know, and that's where you get your chance."

"Yes, I thought so; but—but——"

"Which competitors are you afraid of?" asked Bob. "There's Bulstrode—but he doesn't count."

"No, I don't think I need fear Bulstrode."

"Then there's Skinner—but he hasn't an earthly."

Mark smiled.

"No; I expect Skinner to come in last."

"The other one is Vernon-Smith—the Bounder! You don't think the Bounder is likely to beat you, do you?" Harry Wharton exclaimed in surprise.

"That's the one I fear."

"The Bounder?"

"Yes."

"My hat!"

Wharton and Bob both stared at Mark in great surprise. Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, was the last fellow they would have thought of fearing in an exam.

The Bounder was the blackguard of the Lower School; he had nearly every bad habit a boy could have. He smoked, he gambled in secret, he broke bounds at night to visit a public-house in the village. He turned up his nose at games, and he neglected his studies. His entering for the Founder's Prize at all was a surprise to the Remove fellows, and most of them had laughed.

To imagine him as having a chance against the keen, studious, industrious Lancashire lad seemed absurd.

Yet he was the one Mark Linley feared.

"But it's all holy rot!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Why, the Bounder would be as likely as not to send in his paper smelling of tobacco, and he'd get the order of the boot for that alone."

"He'd be too careful for that."

"But he's the biggest slacker at Greyfriars."



"Here's Trotter with the telegram!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. Mark Linley started and turned round quickly, his face pale.

"Yes—by nature—but when he chooses he can work hard. And he only entered for the exam. at all because I had entered, and he wanted to beat me. He doesn't need the fifty pounds; he could have twice as much by asking his father for it. As for the honour of winning, he doesn't care two straws for that. He wants to beat me—out of sheer spite; though, goodness knows, I've never done him any harm!"

Harry Wharton nodded.

Vernon-Smith's motive for entering for the Founder's Prize was known well enough in the Remove. He did not want the money, and he cared nothing for the glory; he wanted to "take a rise" out of the "factory bounder."

But few expected that he would succeed.

"I know that's his little game, and a rotten caddish game it is, Marky," said Wharton. "But he has no chance."

"He has a jolly good chance."

"But at Greek, too?" said Bob Cherry. "Remember one of the papers is Greek, and I've heard it's a jolly hard one, too."

Mark Linley smiled miserably.

"You don't know the Bounder," he said. "He can do anything he likes. Do you remember how he always sneered at footer and cricket, and never would play.

But when he had a purpose to serve he bucked up, and played both games as well as any fellow in the Form. He practically won a cricket match for us, after everybody had been saying that he couldn't play cricket for toffee. It was the same with the German prize, but his German paper was miles ahead of the others, and he took the prize quite easily."

"Yes, and gave it to a kid in the Second Form afterwards," said Harry Wharton wrathfully. "That was like his caddish swank. He just entered to show that he could beat Hoskins of the Shell, who expected to get it."

"Yes, and he's entered now to show that he can beat me."

"But he won't do it, old chap. He can't!"

Mark did not reply.

Wharton and Bob Cherry stood silent, too. Their confidence was shaken. They remembered that Vernon-Smith was indeed a "dark horse." Blackguard and rascal as the Bounder undoubtedly was, there seemed to be no doubt that he was cleverer than most of the fellows in the Remove, and that he could do almost anything successfully when he had once set his mind to it.

At the thought of Vernon-Smith winning the Founder's Prize, both the juniors felt savagely exasperated. That prize had been founded for the benefit of needy scholars, long years ago; and for a rich fellow to enter for it was bad form, in the first place. When Wharton had heard that Linley had entered, he had at once withdrawn his name. Common decency should have impelled Vernon-Smith to do the same. But the Bounder was the last fellow in the world to do that.

Fifty pounds was a matter of no moment to the son of Samuel Smith, the millionaire. The Bounder often had bank-notes for as much as that in his pocket. But it was untold wealth to Mark Linley, the factory lad, who had come to Greyfriars on a scholarship, and whose people had to pinch and contrive to keep him there. And lately Mark's father had been injured in an accident in the factory, and money was more than ever sorely needed in the poor home. The Bounder knew it all, but to the Bounder it seemed only like a chance of paying off old scores against the lad from Lancashire. Many a rub had they had—many a time had the mean, false, reckless blackguard of the Remove shrunk from the clear, scornful eyes of the scholarship boy. And Mark Linley was to pay for it all now; that was the Bounder's object.

Mark thrust his hands deep into his pockets, and walked restlessly up and down the passage.

Would the news never come?

He thought of the little home in far-off Lancashire—of the anxious mother, of his little sister, of his father stretched upon a sick-bed, his strong right arm barred from the work which had supported the home.

He must have the money!

In the midst of gloomy trouble that exam. for the Founder's Prize had seemed like a beacon of light to the Lancashire lad. He had worked for that exam. as he had never worked before. It was wholly a paper exam., and the Lancashire lad had worked on his papers till his eyes were dim, and his head was aching, and his whole body was throbbing. He had sent his papers in at the finish, feeling that he had put into them all that he had in him, and that if he failed it was because he simply hadn't it in him to win.

Then came the dreadful pause of more than a week, while the adjudication took place.

The news was to come to-day—a wire that was to announce the name of the fortunate winner. Fuller information as to who had taken second prize, and so forth, and the number of marks would follow by letter.

Would the wire never come?

"Buck up!" said Bob Cherry. "It can't be long now."

Mark nodded miserably.

The chums had never seen him so disturbed before. However thickly troubles might pile on him, he had always borne them bravely. But now he seemed to be quite thrown off his balance.

The juniors did not understand the bitter need the boy was in—how terribly the money was wanted.

They stayed with him—to wait for the telegram, though they could say little to encourage him. Into their own minds was creeping a doubt now, and they feared to learn that the Bounder had won.

Bob Cherry uttered a sudden exclamation.

"Here's Trotter!"

Linley started and turned round quickly, his face pale.

Trotter, the page, came along the passage with a buff-coloured envelope in his hand. He grinned a little at the sight of Mark Linley. He knew what the Lancashire lad was waiting there for.

"Is that for the Head?" asked Mark quickly.

"Yes, Master Linley."

"Thank you!"

Trotter knocked at the door of the Head's study, and went in. Mark Linley clenched his hands hard and waited.

THE SECOND CHAPTER
A Bitter Blow!

MARK'S face was pale, and there were little beads of perspiration on his forehead. He waited, his face tense and his hands hard clenched.

In a few minutes now he would know the result.

Either he had won the Founder's Prize and was the richer by fifty pounds, or else he had failed and—and what?

He did not dare to think.

If he had failed, if the money was gone, it meant that the little home in Lancashire would be sold up—that his sick father would have to go to a workhouse infirmary and his mother to a factory.

That, and more, if he had lost!

If he had won, the money would tide over the difficulties at home, and leave a little sum in hand for future emergencies. But if he had failed——

He groaned at the thought.

"I say, buck up, old chap!" said Bob Cherry, in alarm. "I've never seen you like this before. Don't take it to heart like that."

"You don't understand," said Mark.

"I know it must mean a lot to you, but—hang it all, cheer up! Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Trotter came out of the Head's study.

The three juniors made a simultaneous movement towards him.

"Does the Head want to see Linley?" asked Harry Wharton quickly.

"He didn't say so, sir," said Trotter.

Mark's heart sank.

"He hasn't given you a message for me?" he asked.

"No, sir."

"Oh!"

"Has he read the telegram?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Yes; he read it at once."

"Then why doesn't he want to see Linley?" growled Bob. "Blessed if I catch on! He ought to want to see the winner at once, to put him out of his anxiety."

Mark was silent, his heart throbbing. But Harry Wharton asked the question that was in the Lancashire lad's mind.

"Has Dr. Locke given you a message for anyone, Trotter?"

"Yes, Master Wharton."

"For whom?"

"Master Vernon-Smith."

Mark muttered something. Bob clenched his hands.

"Vernon-Smith!" repeated Wharton.

"Yes, sir."

"You—you're sure," said Harry. "No mistake? You know what a young ass you are, Trotter. You're sure he said Vernon-Smith?"

Trotter grinned.

"Yes, sir, quite sure!"

And he went down the passage to find the Bounder and give him the message from the Head. The three juniors looked at one another.

"There must be some mistake," said Bob Cherry, not very hopefully, however.

Mark shook his head.

"There's no mistake," he said quietly. "This is what I feared; but I suppose I

shall have to stand it. If it wasn't for ——"

He was going to say if it wasn't for the people at home, but he stopped himself. He never would speak of his home poverty to anyone; he shrank from sympathy on that subject, and the Lancashire lad, poor as he was, had as much pride as a prince.

"Better speak to the Head and make sure," said Harry.

"Yes, I suppose I might do that."

Mark Linley tapped at the door of the study.

"Come in!"

It was the deep voice of the Head.

The Lancashire lad opened the study door and went in, leaving Wharton and Bob Cherry waiting anxiously enough in the passage.

Mark Linley's heart was throbbing almost to suffocation as he entered the Head's study.

In spite of the fact that he had not been sent for—in spite of the fact that Vernon-Smith had been called—he nourished a hope that his name might have come out first. He had feared the competition of the Bounder; but—but all the time he had felt almost as if the prize were rightfully his—as if he must have it.

Dr. Locke looked at him over his desk and nodded.

"Ah, it is you, Linley! I suppose you are anxious to know the result of the examination for the Founder's Prize?"

"Yes, sir," said Mark, in a suffocating voice.

"I do not know the details yet," said the Head. "Those I shall know to-morrow. So far, I know simply the name of the winner, and I regret very much that the name is not yours, Linley."

Mark Linley staggered back.

He had feared it—expected it; but it came like a crushing blow, all the same! His face was as white as death.

"I had fully anticipated, from the list of competitors, that you would carry off the prize, Linley," said the Head kindly. "It is a great surprise to me to find the name of Vernon-Smith as the winner. I am agreeably surprised to find that that lad knows how to work in this way. It is a great surprise."

The Head's voice seemed to Mark to be droning on from a great distance. The room was swimming round the Lancashire lad.

He had lost!

Vernon-Smith had won. But that did not matter. It did not matter who had won. He had lost!

He had told his people that he was practically certain of winning. That was before he had known that the Bounder had entered. What was he to tell them now?

Lost!

"I have not the slightest doubt that your name will come second, Linley," said the Head—"not the slightest doubt. The second prize is a valuable set of books—a most valuable set of books, which any studious boy might be proud to possess. A really thoughtful and studious lad, perhaps, would prefer the second prize to the first, for the books will undoubtedly remain, to be friends through life, long after the money is spent. I shall be very pleased, Linley, if it proves that the second prize is yours. Ah! Come in!"

There was a tap at the door. Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, entered. Mark Linley turned dully to the door.

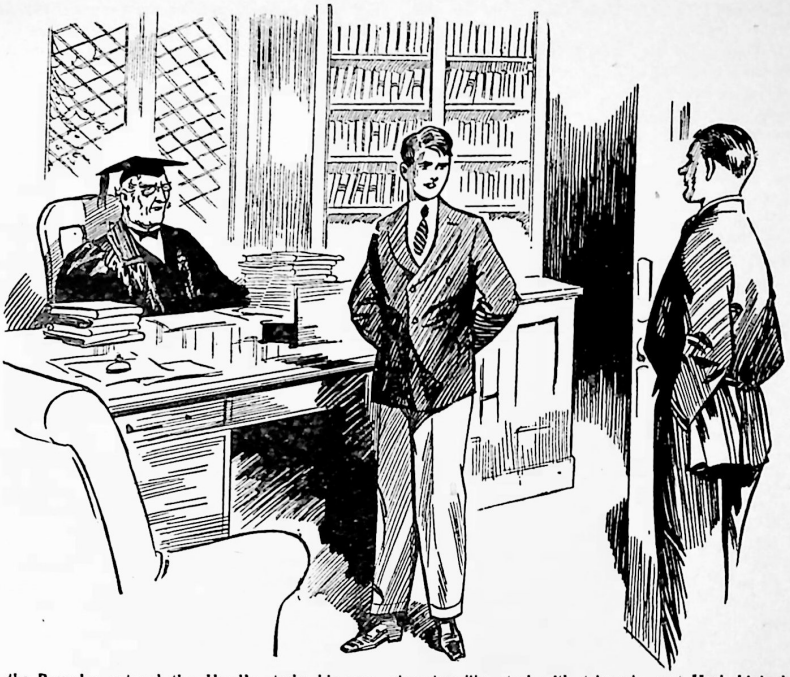
"Ah! Vernon-Smith! I congratulate you——" began the Head.

The Bounder's eyes met Mark's for the moment, gleaming like steel with triumph. But Mark was too hard hit to feel even resentment for the ungenerous triumph of the Bounder. He crossed blindly to the door and passed out into the corridor, hardly seeing where he was going; and Bob Cherry passed an arm through his, and led him away.

THE THIRD CHAPTER
Nothing for Bunter!

"I say, Linley——"

Billy Bunter jerked at Mark Linley's sleeve as the Lancashire lad walked blindly down the passage. Mark did not see or hear him. But Bob Cherry put out a foot,



As the Bounder entered the Head's study, his eyes, gleaming like steel with triumph, met Mark Linley's for a moment.

and pushed the fat junior hard, and Bunter sat down on the flags.

"Ow!"

Bob walked on with Mark.

Many fellows looked at them—the expression upon Mark's face was sufficient to show them what had happened. Some of them looked sorry, most indifferent, a few glad. Some of the Remove had never quite got over the fact that Mark Linley had been a factory lad before he had come to Greyfriars.

With the snobbish set in the Remove—fellows like Skinner and Snoop and Stott—that weighed a great deal. As a matter of fact, the noble nature of the Lancashire lad was the real cause of their dislike. They felt annoyed and inferior in his presence, and they indemnified themselves by sneering at his antecedents.

"He's got it in the neck," said Skinner. "I can't say I'm sorry."

"Same here," Snoop remarked. "Like his cheek to think he was going to bag the Founder's. He's bagged one scholarship here already, and a giddy prize, too."

"I say, you fellows," said Billy Bunter, "do you know who's won the Founder's?"

"No, I don't, for one."

"I suppose it was Linley."

Skinner chuckled.

"He doesn't look like it," he said. "He's going about with a face as long as

a fiddle, and Bob Cherry is playing the comforting friend."

"That may be because his people want all the money," said Bunter sagely. "Chap would feel like that if he won a big prize, and his people wanted it. I know I should."

"You would!" said Bulstrode, with a sneer.

"Oh, really, Bulstrode! I don't see why a chap shouldn't be allowed to keep his own money. Besides, I'm expecting a postal-order to-morrow, and I was thinking that Linley would be able to advance me something off it, you know."

"You ass! If he's won, he won't have the money to-day."

"But he could borrow on the strength of it, you know. Which way did he go?"

"Find out," said Bulstrode.

"Oh, really——"

"Oh, buzz off, you fat bounder!"

Which Bunter immediately proceeded to do. He went out into the Close, blinking to and fro with his big spectacles. He fully expected that Mark Linley had won the prize, and if the Lancashire lad was in funds the Owl of the Remove meant to have a share of the money, or know the reason why.

"Anybody seen Linley?" asked Billy Bunter as he came out on the steps of the School House.

A hand grasped the fat junior by the collar and shook him. Billy Bunter struggled in the strong grasp.

"Ow! Oh, really, Bull——"

"You fat cad——"

"Oh, is it you, Cherry? Look here—— Ow! Don't shake me like that! You might make my glasses fall off, and if they get broken you'll have to pay for them! Ow!"

"What do you want Linley for?"

"Ow! I want to—to—to return him half-a-crown I borrowed of him yesterday," said Bunter.

Bob could not help laughing. The idea of Billy Bunter repaying any loan under any circumstances whatever was ludicrously absurd.

"I—I say, Cherry, where is he?"

"He hasn't won the prize, and there's nothing for you to borrow," said Bob Cherry. "So you can leave him alone, you fat rotter!"

"Oh, really—— Ow!"

Bunter gasped for breath as Bob slammed him against the wall and left him. Then he rolled out into the Close.

"Beast!" murmured Billy Bunter. "Of course, I know jolly well that Linley has won the prize, but that rotter wants to keep all the borrowing to himself. I wonder where that rotten factory cad has got to?"

Bunter blinked up and down the Close.

Mark Linley, as a matter of fact, had gone into the Cloisters to be alone. Bob Cherry would have remained with his chum, but he saw that Mark wished to be by himself, and he left him at the entrance of the Cloisters.

Under the old stone arches—the most ancient part of Greyfriars—Mark Linley passed to and fro with throbbing brow.

The old stones, worn by the feet of generations, bearing the traces of the sandals of monks who had trodden there five hundred years ago, echoed dully under the restless tread of the Lancashire lad.

What was he to do?

There had always been a risk that he would lose the prize, but the certainty was terrible!

He had lost!

What was he to do?

That question was humming and throbbing in his brain and aching in his heart. What was he to do?

"I say, Linley——"

Mark started as the creaking tones of Bunter invaded the silence. The Owl of the Remove had found him.

The fat junior rolled up, blinking at him through his big spectacles. There was a fat propitiatory smile upon Bunter's face. He was too short-sighted, and too occupied with his selfish thoughts, to notice the expression upon the features of the unhappy Lancashire lad.

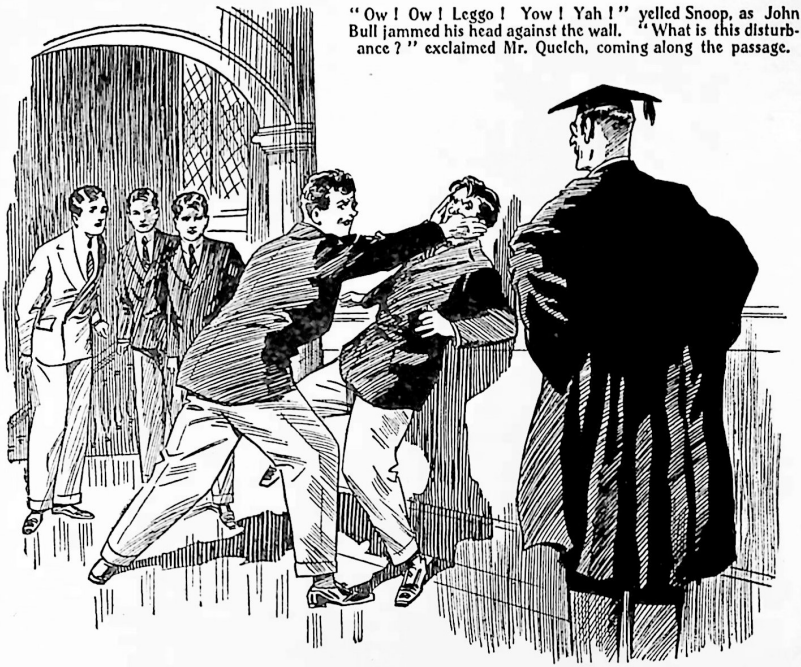
"Linley, old man, I've been looking for you! Congratulations!"

"What?" said Mark.

"So jolly glad you've won," said Bunter. "Bob Cherry said you'd lost, but I knew it wasn't true. I knew you'd won, and he wanted to borrow all the money himself. Look here, I think I ought to warn you against that chap. He——"

"You cad!" said Mark.

Bunter shifted his ground immediately.



"Ow! Ow! Leggo! Yow! Yah!" yelled Snoop, as John Bull jammed his head against the wall. "What is this disturbance?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, coming along the passage.

"I—I mean—what I meant to say was, I—I think Bob Cherry is the most decent chap going," he said. "That's what I really meant to say. You know how I like Bob Cherry."

"Oh, leave me alone! Don't talk to me!"

"But I want to congratulate you about winning the prize. Look here, I'm expecting a postal-order this evening, and if you could advance me ten bob——"

"I can't! I——"

"Yes, yes, I know you haven't the money at once; but you could borrow it on your expectations," Bunter explained. "You've got fifty quid coming. Lots of fellows pay their way by borrowing on their expectations. It's quite common."

"I tell you——"

"Suppose you let me have a pound! When my postal-order comes——"

"Oh, let me alone!" cried Mark. "I tell you I have not won the prize, and I have no money to give you. If I had, I wouldn't give it you. Now get away!"

Bunter blinked at him.

"You haven't won!" he exclaimed.

"No."

"Then who has?"

"Vernon-Smith."

"My hat!" said Bunter. "I—I suppose you're telling the truth!" He started back as Mark made an angry gesture. "Look here, Linley, as for what you said about not having any money to give me, I hope you don't think I want any of your rotten money, even if you had any, you poverty-stricken cad! I was speaking of a little loan, and I shouldn't dream of taking money as a gift, even from an equal. And certainly not from a chap who has worked in a factory. Why, you utter outsider ——"

Mark Linley made a step towards him, and the fat junior broke off and ran. Mark did not pursue him a single step, but Bunter did not leave off running till he was clear of the Cloisters. Then he stopped, breathless and panting.

"Beast!" he muttered. "Well, I think I gave it to him pretty straight! The rotter! He ought to be jolly glad to have some notice taken of him by a gentleman! My fault is that I'm too kind to these fellows! H'm! Vernon-Smith has won, has he?"

And Billy Bunter, when he had recovered his breath, rolled away in search of the Bounder of Greyfriars.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER
In the Depths!

"LETTER for Linley!"

Mark Linley heard the words as he came in.

The Lancashire lad was looking a little pale, but he was quite composed now. He had wrestled the matter out with himself, as it were, and had come to a more composed frame of mind. Whatever he felt, it was useless to show it. There was no object in wearing his heart upon his sleeve for daws to peck at.

He knew, too, that there were many fellows at Greyfriars who would be glad to see the signs of discomfiture in his face—who would rejoice to know that the "factory cad" had had a fall.

And Mark did not intend to gratify them.

Outwardly, the Lancashire lad was quiet, calm, as usual, only a little unaccustomed pallor in his cheeks showing that he felt the blow that had fallen upon him. Inwardly, he was suffering.

The post had come in, and many of the fellows had letters. There was a letter for Linley in the rack, and some of the juniors were standing round looking at it, some of them grinning.

The letter was addressed in a strong though uneducated hand—the hand of Mark Linley's father. Snoop especially was very much amused.

"I like that fist," he said. "You can see that the hand that wrote that was used to handling a pick or something."

"Yes, rather," said Stott.

"And why not, you cad?" exclaimed John Bull. "Is there anything disgraceful in handing a pick, you ass? Isn't a pick a more useful instrument than a pen, any day?"

Snoop sneered.

"I dare say it is," he said. "All the same——"

"All the same, you're a low cad, and if you say any more I'll jam your head against the wall!" said John Bull wrathfully.

And Frank Nugent sang out:

"Hear, hear!"

"Look here——" began Snoop savagely.

He got no further; John Bull kept his word. He seized Snoop by the collar, ran him to the wall, and solemnly jammed his head there.

Snoop roared with anguish. He was a child in the hands of the sturdy junior. He was taller than Bull, but he never kept himself fit, and he had not the courage of a canary.

"Ow! Ow! Leggo! Yow! Yah!"

Mr. Quelch came along the passage.

The master of the Remove looked sternly at John Bull.

"What is this disturbance?" he exclaimed. "What are you doing, Bull?"

"Knocking Snoop's head against the wall, sir," said John Bull calmly.

There was a chuckle from some of the juniors. Coolness was John Bull's great gift. Mr. Quelch frowned. John Bull's coolness did not please him so much as it tickled the Removites.

"Take a hundred lines, Bull, and release Snoop at once."

"Yes, sir."

And Mr. Quelch walked away.

Snoop rubbed his head, and gave John Bull a malevolent look.

"You—you rotter!" he muttered.

Bull shrugged his broad shoulders.

"You can call me any fancy names you like," he said. "I don't mind. But if you begin any more of your caddish remarks about Linley's pater, I'll jam your head against the wall again, if I get a thousand lines for it!"

And Snoop, thinking that discretion was the better part of valour, said no more.

"Blessed if I know why you can't keep your oar out of it, Bull," said Skinner. "Look here——"

John Bull turned on him in a flash.

"Do you want your napper jammed on the wall?" he demanded.

"Oh, no!"

"Then shut up!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Marky!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Here's a letter for you, Marky."

"Thank you," said Mark quietly, taking the letter.

His heart throbbed as he looked at the address on it. It was in his father's hand, and Mark could guess the contents of that letter.

"It's a letter asking for money," Skinner murmured to Stott. "I'll be bound his people are after that Founder's Fifty!"

"What-ho!" said Stott.

"I shouldn't wonder," Hazeldene remarked. "I suppose they're frightfully hard up, you know, and they naturally want a look in when the kid bags fifty quid."

"He hasn't bagged it this time," said Ogilvy. "I'm sorry, too. I wish he had."

"Rats!" said Skinner. "I was in for it, too, and you never wished me luck."

"You hadn't an earthly. It was like your cheek to enter!"

"Rats!"

"Well, it will be a dot in the eye for them when they find that he hasn't got the tin," said Stott. "And he hasn't, you know."

"Serve them right!"

"Yes, rather! What right have they to Greyfriars cash?"

"Blessed blood-suckers, I call them!"

"It's hard on the cad himself," said Skinner, with an air of great fairness. "I think he's a rotten outsider, and he oughtn't to be allowed here. But as he's here, if he wins any prizes, he ought to have them."

"Oh, they're all of a sort!" said Stott. "Lot of awful rotters, of course."

Mark Linley, careless of what the cads of the Remove might be saying, went on up the passage with his letter. Tom Brown, the New Zealand junior, tapped him on the shoulder.

"Busy?" he asked.

Mark stopped.

"No."

"I want to pay my subscription," said Tom Brown, diving his hand into his pocket. "I'm sorry it's so late; but you know the money had to come from Taranaki, over in Maoriland. I was hard up till the remittance came."

"It's all right," said Mark.

"Will you take it now?"

"Certainly, if you like."

"Here you are, then."

Mark took the money without counting it, and slipped it into his pocket. Tom Brown looked at him in great surprise. Mark Linley was secretary and treasurer of the Remove Cricket Club, and as a rule he was extremely careful and methodical in his accounts. The fellows had been glad to get him as treasurer for that reason, because he didn't mind how much trouble he took, and because he could always be relied upon to have the accounts exactly in order.

But certainly order and method seemed to have departed from him now.

"I—I say," said Tom Brown as Mark turned to go upstairs, "we made it a rule for the treasurer to give a receipt for the payments, you know."

"Oh, I forgot!"

"I don't mind, of course," said Tom hastily; "but—but it's more in order, in case of any forgetfulness on either side."

"Yes, yes, of course," said Mark; "I forgot! I'm sorry! I will give you the receipt."

He pencilled the receipt.

"Nothing wrong, I hope?" asked Tom, looking at him curiously.

"No, only—well, I've lost the Founder's, and I feel a little upset about it, that's all," said Mark, in his frank way.

"Oh, sorry I bothered you now!"

"It's all right."

"I'm sorry about the prize, too," said Tom Brown sincerely. "I was certain you would pull it off, you know, and certainly I jolly well hoped you would. Do you know who's got it?"

"Vernon-Smith!"

"My hat!"

Mark Linley went upstairs. He went into his own study—the study he shared with Bob Cherry at the end of the Remove passage. Little Wun Lung, the Chinee, made a third in the study. But neither Bob nor Wun Lung was there now, and Mark was glad to see that he had the room to himself. He wanted to be alone.

He sat down to read his letter.

It was from his father, and it was the kind, strong, hopeful letter that the lad knew he would receive from the brave and sturdy Lancashire man.

"Dear Marky,—We are all glad to hear you feel so hopeful about getting the prize. I know what you mean to do with the money—I know, my lad! But we shan't let you part with all of it. You shall help us over this bad time; but half of the money shall be put in the bank for you, and in your name, for you will need it when you get into a higher Form at your big school. Don't say any more about being a worrit to us. It's nothing of the kind. You don't know how proud and pleased your owd folk are to see you getting on so fine."

Mark lowered the letter.

The tears were blinding his eyes.

His father said nothing of it, but Mark knew—knew only too well—the bitter need there was for that money in the far-off home.

He knew that his father had not had work for weeks, that illness had sapped away the little savings of the thrifty family, that there were bills to be paid, rent in arrears, a hard and grasping landlord to be faced.

He knew it only too well!

He had not been away from home long enough to forget the troubles of home, in the class he belonged to—that brave and hard-fighting class which does so much of the work of the world and wins so little reward.

How was he to write and tell his father that he had been over confident, that he had lost the prize, that there was no money?

He knew that he had not a word of reproach to expect. It was not that, but the blow it would be to his people. And, besides, what were they to do? Without money, the little home would be broken up.

Mark groaned aloud.

There was a step in the passage, and Harry Wharton came in. Wharton's face became very grave and serious as he saw Mark sitting in a dejected attitude, the letter in his hand.

"Linley, old man!"

Mark looked at him dully.

Wharton clapped him on the shoulder.

"Linley, old man, buck up!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER
Out!

MARK LINLEY rose to his feet slowly, heavily. As a rule the Lancashire lad was in the best of condition—his form was elastic, his step springy. But all the spring had gone out of him now.

"Bad news?" asked Wharton, his eye falling on the letter.

Mark shook his head.

"No."



Mark Linley made a feeble stroke at the ball, missed it, and the leather went crashing into his wicket. "How's that, umpire?"

"Well, I'm glad of that. Your pater's no worse?"

"No; he's getting better."

"Jolly good! I suppose you're feeling horribly cut up about the prize," said Wharton. "It was too bad! But it's no good moping over it, you know. I want you to come out to the cricket."

"Oh, no, no!"

"Better come!" urged Wharton. "When you get a knock-out blow, the worst thing possible is to mope over it indoors. It's always better to get out and to get some fresh air into your chest, and the trouble doesn't seem half so big then."

Mark smiled faintly.

"It's all right, Wharton! You're very kind. I shall buck up. But I don't think I will come down to the cricket just now."

"Hang it, old man, you can't waste a half-holiday in this way!" said Wharton. "It's gorgeous weather, and you simply must come out."

"I should jolly well say so!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, putting his head in at the door. "We're not going to let you mope, Marky."

"Come on, Linley, old chap!" said Frank Nugent, over Bob's shoulder. "It's the best thing to be done, you know."

Mark hesitated.

The chums of the Remove only thought of him as depressed by his failure, and perhaps hit a little hard by the loss of the money. They did not know all the circumstances. Mark would never have dreamed of telling them. They regarded his depression as a feeling that was natural; but that had to be got over, and the sooner the better. They did not know that the lad was in a difficulty from which there seemed no escape.

"Come on, Marky!" said Bob. "Besides, we want you to bat. We're getting up a match with the Upper Fourth chaps."

"Oh, very well!" said Mark.

After all, he could do no good by staying in the study. Like a wounded animal, he felt that he wished to creep into a corner and be alone. But it was not good for him to do so.

"I'll come," he said.

"That's right!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

Mark followed the juniors from the study.

When they came out of the shady old house into the brilliant sunshine of the Close, Mark felt his spirits revive, in spite of himself.

"You'll feel better when you're batting," Bob remarked.

Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Upper Fourth were already on the cricket pitch. They greeted the Remove cricketers with superior smiles.

Although the lower Form of the two, the Remove was a great distance ahead of the Upper Fourth in all sports, but that fact never had the slightest effect in diminishing the swank of Temple, Dabney & Co.

They were the Upper Fourth, and the Remove were the Lower Fourth; and as a consequence Temple, Dabney & Co. put on airs, which were not diminished by repeated lickings on the cricket field.

"Hallo! Here you are!" Temple exclaimed. "I suppose you know you're late?"

"Two minutes," said Harry.

"Oh, it doesn't matter! We shall have lots of time to lick you before dark!" said Fry of the Fourth.

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I think I know who'll get the licking," he remarked. "But never mind that! We're ready if you are."

Temple won the toss and elected to bat.

To Mark Linley, at long-field, the Upper Fourth's innings passed very quickly, for his thoughts were far away. Soon the last man was out, and it was the Lower Fourth's turn to bat. Harry Wharton put in Mark to open the innings with Bob Cherry.

His idea was that Mark would be bucked up, for he had noticed that the Lancashire lad was still moody.

But the trouble in Mark's breast was more deeply seated than the junior knew.

Before Mark's eyes danced a picture that never faded—the picture of a quiet and humble home, of a father's care-worn face, a mother's anxious looks, a little sister whose childish face that should have been happy and bright bore the signs of early worry, like so many of the faces of the children of the poor.

And that home, humble but happy in its way till now, was to be broken up. There was to be farewell, want, separation.

And he could not save it!

No wonder Mark Linley went on the pitch walking like a fellow in a dream. He was a keen cricketer as a rule. But what was cricket to him now?

Dabney went on to bowl against Bob Cherry, who scored a couple of runs for the over. Then Fry was put on against Linley's wicket.

Harry Wharton glanced rather anxiously at the batsman.

Mark Linley was standing in his place; but his look was far from attentive, and his eyes seemed dreamy.

"Linley," called out Harry sharply, "buck up!"

Mark Linley started.

"Oh, all right!" he exclaimed.

"Look out!"

Whiz!

The ball came down. Mark Linley made a feeble stroke at it and missed it, and the leather went crashing into his wicket.

There was a yell from the Upper Fourth:

"How's that, umpire?"

"Ha, ha! Out!"

Mark Linley had been bowled first ball. Harry Wharton's face was a study.

Mark glanced miserably down at his wicket, and left the pitch with his bat under his arm. He looked at Wharton as he passed him.

"I'm sorry!" he said quietly.

Wharton nodded.

"Oh, never mind!" he said, with an effort. "It's all serene! Never mind! Next man in!"

Mark Linley tossed down his bat. Most of the fellows on the ground were laughing. It was rare enough for the Lancashire lad to retire with a "duck's egg" to his credit, but he had done so now.

Mark left the ground with a heavy heart. Several of the Removites jeered at him as he went. But he hardly heard them. His heart was too heavy to be made heavier by the jeers of Skinner & Co.

"It's rotten, Harry!" Frank Nugent said, speaking to Wharton, as the next man came in. "Marky must be simply rocky to lose his wicket like that."

"Yes, it's rotten!"

"I guess it can't be helped," said Fisher T. Fish, the American junior. "I kinder reckon you should have played me instead, Wharton. I guess I could show you how we play cricket over there."

"Oh, rats!" said Wharton crossly.

Mark Linley walked off the cricket field feeling that he had done very badly for his side—as, indeed, he had! But the thought that was hammering in his mind was what was to happen at home—that was the thought that tortured him.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER
Many Friends!

VERNON-SMITH, the Bounder of Greyfriars, was in high feather.

He had won the Founder's Prize, one of the biggest things going at Greyfriars for the junior Form. He had beaten Mark Linley, who had been generally considered to be a "dead cert." in that direction.

And the Bounder of Greyfriars was very, very pleased with himself.

Not that he cared twopence for the money. He could have had as much by asking his father for it if he had wanted it. Samuel Smith, the millionaire, did not stint his hopeful son; indeed, many of Vernon-Smith's vices might have been directly traced to the circumstance that he had more pocket money than was good for him.

Neither was the honour of winning of much account to the Bounder; for scholastic distinctions he cared not a straw.

But he had triumphed. He had a peculiar kind of vanity; he liked to show that he could do things easily that other fellows did with difficulty, or could not do at all.

For that reason he had thrown himself into football once, and come out ahead as a splendid player; for the same reason, only lately, he had distinguished himself at cricket, and then dropped the game entirely.

Nobody had believed that at the exam. for the "Founder's Fifty," as the juniors called it, he would have a chance against Mark Linley.

He had proved that he had a chance—a winning chance—and he had revenged himself upon the Lancashire lad; two very gratifying circumstances to the Bounder of Greyfriars.

Not that Mark had done anything to provoke his dislike, apart from being quiet and decent and clean-living—a contrast to the Bounder. But those were the reasons why the Bounder could never endure him.

Fellows like Wharton and Bob Cherry, Nugent and John Bull, took to the boy who had been a factory lad, and stood his firm friends through thick and thin. They did not take to the Bounder, and his reckless extravagance, his piles of money, did not make them do so. The best set in the Remove did not care a straw for his money, or for the millions of Samuel Vernon-Smith.

And at that the Bounder chafed.

He had hit Mark Linley hard, and, through Mark, he had hit the other fellows hard, and therefore he rejoiced.

And there were plenty of fellows to congratulate him. Few, if any, liked him; but a good many liked his money, and the free way he spent it. And fellows like Snoop and Skinner liked his reckless, blackguardly ways, too, and were glad to be taken on little excursions with him to haunts forbidden by the rules of the college —rules at which the Bounder snapped his fingers.

It was a marvel to many how it was that Vernon-Smith escaped being expelled, and many surmised some mysterious influence which his pater exercised over either the Head or the Board of Governors.

Fifty pounds was a large sum for a junior to possess, and the Bounder's ways were too well known for him to be supposed to have any intention of saving any of it.

He was certain to expend it, or most of it, in some jollification, some celebration which would not bear the light in all probability; and there were many fellows who were only too eager to be asked to it.

Fellows dropped into Vernon-Smith's study by chance, as it were, during the afternoon.

The Bounder was not playing cricket, he was not on the river, he was not in the gym. He was occupying the golden summer's afternoon by sitting in his study, smoking cigarettes and poring over a betting-book. It was a marvel how the Bounder kept himself fit, considering the life he led, yet he never seemed to be seedy.

After a night out of bounds with Vernon-Smith, Skinner or Snoop would look like ghosts on the following morning; but the Bounder himself seemed to be made of iron.

When a fellow dropped in, and began to talk about the weather or the cricket or the Founder's Fifty, Vernon-Smith grinned quietly.

He knew what they wanted, and he asked those whom he had already selected in his own mind to join his party, and the others he did not ask, in spite of the most genial blandishments.

Bunter was one who was not asked. The fat junior rolled into Vernon-Smith's study with his most ingratiating smile turned on, and blinked at Vernon-Smith through his big spectacles in a way that was meant to be very engaging.

The Bounder raised his pencil to point to the door.

Billy Bunter blinked round at the door, not understanding what the Bounder intended to convey, or, perhaps, not caring to understand.

"I say, Smithy, old man——" he said affectionately.

"Outside!" said the Bounder.

"Eh?"

"Get out!"

"I came to speak to you on a rather important matter. I want to congratulate you about winning the prize, first. I'm so jolly glad that factory cad never got it," said Bunter. "He's an insulting beast! Of course, I knew that he hadn't an earthly all along when I knew that you had entered!"

"Liar," said the Bounder calmly.

"Eh?"

"You know very well that you thought I hadn't an earthly against Linley," said the Bounder. "So did all the other fellows. I had some doubts myself."

"Yes; that—that's exactly what I meant to say!" stammered Bunter. "I—I meant that you hadn't an earthly, you know——"

"Oh, get out!"

"I'm sincerely glad you won! I've been thinking that, as you are simply rolling in money at the present moment, you might care to make me a small advance upon a postal-order I'm expecting——"

"Travel! I haven't the money, you young ass! If I had, it would make no difference!"

"No; but you can borrow on it," said Bunter. "You see, you can borrow on your expectations. Lots of chaps do who have relations who are going to die and leave them money, you know!"

"Are you going?"

"With you—for the celebration?" said Bunter, purposely misunderstanding.

"Certainly! I shall be very pleased indeed to accept your kind invitation——"

"You'll be pleased to accept a thick ear, you fat duffer, if you don't get outside this study!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Oh, really, Smithy——"

Vernon-Smith rose to his feet, and the Owl of the Remove skipped hurriedly to the door. He stood with the handle of the door in his grasp, ready to bolt if the Bounder made a step towards him.

"Now, look here, Smithy," he said, "I want you to be businesslike! If you hand me a pound, I'll give you twenty-five bob for it when my postal-order comes tomorrow!"

"Cut!"

"Anyway, I know you're going to stand a feed out of that prize, and I'll come," said Bunter. "You will need a good cook, and I'm a good cook!"



"You rotter!" yelled Bunter from the door. "I wouldn't come to your mouldy feed if you asked me, now! Yah! Beast!"

"There won't be any cooking, fathead!"

"Well, I don't mind if it's a cold collation," said Bunter. "I can enjoy a cold chicken as much as anybody."

"I dare say you can," said the Bounder, with a grin. "But you won't have any cold chickens at my expense."

"Oh, really, Smithy——"

"Buzz off!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith, picking up a ruler.

Bunter dodged outside the door. Then he put his head cautiously into sight again.

"Look here, Smithy——"

Crash!

The ruler crashed on the door, and Bunter gave a yell and jumped away. The next moment he put his head in again.

"You rotter!" he yelled. "You blessed parvenu, I wouldn't come to your mouldy old feed if you asked me, now! Yah! Beast!"

And Bunter fled down the passage—so suddenly that he fled right into a junior who was coming to the study, and there was a terrific collision.

"Ow!"

"Yow!"

"You silly ass!" roared Hazeldene, catching Bunter by the collar. "You chump——"

"Ow! Oh, really——"

"You—you——"

Bunter twisted himself away and ran. Hazeldene kicked wildly after him, missed, and lost his balance, and sat down on the linoleum.

Vernon-Smith stood in the study doorway, laughing.

Hazeldene limped up.

"Hallo! I was just coming to see you!" he said.

"Come in!" said the Bounder cordially.

Hazeldene entered the study.

"Sit down!" said the Bounder. "What is it? Have you seen Marjorie lately?"

Hazeldene coloured uneasily. He wished that the Bounder would not speak of his sister, but it could not be helped.

"Yes," he said; "I've been over to Cliff House this afternoon."

"Good! You might have mentioned that you were going, and I would have come with you," said Vernon-Smith.

Hazeldene's colour deepened. It was for precisely that reason that he had not mentioned the matter to Vernon-Smith.

"Well, I'll think of it another time," he said. "I really looked in just now to congratulate you about the prize."

"Oh, thanks!" said the Bounder carelessly.

"I'm sorry about Linley; but I'm glad you've got it! I suppose you're going to have a bit of a celebration?"

"Yes; I've asked some fellows. Look here, I'd like you to come——"

"Good!"

"And bring your sister.

"I'm thinking of having a nice little party, quite suitable for a girl to come to," the Bounder remarked. "She could bring Miss Clara with her, of course!"

Hazel shook his head.

"It's no good; she won't come!"

"How do you know?"

"You know she doesn't get on with you, Smithy. It's no good talking about it; she doesn't like you. I don't like telling you so, but there it is."

"You might ask her."

"It wouldn't be any good."

"Just as you like," said the Bounder, with a bitter gleam in his eyes, in spite of his careless tones. "It's of no importance. If there are no ladies present, however, the party will be a bit—well, a bit more lifey! I couldn't think of asking such a nice, well-conducted chap as you are! Will you excuse me now? I'm busy!"

He turned to his book again, and began jotting in figures with his pencil. Hazeldene rose and stood irresolute. He wanted very much to make one of Vernon-Smith's little party, but he knew the hard nature of the Bounder.

"I say, Smithy——" he said weakly.

The Bounder did not even look round. Hazeldene hesitated another minute or so, and then quitted the study.

Then the Bounder looked up, with a savage snap of the teeth.

"She won't come!" he muttered. "And yet she'd come like anything if—if it were that beggar—that factory cad Linley who asked her! Hang him! Hang him! But I think I've settled him this time, anyway!"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

The Cross-roads of Life!

MARK LINLEY, if he could have heard that remark of the Bounder's, would probably have agreed with him fully—that Vernon-Smith had "settled him" this time. It seemed to Mark, as he left the cricket field with downcast looks, that he was indeed "settled."

His cheery optimism had led him to speak confidently to the people at home about the prize. He had had high hopes, and his hopes had seemed well founded. Now they were shattered at a blow. And what was to be done?

Even if he had not led his people to depend upon him in this matter, the situation would have been the same; the need of money would have been just as pressing, just as bitter. The little home would have been in just as much danger of being broken up. The fact that his people expected the money made little or no difference. They needed it just the same, whether they expected it or not. His hopes had not led them to incur any additional expense. It was the necessary expense of keeping alive, while the head of the family was out of work in sickness, that had piled debt on the Linley house and brought the family to the verge of ruin.

Mark was the only one who could help, and Mark had failed.

There remained, perhaps, one thing that he could do. He could leave Greyfriars, throw up his education and his hopes of success in life, and go back to the factory—back to the work in which his earliest years had been spent. By that means he could keep the wolf from the door while his father recovered. By that means, perhaps, he might stave off the ruin that threatened his people.

Give up everything!

The hard struggle for the scholarship, against fellows who had had many more advantages; the difficulties which he had met and overcome at Greyfriars—all must go for nothing!

He had to throw everything up, and recommence life as a factory hand!

And even that would not save his home.

The Linleys would have to go, and it was only in some cheap garret that they could hope even to subsist on the money that Mark could earn.

No wonder there was a grim shade of gloom upon the brow of the Lancashire lad—no wonder the cheery shouts from the cricket field, the merry click of bat and ball, grated on his ear.

He went into the House. It seemed strangely silent and deserted on the sunny afternoon.

There were several fellows in the Remove passage, however, and Mark noted that the Bounder was at home. The Bounder was receiving many polite attentions from his Form-fellows, and from fellows in a higher Form. Fourth-Formers, and even fellows in the Fifth, felt it incumbent upon them to show some civility to Herbert Vernon-Smith under the circumstances.

Mark went on to his study.

He went in and closed the door, and threw himself into a chair, utterly dejected and unhappy.

He had to reply to his father's letter, and he had to tell his father that he had lost instead of winning the Founder's Fifty.

How was he to tell the old man so—to tell him that the last hope of saving his home was gone?

He drew pen and paper towards him, and began to write:

"Dear Dad——"

There he stopped.

He sat at the table, biting the handle of the pen, staring at the paper before him, till the two words he had written danced before his weary eyes.

He could not go on.

He rose and walked about the room, thrusting his hands into his pockets, or folding them behind him, unable to still his restless movements.

"Dad could stand it, sick as he is," murmured Mark; "but mother and Mabel —— Oh!"

He sat down again. His pen ran on over the paper:

"Dear Dad——"

He drove on the pen, forcing himself to write. After all, the letter had to be written; it was a task that had to be done.

"Dear Dad,—I'm sorry to have to tell you that I've been disappointed about the prize. I haven't won it. I shall not get the fifty pounds; and the second prize, even if I get it, is a set of books——"

He broke off and threw down the pen, and tore the letter into pieces.

"I can't do it! I can't do it!"

He took out his books; he opened Xenophon and his Greek Grammar. As a rule, when he was worried or bothered, he could find relief in work. When the fellows had ragged him in the Remove, when matters had gone wrong in any way, he always had his work to retire to, and he could bury himself in it and forget his troubles.

But now the Greek characters danced before his eyes.

He could not fix his attention upon them; he could make no meaning of the simplest sentence.

He pushed the books away with a groan.

"I can't work! Oh, what shall I do?"

He felt that he must have some occupation, or he would become distracted. He shrank from going out into the sunshine. He knew that his face was haggard, and he did not want the fellows to see it. And the sunny brightness of the July afternoon, the green of the trees, the shimmer of the clouds, seemed to mock him.

The money that Tom Brown had paid him clinked in his pocket as he moved. He remembered it, and took it out and laid it upon the table. He had some work to do as treasurer of the cricket club, and he drew his book from the drawer of the table, and unlocked the box he kept the cricket funds in.

Tom Brown's subscription clinked into the box.

Mark stared at the money.

The clink of the coins and the rustle of the notes seemed to exercise a strange fascination over him. He looked at them dazedly.

There were many subscribers to the Remove Cricket Club, and they had mostly paid up by this time, and little of the money had been, so far, expended.

In the keeping of Mark Linley it was as safe as in a bank—or safer. So, at all events, everybody in the Remove thought. Even Mark's bitterest enemies would not have hinted that his honesty was not beyond question.

Mark gazed at the money.

A few pounds—that was all! But a few pounds was all that was required to keep the wolf from the door at home—all that was needed to save his people. He had hoped to win fifty, but fifty was not required. Ten pounds would have been sufficient; ten pounds would have answered the purpose.

And now, here——

Mark Linley gazed at the money under his eyes.

His hand stole into the box; he played with the coins and Treasury notes, pouring them out on the table.

Money, money, money!

The money he needed!

His for the taking—his if he chose to take it. He would have to leave Greyfriars; but he had to leave Greyfriars anyway, to work. Why should he not save those who looked to him for help?

Thief!

Some strange voice from the distance seemed to whisper the word, and Mark started and clenched his teeth.

Thief!

Yes, that was what he would be if he yielded to this temptation. A thief!

But to save his people—to save those he loved—would it not be justifiable? Surely no lad had ever been exposed to such a temptation before!

Would it not be justifiable?

After all, the fellows would not miss the money much. New nets for the cricket ground, new stumps—— Pah! What did all that matter when it was a question of

life or death, perhaps, to a sick man, of shelter and food, or of homeless wandering and famine to a woman and a little girl?

Mark's hand closed on the money.

Surely——

A footstep sounded in the passage—the footstep of someone passing along the Remove studies.

Mark Linley started — started like a thief—and cast a guilty look towards the door.

If the door opened——

The footstep passed on.

The boy breathed again.

But his heart was still throbbing—throbbing as if it would burst. His dazed eyes turned upon the glimmering coins.

Thief!

The horrible word seemed to ring from somewhere, as if it had been spoken. Thief!

But why not a thief, then, if it was to save his father and his mother and his little sister from want? Who should blame him? The dreadful sophistry that is never wanting when temptation comes was sapping away his resistance. Yet all the time he knew that if he stole, if he took what did not belong to him, he would become a moral outcast—he would become a boy who was not fit to breathe in the same atmosphere as a decent lad.

He knew it!



Mark Linley played with the coins and Treasury notes, pouring them out on the table. Money, money, money! The money he needed!

All the time he knew it, yet the temptation tugged at his heart, and his hand still lay upon the glimmering coins.

Mark Linley was at the cross-roads—the cross-roads of life. Upon his decision rested all that mattered to him. Upon it depended whether he should go through life with his head erect, fearing to look no man in the face, or whether he should slink through it with drooping head and shamed look—a thief, fit for no honest man to touch.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

Taken to Tea!

Loud voices and the loud tramp of feet. The fellows were coming in after the cricket. They came in ruddy and cheerful, all talking at the same time. Even after the bad start by Mark Linley, the Remove had won; they had beaten the Upper Fourth with wickets to spare.

Harry Wharton threw his bat down in a corner of the study, and stirred the fragment of a fire.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry, looking in. "You fellows having tea here?"

Wharton looked round, still poking the fire.

"Yes," he said. "Franky, old man, fill the kettle."

"Right-ho!" said Nugent.

"Much going?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Yes, quite a feed. Will you join us?"

Bob Cherry grinned.

"That's what I was thinking of," he said. "Old Marky's moping in the study, and if you chaps like I'll bring him to tea. He wants cheering up, and the cricket didn't seem to do it."

"He came a mucker at that," said Frank Nugent.

"Well, what could you expect? I suppose that rotten Founder's Fifty meant much more to him than any of us knew," said Bob sagely. "He might have been depending on it to pay for new books, or perhaps the doctor's bill through his pater being crocked. You never know."

"Quite likely. Poor old Marky!"

"Chap can't offer a chap money, or we'd get up a subscription for him," said Bob Cherry. "But we can cheer him up. No good moping. He'll get over it in a day or two; but it's that day or two that's rotten, you know, in a case like this. It's like being crossed in love to fail in an exam. It's all serene when the wrench is over, but the wrench is simply beastly."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Well, I don't know about being crossed in love," he said. "I haven't had all your experiences. I suppose——"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Bob. "Of course, that's from hearsay. But about Marky; shall I bring him, and have a cheerful jaw here to liven him up?"

"By all means."

"Trot him in," said Nugent. "We'd kill the fatted calf for him, too, only we're not allowed to suffocate Bunter, much as we should like to."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry went along the passage with his sounding footsteps. He kicked open the door of Study 13, and Mark Linley started to his feet.

Bob Cherry glanced at the notes and silver on the table.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he exclaimed, staring. "Have you come into a giddy fortune, Marky?"

Mark's face was crimson.

He could not answer Bob Cherry for the moment. His lips seemed frozen, and they moved without any word coming forth.

"What's the matter, Marky?"

"Nothing," muttered Mark.

"You're looking awfully upset, old chap," said Bob sympathetically. "I never thought this would cut you so deep, you know."

"It's all right," muttered Mark thickly.

He gathered the money up into the box and locked it. Bob Cherry recognised the box, and understood where the money came from.

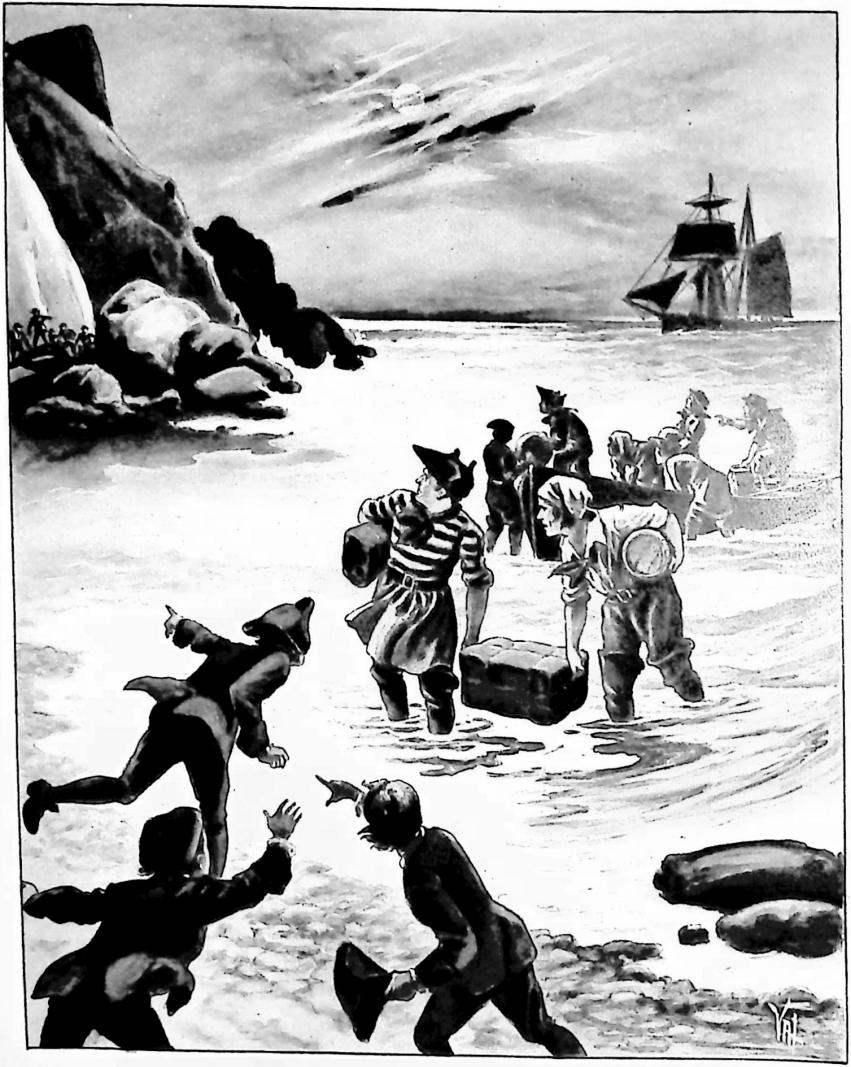
"Oh, the cricket funds!" he said. "You've been doing the club accounts?"

"Yes," said Mark.

"Have you done them?"

"Yes."

"Well, you are a chap for work!" said Bob Cherry admiringly. "Now, if I felt downhearted, what I should do would be to go and have a terrific slog at the punching-ball, you know, and fag myself right out. I shouldn't ever think of turning to work as a relief. But chaps are different. All the same, it would do you good to slog the punching-ball a bit, Marky. You're beginning to look off colour; you are, really. Your face went quite red when I came in, and flushing is a sign of bad health, you know."



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"'WARE EXCISEMEN!"

Mark's face went redder still as Bob Cherry made this remark.

"I'm all right, Bob," he said, with an effort. "Don't bother about me. Are you going to have tea in the study, or down in the hall?"

"Neither. I'm going to have it in No. 1, with Wharton" said Bob.

Mark Linley sat down again. Miserable and unhappy as he was, he was glad that he was not to be disturbed. He wanted to be alone.

"Very well, Bob; I'm all right here. If I feel hungry, I'll slip down to the hall and get some tea. Don't stop for me."

Bob Cherry grinned again. He had not the least intention of leaving the Lancashire lad to mope alone in the study.

"You're coming with me, you see," he explained. "Come on!"

Mark Linley shook his head.

"I'd rather not," he said. "I don't feel inclined for company just now."

"Rats! Wharton's asked you."

"You could excuse me to him——"

"Yes, I could," said Bob Cherry, with a nod, "but I'm jolly well not going to. You're coming to tea with me, and we're going to cheer you up."

Mark smiled faintly.

"I don't think you can do that, Bob."

"We're going to try. Come on!"

Mark did not move.

"Getting deaf?" asked Bob Cherry pleasantly. "I told you to come on."

"I'd rather not come, Bob—really!"

"Possibly. Come on!"

"Look here, Bob——"

"This way!"

"Bob, old man——"

"I'm waiting for you."

Mark Linley's brows wrinkled a little. He wanted to be alone—alone! Bob Cherry did not understand—he could not understand, not knowing all the circumstances. He wanted to cheer Mark up, but Mark was in a frame of mind that was far past any kindly efforts at cheering up. He was in black spirits, and he wanted to bury them in solitude.

"'Ware, Excisemen!"

THE risks smugglers ran gave the adventure-loving boys of Greyfriars plenty to talk about in the reign of George I. The innocent-looking village of Pegg, adjacent to Greyfriars, sheltered not a few smugglers, who, despite their lawlessness, were decent men. Among them was Ben Signers, a youngish man of the typical bulldog breed, who had rendered Greyfriars a signal service by rescuing Dr. Tyson, the popular headmaster, from drowning. Later Greyfriars was destined, through three of its most unruly pupils, to repay the service.

The three boys in question—Roberts, Hadley, and Greshunt, of the Remove Form—had seen fit to break bounds one moonlight night in order to attend a cock-fight at the "Fisherman's Rest," at Pegg. And it was in the midst of one of the most exciting bouts that the juniors overheard a neighbour say that the Excisemen had got word that Signers and his band were expected to land a contraband cargo at the foot of the Seagull Cliff at midnight.

At all costs, Signers and his associates must be warned was the thought that prompted the Removites to leave the "Fishermen's Rest," and to speed by short cuts over the cliffs to the appointed place.

Out at sea, riding at anchor, was the silhouetted shape of a brig. Speeding silently towards the sanded shore was a long-boat manned by Signers and his comrades, and laden with contraband. Away in the distance, at present hidden by the jutting cliffs, were the Excisemen, racing along the shore to the scene. Roberts was the first to espy them. The juniors slithered down the cliff and raced to the water's edge, where the task of unloading was already proceeding.

"Excisemen!" panted Roberts, and he pointed with shaking finger to a spot a quarter of a mile away where dark moving objects were faintly discernible.

With a hasty expression of thanks to the boys, Signers and his comrades reloaded the boat and pulled away, making good their escape in the brig.

"Look here, Bob, I'd rather stay here. Don't be a worry, old chap. Do go by yourself, and let me stay."

Bob Cherry shook his head decidedly.

"Can't be did!" he said. "I want you to come. You're not going to be allowed to mope. Shake it off, old son."

"I can't shake it off. You don't understand."

"Perhaps not; but if you can't shake it off we'll stand it together," said Bob Cherry genially. "Two heads are better than one."

"I tell you——"

"You can tell me what you like," said Bob, "but you're coming to tea with me. That's settled. Now, are you going to come quietly, or have I got to boost you?"

"Bob, old man——"

"You have a choice of ways. You've got to come. You can walk, or run, or crawl, or be carried! Which?"

Mark rose to his feet.

"Now, look here, Bob, don't be an ass! I——"

Bob put his arm through Mark Linley's.

"Come on!"

The Lancashire lad resisted. Bob calmly dragged him out of the study. In the passage Mark made one more expostulation.

"Bob, I tell you——"

"All serene! This way!"

And Mark Linley was marched down the passage. Half laughing, in spite of his trouble, the Lancashire lad was taken to Study No. 1. The fire was spurting up in the cinders of the grate, and the kettle was beginning to sing. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent gave the Lancashire lad looks of welcome.

"Come in!" exclaimed Wharton. "Glad you've come. I hear that you've got the blues, bad. We're going to cheer you up."

"I'm more likely to give you my blues, I think," said Mark.

"We'll risk that," said Wharton, laughing. "We've beaten the Upper Fourth, and I feel as fit as a fiddle, so it won't be easy to give me the blues."

"Open the tin of sardines, Bob," said Frank.

"Right you are!"

"I'm going to make toast, if this blessed fire will smile a bit," said Harry Wharton. "You can cut the bread, Marky."

"Certainly."

Mark Linley was soon busy in helping in the preparations for tea, and a cheery chat ran on all the time, but neither occupation nor chat had the effect of enlivening the lad from Lancashire. Sometimes he tried to smile, but the effect was painful and apparent, and even Bob Cherry began to doubt whether, after all, they would succeed in cheering poor Marky up.

THE NINTH CHAPTER
Not Cheered!

BOB CHERRY helped to make the toast when the fire condescended to burn at last, and he rose from the grate with a ruddy face, grunting. On the table was an enticing array of boiled eggs, sardines, and bloater-paste. Jam and marmalade and biscuits and cake completed the spread, and a whole pineapple. Billy Bunter's eyes would have danced behind his spectacles at the sight of that table, but it did not have the effect of dispelling the gloom from Mark Linley's countenance.

Mark had what Bob called "got 'em!"

And he had "got 'em" bad!

His spirits were down at the lowest level. He was in such a state of mind that life itself seemed like a weary burden to him, and the outlook on all sides was black, unrelieved by a gleam of hope.

He must leave Greyfriars!

Amid many doubts and uncertainties that fact stood forth plainly enough. He must leave Greyfriars and work for his parents.

There was no other way of tiding them over the bad time. For weeks his father would not be able to work. During that time Mark must keep the family, or the family must starve.

The Founder's Prize would have saved the situation, but the Founder's Prize was not to be his.

He must leave Greyfriars, but that was not all. It might be some time before he could get work; in his earlier days he had

had bitter experience of that. He knew the problem of the unemployed from the inside.

And in the meantime, what were his people to do? And even when he began to earn money it would only be a small pittance—not much among four.

He needed money—money—money with bitter need.

And the thought of the money in the box in his study was like poison in his mind, tainting every thought.

Money, so bitterly needed, could be his for the taking; he could take it if he chose. He need even fear no punishment, for he would leave Greyfriars, and the Head certainly would not make the matter public, and cause a scandal over a boy who had gone for good.

The possession of the money might mean the difference between life and death for his sick father, perhaps for the others.

No wonder poor Mark had "got 'em"!

With such thoughts in his mind, he was not likely to be cheered up by the well-meant efforts of the juniors.

"You must be ill, Marky," he said.

Mark shook his head.

"He feels seedy, of course," said Nugent. "He looks seedy. As a matter of fact, I dare say he swotted too hard over the exam."

"I'm all right," said Mark.

"Will you have some sardines, old son?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Thank you!"

But the sardines remained untouched on Mark's plate. After they were placed there he did not even seem to see them.

He had barely touched his egg, and the bread-and-butter and the toast remained uneaten. When a chap who had not eaten anything since dinner found himself unable to touch nice buttered toast at tea-time, it seemed to Bob Cherry that there must be something seriously wrong with him.



"Aren't you running a risk here, smoking with the blessed door open?" asked Coker. The Bounder laughed. "Oh, I don't see it!"

Bob Cherry could not quite understand. He knew that Mark had troubles at school and troubles at home, but he had always seen him bear them with quiet fortitude. This new phase of the Lancashire lad's character astounded Bob.

When Bob found that Mark could not even be interested in the forthcoming cricket match with Courtfield School, he was "done."

"Don't you like the sardines, Marky?" asked Nugent.

Mark started.

"Yes—yes, thanks!"

And he ate a fragment.

"Like the toast, Marky?"

"Ye-yes!"

"Why the dickens don't you eat some, then?" demanded Bob Cherry.

Mark started again, and coloured.

"Haven't I?" he said confusedly. "I—I'm sorry! It's certainly very nice. As a matter of fact, I—I don't think I'm hungry."

"You don't think!" said Bob Cherry. "Don't you know whether you're hungry or not, sonny?"

"I—I—I'm all right."

The chums of the Remove exchanged hopeless looks. There was evidently nothing to be done.

Mark had said that he was more likely to give the chums his blues than to be infected by their cheerfulness—and he was quite right as it turned out. Under the influence of the Lancashire lad's black depression, the cheery chat in the study died away, and remarks became dull and desultory.

Finally there was silence.

Mark Linley did not notice it. In spite of himself he was buried deep in gloomy reflection, and he had almost forgotten where he was.

Bob Cherry rose from his seat at last.

"I think we had better be going," he remarked grimly. "Come on, Marky! Sorry you chaps have had such a treat!"

Wharton laughed.

"It's all right," he said. "Don't mind us. I'm only sorry that we haven't been able to cheer poor old Marky up."

Mark's face was darkly clouded.

"I'm sorry I've inflicted my blues on you fellows," he said. "But Bob would bring me. I'm sorry."

"Not at all."

"It's all serene."

Mark Linley went out with Bob Cherry. In the passage, Bob looked at his chum very curiously indeed.

"I'm blessed if I can make you out, Marky," he said. "Can't you make an effort, old chap, and chuck this off your chest?"

Mark groaned.

"You don't understand."

"I suppose I don't," agreed Bob Cherry. "Look here! Come and have a slog at the punching-ball. It will do you good."

Mark shook his head.

"Come and have a sprint round the Close, then."

"No."

"Let's go to the Fourth Form-room, and pick a row with Temple, Dabney & Co.," Bob suggested hopefully. "They've been swanking a lot lately."

Mark smiled faintly.

"No, thanks."

"My hat!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Isn't there anything I can suggest to cheer you up?"

"Nothing, I am afraid. I'm a grumpy brute; better let me alone."

"Oh, rats!"

"You'd better, Bob. Buzz off, and get to the gym."

Bob Cherry hesitated.

"Where are you going?"

"To the study."

"What for?"

"Well, I've got my prep to do, and——"

"But you're not going there to do your prep?"

"Well, no."

"What, then?"

"I've got to think something out."

"Mope, you mean."

Mark did not reply.

"Well, I suppose I can't do you any good," said Bob miserably. "I've hardly ever felt quite so downhearted before, Marky, old chap. It's really rotten to see you like this."

"I can't help it, Bob. Better let me alone."

And Bob Cherry came to that conclusion, too, at last. Mark Linley went to the study, and Bob Cherry tramped downstairs, with his hands driven deep into his pockets, and his brow wrinkled up in a gloomy frown.

THE TENTH CHAPTER

Coker Thinks Not!

VERNON - SMITH lighted his eighth or ninth cigarette, and blew out a little cloud of smoke. The Bounder was smiling serenely. Few fellows in junior Forms had been so courted as the Bounder of Greyfriars just now. There had been one little disappointment—in connection with Marjorie Hazeldene; but by excluding Hazel from the rest of the party, Vernon-Smith had indemnified himself for that. And, really, the way the Bounder was planning his little celebration, it seemed likely to be a great success—in its own peculiar way.



Smack—smack—smack! Potter's strong right hand rose and fell with machine-like regularity, and wild yells came from Vernon-Smith. "Ow-ow! Yow! Ow!"

The best fellows in the Remove, certainly, wouldn't be there; but then, Vernon-Smith did not want them. He wanted the worst fellows, and he could have them for the asking—and he had them.

Skinner, and Snoop, and Stott, and several other fellows of the same sort were coming, and two or three fellows belonging to the Fourth Form. The Bounder had been sitting in state in his study, receiving hints for invitations, and inviting whom he pleased. Somewhat to his surprise, Bulstrode had not been to see him. Coker of the Fifth came in with Potter, and both of them beamed on the cad of the Remove. Vernon-Smith was smoking, and he pushed the cigarette-box across to the visitors.

"Light up!" he said.

Coker hesitated. He was a reckless fellow, but he did not care about smoking in a study, especially a junior study.

"Thanks, I don't think I will," he said. "Aren't you running a risk here, smoking with the blessed door open?"

The Bounder laughed.

"Oh, I don't see it!"

"You might get reported to the Head."

"What then?"

"The sack!" said Potter.

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"The Head can't sack me," he said. "My governor's got too much influence for that! He can't kick me out! He'd have done it before this if he could."

"Well, I shouldn't wonder if there's something in that," agreed Coker. "If ever there was a chap who deserved to be expelled—ahem!—I—I mean—the fact is, Smithy, we ran in to congratulate you about the Founder's."

"Thanks."

"Never expected you to beat Linley," said Coker, in his tactless way, though Potter was pulling at his sleeve all the time. "I suppose it was honest Injun, eh?"

"What do you mean?" said the Bounder darkly.

"I mean you really did the exam. paper—no blessed fake?" said Coker, with a grin. "No getting a senior to help you, eh?"

"We had to do them alone."

"Yes, I know you had to, but I don't know that you did. However, it's none of my bizney. I thought it might be spoof when I heard that you had beaten Linley, that's all."

"Thanks," said the Bounder sarcastically.

"Not at all," said Coker, still quite obtuse. "Don't mention it. I suppose you feel as if you were rolling in money, with fifty quidlets knocking around?"

"I've had as much before."

"Yes; I hear your governor is a millionaire or something, and makes millions out of corned beef, or sewing-machines, or something."

"My father is the Cotton King."

"Yes, I knew it was something to do with sewing-machines, or mangles, or something," said Coker, with a nod. "Must be ripping for you. I've got an aunt who comes down handsome, but nothing like that. And then she has tantrums sometimes, and won't shell out for weeks. I always know if she's in a tantrum by not getting any postal-orders, you know, or registered letters. Does your pater ever get into a giddy tantrum?"

"Not with me."

"Oh, how good! I'd swap my aunt for him any day," said Coker. "Look here, we looked in to—to congratulate you, wasn't it, Potty?"

"That's it," said Potter, "to congratulate him."

"Thank you," said Vernon-Smith, unmoved.

"There was something else," said Coker.

"Oh, go ahead!"

"I think you're having a little celebration with the quids," said Potter. "I hear you are going to blue the lot."

Vernon-Smith nodded.

"Quite correct."

"Well, we shouldn't mind coming."

"That's it," said Coker genially. "I knew there was something else I wanted to say. We shouldn't mind coming—really, we shouldn't mind at all, should we, Potty?"

"Not at all," said Potter.

"In fact, we should be quite pleased to give you a—a sort of a—a leg up on an occasion like this," said Coker—"shouldn't we, Potty?"

"Exactly," said Potter.

"You can come," said Vernon-Smith.

Coker and Potter coughed. That really wasn't exactly the way to meet the sublime condescension of the Fifth; but Coker checked his desires to tell Vernon-Smith what he thought of him. For he wanted to make one of the party.

"I suppose it's going to be something pretty decent," said Potter abruptly.

Vernon-Smith shrugged his shoulders.

"That depends on what you call decent," he said. "Some of the Sixth are coming—Loder and Carne."

Coker whistled.

"Those two giddy blackguards!"

"They know how to keep things lively," said Vernon-Smith. "Hobson of the Shell is coming, too, and several of the Fourth and the Remove. I had to have Loder if I could get him as he's a prefect, and it makes all safe."

"Safe!" said Coker.

"Of course!"

"But—but what's the giddy celebration going to be like?" asked Coker, in surprise.

"What did you think it would be like?"

asked the Bounder, with his unpleasant smile.

"Well, I was thinking of a big feed, I suppose," said Coker—"something extra special, with pâté de fois gras, and kickshaws, you know."

"That's it," said Potter.

"You can have as much pâté de fois gras as you like," said Vernon-Smith. "I'm having the grub sent in by a firm of caterers. I'm not depending on the Cross Keys for that."

"The Cross Keys?"

"Yes. Cobbs' place, you know."

"You don't mean to say that you're standing this feed at the Cross Keys, in Friardale?" Coker exclaimed.

"Did you think I was going to stand it in the Remove dorm?"

"Well, yes, or in a Form-room."

"Well, I'm not. I'm not a fag with a pot of jam to share out," said the Bounder of Greyfriars disdainfully. "I'm giving this celebration at the Cross Keys. Old Cobb has arranged a room for me—big table, two waiters, floral decorations, and so forth."

"My word! You're going to do the thing in style!" said Potter. "But there's one little item you seem to have forgotten."

"What's that?"

"The Cross Keys is out of bounds."

Vernon-Smith laughed.

"I know it is. That doesn't make any difference."

"So you're giving a feed at a place out of bounds—and the lowest hole in Friardale or the district?" said Coker, eyeing the Bounder of Greyfriars grimly.

"You needn't come if you don't want to."

"Ahem! What's the feed to be like?"

"Anything you like to eat and drink. There will be champagne going," said the Bounder, with perfect coolness.

"Champagne!" shouted Coker and Potter together.

"Yes, certainly," said Vernon-Smith, "and cigars and cigarettes. After the feed there will be a little game."

"A little game?" said Coker dazedly.

"Yes, poker and nap."

"For money?"

"Well, I'm not likely to spend an evening playing cards for nuts or sticks of toffee," said the Bounder contemptuously.

"My hat!" said Coker.

"I think it will be a giddy success," said the Bounder, "and having a prefect with us makes all safe. Prefects have keys to the side gate, you know, and we can get in afterwards quite easily without being spotted."

"But—but at what time are you going to have the feed, then?"

"Start at eleven o'clock."

"At—at night?" gasped Coker.

"Did you think I meant eleven o'clock in the morning?" asked Vernon-Smith, with unpleasant humour.

"Then all your giddy party will have to break bounds at night?"

"Precisely."

"Well," said Coker, "I'd have been glad to come to a feed—especially as my aunt is in one of her giddy tantrums, and cash has run out. But to take part in a low, rotten, blackguardly affair like that ——"

"Oh, draw it mild!"

"You ought to be kicked out of the school," said Coker. "Champagne and cigars, and gambling—and you're not fifteen yet! My only hat! What will you be at twenty, when you get to Oxford?"

The Bounder sneered.

"You're not forced to come if you don't like the programme," he said. "You're a fool if you miss it, that's all."

"I suppose I'm a fool, then," said Coker. "Nobody's ever called me a goody-goody or straight-laced that I know of; but a chap's bound to draw the line somewhere. I draw it at giddy midnight orgies."

"Yes, rather!" said Potter.

"And look here," said Coker, wagging an admonitory finger at the sneering Bounder, "I warn you that you're going too far. Champagne is jolly hefty stuff for a kid of your age. You'll come home squiffy."

"Well, what about it?"

"Only you'll get sacked from the school."

"The Head can't sack me."

"I don't know about that, of course; but what about the other fellows? Suppose they get run in by a prefect?"

"They must take their chance."

"You mean you don't care?"

"Not a brass button!" said Vernon-Smith, with a yawn. "If a chap can't look out for himself, the sooner he goes under the better."

"Let's get out of this room," said Coker. "I feel as if I were interviewing a convict in a cell. Look here, Vernon-Smith, I can't tell anybody about this—it would be rotten sneaking—but it would serve you right if I did. My advice to you is to drop the idea and try to be decent."

"When I want your advice I'll ask for it!"

Coker flushed red.

"You cheeky young sweep!" he exclaimed. "For two pins I'd wipe up the study with you now! You—you unspeakable young blackguard!"

Vernon-Smith pointed to the door.

"Would you mind getting out of my study?" he asked, yawning.

"You cheeky young hound——"

"Perhaps you'd be kind enough to close the door after you?"

"You—you——"

"Good-evening!"

The Bounder's cool insolence was too much for Coker. Coker was not very patient at any time; in fact, he was extremely hot-headed. To be cheeked in this way by a Lower Fourth boy was a little too much. Coker made a dive at the Bounder, and grabbed him across the table, lifting him out of his chair.

"Oh!" roared the Bounder. "Leggo!"

Coker did not let go. He dragged Vernon-Smith across the table, upsetting a good many articles in doing so, so that the Bounder was sprawled across the table face downwards. Coker's strong grasp held him there, pinned, and wriggling.

"Now, then, Potty!"

"What-ho!" said Potter.

Smack—smack—smack!

Potter's right hand was strong and heavy. It rose and fell with machine-like regularity. The dust rose from Vernon-Smith's trousers in great clouds.

Smack—smack—smack!

"Ow—ow! Yow! Ow!"

"Go it, Potty!"

"Ain't I going it?" demanded Potter.

"Ha, ha! You are! Ha, ha!"

Smack—smack—smack!

Vernon-Smith roared and howled and struggled, but he could not get away from the grasp of the powerful Coker. He squirmed under the heavy smacks, roaring, till Coker let him go at last.

"There!" gasped Coker. "That's for your cheek, and it's for your rotten caddishness. And if ever you have the nerve to ask me to a party again, I'll wipe up the study with you!"

"Ow!"

"Come on, Potty!"

The two Fifth-Formers left the study, and Vernon-Smith wriggled off the table back to his chair. But sitting down was too painful, and he jumped up quite quickly. His face was convulsed with rage.

There was the sound of a chuckle in the passage. Two or three fellows were looking in at the half-open door. The disturbance in the study had brought them along the passage, and they had enjoyed the scene.

Vernon-Smith turned a crimson and furious face upon them.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Bounder caught up an inkpot and hurled it. In his passionate temper, the Bounder did not care how much he hurt. There was a quick dodging in the passage, and the inkpot smashed on the opposite wall, sending round a flood of splashing ink.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Vernon-Smith slammed the door with a slam that rang along the Remove passage. Through the keyhole came the sound of persistent chuckling.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

Skinner Eats His Words !

HARRY WHARTON laid down his pen and looked out of the window of Study No. 1. For some time past he had heard unusual noises in the Close, and he wondered what was happening. From the Close came a sound of shouting.

"Something's on," said Harry, looking at Frank Nugent, who was baking chestnuts at the fire.

Nugent nodded.

"Yes, I heard a row," he said. "I shouldn't wonder if it's Skinner & Co. up to some little game."

"Look here, Frank! If the cads are ragging Linley, we're going to interfere," said Wharton. "We're not having anything of the sort."

"Wait till I've finished the chestnuts."

"Oh, blow the chestnuts!"

Nugent rose with a grunt. Bob Cherry looked into the study from the passage with a somewhat excited expression upon his face.

"You fellows heard the row?"

"Yes, we are just going down," said Harry. "What is it? Linley in trouble again?"

"No; he's still in his study. But I believe it's in connection with him. They're shouting out his name, guying him in some way, I suppose."

"The rotters!"



Bob Cherry rammed the inky cloth into Skinner's open mouth, until the cad of the Remove gasped and squirmed for breath.

"I'm going to chip in, I think," said Bob. "You fellows can come down and see fair play, if you like."

"What-ho!"

The chums of the Remove hurried downstairs. There was quite a large crowd of juniors in the Close in the sunset light. And there was evidently some very great excitement toward.

"What is it?" exclaimed Nugent.

"Looks like a procession of some sort!"

"Look! Oh, the cads!"

Skinner & Co. came walking by, and several of them were bearing a banner, with the inscription:

"No Hands Wanted."

It was a parody, of course, of the notice frequently seen at the gates of factories where no labour was required.

But there was a double meaning in Skinner's little joke. He intended it to convey that factory hands were not wanted at Greyfriars.

As the cads of the Remove caught sight of Harry Wharton & Co., they burst into a simultaneous shout:

"Down with factory cads!"

Bob Cherry clenched his hands hard.

"I'm going to charge them," he said. "You fellows can follow if you like."

"What-ho!" said Harry.

Bob Cherry was already rushing on.

"Line up!" yelled Skinner. "Look out!"

But Bob was upon them in a moment, hitting out furiously.

Harry Wharton and Nugent were only a few seconds behind him, and John Bull and Tom Brown and Bulstrode followed them fast.

The procession was knocked to pieces in a moment.

With wild yells the processionists scattered, and the banner came down to the ground, enveloping the unfortunate Skinner in its folds, and keeping him a prisoner.

As Skinner struggled in the banner and the others fled, Bob Cherry turned his wrathful eye upon the leader of the procession.

"Get up!" he roared.

"Ow!" gasped Skinner.

"I'm going to lick you! Get up!"

"Yow!"

The juniors dragged the torn banner off the fallen hero. Skinner sat up and gasped, but he showed no desire at all to get upon his feet. Perhaps he thought that Bob Cherry looked too dangerous.

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"Are you going to get up?" roared Bob.

"Groo! I can't!"

"I'm going to make you eat your words," said Bob Cherry. "You've said enough things about old Marky; I'm going to show all Greyfriars that you're a coward and a rotter!"

"Why can't you mind your own business?" exclaimed Vernon-Smith. "Mark Linley's old enough to take his own part, I suppose."

Bob turned on him in a flash.

"So you must shove your oar in!" he exclaimed. "Do you want to take it up for this cad? If you do, put up your fists!"

The Bounder backed away.

"I don't want to fight you," he said. "But——"

"Then you'd better shut up! You'll jolly well fight me whether you like it or not, if you give me too much jaw," said Bob.

"Look here——"

"Oh, get out! I'm fed up with you," said Bob savagely. "Now then, Skinner, you're going to eat your words! Here they are!"

He dragged the banner towards Skinner, and wrenched off the part of the cloth that bore the inscription, daubed in thick ink. Skinner stared at it.

"W-w-what do you mean?" he gasped.

"I'm going to make you eat it," said Bob Cherry—"as much as you can hold, anyway."

There was a roar of laughter from the juniors crowding round. This novel way of making a fellow eat his words appealed to their sense of humour.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Cherry!"

"Pile in, Skinny!"

Skinner gave a wild glance round for help. But there was no help for him. His friends had fled far, only too glad to escape.

"L-l-look here," gasped Skinner—"look here! I—I'm not going to, you know. Don't be an ass! I'll say I'm sorry!"

"You'll be sorry, whether you say so or not, by the time you've finished," said Bob Cherry grimly. "Eat away!"

"Yow! I won't!"

"Then I'll cram it in, with my knuckles behind it to make it go down," said Bob Cherry.

"Groo! Ow! Help!"

"I guess this is the proper caper," said Fisher T. Fish. "Pile in, Skinner! You may get to like the flavour in time—some."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! I won't! Yow—gr-rr-r—rrrooo—oh!"

Skinner's open mouth was crammed with inky cloth. Bob Cherry rammed it in, till Skinner gasped and squirmed for breath.

"Gr-r-r-r-rrrrooorrr—r-r-r-roooooch!"

That was all that Skinner could say.

Streams of ink were running out of the corners of his mouth as the thick lettering on the cloth melted on his tongue. He gasped and choked, and choked and gasped, amid yells of laughter.

"Buck up, Skinny!" howled Ogilvy. "How do you like the flavour?"

"Gr-r-r-r-roooh!"

"Bite at it, you ass!"

"Gr-r-r-r-roooh!"

Bob Cherry turned away from the gasping, writhing cad of the Remove.

"If that isn't enough lesson for you, I'll see that you get another!" he exclaimed. "I advise you to let Mark Linley alone."

And Bob walked away with his friends. Skinner staggered to his feet, and spat out the cloth and the ink, spluttering with rage. Loud laughter all round him showed how little sympathy he had to expect.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner staggered away. Under the fountain in the Close he washed out his mouth, stuttering and spluttering with fury.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER
The Right Path!

VERNON-SMITH was grinning quietly to himself when he went to bed that night with the Remove. The Bounder of Greyfriars was in great spirits. All the arrangements were made for his little party that night. Excepting in the case of Coker and Potter, all the intended guests were in high good-humour, and all anticipated a rare old time. Vernon-Smith had been very careful in his selection of guests. All the brightest spirits in the Remove, the Fourth, the Shell, and the Fifth—two or three from each Form—had been selected for the little party at the Cross Keys. The catering had been arranged for, and as Vernon-Smith spent money like water, all was likely to be successful. The Bounder of Greyfriars intended to "blow" the whole of the fifty, and as his credit was good, he was able to blow it before he received it.

It was really a stroke of genius on Vernon-Smith's part getting Loder, the prefect, as a member of the party. Loder was the biggest blackguard in the school, with the possible exception of Ionides, the Greek.

Vernon-Smith knew his little ways, but it was not easy to get a Sixth-Former in a junior party. But Vernon-Smith had contrived it.

The loan of a five-pound note to gamble with dazzled Loder, and the prospects of a big feed with champagne was very attractive to him. And with a prefect in the party, Vernon-Smith felt safe.

True, his father's influence over the Head was strong enough to save him from being expelled—at all events, he firmly believed so. But the other fellows had more risk to run, and Vernon-Smith did not want them to "funk" at the last moment, and leave him with a guestless table. He wanted his little party to be a success, and Loder's

presence would help to make it so by giving all the fellows a sense of security. If there were any trouble, the prefect would have to get them out of it; and as the prefects had keys to the side gate, there would be no difficulty in getting in and out of the school for the occasion.

Vernon-Smith and Skinner and Snoop and the others grinned at one another anticipatively as they went to bed. They were to rise at eleven, and make their way to the lower box-room, where the members from the other Forms were to meet them, with Loder and Carne, of the Sixth.

The party were to set out together, and all of them were looking forward to it very much. It was to be the time of their lives, the Bounder of Greyfriars had promised them. Vernon-Smith & Co. were not likely to sleep much before eleven.

There was another fellow, quite ignorant of the Bounder's plans, who was not likely to sleep either.

It was Mark Linley.

When the Remove went up to bed Mark Linley was not with them. He was still in his study, and he had forgotten bedtime.

The Lancashire lad was alone. Bob Cherry and Wun Lung had respected his desire to be alone, and they had done their prep. that evening in John Bull's study. Mark Linley himself had done no preparation at all.

It was the first time he had failed to do his regular work. But he was in no mood for it now, and what was the use? He had to leave Greyfriars.

There was no doubt about that. The unhappy lad paced his study, and thought of it again and again till his head seemed to be bursting.

It could not be helped. His people needed him—without him they must starve—he must leave Greyfriars, and go home and work for them!

It was his duty!

At whatever sacrifice to himself, he knew he must do it. The path of duty lay straight before him; if he did not follow it, his conscience would give him no rest.

"I must go!" groaned the junior.

The career he had hoped for—the honourable position in life which would have enabled him to provide for the old people comfortably—all must be abandoned. He had to provide for the present now—for the passing hour.

And to go home empty-handed—to add one more mouth to those waiting to be fed. It must be so till he could get work.

To tell his people that he had been disappointed about the prize, that he had nothing—nothing but his two hands to devote to their service, that they must starve till he obtained work!

Mark Linley opened the drawer where the box of money reposed and looked at it. He had made up his accounts fully, and left them in perfect order for the committee to see. But—but the money!

He opened the box mechanically. The glimmer of silver in the gaslight struck savagely on his weary eyes.

"Oh, what shall I do?" he muttered.

He thought of the anxious, pinched faces at home—of what this money would mean to them. Then again that strange fancy came to him—from somewhere an echo seemed to ring in his ears:

"Thief!"

The boy started.

Had a real voice spoken, or was it simply the voice of conscience—that inward voice that Providence has given for our guidance?

He drew a deep breath.

All seemed to become clear to him in a moment. Whatever happened, whatever might chance, it was wrong to steal—and out of evil good could not come! Whatever Fate might hold in store for him, it was best to face it with a clear conscience and clean hands.

Mark Linley had decided.

At the cross-roads of life he had chosen the right path. He locked the box, and packed it away in the drawer. From that moment he never looked back, and the terrible temptation ceased to haunt him.

It was finished!

There was a step in the passage. Harry

Wharton knocked at the study door and opened it and looked in.

"Oh, here you are!" he exclaimed. "It's bedtime, Marky. Old Wingate's waiting."

Mark started.

"I forgot!"

"Buck up, then."

Mark Linley hurried up to the Remove dormitory with Wharton. Wingate of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars, was waiting inside the doorway, and he gave the junior a grim look.

"Didn't you know it was bedtime?" he demanded.

"I—I forgot," Mark stammered. "I'm sorry."

"Well, tumble into bed," said Wingate, with gruff good-nature.

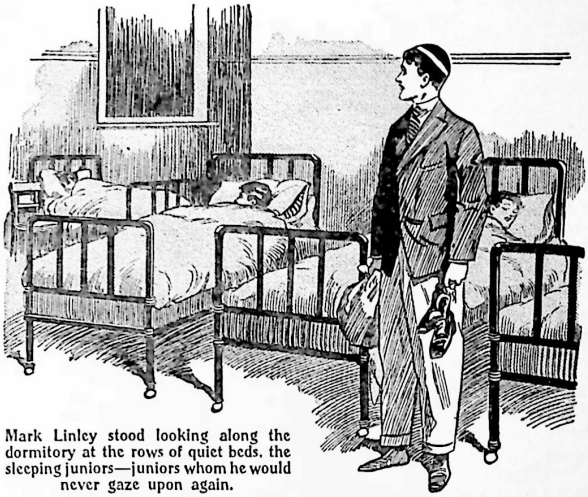
And Mark Linley tumbled in.

But he did not sleep. Wingate turned out the light and retired, closing the door of the dormitory. Mark lay awake, his eyes staring into the darkness, thinking.

He had to leave Greyfriars!

He would go with hands clean, his conscience unspotted. But he had to go; there was no doubt about that.

It was his last night at the old school!



Mark Linley stood looking along the dormitory at the rows of quiet beds, the sleeping juniors—juniors whom he would never gaze upon again.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER

Caught!

HALF-PAST ten chimed from the tower. Mark Linley sat up in bed.

The Remove dormitory was dark and silent. Round him boys were sleeping soundly.

Some were nodding and dozing, one or two were awake. Among the latter was Herbert Vernon-Smith. He was waiting for the hour of the expedition, and sleep did not visit his eyelids.

He heard Mark move in his bed and listened. Mark stepped out quietly, and found his clothes in the dark.

There was a glimmer of moonlight in at the high windows—light sufficient for the Lancashire lad.

Vernon-Smith looked at him from his bedclothes, and gave a grunt. He saw that it was a junior dressing himself, but in the dim light he could not recognise whom it was.

"It's not time yet," he said, in a low voice.

Mark Linley gave a great start.

He had imagined that all the dormitory slept, with the exception of himself, and Vernon-Smith's voice, suddenly in the darkness, was startling.

"Who spoke?" asked Mark, looking round.

"I did," said the Bounder.

"Smith! What do you mean?"

"It's not time yet; that was only half-past ten, and we do not get up till eleven."

Mark looked at him, greatly puzzled.

"I don't understand you," he said.

Then it was Vernon-Smith's turn to start as he recognised the voice of the lad from Lancashire.

"Who's that?" he exclaimed. "Is that you, Linley?"

"Yes."

"What are you getting up for?"

Mark did not reply.

"You're not coming with us," said Vernon-Smith, in surprise. "I don't see what you're getting out of bed for."

"I am certainly not going anywhere with you," said Mark drily.

"Then what's the game?"

"That's my business."

"Are you going out?"

"Yes."

"Breaking bounds, hey?"

"Yes, I suppose so," said Mark quietly.

Vernon-Smith whistled softly.

"Blessed if I knew you were that sort!" he said. "You've kept it jolly dark up till now, anyway. Look here, Linley, if you're really the right sort, you can come to my little party if you like."

Mark's lip curled.

"I'm afraid I'm not what you would consider one of the right sort," he replied. "I should be very unsuitable for your little party. Besides, I've no time to spare."

"Where are you going?"

"I have nothing to tell you, Smith."

The Bounder yawned.

"Oh, just as you like," he exclaimed; "I don't care. I suppose you are up to some lark; but it's your own bizney. Say nothing about my little larks, and I'll say nothing about yours. That's fair."

Mark made no reply. He had several things to do before he left. He made up his few belongings into a little bundle. His books and other things would be sent after him later, when he was home.

Mark had thought it out, and he felt that it was better to leave in this way. He could leave a note in his study explaining to the Head.

He had to go, and it was better to go quietly in the night, without his enemies in the school rejoicing at his going, without having to face the sympathy, harder to bear than enmity, which his friends would feel.

Better to disappear quietly from Greyfriars, as if he had never entered the place; better to go without a word.

He knew that his friends would understand. As for his foes, they would be deprived of their last chance of ragging the departing junior.

It was better so.

Yet as Mark Linley stood, bundle in hand, and took his last glance round the dormitory, he felt a strange throb in his heart.

He had had many troubles at Greyfriars; he had had an uphill battle to fight there. Yet it had grown very dear to him.

He loved the old place—every grey old stone in the walls, every clustering trail of ivy, every old arch and red roof in the place.

It had all grown very dear to him.

His friends, too, sleeping quietly without knowing that he was going. Even his enemies—they were at least familiar faces, whom he would never gaze upon again.

There was no resentment in his heart now—only grief.

It was only for a few moments, however, that Mark stood looking along the dormitory at the rows of quiet beds, the sleeping juniors.

Then he turned with a firm step towards the door.

It wanted but ten minutes to eleven now, and he had no time to lose if he was to catch the last up train from Friardale Station.

He quitted the dormitory, and closed the door quietly behind him. He made his way along the densely dark passage.

Suddenly he started.

His hand, stretched out before him to feel the way, had come into contact with a human body. The Lancashire lad started back in amazement and alarm.

There was a voice from the darkness.

"Who's that?"

Mark was relieved. He had naturally thought of burglars, but the voice was the voice of Hobson of the Shell.

"Hobson!" he exclaimed.

"Yes. Who's that?"

"I'm Mark Linley."

"You ain't one of us, then?" said Hobson, endeavouring, unsuccessfully, to peer through the gloom at the features of the Lancashire lad.

Mark stood still in the passage. He began to understand what was going on. Vernon-Smith was going to celebrate the winning of the Founder's Fifty by some jollification out of the school bounds at a late hour. If Mark held to his original plan and went on to the box-room, he would probably run right into the rendezvous of the jolly party.

It was almost as easy to leave the School



Wingate stared in astonishment. The sudden turning on of the light had revealed half a dozen juniors out of bed and nearly dressed.

"No," said Mark.

"Where's Smithy?"

"Still in bed, I believe."

"Oh! I'm going to the box-room to wait for him," said Hobson. "I don't know what you're doing out, Linley, but if you ain't coming to the party, you'd better get back to bed."

And Hobson groped on his way.

House by a lower window. There was a window at the end of the Sixth Form passage that gave upon a rain-pipe, clustered with ivy.

Mark Linley turned his steps in that direction.

There was a glimmer of light in the passage from the big window at the end. From the rooms as he passed Mark heard

sounds of slumber, a most decided snore from Walker's room. The Sixth at Greyfriars had separate bed-rooms, which were their studies during the day. Mark Linley trod very lightly as he passed the door of Wingate's study. There was a light still burning there, showing that the captain of Greyfriars had not yet gone to bed.

Eleven!

The strokes came booming out from the clock-tower.

The door of Loder's study, next to Wingate's, opened, and Loder, the prefect, came stepping quietly out. He stepped very quietly, because he knew that Wingate was not yet gone to bed, and he had to be very careful not to let the captain of Greyfriars get upon the scent of the intended jollification at the Cross Keys.

But it was unfortunate for Loder, under the circumstances, for Mark Linley was also stepping along very lightly, and as neither made a sound, they crashed together without the least warning, just outside Loder's door.

Bump!

Loder staggered back with a sharp exclamation. Mark Linley reeled against the wall, gasping. The bundle fell from his hand, falling with a crash upon the floor of the passage.

There was a movement in Wingate's study.

Loder gritted his teeth.

Before he could retreat to his own room, or decide what to do—before Mark Linley could make a movement to escape—Wingate's door was thrown open, and a bright light streamed out into the dusk of the passage.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

Quite Off!

WINGATE stepped out of his study in surprise. The light showed Mark Linley and Loder, and the bundle lying on the floor, with several articles scattered from it in the fall.

Wingate looked from one to another of them.

"What on earth's the matter?" he exclaimed. "What are you doing here, Linley—at this time of the night, too? What does this bundle mean?"

Loder turned quite pale for a moment.

In his mind's eye he could see himself reported to the Head, deprived of his prefectship, if not expelled from the school; for if the whole matter came out, and there was an inquiry by the Head, there was no doubt that some of the juniors concerned would betray all the circumstances of the planned jollification. It was not safe to depend upon fellows like Snoop and Skinner, for instance, to show a fastidious sense of honour. And the heaviest punishment would fall upon the prefect who had lent his authority to such an outrageous breach of the rules.

But Loder's brain was quick to work. Nothing was known to Wingate yet, and, if he was careful, nothing need be known. There was a scapegoat already provided in the person of Mark Linley.

"It's this young whelp," he said thickly. "I've caught him."

"Caught him? Linley?"

"Yes. I—I heard somebody sneaking along the passage, and came out quickly to catch him," said Loder, recovering his nerve as he realised how extremely plausible his falsehood sounded. "I guessed it was one of the Remove going to break bounds."

"I'm jolly glad you caught him, then," said Wingate unsuspiciously. "He passed my door, I suppose, but I never heard him. Linley, where were you going?"

Mark Linley did not reply. He was inclined to make a bolt for it, but it would hardly have done. Besides, Wingate blocked the way in one direction, and Loder in the other.

Wingate's brow grew very stern.

"You had better answer me, Linley," he said. "You are fully dressed, and going, I suppose, to the window yonder. Were you going out?"

"Yes," said Mark.

"Then you were breaking bounds?"

"In a sense, yes."

"You had better answer me, Linley," I never dreamed that you were that sort of a boy," said the Greyfriars captain.

Mark smiled faintly.

"And I am not, either," he said. "I was not going down to the Cross Keys, Wingate."

"Where were you going, then?"

There was no help for it. Mark had to make a clean breast of it or else have a much worse construction placed upon his actions.

"I was going to the railway station," he said.

Wingate stared at him.

"The railway station! What for?"

"To catch the last up train."

"What? What? You were running away from school?" exclaimed the Greyfriars captain, in utter astonishment.

"Not exactly. I was leaving Greyfriars, and I wanted to leave quietly. I've got to go," said Mark dully.

"Why?"

"Because I've lost the Founder's Fifty, and I've got to work."

Wingate's face softened.

"I'm sorry if things are like this, Linley. It's hard cheese on you. But you cannot go in this manner. I understand your feelings, but you cannot do it. You must see the Head in the morning, and explain the situation to him."

"He wouldn't understand," said Mark drearily. "He doesn't know what poverty is. He would never see. But——"

"You cannot go without permission."

"Yes, but——"

"Come, you must get back to your dormitory," said Wingate. "I'll see that you do. Pick up those things you've dropped. It's all right, Loder; I'll look after this."

"Right-ho!" said Loder indifferently.

But as he turned back into his study, he ground his teeth with rage, for he knew that the expedition was over for that night.

He could not very well raise any objection to Wingate's going to the Remove dormitory, but if Wingate went there he would find the Bounder and his friends either up and dressing or already gone. It was already ten minutes past eleven, and then all would be up.

Wingate, quite unconscious of anything of the sort, marched the Lancashire lad back to the Remove dormitory. Mark Linley went quietly. It would have been useless to resist, and he would never have raised his hand in any case agaist Wingate, the most popular fellow in the college. At the same time, he was bitterly disappointed. He had longed, with a longing that will be easily understood, to get out of the school, since he had to go, without general attention being fixed upon his going. Poverty was no crime, but Mark did not like dragging it out in the public light for pity and contempt.

But he could not help himself now. Wingate opened the door of the Remove dormitory and switched on the electric light.

"Get to bed, Linley," he said. "In the morning you can see the Head, and if you seriously wish to go—— My hat!"

Wingate broke off in astonishment.

The sudden turning on of the light had revealed half a dozen juniors out of bed, all of them finishing dressing.

They stood dumbfounded, taken utterly by surprise at the sudden discovery.

Even Vernon-Smith, cool as he was, was taken utterly aback. He stood with his collar and tie in his hand, staring blankly at Wingate.

"My—my only hat!" Wingate ejaculated. "What on earth does all this mean?"

Snoop made a dive back to bed. The others stood still, staring at the captain of Greyfriars.

"What does it mean?" thundered Wingate, advancing into the room. "I needn't ask you, Vernon-Smith, if you're the leader—I know you are."

The Bounder caught his breath.

Punishment or no punishment, the expedition was "busted" for that night, at least, and Vernon-Smith was furious. He glared at Mark Linley, whom he regarded—unjustly enough—as the cause of the discovery.

"Will you explain, Smith?" asked Wingate ominously. "I suppose you were not all going to run away from school, eh?"

The Bounder grinned a little.

"No," he said.

"Where were you going?"

"We had an idea of a—a sprint round the Close to keep us fit," said the Bounder coolly. He had quite recovered his nerve by this time, only a minute or so as it was. "We are in want of exercise, you know."

Wingate gasped. The cool effrontery of such an explanation took his breath away. Some of the other fellows chuckled—they could not help it.

"Don't tell absurd falsehoods, Smith," said the Greyfriars captain sternly.

Vernon-Smith shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, I've explained," he said.

"Will you tell me the truth? If you will not, it makes no difference; you were certainly going to break bounds. I shall make a note of all your names and report you to your Form-master in the morning."

"Oh!" said Skinner.

"You will all be caned," said Wingate; "but you may be glad that I have caught you. If you had succeeded in breaking bounds, you might have been expelled for it. And I shall keep an eye on you in future now that I know you all."

The intended celebrators could only gaze at him in dismay. Most of the fellows in the dormitory had been awakened by the turning on of the light and the sound of voices, and even Bunter was sitting up in bed.

The fat junior groped for his glasses, and put them upon his fat little nose, and blinked reprovingly at Vernon-Smith.

"I say, you fellows," he exclaimed, "now you're bowled out, you know, you ought to remember what I told you all along. You remember how I cautioned you against goings-on of this sort, Smithy?"

"Liar!" said the Bounder.

"Oh, really, Smithy! You must remember how I came into your study and begged of you, with tears in my eyes, not to make up this party to go to the Cross Keys——"

"Shut up!" whispered Skinner savagely.

"Oh, really, Skinner——"

"The Cross Keys, eh?" said Wingate, with lowering brows.

"Oh, that's Bunter's imagination," said Vernon-Smith. "I suppose you know what a liar Bunter is?"

"Oh, really, you know, Smithy——"

"I shall take no notice of what Bunter has said," replied Wingate, "but I shall certainly report to your Form-master that you boys were up and dressed, preparing to go out, at a quarter-past eleven at night. He will deal with you as he thinks fit. Now go to bed, all of you. I shall lock the dormitory door on the outside to-night."

The intending celebrators turned in. There was no help for it—the expedition was evidently "off." Wingate grimly watched them to bed, and turned off the light, and closed the dormitory door. The juniors within heard the key turn in the lock.

"My word!" murmured Skinner. "What about the other chaps? They'll be waiting in the box-room for us, Smithy."

Vernon-Smith gritted his teeth.

"Let 'em wait!" he said.

"It's a bit rough on them."

"Oh, hang them!" said the Bounder.

"And Loder, too—he'll be wild—and Carne."

"Hang them!"

The Bounder scowled into the darkness. Gladly enough he would have ragged Mark Linley for being the inadvertent cause of the discovery, but there were plenty of fellows in the Remove dormitory to take Linley's part if it came to that. The Bounder scowled himself to sleep.

In the box-room several youths of various Forms waited for the Bounder to come—and waited in vain. Loder never gave them a thought, and nobody was able to get out of the Remove dormitory to speak to them, even if inclined to do so. Fellows of the Shell, the Fourth, and the Fifth—gay dogs who had been going to "keep it up" at the Cross Keys at Vernon-Smith's little party—waited and waited, and said things.

They got tired at last. They crept back to their various dormitories, vowing vengeance upon the Bounder. They could only conclude that Vernon-Smith had been japing them, especially when Hobson crept to the Remove dormitory and found the door locked, and no key there. He did not

know that the door was locked on the outside, and the key in Wingate's pocket.

The disappointed roysterers crept back to bed, promising Vernon-Smith all sorts of things on the morrow, and some of the promises were kept.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER
Great News !

MARK LINLEY slept little that night.

His attempt to leave Greyfriars quietly without attracting attention had been prevented, but that he had to go all the same was clear.

Most of the night the Lancashire lad lay awake, thinking of the gloomy prospect before him, turning over in his mind his plans for the weary future.



Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry looked in surprise at Mark Linley's beaming face. "What's happened?" exclaimed both in one voice.

To go home—to work—to do his duty by his parents—that was evidently the path of duty, and Mark never thought of shrinking from it.

But it was hard!

Morning light gleamed at last into the windows of the Remove dormitory, and Mark Linley rose before the rising-bell clanged out. He had packed his box, and made all his preparations for leaving Greyfriars before the other fellows were up.

He went downstairs at the same time as the rest of the Remove. Wingate met the juniors in the Lower Hall.

"Vernon-Smith, you are wanted in Mr. Quelch's study—and the others," he said. "He is going to attend to you before breakfast."

And the Bounder & Co. went into their Form-master's study, and were "attended to" for their escapade of the previous night, and they came out of the study with their hands tucked under their arms, squirming in all sorts of attitudes indicative of anguish.

"You are to go in and see the Head before school," said Wingate to Mark, and

the Lancashire lad nodded without replying.

Wingate laid a hand upon his shoulder.

"I hope it won't be necessary for you to leave Greyfriars, Linley," he said. "You are doing well here, and it would be a great pity."

"Thank you!" said Mark.

"What's that?" exclaimed Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry together as the Greyfriars captain walked away. "What's that? Leave Greyfriars?"

Mark nodded.

"I've got to go," he said.

"Why?" asked Bob. "You—you shan't go! I won't let you! Hang it all, what do you want to leave Greyfriars for, you ass?"

"I don't want to, Bob."

"Then why are you going?" Harry Wharton demanded.

"I can't help it."

"Look here——" began Bob.

"It's through losing the Founder's Fifty," said Mark wearily. "My father's sick and out of work. I've got to get back and work for the family. Don't tell the other fellows. I'm explaining this to you, that's all. I don't want you to think I want to leave. I've got to."

"Poor old Marky!" said Bob Cherry softly.

"I don't want to be pitied by a crowd of fellows," said Mark, feverishly. "I wanted to get away quietly last night, but Wingate stopped me. I've got to see the Head now; but I shall go to-day."

"Oh, it's rotten!" said Harry Wharton. "I say, can't anything be done?"

Mark shook his head.

"Nothing."

Before morning lessons, Mark Linley presented himself at the Head's study. The doctor was waiting for him. He had a letter in his hand, and he fixed a most peculiar look upon Mark as he came in.

"Ah! It is you, Linley!" he said "I hear from Wingate that you tried to leave the school last night."

"I wanted to get away without any fuss, sir," said Mark. "I'm sorry, but I shall have to go all the same I'm wanted at home."

"Why are you wanted at home?"

Mark hesitated.

"You can speak quite frankly to me, my dear lad," said the Head kindly. "I have some idea how matters stand."

"Somebody's got to keep the wolf from the door," said Mark desperately. "Father's laid up, and mayn't be able to work for weeks—perhaps months. You don't understand our position, sir. We're poor people. We only have something to live on so long as father's in work. When that fails everything goes. It doesn't take long for a poor family's savings to run out when there is sickness and unemployment in the house."

"I quite understand, Linley. And if you had won the Founder's Prize of fifty pounds, it would have saved the situation?"

"Yes, sir."

"That would have tided your family over their present difficulties?"

"More than that, sir. My father intended to place half the money in the bank in my name, to be reserved for my expenses when I pass into a higher Form here. Half of it would have been enough to save my people. But——"

"Then I think I have some good news for you, Linley."

Mark flushed scarlet.

"If—if you please, sir, I—I hope you won't offer me anything. I—I couldn't accept charity, sir!"

"I was not going to offer you charity, Linley."

"Excuse me, sir. I—I'm so rotten just now, I hardly know what I'm saying. But—but I don't see what the good news can be."

"It's about the Founder's Prize."

"Oh! Perhaps I've won the second prize, sir," said Mark. "Books. I should be glad to have it, but——"

"You have not won the second prize. You have won the first prize," said the Head quietly.

Mark Linley started.

"The—the what, sir?"

"The first prize. As you know, the name of the winner only was sent to me by wire, and fuller information was to follow by letter, which reached me by the first post on the morning—this morning I find that, owing to an error on the part of the clerk who sent the telegram, the name of the winner of the second prize was given instead of the name of the winner of the first prize."

"Oh, sir!"

"The winner of the second prize was Herbert Vernon-Smith. I am sorry for him, as it will be a great disappointment to him to learn that he is, after all, the winner of only the second prize. The winner of the first prize is Mark Linley."

"Oh, sir!"

"I congratulate you, Linley! And I may say now that I expected this result all along," said the Head. "I was surprised when I found that you had been beaten by Vernon-Smith, and I think most of us were. I congratulate you!"

And Dr. Locke held out his hand.

Mark Linley shook hands with the Head like a fellow in a dream.

He had won after all!

He had won the Founder's Fifty! He had won the money that was necessary to save his family! He remembered how near he had been to becoming a thief, and shuddered. He had chosen the right path; and how thankful, how grateful to a merciful Providence he was now that he had chosen it!

He had stood at the cross-roads of life, and he had made the right choice; and so long as he lived he would be glad of it!

"The money will be paid to you today," said Dr. Locke. "I am quite satisfied with the mode of expending it you have suggested. Some should certainly be kept for your own future use; but some, certainly, should be devoted to your people. I know it cannot have been easy for them to send you here, even with the aid of your scholarship, and they are entitled to benefit by your success. I congratulate you, Linley! And I congratulate your parents on their son!"

Mark Linley left the Head's study with his head in a whirl and his heart beating almost to suffocation.

He need not leave Greyfriars! That fact stood out clear to his mind at once. The stress was over now—the sun was breaking through the clouds!

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry were waiting for him in the passage. They looked in surprise at his beaming face—so different from what it had been like when he had gone into the Head's study.

"What's happened?" exclaimed both, in a breath.

Mark burst into a happy laugh.

"It's all right!"

"But what——"

"There was a mistake in the telegram! The wrong name was given! It's I who's won the Fifty, and not Vernon-Smith!"

"My hat!" ejaculated Bob.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"It's jolly lucky for the Bounder that his little party was knocked on the head last night," he remarked. "He was going to stand that out of the Fifty. It was a bit of luck for him."

"Yes, rather!" grinned Bob. "And you've won the Fifty, Marky?"

"Yes."

"And you won't have to leave Greyfriars?"

"No."

"Hurray! Hip-pip-pip — hurray!" roared Bob Cherry.

In his study the Head heard Bob Cherry's enthusiastic roar, but he only smiled.

Mark Linley was marched to the Remove Form-room between Harry and Bob, with linked arms, all three of them in the highest of spirits.

The sun was shining at last for Mark Linley. The clouds had passed over, and all lay bright before the lad who had chosen the right path when he stood at the cross-roads!

THE END



Our Incurable Interviewer Calls On HORACE JAMES COKER

(The duffer of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars.)

SOUNDS of wordy argument fell on my ears as I drew near the study of the great Coker. I tapped on the door several times in vain, then looked into the study.

A hefty individual whom I took to be Coker himself was standing in the middle of the room. Two worried-looking fellows were standing in front of him, arguing and pleading. Apparently their arguments and pleas were falling on deaf ears.

"You can't do it, old chap," one was saying as I opened the door.

"Rot! There's no such word as 'can't' in my dictionary!" snorted Coker. "Wingate refuses to give me my place in the First Eleven, so I'm jolly well going to bash him. See?"

"'Hem!" I coughed, with the idea of calling attention to myself.

Coker and his chums looked round, with a start.

"Who the thump are you?" asked Coker, with a frown.

"I represent the HOLIDAY ANNUAL, Mr. Coker," I explained. "I have called to see if you would care to grant me an interview?"

Coker thawed perceptibly.

"Pleasure!" he said. "You had better reserve fifty or a hundred pages for my interview, I should say."

"'Um!" I murmured, rather dubiously.

"But before I begin I'll just trot along and bash that swanky ass, Wingate," said Coker, frowning again. "Like to come along and see me? Then you'll be able to tell the HOLIDAY ANNUAL readers how, with one mighty swipe, I knocked the captain of Greyfriars into the middle of next week!"

"I'll certainly come along and see that unique performance!" I smiled, and followed Horace James out of his study, feeling deeply interested.

Potter and Greene seemed to melt away somehow, and Coker tramped towards the Sixth Form quarters in solitary state, myself following at a discreet distance.

Coker halted outside one of the studies and hurled open the door. For the space of about five seconds there was a clash of raised voices from within the study. Then there was a sound of scuffling and struggling, terminating in a yell from Coker.

"Whoooop! If you dare——"

"Hold him down, Faulkner!"

Swish, swish, swish!

"Yaroooooop!"

Thwack, thwack, thwack!

"Yooop! I'll smash you! I'll——"

The great man of the Fifth struggled and yelled in vain. Wingate's cane rose and fell relentlessly.

At last Coker came out, looking more like a wet rag than a celebrated leader of public opinion at Greyfriars.

"Now, about this interview, Mr. Coker ——" I began.

"Blow the blessed interview! Bother it—and you, too—and the HOLIDAY ANNUAL as well!" roared Coker.

And on reflection I decided that perhaps, after all, the HOLIDAY ANNUAL readers would be content to hear how Coker knocked Wingate into the middle of next week—in his dreams!

THE END

Detective Mystery and Adventure.



The Secret Message!

By "X"

The betrayal of a client's trust is the price of Ferrers Locke's freedom from a gang of crooks. If the famous detective refuses—it is death!

THE FIRST CHAPTER
In Lawless Hands!

FERRERS LOCKE smiled grimly.

It was the first time in his career that the Baker Street detective had been caught napping. The blow had fallen suddenly, swiftly. The hunter in his turn had been hunted; the trapper trapped; the thief-taker taken. But the fact that he lay, bound and helpless, at the mercy of his enemies, did not shake Locke's accustomed calm. It did not prevent him from seeing a grim humour in the situation.

He lay—as he had lain for hours—on a rug on the floor, in a room darkened by blinds. The room had been in utter darkness when the detective, bound hand and foot, had been carried into it, and dumped down on the floor by his unknown captors. But with the dawn had come a glimmering of light, and as the sun rose higher the light penetrated more and more, in spite of the blinds at the windows. Ferrers Locke was able to see his surroundings, but what he could see told him little.

The room was not a large one. It was furnished as an office, with worn linoleum on the floor, a roll-top desk by the window, with a telephone standing on it; a gas-fire fixed in a disused fire-grate. A revolving-chair stood before the desk, a couple of cane-seated chairs by the wall. There was little more in the way of furniture.

Where was he?

He did not know.

By whom had he been seized, and why? He could find, as yet, no answers to those questions.

Whoever they were, they were in no hurry to deal with him.

It was, as he remembered, close upon midnight when he had been seized; at the very door of his house in Baker Street. The house had been in darkness. Jack Drake, his boy assistant, had gone to bed. Something had been wrong with the lock, and as he fumbled at it with his latchkey, there had come that sudden rush of feet, the grip of sinewy hands, the sack thrown over his head. In a few seconds he had been lifted, a helpless prisoner, into a closed car and driven away. Where? He did not know.

He had been driven miles—many miles. Whether they were taking him a long distance from London, or just covering

unnecessary ground in order to deceive him, he could not tell. In black darkness, he had been taken at length from the car and dumped down where he now lay. The sack had been withdrawn from his head, allowing him to breathe with more ease, but the hard, gripping bonds on his wrists and ankles remained.

Locke had tested his strength on the bonds and failed. He did not expect to succeed, and, having failed, he did not waste his strength in further futile efforts. He lay and waited.

It was now, as near as he could tell, getting towards noon. Closely blinded as the windows were, light filtered in more and more. Dim as it was, his eyes were accustomed to the dimness, and nothing in the room escaped his searching eyes.

He did not know where he was, but had he escaped from his prison he could have found it again with ease. Many times his eyes had dwelt on the telephone that stood on the desk. It was partly turned from him, and the dimness would have defied eyes less keen than Ferrers Locke's. But he could read the label on the instrument that gave the exchange and number:

"Greenover 131."

He knew nothing of Greenover or its exchange. Probably an outlying suburb of the great city. But, once free, it would have been a simple task to trace the house where he now lay by its telephone number and exchange.

That thought was in his mind, but it was useless enough. He was not free, or likely to be free, until his captors chose.

If he could but have reached the telephone——

Jack Drake, in the office at Baker Street, would be wondering why his chief had not returned. But he would not be alarmed. It was common enough for Locke to absent himself for days at a time without a word. Not for some days, at least, would Drake feel uneasy. There would be no search for him, for he would not be missed.

If he could have reached the telephone——

But he could not reach it. He could not even rise to his feet. He knew that he would not have been left where he was if he could have reached the telephone.

Yet, powerless as he was, the thought lingered in his mind. He could not have told Drake where he was, but "Greenover 131" would have been sufficient. Swiftly enough, Drake would have traced out that telephone number and flown to the rescue. Ferrers Locke visualised a fast car, packed with Scotland Yard men——

But it was futile to think of it. He lay helpless, his limbs aching from the grip of his bonds.

How long were they going to leave him like this? What did they want? Not his life—that would have been easy enough to take. He was kept a prisoner, for some reason. For what?

He smiled grimly.

They were leaving him like this, weary hour after hour, to realise his helplessness, to break his nerve. If that was their object, they were not likely to succeed.

The silence was deep. He had heard no sound in all the weary hours he had lain there, waiting with grim, impassive patience till it should please his captors to come to him.

But there was a sound at last.

A key turned in a lock. A door opened.

The detective's eyes turned to the man who entered the room.

For the moment he had only a back view of the newcomer as he locked the door after entering.

Then the man turned towards him.

From the eyeholes of a black crape mask, two keen and penetrating eyes returned the detective's glance.

Locke was conscious of disappointment. The black crape completely concealed the face, and the figure was hidden in the folds of a loose, almost shapeless, shabby ulster. Only the feet, well shaped and well shod, gave Locke the hint that a well-dressed man was hidden under the shabby ulster. The brisk step, light and springy, told him also that the man was young. But to his identity there was no hint of a clue.

For a long minute the man in the mask



"Refuse my request," said the masked man, a note of menace in his voice, "and the gas will be turned on—unlighted"!

stood looking down on the bound detective in silence.

Locke did not speak.

He waited.

It was the masked man who broke the silence at last.

"Ferrers Locke!" The detective listened for a familiar note in the voice, but in vain. Either the man was a stranger to him, or he was disguising his tone. "You are in my hands!"

"I do not need telling that," said Locke tranquilly.

"You have been given time for reflection——"

"More than enough!" said Locke.

"To help you to realise your position. No human eye saw you brought here. No one can even surmise where you are. You do not know yourself."

"That is true."

"If you never reappear in Baker Street, Ferrers Locke, your fate will be one more of the many mysteries of London."

"No doubt."

"Your fate depends on yourself. Do as I demand, and to-night the same car that brought you here will take you back to Baker Street. Refuse——" The masked man paused, on a note of menace.

"And then?" asked Locke calmly.

The unknown made a gesture towards the gas fire in the grate.

"The gas will be turned on—unlighted! I need not tell you what the result will be."

Locke smiled faintly.

"You need not," he assented. "It only remains to tell me what you demand."

"A little thing!"

Locke raised his eyebrows ironically.

"Only a little thing? You have taken all this trouble to ask a little thing?"

"A little thing—to you! A great thing—to me! In your safe at Baker Street there is an article I require—that I must have! If it be given to me, you live! If not——"

Another gesture towards the gas fire completed the sentence.

THE SECOND CHAPTER
The Price of Life!

THERE was silence.

The masked man had taken a seat on the revolving-chair at the desk, facing the bound detective on the floor.

As he sat the loose ulster fell aside a little, disclosing a portion of an elegantly-trousered leg.

The man was well dressed. His voice was cultivated. His eyes were cool, clear, dominating. It was no common criminal who sat looking at the Baker Street detective.

Minute followed minute. The man in the mask was waiting for Locke's reply; his penetrating eyes scanning the detective's face, perhaps for a sign of uneasiness or fear. But no such sign was to be read in Locke's impassive face. His expression was quietly thoughtful. It was the masked man who broke the silence again.

"Your answer, Locke?"

"I am not in a position to bargain," said Ferrers Locke. "What is the article you require? I admit that I cannot even surmise——"

"A little thing, as I said. Merely a document."

"There are some hundreds of documents in my cabinet at Baker Street."

"Only one that interests me."

"You must be a little more explicit," said Ferrers Locke. "At present I am quite in the dark."

"I will be explicit. You see this telephone? I shall ring up your office in Baker Street, and put you through to your assistant, the boy Drake. Then I shall lift the instrument down to you. You will speak to Drake. You will tell him that you are a powerless prisoner, in danger of death; that your life depends on his instant obedience to the order you will give him."

"And that order?"

"To hand over to a man who will call at Baker Street this afternoon a certain document, which you will describe to him. The document is to be handed over without question. Once it is in my hands, you are a free man."

The eyes gleamed from the mask.

"But a word of warning! You are a clever man, Locke—a dangerous man, as the criminal world of London well knows. You may think of attempting to enlist Drake's aid—and the aid of Scotland Yard through him. You may, in spite of all my precautions, have some inkling of where you are at this moment. Take care! One word to Drake outside my instructions—one syllable that might bring danger upon me—and I cut off immediately, and leave you to the gas! If you fail me in this, it will not be easy to abstract the document I need from your safe, but it will be easier with Ferrers Locke dead than with Ferrers Locke living. You understand?"

"Quite. And the document I am to describe to Drake——"

"I will make that clear. It is a document as yet unread by you——"

"Unread?" repeated Locke.

His eyes narrowed.

"Unread, because you are a man of your word. It was placed in your hands sealed, not to be opened till a certain date."

Locke was silent.

"I will refresh your memory." There was a tone of irony in the cultivated voice that came from under the black mask. "Some weeks ago a Captain Harrington called on you in your office in Baker Street. You remember him?"

Locke made a sign of assent.

"He explained to you that he had become involved with a gang of West End criminals, led by a man well placed in Society, whom the police never dreamed of suspecting, who was beyond the suspicion even of Ferrers Locke." The eyes from the mask glinted mockingly. "He had long desired to withdraw from the association,

but he dared not. His life would have been the forfeit for desertion. You remember this?"

"I remember."

"His associates found him too useful to let him go. And they could not have trusted him once he had broken loose from them. He was warned; he knew what to expect. To protect himself, for he was determined to break off his criminal associations, he wrote out a full confession, giving the names of his associates, and a list of the robberies in which they had been engaged, with full details. Most important of all, the name of the leader of the association——"

"Your name?" asked Ferrers Locke.

The man in the ulster shrugged his shoulders.

"I need not deny it, since my identity will never be known to you. My name! This document he sealed and placed in your hands, on your promise to keep it sealed and unread, unless you received the news of his death. This service you promised to perform."

"I remember."

"If you received news of his death, you were to break the seal, read the confession, and act upon it."

"That is correct."

"Having taken this measure to save himself, the captain broke with us, warning us of what he had done, not doubting that it would protect him from our vengeance."

Locke felt a chill.

"It did not protect him," went on the quiet voice under the mask. "At the present moment an unidentified body is floating somewhere in the Thames. When it is found and identified, you, if a free man, would break the seal of that envelope, and act on the confession written within. But you are not a free man, Ferrers Locke, and you will never break that seal!"

Ferrers Locke breathed hard.

"That document, unseen by your eye or any other, will be placed in my hands when I call at your office this afternoon," said the man in the mask. "My safety, even my life, depends on it! I have told you what happened to the weak-kneed traitor who deserted me. You may guess that I shall not deal with you more gently if you fail me."

He paused.

"You will telephone to Drake, and fix an hour this afternoon when he will hand over the document to the one who will call for it. Attempt any trickery, and you will not have a second chance. The document safe in my hands, to be destroyed, you are free. I do not fear you once Harrington's confession is out of the way. Refuse, and—— But I need not repeat that."

Locke was grimly silent.

"It is a matter of life or death for you, Ferrers Locke!" said the man in the mask quietly. "If I leave this room unsatisfied, I leave the gas turned on. Your answer?"

"Give me time to reflect!"

"That is only reasonable. I will give you a quarter of an hour." The man in the ulster rose from the chair. "In fifteen minutes I shall return—for your answer. Let it be ready!"

"It will be ready," said Ferrers Locke.

The door opened and closed.

The man in the mask was gone.

Ferrers Locke lay alone again, in silence, in the dusky room.

As he lay, his eyes were fixed on the telephone that stood on the desk. His brow was wrinkled with thought.

From time to time his lips moved, as if he were murmuring and repeating words under his breath, but no sound came from him.

The minutes ticked away.

Minute by minute the sands of the detective's life were running out. He knew that he had no mercy to expect. The man whose secret life of crime was betrayed by the document locked up in the office at Baker Street had shown no mercy to the poor wretch who had deserted him, and he would show none to the detective who would gladly have hunted him down to his just punishment. Only the surrender of the confession could save Ferrers Locke, and with the confession would be surrendered the possibility of bringing to justice the most dangerous criminal in London.

Even if he yielded—not that he dreamed

of yielding—would the unknown keep faith?

Was he likely to spare the life of the detective who had been a prisoner in his den, and might find his way there again? It was not likely.

The door opened quietly.

The man in the mask was with him again. He stood over the bound detective.

"Your answer?"

Locke drew a deep, deep breath.

"Ring up Baker Street!" he said.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

The Message!

BUZZZZZZZ!

Jack Drake stepped to the telephone in Ferrers Locke's office in Baker Street.

From without, the murmur of the traffic in Baker Street came dully to his ears. He had been looking from the window, watching the endless procession of vehicles and passengers, and wondering when his chief would return, when the telephone bell rang sharply.

"Hallo!"

"Hallo! Is that Drake?"

"Drake speaking, Mr Locke." The detective's assistant recognised the cool, clear, incisive voice of Ferrers Locke at the first word.

"Good! Listen to me carefully, Drake. I have fallen into the hands of a man I do not know, and am a bound prisoner in a place that is strange to me."

"Mr. Locke!" gasped Drake.

"Keep cool, my boy! My life depends on you, and on your carrying out the instructions I give you."

The receiver trembled in Drake's hand for a moment. The colour had faded from his face.

Ferrers Locke a prisoner, in danger of his life! A bound prisoner in some unknown den of crime! And yet his voice had come to Jack Drake's ears quietly, calmly, in the cool, incisive tones he knew so well.

Drake pulled himself together.

He would have risked his life, given his life, to save his idolised master. But there was nothing he could do—nothing but listen, with all the steadiness he could muster, to that quiet voice on the telephone.

"You hear me, Drake?"

"Yes, sir."

"The man into whose hands I have fallen, and who holds my life at his mercy, demands a certain document, now locked up in my office. Unless this be given up to him, I am a dead man."

Drake caught his breath.

For a second he almost doubted whether he was listening to Ferrers Locke, for the words told of surrender—told that the Baker Street detective, to save his life, was yielding to the demand of a criminal.

Life was sweet, but if Ferrers Locke was saving his life by such a concession to a criminal, he was not the man Jack Drake had always believed him to be.

"Listen to me, Drake! I shall give you directions where to find that document, and instructions what to do with it. Do not fancy that you can help me in any way. You can only save my life by acting exactly as I tell you. You understand?"

"I understand," faltered Drake.

"There must be no mistake. A mistake means death to me, Drake. Take down my instructions in writing."

"I have my fountain-pen, sir."

"Write, then," said Ferrers Locke.

"I am ready, sir." Drake had opened his fountain-pen, and he drew a writing-pad towards him.

With a hand that shook a little in spite of himself, Jack Drake wrote down the words that followed, in the quiet voice over the wires:

"The document is in the steel cabinet under the telephone, packed away among a number of other papers. It is sealed in a long green cartridge envelope. Hand it over immediately, without question, to one who will call at three o'clock this afternoon. No one else can give me help; only this can save me."

There was silence.

"I've got it, sir," said Drake.

The silence was unbroken.

Ferrers Locke did not speak again.

"Are you still there, sir?" asked Drake.

A voice came through—another voice, strange to Drake's ears. It was a soft and

cultivated voice, with a tone of mockery in it.

"You have heard your master's instructions! Carry them out, Jack Drake, if you value the life of Ferrers Locke."

"I am here to carry out Mr. Locke's orders," answered Drake. "I shall do exactly as he has told me."

"Then expect a caller at three, and remember that any attempt to detain him, to watch him, or to follow him will cause the death of Ferrers Locke."

Three hours to save Ferrers Locke and lay that scoundrel by the heels! More than enough, I fancy."

Once more he read over the instructions written on the page of the writing-pad.

Then he picked up the receiver again, and gave a Scotland Yard number. As soon as he was through, he asked for Inspector Cornish.

The deep, rather gruff voice of Inspector Cornish, with whom Locke had often worked, came through in a minute or less.



"You are a clever man, Locke," said Sir Peter Denaby, "but I cannot fathom how you contrived to outwit me."

"I shall do exactly as my master has directed me—no more and no less," said Drake.

"That will be well."

Drake put up the receiver.

That strange message from a man who lay in the shadow of death was at an end.

Drake stood very still.

His face was white and set. But as he read over the instructions he had written down, a faint smile played over his face.

He looked at his watch.

"Twelve! Three hours to work in!

"Drake speaking, from Ferrers Locke's office," said the detective's boy assistant.

"Fire away!"

"Mr. Locke has been made a prisoner, and his life is threatened."

"Good gad!" ejaculated the inspector.

"I cannot say whose hands he is in, or where he is," went on Drake. "But the telephone number of the place is Greenover 131. That is all Mr. Locke was able to tell me."

"But how——"

"I will explain when I see you. I am

coming round as fast as the car will move," said Drake hurriedly. "You'll be ready, with as many men as you think you'll need, Mr. Cornish?"

"Rely on me."

"How long will it take you to trace out the address of that telephone number?"

There was a chuckle.

"I'll have that ready before you get here, young 'un. If you want to be in at the death, lose no time."

"Right!"

Drake jammed the receiver back on the hooks. Two minutes later a fast car was threading the traffic of Baker Street, with Drake sitting in it, his eyes gleaming, his heart beating fast.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER
Brought to Book!

FERRERS LOCKE lay and listened.

He was left alone, and for a long, long hour he had lain and listened intently.

The man in the mask had held the telephone to his lips, the receiver to his ear, while he spoke to his boy assistant at Baker Street. Immediately he had given his instructions to Drake, the instrument had been taken away. His hands had not been freed for a moment; his captor was taking no chances with him.

The masked man was gone, the door locked, and silence brooded over the dusky room, with its dark blinds.

If there were others in the house—and Locke knew that there must be—no sound of them reached him.

He listened with painful intentness. Until three o'clock that afternoon, the hour fixed for the document to be handed over to the one who would call at Baker Street for it, his life was safe. Not until then could the man in the mask know that he had been tricked.

Drake had time to work in, and there were men at Scotland Yard, old friends of Locke's, who would be eager to help. If Drake had understood! But Locke had no doubts on that point. He knew that Drake had understood. There was time for help, time for rescue, and it was for the sounds of rescue that Locke was listening as he lay in dusky silence, his limbs aching from his bonds.

He started suddenly.

The silence was broken at last!

A crash, a shout, a sudden ringing shot, a tramp of feet, a howl of excited, alarmed voices!

Then a shout that reached the detective clearly, in tones of surprise and terror:

"The police!"

Trampling footsteps passed his door. Voices called and shouted; another shot rang out. Desperate work was going on in that unknown house of mystery while the Baker Street detective lay helpless, unable to stir a limb.

But the uproar calmed at last. Obviously the denizens of the mysterious house had been taken by surprise by the sudden raid. A brief, desperate resistance had been overcome, and the house was in the hands of the police.

Footsteps and voices—a voice that Locke knew—the voice of his boy assistant.

"Mr. Locke! Mr. Locke! Where are you?"

"Here!" called back the detective.

The key turned back in the lock, the door was hurled open. Jack Drake sprang into the room. Behind him loomed the burly figure of Inspector Cornish.

"Drake, my boy!" Locke's face lighted up at the sight of the eager, excited face of the boy.

"We've got them!" came the inspector's deep voice. "Three of them—and one a bird in fancy feathers, by gad!"

Drake's pocket-knife was already sawing at the cords that bound the Baker Street detective. The bonds fell apart. Ferrers Locke, stiff and cramped, rose to his feet with Drake's assistance, and stood leaning heavily on the boy's shoulder. His face was pale with the twinges of pain in his cramped limbs.

The burly inspector grinned at him cheerfully.

"We've got them, Mr. Locke! Three of them—and more to come now that we've got their headquarters! Come and look at them! One of them's a priceless bird—no less than a baronet. A man I've seen

knocking about the West End for years, and never dreamed—— But come and look at them!"

He chuckled.

"We've not had time to search the place yet, but it's stacked—crammed. The loot of a good many robberies here, Mr. Locke." Mr. Cornish rubbed his plump hands. "By gad, you've put us on to the catch of the season—or, rather, your lad here has! Come and look at the fine bird that's dropped into the net! He handled a revolver when we got him—luckily for his neck, without any damage. Come!"

Locke pressed Drake's hand; it was all the thanks the boy needed. They followed the inspector.

In a large room three men in handcuffs were guarded by a number of plain-clothes men from Scotland Yard. Two of them were lowering, common crooks. The third was a handsome, well-dressed man in the prime of life, whose elegance of manner and cool assurance had not deserted him even in his present situation. His eyes shot one glance of deadly hatred and revenge at Ferrers Locke. It was the man who had worn the mask and the ulster.

"Sir Peter Denaby!" grinned the inspector. "Man about town, living by his wits. But who would have picked him out as a cracksman? Member of the best clubs, by gad! You've seen him about town, Locke, but I'll bet you never guessed the other side of his life."

"I've seen him about town, and I never guessed the other side of his life," assented Ferrers Locke quietly. "But I have a document in my office which will, I think, let in considerable light upon Sir Peter's proceedings for the past few years."

"This is their headquarters—the headquarters of the most daring and dangerous gang that has worked the West End in my time," said the inspector. "And Denaby's the leader, by gad! We'll get them away quietly, and wait for the other birds to drop in—what? But it was touch-and-go with you, Locke. If your boy had misunderstood——"

"I was sure that he would not," answered Locke tranquilly. "I leave them in your hands, Cornish. Drake——"

"The car's outside, sir," said Drake.

"Let us go, then!"

"One moment!" Sir Peter Denaby's voice, calm and cultivated, was the same that had spoken to Ferrers Locke from under the mask. Desperate rascal as he was, the man was game. "You have me now, Ferrers Locke. The tables are turned. What will be found in this house will leave little need for Harrington's confession, locked up in your safe at Baker Street. The game is up—for me! You can afford to satisfy my curiosity—an idle curiosity in my present circumstances, I admit. How did you work this?"

Jack Drake smiled.

"You spoke on the telephone, in my hearing," said Denaby. "I heard every word, and weighed every word. Yet I gather that you conveyed some message to your assistant."

"I did!"

"You have me guessing," said Denaby. "You are a clever man, Locke, and I have often admired your cleverness. Yet I cannot fathom how you contrived to outwit me."

Locke turned to his assistant.

"You have the instructions you wrote down at my dictation, Drake?"

"Here, sir."

Drake produced the paper from his pocket.

"Read that," said Locke.

Denaby read the paper over:

"The document is in the steel cabinet under the telephone, packed away among a number of other papers. It is sealed in a long green cartridge envelope. Hand it over immediately, without question, to one who will call at three o'clock this afternoon. No one else can give me help; only this can save me."

"I heard this, every word, as you spoke to Drake," said Denaby. "It tells me nothing."

"Fortunately, it told Drake much," said Ferrers Locke dryly.

"What did it tell him?"

"The telephone number of this house."

Denaby started.

His eyes sought the paper again, and he shook his head.

"A secret code?" he asked.

"A code long ago arranged with my assistant, for use in emergencies when secrecy was essential," said Locke. "It was never more essential than in this instance, Sir Peter Denaby."

"True!" The gentleman cracksman smiled faintly. "Had I detected the trick your life would have paid for it, Ferrers Locke! But the trick, if it is there, escapes me even now!"

Locke shrugged his shoulders.

"Read every fifth word," he said.

The cracksman started again, and once more his eyes scanned the paper.

A bitter smile crossed his lips.

"That is why you asked for time for reflection, Ferrers Locke! You needed time—a little time—to prepare this message for your assistant."

"Precisely."

The cracksman read out slowly the message that was made up by selecting every fifth word in the instructions Jack Drake had written down at his master's order:

"'THE TELEPHONE NUMBER IS GREEN OVER ONE THREE ONE. HELP ME.'

"The telephone number is Greenover 131. Help me," he repeated. He handed the paper back to Ferrers Locke with his manacled hands and bowed with sardonic politeness. "You have beaten me, Locke, and I deserved to be beaten for giving you the chance. Another time——"

"Another time, I think, will never come," said the Baker Street detective quietly.

Locke made a sign for Jack Drake to follow him, and walked past the prisoners, the eyes of the cracksman following him with a deadly gleam in them. A few minutes more, and the car was bearing Ferrers Locke and his boy assistant back to Baker Street.

THE END

Riding the Storm

An inferno of noise, stunning to the senses, paralysing to helpless inaction all but the strongest-nerved of men out on the bosom of the sea or in the air—howling wind, raging water, madly scurrying clouds, slashing rain, and clammy sea-mists swirling and blotting out everything. The stage is set for an epic battle with the elements.

The powerful destroyer in our picture—grace in every line of her, thick armour-plate enclosing a collection of that giant-powered machinery of the sea to which the twentieth century has given birth—is direct descendant of the stoutly-built wooden barques of our uncivilised ancestors, and is therefore thoroughly at home in this turmoil of savage Nature.

But her escort of seaplanes is in another category altogether. For seaplanes are the babies of the world's transport, and sea and sky and knife-edged slashing rain combine as common enemy to beat all aircraft down to doom. The art of navigating the waters has long since been learned. The airman is still learning; he is only at the beginning of his schooling, as this is reckoned by the measure of Time.

But every year that passes now sees gigantic strides in the complete conquest of the air. No matter though the thick, clammy mists blot out the destroyer completely for long minutes together, her escort of seaplanes keep in touch with her, by wireless, even as they keep in touch with shore stations set up to aid the airman flying "blind." And when ships and sea and horizon are blotted out utterly, the air pilot is able to fly solely with the aid of his instruments—products of the scientist's uncanny skill.

The man at the wheel of the storm-wracked destroyer and the navigating officer on its bridge, by reason of the greater protection afforded them, know little of the ordeal the air pilot passes through when sea and sky are conspiring to defeat all mankind!

THE END



Facing page 96

RIDING THE STORM!

A Day in the Life of a School Porter

by

William Gosling

(In an Interview)



I tugs at the risin'-bell until my pore old arms is well-nigh wrenched from their sockets!

"'And work never killed nobody." That's wot the 'Eadmaster told me when I complained to 'im that I was bein' rushed off me legs, an' swept off me feet, an' worrited off me 'ead by the noomerous dooties which falls to my lot.

Well, p'r'aps 'ard work ain't killed nobody—yet; but I've got an uncomfortable feelin' that I shall be the first victim! You see, when a man gets to my age 'is constitution is the worse for wear an' tear, an' it ain't nearly so robust as wot it used to be. They say that the first seventy years of a man's life is the worst, but don't you believe it. It's when you're between seventy an' eighty that the pace begins to tell, an' your joints get rusty, and you're leg-weary an' body-weary an' soul-weary.

Wot I says is this 'ere—why should a man 'ave to work, manually an' annually, all 'is days? Why should he 'ave to work at all, for the matter of that? I often wishes as 'ow I was a beautiful lily, wot toils not, neither do it spin. But if man *must* work, as the song says, then the only job wot appeals to me is that of a wine-taster—with plenty of overtime! But wine-tastin' is one of the overcrowded perfessions, so there's no chance in that quarter.

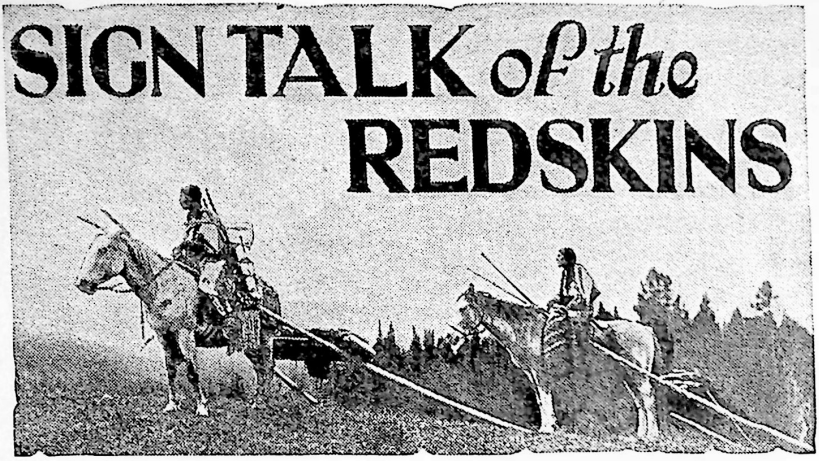
'Ere at Greyfriars, in my job as school porter, I works me fingers to the bone; an' as soon as the flesh 'as 'ealed, I works 'em to the bone again; an' so it goes on. I rises earlier than the lark, on winter mornings dull an' dark (poetry!), an' tugs at the risin'-bell until these pore old arms is well-nigh wrenched from their sockets!

Then, after a bite of breakfast, I spends the mornin' runnin' errants for the 'Ead, an' sweepin' the leaves in the Close, an' cleanin' the winders, an' polishin' up the 'andle of the big front door; an' a thousand an' one other dooties, most of which ought to be done by Trotter, the page. But whenever the word *work* is mentioned, Trotter trots so fast that you can't see 'im for dust!

In the afternoons I runs more errants, an' sweeps more leaves, an' cleans more winders, an' polishes up more 'andles of more big front doors. The summer is my busiest time, because we generally gets 'eavy falls of snow durin' an English summer. An' when the Close is snowbound, it's jolly 'ard work gettin' it clear—especially with snowballs whizzin' all around you, an' knockin' off your 'at, an' squelchin' into your face. Drat these English summers, I says; an' drat the young rips wot spends 'em a-snowballin'!

If the Governors of Greyfriars possessed 'earts instead of flintstones, they would find me a nice little cottage where I could pass the evenin' of me days, with a pension of five 'undred a year to retire on. My terms is quite modest, but the Governors an' the 'Ead won't 'ear of them. So there's nothin' for it but to stick to my dooties—in fact, to carry on until I'm carried off!

SIGN TALK of the REDSKINS



Indian days and Indian ways are changing fast! Buck McClintock, author of this article, has many friends among the tribes of the Indian nations. He caught the Indian before the changing conditions of the West have relegated beads and buckskin finally and irrevocably to the shadowland we call the "Past." And from the lips of Redskin chiefs he gleaned his information on the sign talk used between brave and brave, tribe and tribe, race and race.

A Hundred Different Dialects.

THE sign language of the Redskins was well known to the old-time plainsmen of the West. It was the means of communication between Redmen, tribes, and races. Most folks nowadays, thinking of the Indian, imagine that all Redskins spoke the same tongue. That is wrong.

There were over a hundred different dialects and languages spoken by the American Indians fifty years ago. When border fighting with Indians was an everyday occurrence in the West, when tribe and tribe united in warfare against the invading Paleface, some means of inter-communication between tribe and tribe was necessary, and so they used the sign talk.



The word "horse" was brought to mind when the Indian straddled his right wrist with two forked fingers.

From Red Eagle, an educated chief of the Sioux tribe, who visited England two years ago, I learned much of the sign talk used on the plains. He greeted me by placing his hand over his heart and then moving the hand outwards to me, palm downward. He had said, in sign talk: "My heart goes out to you."

The way the Indians informed a man that

he lied, and that his words were not to be believed, was simple and to the point. They held forked fingers before the mouth: "He speaks with the forked tongue." When in agreement with the speaker, one finger was held out in front of the mouth: "He speaks with the single tongue."

Sign talk was a silent and easy way of warning hunting parties of the approach of game. When the Indian brave crooked his right and left forefingers and held them up at the sides of his head, it was apparent that he pictured the horns of the bull buffalo. To see him straddle his right wrist with two forked fingers of his left hand brought the word "horse" to mind at once. Both arms raised above the head, fingers outstretched, visioned the branching antlers of the elk. The snake sign was the arm extended and moved slowly forward in an undulating gesture, with a sibilant hiss from the mouth.



Chief Bull Child, of the Glacier Park reservation, in front of his tepee, one of the finest on the reservation, and of which he is very proud.

Indians and Film Work.

A good friend of mine, who recently returned from a hike along the Mexican Border, told me how, in a forgotten corner of the Mojave Desert, he rode at sundown to the door of an adobé hut, and, knocking, was greeted by—of all people!—the man who trained the Indians who acted in that epic Western film, "The Covered Wagon." His name is Lee, and he is a direct descendant of the famous Mormon, Bishop Lee, who was responsible for instigating the terrible massacres on the settlers' wagon trains in Utah last century. Be that as it may, his descendant has proved a worthy Westerner, and was chosen to undertake the very difficult task of gathering and training the Indians of *seventeen*



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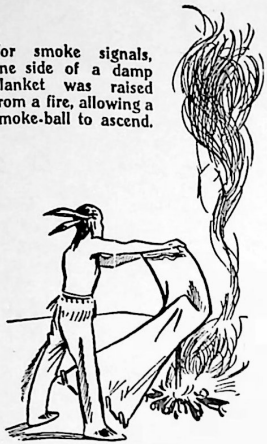
The peace sign was made by raising the right hand aloft, palm outward; or holding a blanket up before the body.



For smoke signals, one side of a damp blanket was raised from a fire, allowing a smoke-ball to ascend.

different tribes who performed so realistically in the famous film. Lee was one of the few men in the West who could take it on—*because he knew the Sign Language.*

Certain signs composed a universal lingo among the Redmen, and every man learnt it in addition to his own tribal signs. An Indian passing through strange territory and meeting men of another tribe made the peace sign—raising his right hand aloft, empty palm outward; or holding his blanket up before him so that it covered his entire body.



At night, flaming arrows were used as a means of signalling.

An imaginary thread drawn from the mouth expressed "life," while the cutting of the thread by a motion of the other hand indicated "death." Death was also indicated by placing the fingers of one hand against the palm of the other, held vertically, and letting the fingers slip down till they dropped below.

For long distances smoke was used. The Indian built his signal fire on some upstanding butte or hill, if such was to hand, using damp wood, so as to cause thick smoke. He sent his message in the form of smoke puffs or streamers.



Chief Aims Back, of the Glacier National Park reservation, all dressed up for state occasions. He uses the eagle wing as a fan.

It really took two to send smoke signals, though one quick man could do it at a pinch. A blanket, previously damped, and held off the flames by a stick thrust upright amid the fuel, was laid over the fire. One side of the draped blanket was lifted right up, allowing a round smoke-ball to ascend. For the smoke-streamer, the blanket was left on longer and held off longer. A long, straight streamer of smoke was allowed to rise for about half a minute; then the blanket was whipped into place for the next signal.

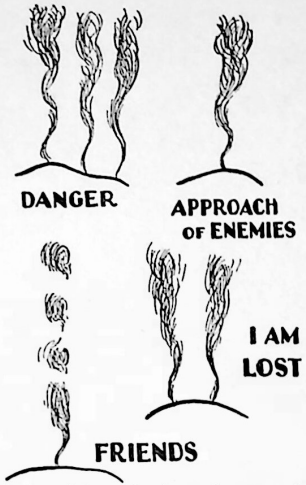
Three streamers close together meant "Danger." One continuous streamer told

the Indians for miles around of the approach of enemies. Three short puffs and a streamer said "Friends," and two streamers meant "I am lost."

The Flaming Arrow!

At night, when smoke could not be seen, fire arrows were used. The arrows were prepared by treating the head of the shaft with gunpowder and ground bark. The arrow was notched into the bowstring, a brave touched it off with a lighted torch, and whizz! went the flaming messenger into the night.

One fire arrow sent high into the sky meant "Enemies at hand." Two meant danger, and three that the danger was great.



For long-distance signals, smoke was used. Four smoke signals and what they meant are shown here.

A fire arrow shot in a diagonal direction indicated the direction as plainly as a pointing hand. Two arrows shot simultaneously said: "We shall attack!" Three arrows shot simultaneously: "We attack now!" Several arrows, shot at the same time, meant "Retreat. The enemy are too much for us."

The calumet, named after the reed from which it is made, and commonly known as the "pipe of peace," was another symbol between tribes. But if a chief refused the pipe it meant war!

Each tribe and nation had its own distinctive sign. The Sioux sign was made by placing the edge of the hand across the throat. The Arapahoes bunch the fingers of the right hand and tap their breasts with the tips, bunched fingers meaning a bunch of needles and tapping the chests meaning "The Tattooed Chests."

The Arapahoe tattoo marks, on close inspection, prove to be scar marks caused by the "Sun Dance."

A Painful Test!

Every young brave had to pass the "Sun Dance" test in days gone by, before he was admitted into the ranks of the warriors. The dance was a fiendish piece of torture, and it speaks volumes for Indian pluck and endurance to state that men went through it without a murmur!

A wooden skewer, about a foot long, was thrust into the fleshy part of a man's chest on one side and pushed through till it emerged on the other. To each end of the skewer was fastened a rope, and the ropes were made fast to the top of a high pole. The young Indian then leaned backwards until he was held up by the ropes which pulled on the skewer through the flesh and skin of his chest!

All through the blazing heat of the day he moved round the pole, ever leaning back, facing the sun as it moved across the heavens! And he gained blessed relief at last when the flesh and skin gave way, and the ropes pulled the skewer free! How the tribe shouted as the Medicine Man brought gunpowder and rubbed it into the gash, darkening the scar so that it would show through life as that of the tried and proved stoic!

One sign there was which was not made with hand, limb, smoke, or arrow. It was done on horseback. If a rider, sorely wounded or needing help, desired to summon distant tribesmen, he rode backwards and forwards for a few yards across the trail. It called for instant action. The watchers knew it meant "Come to me!"

THE END



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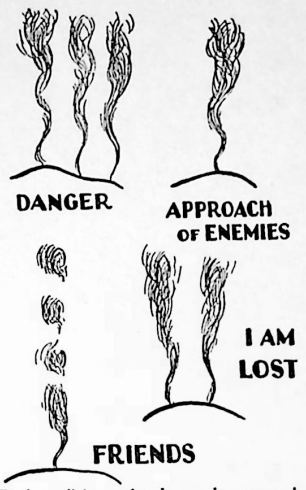

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Our Incurable Interviewer Calls On HARRY WHARTON

(Captain of the Remove Form at Greyfriars)



"TROT in and take a pew!" was the hospitable reply of Harry Wharton, after I had looked round the door of Study No. 1 and explained the purpose of my visit. "Can't spare much time, I'm afraid. Always busy here, aren't we, Franky?"

A nod from the pleasant-faced Frank Nugent confirmed the statement of the Remove skipper.

"You shan't be interrupted for long," I assured him. "Now, in the first place——"

"Wharton in?" roared a hearty voice from the doorway before I could say more. "Oh, there you are! Gym. practice in five minutes, remember!"

"I haven't forgotten, Bob."

Slam!

"That was Bob Cherry," smiled Harry Wharton. "Bit noisy, but one of the very best. Now, to resume——"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Bunter!" exclaimed Wharton, with a frown. "Roll away, old barrel! We're busy!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! Look here! Who's going to help me with my prep.?"

"Echo answers 'who'!" chuckled Nugent. "Nobody in this study anyway, Fatty! Buzz off!"

"Oh, really, Nugent! As you're so jolly rude, I shall take good care not to buzz off now! I—— Yoooooop!"

Billy Bunter changed his mind about staying. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that he had his mind changed for him. A heavy lexicon from Wharton and a fives bat from Nugent collided with him simultaneously, and Bunter gave a roar, and decided to buzz off after all!

"Now for a little peace!" sighed Wharton. "Come in!"

An inky-fingered fag put his head round the door and burst out with:

"Wingate wants you at once, Wharton! I heard him tell North it was about the row in your dorm. last night."

Wharton groaned.

"Oh, all right, Gatty! Look here, about this interview——"

"Quelchy wants you, Wharton!" called out a stentorian voice from the passage, and Bolsover of the Remove looked in. "It's about those broken windows in the Form-room, I think."

"Oh, crikey!"

"Wharton here?"

It was a chorus from the doorway. Half a dozen rather grim-looking juniors marched in and started speaking together.

"About the Soccer team——"

"You've put in that dud Hazel——"

"You've left me out again——"

"Sure, and it's a spalpeen ye are——"

"If you don't put me in——"

"Shut up, you idiots!" hooted Wharton, putting his fingers to his ears.

"Quelchy comes first!" grinned Bolsover.

Seizing a handy megaphone, I bawled into Wharton's ear:

"See you again when you've got a minute to spare—in other words, when you're no longer Form captain!"

And as I guided the Ford-Rolls back to London town, I had to admit that a Remove captain's life is not one of unadulterated bliss!

A delightful Nature story—By CLIVE R. FENN



The Wanderers

Far away there was a shuffle in the undergrowth; Magnus and his mate were trekking back into the untrodden wilderness . . . .

CRACK!

The stillness of the big forest was broken by the sharp report of a rifle, and Magnus, a shaggy bear which was shuffling on through the deep glade, pulled himself up and snuffled uneasily. There was nothing to be seen except a faint cloud of blue smoke, floating away amidst the grey-green columnar trunks of the lofty pines. A dim reflection of the vapour was caught in a pool of water which looked blue, for it mirrored a vivid patch of sky. Ahead were to be seen patches of gleaming snow on some higher ground.

The bear looked back for Ursina, his faithful partner, and heard a scuffling, so judged she was all right. But he was puzzled, never having heard a sound like that before. Life—for a bear, anyway—had been safe enough in the far western wilds, though, to be sure, Magnus had heard rumours of sportsmen who had come that way, armed with iron tubes, which sent forth flame and smoke.

But this was far too close to the cave where the two had made their home for a couple of seasons past—much too near to be pleasant. Magnus swung round and sniffed amidst the brown wrack of fern and rough grass. He tried to make himself believe that he had dreamt it as he lumbered into the little track he and Ursina had made to their cave.

Dream! It was not much of a dream, however! As Magnus arrived within sight of the black entrance to the den, the air was rent by a second report, and he caught sight of his companion just in front. The she bear had reached the open space in front of the cave when—crack!—that second shot rang out, and she spun round and dropped, with a whimpering cry.

Magnus gave a growl, and proceeded cautiously. All was still again, the sun catching the shiny seed-scales of the big fern fronds, and lighting up the magic mesh of the gossamer webs which lay across the moist undergrowth like fairy washing set out to dry. But luckily there was no tramp of heavy feet, no sign of a sportsman! Magnus trotted to the spot where his wife lay, and smelt round uneasily. The air was smoky, smelling of something he failed to recognise, for he had never set eyes on a man, except one evening at sunset long ago when he had seen an Indian on the big hills away north.

Ursina moved, and then, with a quick jerk, scrambled up on three legs, for one was hurt. With a swiftness marvellous in such bulky animals, the two bears dived into the thick undergrowth, and did not stop until they had put a safe distance between them and the suspicious scent. Ursina was the first to halt. A yelp escaped her, and she threw herself down again in the warm sun and licked the wound in her leg.

The two bears took counsel together. It was plain as paint that their comfortable sanctuary was no longer safe, and they reasoned that it was best to be going while the going was good.

After a further dose of Ursina's rough surgery, the two set off, intending to get farther into the wilds, where no ugly sounds disturbed the forest.

So the wanderers shuffled on, through mossy wildernesses where dazzling white snow patches shone. Magnus did the hunting now, while Ursina grumbled and limped in the rear. The little wild pig her mate brought in one evening did her good, however, though it was sure enough, with that shot in her leg, that she would go "dot-and-carry-one" to the end of the chapter.

The forest grew denser, and the travellers felt they had reached safety. Alas! there was no one to inform them of the danger of certain signs of peril in the shape of odd little curls of white wood, shavings which blew across an open space as at last, they reached a rift.

But, as good fortune would have it, they found here another cave. It was something quite new—something which the bears took for a new kind of hollow tree which offered comfortable shelter—while just beyond was a look-out or, rather, a look downward. The ground dropped away suddenly, a sheer descent which was calculated to make anyone except a bear quite dizzy. In front of this 'cave" lay a small heap of white ashes, from which a curl of smoke rose lazily; and Ursina, who was weary with the tramp, tripped in a hole as she gained this pile and went down sitting in the midst of the ashes.

She did not for the life of her understand why the special bit of earth there should be warm, but the sensation it afforded was grateful, and she did not get up, but lay and blinked happily at her companion. Undoubtedly this was the home for the two seekers after safety! True, the place was a bit strange, rather too fine for them, and different in a score of ways from what they had been accustomed to meet. All the same, it had advantages. It was snug enough inside this novel "cave," which was, in actual fact, the hastily made log cabin of a settler but recently come west, and who at the moment was padding it back with his dogs to the distant railhead for his stores.

How were the bears to know that they had jumped out of the frying-pan into the fire? There was nothing to rouse their suspicions, for the hardy settler, who had acquired rights over a belt of the forest land, had merely staked his claim, as it were, and his bed of ferns inside the crib was the only sign of his presence, apart from the four walls of the hut.

For several days there was peace in the new stronghold of Bruin and his mate, and Ursina hobbled about in the bright sunshine, or rested inside the fastness, while Magnus scouted for food, and to right excellent effect.

But the wonderful calm was broken at last by a bark of fury, and to his stupefaction Magnus, who had been making ready to sally forth on a raid, saw a little crowd of dogs come racing down the slope towards him.

They were smallish dogs, but fearless, and the bear faced them in a rage. Were these little animals going to attack him? Was it in their minds that they could turn him out—send Ursina limping off into the wilds, homeless once more? The thought of it, the insolence of the attack, made him quiver.

Then the dogs were on him! No hesitation on the part of the attackers! They dashed right at the bear, baying furiously, teeth bared, consumed with fury at the intrusion, eager to turn out the marauders before their master came up. The settler was far behind, and the distant barking floated to him on the still air.

Ursina surveyed the combat from a safe vantage point on top of the hut. Magnus did not need any aid from her against such puny antagonists. And yet the big bear, trained fighter as he was, felt that moment, in the heat of the conflict, as if he had met his match. For one dog seemed to be transformed into a couple in the lightning rush of the onslaught. Biting, scratching, harrying demons of vengeance—dogs who did not know when they were beaten, but who returned again and again with renewed bravery to the charge, while the big bear faced them, his face streaming with blood, and blind with anger.

The big bear fought with redoubled fury He had been a grim fighter all his life, but he was getting weary of the onslaught No sooner had he rolled one wiry antagonist down the slope than another came on, biting and worrying. His savage growls rose above the flurry of the conflict. Dimly he knew what it all meant—that he was to be driven out of his snuggery, sent back in the wilds, he and his partner.

It was a pitiful thought, and should not be. Magnus staggered and gave way, and the momentary advantage the attackers gained spurred them on anew But it was to be a fight to a finish The bear shook his big frame and struck out. He never knew



Biting, snarling demons of vengeance attacked Magnus again and again!

when he was beaten—and it was not the end yet, not by a long way.

Enemies all round him! Tearing at him, biting like furies!

Weight told all the same. A furious blow from a heavy paw sent one dog spinning; another went rolling down the incline. Not beaten yet, however! The attackers rallied, and the fight went on, when suddenly Magnus trembled, for from somewhere out of the depths of the forest came the thunderous roar which had frightened him

before, and which had sent him and his mate out into the wide world.

Ursina heard it, too, and was just as much alarmed, and the dogs barked frenziedly as they made ready, though badly hurt, to attack once more.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Three shots in swift succession, and the blue smoke lay on the shining air, smelling acrid and suggesting death.

The bear gave a growl, and went heavily, swaying back towards the "cave," pausing once to show fight as his enemies came forward, but rather more warily. Then from out of the greenery appeared the figure of the settler, and in a hazy way Magnus linked him with the horrible sound.

He retired in disorder, realising that there was nothing else for it now but retreat, for he was up against a strange enemy, who could not be fought. Dogs! He could face them right enough, but that noise! No! So he and Ursina were to be turned out. Their rights to the cosy "cave" were questioned. It was abominable, unthinkable, but they had to go!

Ursina went first, hobbling into the forest, away from the right, straight for the safety of the wilds; and in her wake Magnus lumbered along, stopping again to say a growl to the yapping dogs, though these had had punishment enough; while their master came up at the double, his gun recharged now.

But he did not fire again, since that would have been plain waste of good ammunition. He had driven the intruders off, and that was enough. So as not to harm his dogs, he had only fired into the air, anyway!

The settler leaned his piece against the cabin, and stooped to pat the dogs which surrounded him.

Far away there was a shuffle-shuffle in the undergrowth. Magnus and his mate were footing it slowly back into the untrodden wilderness, to seek a new home where all was safe for them, where the swollen waterways laughed over the mossy rocks, and the sunshine flashed—the land of solitude, where the soft winds stirred the birches in the ravines.

THE GREYFRIARS SPORTING ALPHABET

By Bob Cherry

Of the Remove

A is for ANGLING, a sport far too slow,
B is for BOXING, O.K. and K.O.!
C is for CRICKET, a glorious game.
D is for DIVING—deep breaths are our aim.
E is for EATING—here Bunter's a "champ."
F is for FOOTER. Who cares if it's damp?
G is for GOLF. Prouty plays—for his sins!
H is for HOCKEY. Look out for your shins!
I is the IDOL who's good at all sport.
J is for JAPING—but mind you're not caught!
K's the KILL-JOY, who'd abolish the lot!
L is for LUDO. Isn't sport? Why not?
M is for MARBLES, propelled by the thumb.
N's NOUGHTS and CROSSES—in class with your chum!
O's the OBSTACLE RACE—Bunter's stuck tight!
P is for PING-PONG, which ends in a fight.
Q is the QUARTER MILE—see Wharton's stride!
R's ROWING, but Coker's gone o'er the side.
S is for SKATING—just fall after fall!
T is for TENNIS—Biff! Whizz! Thirty all!
U is the UMPIRE, who knows all the rules.
V is for VAULTING a long string of stools.
W's WRESTLING. Have you got ribs of tin?
X is the 'XERTION needed to win.
Y is for YACHTING. What could be choicer?
Z is the ZEST which thrills us with joy, sir.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A FAG!

By DICKY NUGENT

Dicky Nugent, of the Second Form at Greyfriars, insisted on this article being published as written. The facts are all right, but the spelling leaves much to be desired!

FAG-MASTERS are beests!

i fag for Loder, of the Sixth, and Loder's a beest. i used to fag for Wingate. Old Wingate's a just beest, but Loder's just a beest. He keeps me on the go from mourning till nite, and his cheef pastime is to tan my hide with an ashplant —unless i'm cute enuff to hide the ashplant!

Fagging is a rellick of barberism. It takes us back to the days of surfs and vassels. It ought never to be aloud, and i often wonder why we suffer it in silence!

There ought to be a general strike of fags in all the schools, and if only I could get my fellow-fags to back me up, we should certainly have a big strike at Greyfriars. But some of the fags don't want to strike. They have nice, kind masters, who pay them a fare week's wage for a fare week's work, and give them free feeds into the bargin.

Loder duzzent come in that catty-gree. He has never paid his fag a penny-peace, to my nollidge; and as for entertaining his fag to a free feed—why, he wouldn't dreem of it! He's so jolly mean that the only things he ever entertains are suspishuns!

It's not honey being at the beck and call of a bully like Loder. i may be playing ludo or marbles in the Form-room, or baking chestnuts before the fire, and then someone comes in and tells me Loder wants me to go out for him. Off i go to his study, and sure enough he wants me to fag down to the villige for something — usually cigarettes — when i mite have been enjoying myself elsewhere. And if i don't hurry there and back, he gives me a cuff and makes me do some other meenial task out of spite.

It is also my paneful duty to wake Loder up every mourning at seven. When i wake him punctually, he cuffs and abuses me for disterbing his bewty sleep; and when i let him sleep on, he cuffs and abuses me for not calling him at the proper time. So i catch it both ways!

Another paneful duty of mine is to make Loder's toast. i generally manage to burn



Another paneful duty of mine is to make Loder's toast. i generally manage to burn it black, and then Loder looks black, too!

it black, and then Loder looks black, too! But sometimes i make perfect toast, and then Loder says it isn't done enuff. It's always overdone or underdone, but never *just* right!

i used to do Loder's washing-up; but i don't do it now, bekawse i've broken all his crox! Axxidents will happen, even in the best reggulated famblies; and Loder's stock of plates and cups and sawsers has gradually dwindled down to nothing. So there will be no more washing-up till he invests in some more crox.

Yet another paneful duty of mine is to spring-clean Loder's study. The whitewash has an unforchunit trick of splashing all over the carpet; and when i try to sweep the chimbly, the soot has a habit of spreading over the study like a thick fog, and settling on everything—which is very unsettling for Loder! After i've spring-cleaned his study, he always has to have it spring-cleaned again by an eggspert!

i'm fed-up with fagging for Loder, and Loder is just as fed-up with having me for his fag. But he's a dog in the manger, and refuses to give me the sack.

i am writing this artikle in Loder's study. i am eggspecting him to arrive at any minnit, and when he does arrive he will walk right into the booby-trap i've fixed up for his bennyfit. There is a large paper bag perched on top of the door, and it contains ink and gloo and soot and treakle—all mixed together in just the right proportions, by a master hand.

Hark! i hear the sound of approaching footsteps. They paws outside the door. i glance up eggspectantly, my hart pounding against my ribs. The door opens, and then —— Swish! Swooosh! Followed by a choking cry.

i jump to my feet and make a dart for the window.

Loder has found the booby-trap!

THE END

FOR THE ODD FIVE MINUTES!

Each of the following sentences, when the letters are correctly transposed, will be found to form the name of a well-known character at Greyfriars School. See if you can solve these anagrams.

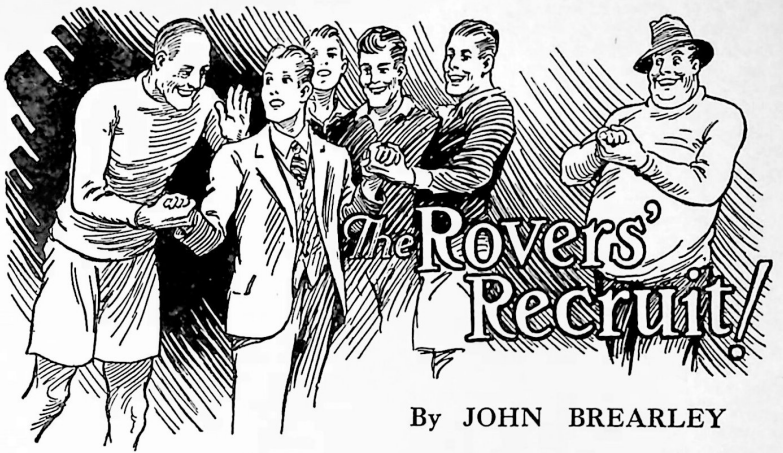
1. Eating, we gorge.
2. Care, or choke!
3. Will go a-smiling.
4. Demons, my Dick!
5. Busy term, man!
6. Life is short—then far.
7. Greed to burgle so.
8. Do no Livy? Glad!
9. Ran risk—held on.

(*The correct solutions will be found on page* 278.)

A RHYMING CONUNDRUM

My first is in WHARTON, but not in MIMBLE,
My second's in INKY, and also in TRIMBLE.
My third is in CHERRY, but not in BLAKE,
My fourth is in HILARY, but not in RAKE.
My fifth is in D'ARCY, but not in GLYN,
My sixth is in KERR, but not in WYNN.
My seventh is in DIGBY'S name—not in MERRY'S,
My last is in MANNERS, and also in HERRIES
My whole is the name of a popular writer,
Whose ANNUAL stories grow brighter and brighter!

(*The correct solution will be found on page* 278.)



By JOHN BREARLEY

A real-life story of the football field, telling how a young newcomer—Dick Forrester—brings about an astonishing revival in the fortunes of Oldtrent Rovers.

THE FIRST CHAPTER
A Determined Rebel !

"THEN this is your last word, pater?" Colonel Forrester rose slowly from his padded seat in the old library at Trent Manor, bushy grey eyebrows drawn down in a frown as he stared at his stalwart son opposite.

"It is, Dick," he said briefly.

"And although we're not—not as well off as we were, you're going to make me waste four years at Oxford—at Uncle John's expense, too—rather than let me try to earn my own living!"

The colonel's temper, always a trifle hasty, flared up when Dick had finished, and down came his fist on the table between them with a crash.

"Confound it, sir," he snapped, "are we going to have this infernal argument all over again? The Forresters have been at Oxford for generations—and you know it! And since I cannot send you, your Uncle John is doing his duty as a matter of course! And, in any case, I do not like your way of 'earning your living,' as you call it! You go up to Oxford as soon as you're eighteen!"

"I won't!"

Dick Forrester's own temper, just as fiery as the colonel's but usually under better control, snapped at last.

There was a striking resemblance between father and son as they glared at each other in tight-lipped silence.

Colonel Forrester was slight and dapper, and his grizzled hair and thin, lined face looked oddly white against the rich panelling of the library; whereas Dick stood three inches taller than he already, and was broad in proportion. But both had the same sparkling grey-blue eyes and the hard chins of fighting men.

The battle of wills raged for some seconds before Colonel Forrester raised a hand that trembled slightly and pointed to the door.

"Get out, sir!" he rasped. "Get out—and don't come back until you can apologise! This is the last time I'll be browbeaten by you!"

Not trusting himself to reply, Dick turned on his heel, fists clenched, head held

high. Next instant the heavy oak door slammed behind him, and the colonel, already regretting his outburst, half moved as though to recall the lad, but finally compressed his lips obstinately and sat down again.

As Dick stamped down the stairs and through the hall of the Manor, a girl came in from the garden, her fresh, pretty face glowing in the autumn sun, and who, when she saw the expression on Dick's face, gave a little cry and hastened towards him. He shook his head heavily when she came up, in answer to the anxious inquiry in her eyes.

"No luck, old girl! He's just as set as ever on me going to Oxford, and, in fact—well, he's just turfed me out! That's all!"

It was characteristic of Moira Forrester that she did not waste words in idle sympathy. Instead, she tucked her arm beneath her twin brother's, and together they wandered moodily out into the wide-flung garden.

Trent Manor stood on the top of a huge hill that towered over the countryside for miles around, and through a gap in the ancient oaks they could look down in the valley to where the town of Oldtrent sprawled untidily.

Once a tiny agricultural place, Oldtrent had boomed during the century into a big industrial centre, and a pall of smoke from countless chimneys hung over its thousands of roofs. There was work down there, energy and the whirling bustle of modern life, men and women earning their living; and Dick Forrester loved the place, all the fierce ambition in his nature making him detest the thought of dawdling away four years in sleepy, grey old Oxford. But Colonel Forrester, on the other hand, remembering the past, hated Oldtrent now and all its works!

A severe set-back in the family fortunes three months before had been the cause of Dick leaving school before his time, so that when his uncle had offered to pay his way through the Varsity, the colonel had jumped at the offer—at least, until his own income should pick up again.

At first, Dick's scheme of earning his own living had been received with an indulgent smile, but, to the colonel's surprise, his son stuck to the idea tenaciously, and the quarrel that had just taken place was the last of many on the subject.

"It's absolutely putrid!" burst out Dick furiously at last, glowering at the smooth lawn before them. "Why should I piffle round at New College? For a tenth of what it will cost to send me to Oxford I can start up with Sergeant Willis, and not be an expense to anyone."

"What did father say about the sergeant, Dicky?" asked Moira, in her soft voice.

"Oh, in off the deep end, as usual! Didn't like my way of earning a living! What the dickens there is wrong in helping a decent, clean-living chap like Willis to run a gymnasium on business lines, blowed if I can see! One of the best P. T. instructors ever turned out by the Army, Moira! And he's got a topping gym., all fitted up with the latest apparatus, smack in the middle of High Street, where all the fat, unfit business jossers are—and for fifty pounds I can go in with him! You see, he's starting classes for the youngsters in the town, and that'll be my job—making the little chaps fit. And, by gum, wouldn't I just enjoy it!"

Moira pressed his arm, knowing just how he felt, although she had heard it all several times before.

Physical fitness was a religion with Dick Forrester. Still five months from his eighteenth birthday, he was a young giant in the making, and hard as nails in wind and sturdy limbs.

Moira knew and liked Sergeant Willis, too; an iron veteran who had retired from the Army and opened a gymnasium and training school in Oldtrent. Apart from other reasons, the gym. was a good commercial proposition, and Moira knew that for fifty pounds a share in the business was cheap. But she was also level-headed enough to appreciate the force and weight of Colonel Forrester's veto.

"Well, what can you do, Dicky?" she asked anxiously.

"Do?" snorted Dick. "Find a way to

earn that fifty quid and some to live on while I'm doing it, of course!"

"Dick!"

Her brother's jaw jutted out like the ram of a battleship as he frowned down on her.

"Why, you don't think I'm going to be licked, do you?" he cried fiercely. "I've said I won't go to Oxford, and I won't! It's absolute obstinacy on the governor's part. He's stiff-necked, old-fashioned, and prejudiced to the hilt against everything in Oldtrent!"



Moira watched her brother, bag in hand, stride off towards the gates, on his way to join Oldtrent Rovers.

"Oh, Dick!" Moira's voice was shaky as she protested against the tirade. "Don't talk like that about dad! You know he's one of the best in the world!"

Dick flushed.

"Well, yes, I suppose so," he muttered remorsefully. "Sorry! But, honestly, why should I waste four years at someone else's expense when we know dad's absolutely hipped for cash?"

"I know, Dick. But what can you do?"

"Play football!"

The words came short and sharp. Moira released her brother's arm, to look up at him with startled eyes.

"Play football! You mean as a professional?"

"Why not?" asked Dick coolly. If his father could be determined, so could he! "It's the best thing I can do. And, Moira, I rather think there's a chance for me in the town team!"

His sister gazed at him in stricken silence—not because of the football, for she loved watching him play; but—but the son of Colonel Forrester a professional!

Apart from the sensation it would cause in the neighbourhood, she hardly dared think of her father's wrath. The colonel hated professional sport—he knew nothing about it, incidentally—and the twins fairly had to sneak into the town on Saturdays to watch Oldtrent Rovers! Now, if Dick threw in his lot with them——

Moira said as much, in a horrified voice.

"I don't care!" cried Dick recklessly. "I'll earn a living somehow! Listen, Moira, I've thought it all out. If I can get taken on——"

"If, Dick?" Moira fired up at that, for she honestly thought her brother one of the finest forwards in the world. "Why, you're sure to!"

"Not sure to!" he corrected honestly. "You've got to be jolly good to be a pro., Moira! I think I'm fit enough, but—well, anyway, I'm going down to see about it. If I can even get into the reserves, I'll jolly soon save hard and raise that fifty! The sergeant'll keep the place open for me, and I'll be all right for the summer!"

Moira plucked at her under-lip doubtfully.

"Ye-es! But, Dick, what will dad say

when he learns you're among professional players?"

"He can say what he jolly well likes!" snorted Dick, hardily. "What's wrong with the pro's, anyway? I know a lot of 'em, and they're as decent chaps as you'll find anywhere! Dash it, they're only doing the job they can do best, the same as millions of other people; and it's a job you have to keep fit for, too, which is more than you can say for others!"

Moira was silent. She knew her brother too well to know he would alter his mind once he looked and spoke like that; and a few minutes later she watched him stride off towards the gates, bag in hand, trying, like the gallant sportsman she was, to keep back her tears. Suddenly, on an impulse, she went flying after him, catching him as he marched into the road.

"I'll come with you," was all she said, and Dick pressed her arm as she fell into step beside him.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

New Chums—and an Enemy!

IN silence they walked down the hill to the town and took a tram to the other side, where the Rovers' ground was—a fine new enclosure. It had not been opened long, and was equipped with the latest accommodation and a fine playing pitch. The pity was that just at the moment the team itself was decidedly not living up to its headquarters!

Last season the club had slumped badly after Christmas, descending with heart-breaking suddenness to the bottom of the First League and feeble relegation.

Now this season, even in the Second League, they were doing no better; in fact, although the football season was six weeks old, Oldtrent Rovers had exactly one point to show for seven matches!

Opinions in the town, of course, were furiously divided on the subject, some blaming the defence, some the management, others the trainer. But only a few of the experts had diagnosed the right trouble—the forward line! The defence was sound enough, as the goals scored against them proved, but the forwards as a line were ragged robins, without an ounce of punch or finish about them.

Individually they were clever, which is why the town as a whole blamed the defence. But against methodical opponents the Rovers' attack folded up completely, and the best defence in the world can't win matches behind a feeble front line!

It was a well-known fact that the Rovers were looking for forwards, and equally well known, too, that, having spent a huge sum of money on the new ground, the club could not afford heavy transfer-fees. Therefore, Dick Forrester speculated, as he walked up to the gates, he had an outside chance.

For there was no doubt he could play football. He was the best centre or inside-right turned out by Clavering School for years, and, in addition to playing for the Corinthians twice on tour, had gained schoolboy international caps against Scotland and Wales.

However, as he received admittance by asking for Mr. Capper, the trainer-manager, and he and Moira walked into the spacious ground, he could not suppress a thrill of nervousness.

Leaving his sister in a stand seat, watching a few grey-sweatered players at heading practice, he learned that the manager was in the dressing-room, the sweeper who gave him the information indicating the passage with a horny thumb.

At his knock a tremendous, irate voice bellowed "Come in!" and, pushing open the door, he found himself in a big room full of players in various stages of changing. There were first and second team men there, some of whom he recognised, and who in turn recognised him as he stood in the door, for the Forresters were well known to nearly everyone in Oldtrent.

A few were silently engrossed donning elaborate shinguards and special boots, but most of them were changed already, chaffing and laughing at each other with a healthiness that showed, no matter what brand of football the Rovers played, they were a happy club, anyway.

One man in the room, however, looked far from happy. He must have been a

sturdy man once, a little pocket Hercules, but was now past his best, and his bulky muscles had run to fat.

Clad in tweed trousers, white sweater, and a battered soft hat, he glowered round the room from man to man with a ferocious frown on his red, chubby, but efficient face, as though begging someone to start trouble. Any trouble would do!

It was his voice that had bidden Dick enter, and as his eyes fell on the lad, he roared:

"And what the pernicketty do you want?"

Dick grinned disarmingly. Although he did not know Mr. Capper he had seen him often, and knew enough about him not to be alarmed by his blustering ways.

"A job, please, Mr. Capper!"

Some of the players who knew Dick looked up in surprise and ceased talking, but Mr. Capper snapped his fingers towards the door.

"Got all our programme-sellers, thanks! Scat!"

"As a player, please!" continued Dick, standing his ground amid a chuckle from the Rovers.

"Huh! What's your fool name?"

"Er—Forrest!" blurted Dick, reddening, at which some queer glances went round the room.

"Means nothing to me!" snapped Mr. Capper testily. Evidently something had riled him badly that morning! "Who have you played for before? How old are you—eighteen?"

"Y-yes!" Dick stammered. "I've played for Clavering School and the Corinthians twice, and——"

"And for English schools against Wales and Scotland!" boomed a great voice behind him.

A mighty hand descended on his back, nearly knocking all the breath out of him, and, turning, he beheld an enormous giant towering over him, with a wide smile on his broad, leathery countenance.

He knew who it was at a glance—Tim Abbot, the Rovers' great old international full-back, now past his best days, but still a star in League games. Tim gave him a friendly nod and grinned at Mr. Capper.

"You're an ignorant old man, Cappy," he said severely. "You ought to study the game more—like me! This lad's one of the best youngsters we've got in the town. Fit, too—aren't you, my son? Feel there, Cappy—and here!" He pinched Dick's calves and flicked a backhander into his taut stomach muscles, grinning again as the lad scarcely moved. "Like iron!"

Mr. Capper found his tongue at last.

"You—you darned interferin' lobster, you——"

"Now, now!" said Tim reprovingly.

"You—you——"

"Cappy! Come, come!"

These two were old friends—and foes! They had been club-mates for years, but whereas Tim Abbot was still a player, Capper's tendency to corpulence had forced him off the playing-field into the training-room. Apparently these little scenes between them were common occurrences, for the rest of the players gathered round to watch the fun.

"Who's the manager of this club?" howled the little man.

"Why, you are, Cappy, of course!" answered Tim, with elaborate surprise.

"Well, then, go and jump off the grandstand, you—— You, youngster—Forrest, or whatever your name is—where have you played?"

"Centre or inside-right," answered Dick promptly. "The latter for preference."

"My players don't have preferences!" snapped the fiery little trainer. "They ——"

But before he could go on, there came another interruption. The group of players moved, and a tall man with very light hair and eyelashes stepped to the fore.

Dick knew him immediately as Thurston, the Rovers' inside-right, a wonderfully clever but terribly selfish player, who, in the opinion of more than one good judge, was just the man who was holding up the line every time, although his trickiness made him popular with the crowd.

Pushing past Capper, he stared leisurely

at Dick from head to foot, with narrowed eyes and a sarcastic grin.

"Think you're going to do me out of my job, then, Mr. Schoolboy?" he sneered.

The unexpected bitterness in the words took Dick's breath away for a moment, but Mr. Capper had something to say.

"Mind your own business, Thurston!" he snorted, laying a hand on the other's arm.

Thurston shook it off easily.

"Close your face!" he ordered insolently. He had cost the Rovers a lot of money last season, and well he knew the directors would not listen very hard to complaints against such an expensive man. Turning to Dick once more, he said mockingly:

"Forrester's your right name, isn't it? Colonel Forrester's son! Father know you've come among us low fellers?"

A curious expression came stealing over Dick's face, and as wise old Tim Abbot studied him in silence, he grinned suddenly and stepped gently out of the firing-line, fixing a comical look of pity on Thurston's scoffing features.

"Well, no, he doesn't as a matter of fact," replied Dick quietly.

"Not officially, eh?" jeered the other.

"How do you mean?" asked Dick, puzzled by the cryptic words.

"Why, the colonel's hard up, I've heard. Suppose he doesn't mind his son earning his living, but not under his right name! Poor but proud, eh? Snobbish, I call it!"

Dick's face went scarlet.

"Why, you fearful blighter!" he roared, in sudden fury. "Take that!"

Smack!

His hand, swishing out, clumped hard across Thurston's face, making the man reel back into the arms of the interested players.

Leaping up, little eyes agleam, the footballer pushed Capper savagely out of the way and jumped at Dick, guarding his face in the usual style of rough-and-ready fighters.

But he made a sad error. Dick had not the slightest intention of breaking his knuckles against anyone's hard jaw, and as Thurston's arms left his body wide open, he bobbed under a swinging left and whipped a right hook to the solar plexus, with all the weight of his body behind it.

The shot was an absolute winner. Thurston gave a curious yelp, half-howl, half-gasp, folded in the middle like a penknife, and slumped heavily to the floor. Tim Abbot, with a beatific smile, lifted Dick's arm and held it aloft.

"Gentlemen, Forrest is the winner!" he guffawed jubilantly.

Little Mr. Capper stared down at the gasping footballer, then at the indignant lad who had knocked him out.

"Who gave you leave to hammer my men?" he yelled. "Gosh, laddie, that was a beauty! What d'ye weigh—11.6? All of it landed on Thurston then, I reckon! Well, pick the moaning elephant up, you chaps, and get along out. We've wasted enough time as it is!"

"Hey, but what about the young 'un, Cappy?" cried Tim Abbot.

Capper whirled round, and, seizing a spare boot, missed the grinning giant by a mile with his aim.

"Will you mind your own business?" he roared. "I know what I'm doing! Son, I'll give you a show just for flooring Thurston! You've finished him for this practice, anyway. Are you fit for a full trial match?"

"I think so, Mr. Capper. I'm always pretty fit," replied Dick respectfully.

"Well, then, you can turn out for the Colours!" ordered Mr. Capper, secretly pleased. "Mitchell!" A youngster in the reserves looked up inquiringly. "Change into a white shirt and play for the First! Go on now, all of you! Out of it!"

When Dick came on to the field, most of the players gave him an encouraging smile. It was not that they were glad Thurston had been knocked out, although he was not very popular with his mates, but like good sportsmen they enjoyed seeing anyone stand up for himself.

Dropping a hand on his shoulder, big Tim Abbot whispered:

"This is a chance for you, laddie!

Cappy's just aching to boot Thurston into the reserves, so play up!"

The game, like most practices, was First eleven forwards against the defence, for Capper was making every effort to remodel his forward line. He had some good players, too, but was handicapped by the directors' instructions to build up the attack round Thurston, the highly-paid star, a state of affairs that only made the vitriolic little man more wild than usual.

Dick lined up nervously in the Colours'

Trapping it prettily in his stride, however, he had a quick vision of a tackler at his shoulder, and flicked the ball to the centre-forward. The pivot's shot went wide, but as they streamed back for the goal-kick, Dick felt better.

He had been terribly shaky at first. Indeed, his knees felt as though they had melted into water. But now his head was clear, and he remembered the stake he was playing for.

The ball came dropping out of the sky



"You fearful blighter!" Dick roared. "Take that!" His hand swished round and clumped hard across Thurston's face.

forwards, catching a glimpse of Moira, sitting eager and alone in the stand, and next moment the game was on.

The First forwards went away speedily in an attack, but Tim, sliding in, cleverly robbed Mitchell, and swung the ball fast and flat to Dick's partner on the wing. Unconsciously Dick sprinted hard into the right position, and the ball bobbed up in front of him before he was quite aware of it.

towards him, and, racing up, he beat a half-back's head by a fraction. As the ball dropped to the ground, Dick whipped round the centre-half and went for goal at a speed that made little Mr. Capper, watching anxiously on the touchline, raise his eyebrows under the battered hat.

Challenged, Dick swung the ball with beautiful precision to his partner, who centred. Again the shot went wide, and again Dick was first away from the goal-

kick, Hall, the Rovers' centre-half, securing the ball and lining out a glorious pass to his toes.

This time, Dick swung the ball into the field first time, right to the feet of the inside-left, and, running like a hare, was just on the spot to push the return pass obliquely to the centre-forward. The lightning criss-cross movement opened the defence wide, and the centre-forward went through the gap with a clear run, and shot. Fast and rising, the ball sped towards the right-hand post, but the keeper, leaping across, punched it out. Unfortunately, it lobbed over the head of a following half-back and dropped at Dick's foot, so that, without losing a second, he drove hard for the other post.

"Good shot, son!"

The unexpected rasper left the reserve keeper standing still. Neatly and sweetly the ball flashed under the bar and hissed cosily into the rigging.

Little Mr. Capper ran out on to the field like an excited terrier.

"Hey, Forrest! Mitchell! Come here, you two! Change shirts!"

Stocky little Mitchell, who so far had had no chance, looked disappointed, but grinned cheerfully at Dick.

"Good luck, old man!" he said as he turned away, and Dick patted his arm gratefully.

Mr. Capper had some brief instructions to give.

"Keep up that constructive work, laddie. It's what this club wants!"

Scarcely daring to look up at the tense little figure in the stand, Dick trotted into the First team forward line, his heart beating quickly. Hayward, the centre, touched the ball to him, and he passed it back; then away they went, until Dick found himself face to face with Tim Abbot's vast bulk, with the ball running between them. At close quarters Tim was still the best tackler in England, but there was a curious grin on his face as somehow Dick *just* got there first. *just* beat him, and sent the outside-right, Osborne, racing for the corner-flag with the leather.

A whirling half-hour passed like a glorious if somewhat confused dream, and then, to everyone's surprise, Mr. Capper walked out at half-time and stopped the practice.

He had seen enough. And so had everybody else on that field, the sullen Thurston included, scowling bitterly from the stand as he saw the other players patting Dick on the shoulder, much to the lad's astonishment; for, although his side had won comfortably, he had put it down to Osborne's terrific pace at outside-right and his accurate centres.

Tim Abbot, too, looked thoughtful as he sauntered up to Mr. Capper.

"Cappy——" he began, but the little trainer waved him to silence.

"Don't wake me up, Tim!" he pleaded. "Don't wake me up and tell me it's all a dream! Don't tell me that at last I've got the makin's of the finest inside-forward we've ever had, and at last I can chuck Thurston into the dustbin!"

The giant laid a hand on his little friend's shoulder.

"I'm glad, old socks!" he chortled. "He's a nice kid, too. We may save the season yet!"

For he alone knew that little Capper was facing the end of his contract with the Rovers if some improvement in the team didn't show up, and if occasionally during the practice he had slacked artistically to let Dick get past—well, why not, if it gave a natural footballer just the right confidence, and helped old Cappy? But all this, of course, he kept to himself!

"Never seen young Osborne move so fast before," he said meditatively, pulling off his boots, "or sling his centres over so well!"

"You've never seen young Osborne get such passes before, either!" snapped Mr. Capper. "Any fast winger can play like that after his inside-man's drawn all the defence and stuck the ball right on the very identical blade o' grass I'd ha' picked out myself to put it on!"

Both veterans glanced over the dressing-room to where Dick and Osborne were changing together, chatting and laughing

over their new partnership like old friends already.

Half an hour later Dick had signed professional forms for Oldtrent Rovers. Afterwards, striding gaily towards the gates with Tim and Osborne, he introduced them to Moira, at the same time telling her the glad news.

Manfully she congratulated him, and won the hearts of the footballers by her firm handshake and bright smile; and Dick, having seen her home, turned back to find Sergeant Willis and tell him about the venture.

For little Mr. Capper, sticking firmly to his guns, had clapped Dick in the side against Mapleton United on Saturday, and as this was only two days off, had already wired Dick's application to the F.A., in London.

Thurston, the ex-star, was forgotten!

THE THIRD CHAPTER
A Happy Ending!

"AND so, you see, Colonel, he's turned professional. And—well, o' course, that's all right in its way, but, being a sport, sir, I don't like to see a wild kid, if I may say so, lowering his folks like that!"

Thurston, the Rovers' inside-right, lounged carelessly back in his chair in Colonel Forrester's study at Trent Manor, and, though his manner was obsequious, there was a sardonic light in his small eyes as he watched the effect of his words on the stern face opposite.

For this was Thurston's idea of getting even. It was Saturday morning. In a few hours Dick Forrester would be playing his first game in the green shirt of the Rovers, a fact which, together with the dropping of Thurston himself from the team, had already caused a sensation in the town.

The footballer had left the Rovers' ground after the trial two days ago nearly mad with fury. Several schemes had occurred to him. He had even toyed for a long time with the plan to have Dick "scragged" by certain of his tough friends in town. But, deciding that there was too much risk in that, he had seized on the subtler inspiration of coming to Colonel Forrester, and, of course, putting Dick's rebellion in its worst light.

Cunningly, then, he picked his time until within a few hours of the match, for, if the colonel acted as he fully anticipated he would, and marched down to the ground and stopped Dick from playing, then that little rat Capper would have no option but to reinstate the fallen star.

So thought Thurston, the inside-right, but he made the mistake of allowing his face to betray his thoughts, for Colonel Forrester was wise in the ways of men, and his voice was bleak as he spoke for the first time.

"You are, I believe, a professional footballer also, Mr.—er—Thurston?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" replied Thurston eagerly. "But, o' course, it's different for me!"

"Doubtless! But I dislike hearing any man run down his own profession. Well, I am obliged to you, sir. Is there anything more you wish to say?"

The abrupt dismissal took the footballer's breath away. This was not what he had expected.

"B-but aren't you going to do anythin', Colonel?"

Colonel Forrester rose to his feet, and, with great calmness, touched a bell on his desk.

"That, I am afraid, I cannot discuss," he said quietly. And as a servant appeared in the door: "I wish you good-morning, sir!"

Five minutes later Thurston was outside Trent Manor, red with wrath and bitterly inveighing against "old snobs" and the like, while back in the study Moira Forrester, who had seen—and heard—his departure and guessed his errand, was sitting on the arm of the colonel's chair, patiently waiting for her father's anger to subside before she put in her own spoke.

"Well, I think you're an old silly, dad," she said, when at last the storm abated somewhat.

"Moira!"

" Well, daddy, I do! Try to put yourself in Dick's place! Would you have taken any favours from people, or consented to live even on a dear old thing like Uncle John for four years? No, of course you wouldn't!" she said swiftly, as the colonel's face twitched.

His fist thumped down on the desk.

" He's a disgrace! My son a professional footballer!"

" And a jolly nice lot they are, too!" cooed Moira serenely. " I've met some of them!"

" What, miss? How dare you!"

" And if you'll listen to me, dad, instead of trying to be the harsh old silly you're not, you'll come and meet them, too, yourself, this afternoon!" Moira's voice would have melted a heart of granite.

" Me?" spluttered the colonel. " Me go and watch my son perform in public—for money? And with such men as the specimen who has just called here?"

" If you want to know, Thurston's the most unpopular man in the club, because he's no sportsman," replied Moira calmly. " And the reason he hates Dicky is because Dick thrashed him after he'd insulted you on Thursday. So there! Now, listen!"

And Moira Forrester began to talk for Dick's sake—and the colonel's.

It was a long fight, but she stuck to it gallantly, and at five minutes to three that afternoon the colonel's two-seater deposited them both at the Rovers' ground, where her father, still bristling and fuming, slammed down a note for two seats in the stand.

Blissfully unaware of the eyes that were watching him, Dick trotted out on to the green field amid the welcoming roar of the home crowd. Tim Abbot won the toss and chose the wind, and Mapleton United came bursting away in their first attack.

They were beaten back by Hall, the centre-half, who slipped the ball to Dick. Not yet certain of himself, he hesitated just for a second, but it was long enough for Carson, Mapleton's veteran skipper, who was marking him, to rob him deftly and send the forwards away.

A groan burst from the crowd, and the man next the colonel in the stand voiced his disapproval strongly.

" That's what comes of playin' blinkin' schoolboys!" he snorted. " They ought to be playing Thurston—not getting kids out of nurs'ries!"

A slight frown came to the colonel's brow as he glanced sideways at his neighbour, and the frown grew into a positive thundercloud next moment, when Dick was again beaten for possession, and the supporter broke into more expressions of disgust.

" Is Dick playing badly, Moira?" The colonel asked the question with studied carelessness, but Moira detected a slight quiver in his voice.

" He's up against a really great player, daddy," she said, and the colonel frowned at his neighbour again.

Meanwhile, the game was going briskly. Dick was disappointed but not downhearted, and a genial wave from Tim Abbot comforted him; but, seeing he had not settled down, the Rovers' captain wisely began to direct the attack to the left-wing, and Dick and Osborne were starved.

Then suddenly came another chance! Rapid-fire play in mid-field left the Oldtrent centre with the ball, and all paths to the left-wing blocked. Quickly he flipped the ball to Dick.

The latter had a glimpse of Carson's red jersey at his elbow, and touched the leather straight back, nipped round the international, picked up the return pass in a clear field, and next moment Oldtrent's new right-wingers were flying down the field in their first raid—a raid that finished only when Hayward finally headed Osborne's centre just over the bar.

To the sound of an encouraging roar, Dick ran back to his place, receiving a grim wink from Carson as he did so; and the colonel looked pointedly at his neighbour.

Hayward got the ball from the goal-kick and sprinted left. Tackled, he passed to Dick, who again just beat Carson and sent Osborne away. This time, however, the centre curled behind the posts.

Expressive glances were exchanged

among the defenders of Mapleton, and Carson smiled as Tim's great voice boomed:

"Hey, Billy, how d'ye like your eggs done?"

Half-time arrived with no score. But Dick had found himself, and the Rovers had done most of the attacking. The crowd gave them a great cheer as they filed off.

The second half started with a bang. Bucked by success, the Rovers had every intention of swamping the United right away; but football is a queer game, and within five minutes two lightning raids, two holes in defence, two unstoppable shots, and Mapleton were two goals up! There was a despairing note in the cheers as the Rovers lined up after the second goal.



Dick got all the swing of his sturdy leg behind the ball, and into the side of the net like a brown, hissing thunderbolt it went. The Rovers had won!

After that they played like demons, much to the surprise of Colonel Forrester, who had always thought professionals turned it in when they were losing heavily; and attack after attack ripped through Mapleton's defence. The criss-cross move between Dick and the inside-left saw Hayward's shot brilliantly saved, then Hall sent the left-wing away. Over came the centre, and Dick got his head to it, and a groan went up as the ball slammed against the cross-bar from ten yards out!

Nothing daunted, the green shirts came again, and Dick began to prove he was a born schemer. Hayward had the ball, Dick running beside him, Carson waiting to pounce. Dick swerved suddenly to the right, waiting for the leader's pass; Carson followed him, and then the new inside-right swerved back through the gap, picked up Hayward's pass, feinted to Osborne, which drew the back, and then stabbed a lightning screw pass to the unmarked inside-left ten yards from goal! The Mapleton 'keeper picked the ball out of the net amid a roar that shook the stands!

"My great little inside-right!" crowed Mr. Capper, standing by the stand rails.

2—1! A solo run by Osborne was beaten by a desperate defender; a great shot from the centre-half was tipped over the bar by inches! Then an attack started by the left-half blazed up in a manner that brought hysterical yells from the crowd and tears of pure joy to little Mr. Capper's eyes; for, like a smooth, polished machine, the Rovers' whole line swept goalward, passes ripping "first time" from man to man until Mapleton were all over the place! The avalanche finished with Hayward in possession five yards out and the backs nowhere! And no goalkeeper on earth could have stopped the lightning shot that nearly tore the rigging!

Level! The colonel by this time had for-

gotten his grievance. He was tense with excitement over the clean, sporting game, and every time Dick got the ball, clutched Moira's arm until she could have cried out —if she had noticed it! Down by the railings, little Mr. Capper was crooning to himself:

"My wonderful little new forward! Go on, Dicky, lad—on your own for a change!"

Having played a perfect passing game all through, Dick was trying a regular Corinthian dribble, beating man after man by pace and swerve. But, like all novices in League football, he just overdid it, and the wily Carson, shadowing him carefully, hooked the ball away amid a wail from the crowd, who had taken young "Forrest" to their hearts. And the colonel's eyes glowed as he saw Dick and Carson grin at each other afterwards.

Mapleton became desperate, trying everything to prevent the ball reaching the Rovers' lightning right-wing. Time went on, and the crowd began to glance up at the clock anxiously between cheers. There was no doubt which was the better team, but Mapleton meant having one point out of the game, anyway!

Wave after wave rolled over them, and somehow they scrambled the ball away; and when their defence was torn into rags by scorching passes from wing to wing, their 'keeper played like a hero. Dick uncorked a beauty from short range, but without any luck, Osborne was just too late for a dropping centre, and a few seconds afterwards a long, floating header from Hayward skimmed the bar. Mapleton's goal bore a charmed life, for nothing could stop the green-shirted forwards as they stabbed and weaved their way along amid one continuous thunder from the crowd.

Three minutes before time a Mapleton back booted hard and high into the stand, and while the ball was coming out Dick grinned at Osborne.

"Got any wind left, Harry?" he asked.

"A little, Dick."

"Well, then, get off your knees and let's see you run!" came the bantering reply. "Something's got to be done!"

The throw-in was collared by Hall, who drilled the ball through to Dick's feet. Whipping past Carson, who was tiring badly from the pace set up by the two youngsters, he sent Osborne off.

For the first time the outside-right centred with bad judgment, and the 'keeper, coming out, gathered and cleared. Trapping the ball with his chest, Hayward slipped it sideways to Dick, and Dick, jaw set and eyes gleaming, took it on the run and slammed through Mapleton like a runaway train.

An irresistible swerve carried him past two desperate half-backs, and, looking up as though to find Osborne, he side-stepped Carson neatly. The Mapleton centre-half pounded across, but Dick got him on the wrong leg and went for goal at top pace, the Rovers spreading out, Mapleton after him with their hearts in their mouths.

The full-back expected Dick to pass, and Dick knew that he did. So that, having looked round for someone to pass to, he altered his mind, by which time the full-back had moved a foot too much to the left, and Dick's pace carried him straight past.

In the stand, little Mr. Capper was nervous with excitement.

"My discovery!" he howled. "Go on, Dicky, lad—on your own! By thunder, now for goal, boy! Shoo-oo-oot! Goal!"

Beating the left-back's sliding tackle by a split second, Dick had got all the swing of his sturdy leg behind the ball, and into the side of the net like a brown, hissing thunderbolt it had gone, the goalie hitting the ground a moment after with a despairing look.

The whistle went soon after, and Oldtrent in their thousands came pouring on to the ground.

In the stand, Colonel Forrester, hatless, stickless, wild with excitement and bristling like a cat, wagged a long, bony finger beneath the astonished eyes of his neighbour, while Moira looked on and laughed helplessly.

"Let me tell you, sir," blared the colonel, "that that's my son, sir! My son! And let me tell you that you know nothing about football, sir! Nothing!"

His fingers snapped loudly in the supporter's bewildered face, and then, grasping Moira firmly by the arm, he set out for the entrance to the dressing-rooms, through which the laughing, gasping Rovers, Dick in their midst, with Tim Abbot's arm round him and Carson of Mapleton by his side, were fighting their way.

He was never one to do things by halves, was Colonel Forrester. The speed of the game, the cleanness and the genial sportsmanship of Carson and his men towards a newcomer, were revelations to the colonel. Leaving Moira talking to the excited little Mr. Capper, he strode straight into the dressing-room amid the changing footballers.

Fine men they were, and he felt an added thrill of pride to think that his son had held his own with such muscular fellows! In a far corner of the big room he saw Dick, grinning breathlessly at Tim Abbot and young Osborne while they chaffed him; and marched up to him with hand outstretched.

"I'm sorry, Dick," he snorted fiercely. "Beg your pardon sincerely! Want me to say any more, you obstinate young hound?"

"Not a single word, dad!" cried Dick, nearly beside himself as he wrung his father's hand. Then, waving his hands at giant Tim Abbot and his speedy partner, he said quietly:

"My friends, dad!"

Colonel Forrester held out his hand again.

After the match with Mapleton United Oldtrent Rovers never looked back, and the end of the season found them fighting for promotion to the First League, which they eventually won, thanks to the young recruit, Dick Forrester.

In the close season Dick, with the fifty pounds which he had been able to save, went into partnership with Sergeant Willis, and helped him to run the gymnasium. He never regrets the day he turned pro., any more than does his father now!

THE END

High Days & Holidays



OLD BOYS' DAY.

ON this great festival so bright
The fags all wear clean collars;
And Greyfriars welcomes with delight
Her old and honoured scholars.
Gaily we greet the heroes bold,
Of bygone generations;
Eagerly bidding them unfold
Stories of past sensations.

See them swarm in! A motley band
Of gallant, grim old-stagers;
Lawyers, and leaders of the land,
Airmen, and gallant Majors,
Professors, scientists, M.P.'s,
And leisured landed gentry;
Some youthful, some inclined to wheeze
All make their welcome entry.

They wander through the old domain
Recalling days of youthfulness;
"If only we were boys again!"
They sigh, with touching truthfulness.
"What fights and feuds, what jolly japes,
What feats of boyish bravery!
When we were gay young jackanapes,
And life was sweet and savoury!"

They live again, for this brief day,
The lives of happy pupils;
They feast, in quite the old-time way,
Without digestive scruples!
And then, beneath the early stars,
We part from their society;
And they are borne, in trains and cars,
Back to the world's anxiety.



Our Incurable Interviewer Calls On WUN LUNG

(The Chinese junior of the Greyfriars Remove.)

A savoury odour of what smelled like Irish stew was the first thing that struck me on opening the door of Study No. 13. The next thing that struck me was a cushion, hurled at my head with unerring aim by the young Chinee who was kneeling in front of the fire.

"Whoooop!" I yelled indignantly.

Wun Lung looked round and registered slight surprise in his almond eyes.

"Me solly!" he said.

"Sorry? I should jolly well think you are sorry!" I growled. "Nice way to greet the HOLIDAY ANNUAL's Incurable Interviewer, I must say!"

"No savvy! Wun Lung thinkee you Billy Buntel," smiled Wun Lung. "Billy Buntel, he come along plenty quick, pinchee Chinese boy's nice stew. Me thlowee cushion, hit fat Buntel plenty hard!"

"Oh, I see! You thought I was Bunter on the prowl," I said, a little mollified. "As it happens, I'm not; but I must say I shouldn't blame him for sniffing round at that stew of yours. It certainly smells good."

"Chinese boy makee nice stew!" grinned Wun Lung. "Handsome stlanger, he tastee plenty soon!"

"Thanks, I will," I replied promptly.

I took a seat at the study table, and started interviewing the young heathen of the Remove while he got out crockery-ware and laid the table.

"How do you like Greyfriars, Mr. Wun Lung?" I asked.

"Me likee plenty much," answered the Chinee. "Handsome Bob Chelly, he velly nice; Mark Linley, plenty good fellow; Billy Buntel, he plenty bad. Me killee one day; cuttee thloat—like this!"

"Here, ease up!" I yelled in alarm as Wun Lung made a dive at me, brandishing a carving-knife.

"No killee stlanger!" grinned Wun Lung, replacing the knife on the table.

I mopped my perspiring brow, and felt very thankful that Wun Lung's programme was "no killee" so far as I was concerned. Having recovered my breath, I proceeded with the interview.

"What are your hobbies, Mr. Wun Lung?"

"No savvy!"

"What is your greatest ambition?"

"No savvy!"

The interview didn't seem to be exactly illuminating. I tried another line.

"Do you prefer English manners and customs to those of your own country?"

"No savvy!" grinned Wun Lung. "Me dishee up stew now!"

After two generous helpings I ventured to inquire the nature of the meat which seemed to form the basis of the stew.

Wun Lung's answer made me jump out of my chair.

"Lats and mice!" he said.

"You—you made that stew with rats and mice?" I murmured faintly.

Wung Lung nodded.

"Oooooooh!" I moaned.

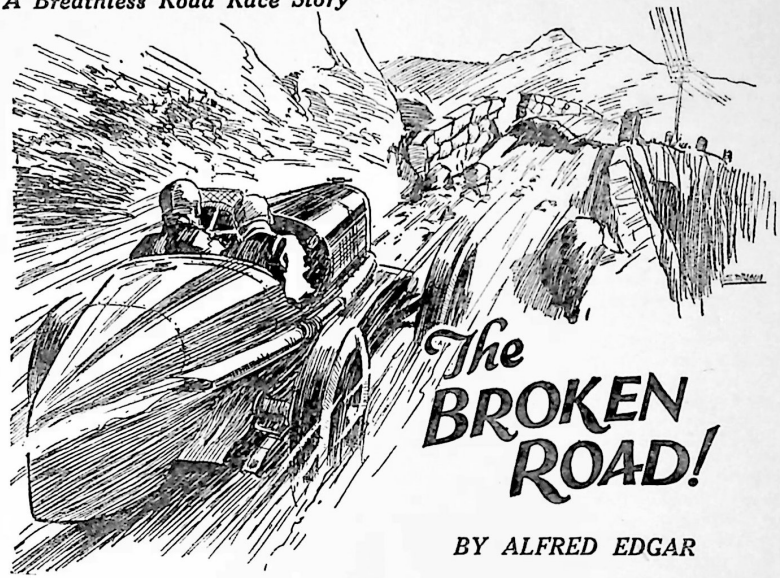
"Stlanger tlyee more stew?"

"Ow! No! Oooooooh!"

Giddily I swayed to my feet and staggered out of Study No. 13, leaving Wun Lung to finish off that awful meal on his own.

THE END

A Breathless Road Race Story



The BROKEN ROAD!

BY ALFRED EDGAR

Less than a lap to race, through blinding sand-storm and intense heat; and a broken road lay between Bob Royd and Danny Moore, in the Connaught racer, and the winning of the gold trophy!

THE FIRST CHAPTER
The Spanish Grand Prix !

BOB ROYD gasped and ducked a little as a racing-car went past the replenishment pit. Its kicking tyres sent a great cloud of choking white dust streaking high from the road, smothering the enclosure opposite and hazing the faces of spectators in the grand-stand.

The roaring machine was painted blue, and the blazing Spanish sun lent Bob a momentary glimpse of the strained face of the driver. Then only the wreathing dust was left behind, rushing past in great clouds as the burning wind of the sirocco took hold.

Bob stood in the Connaught pit, and three Connaught racers were competing in this Spanish Grand Prix. Rather, there had been three. One was now a wreck on the side of the road, and another was in the " dead car " park.

The motor-race was being run off over what was almost a mountain circuit, where precipices edged the course and corners were fringed by gulfs. Almost with the drop of the flag had come the sirocco—an oven-like blast of dust-laden wind which screeched down from the burning hills around.

At the back of the pit a little group of men bent over a figure on a stretcher. The man wore racing overalls which had once been white, and he was unconscious. He was the mechanic out of the last Connaught car in the race—the machine which was even now trying to snatch the lead from a red Italian car.

The mechanic's shoes were almost burnt

from his feet by the heat slung back from the engine. His neck was all blistered and raw from the heat of the sun, and the wind had driven dust deep into the pores of his skin.

Famous Danny Moore, driver of the last of the Connaughts, had dropped the mechanic at the pit three laps back, and had taken on another man. The mechanic had been senseless when Danny had stopped, and Bob marvelled that the driver himself was able to carry on.

Another car went through—Spanish this time, with a yellow body and red wheels. The crowd in the stand cheered its driver, although they knew that he stood no chance of victory unless either Moore or Ricardo, in the flaming red Brescia, cracked up. One of those two seemed certain to win the race, because they had only a couple more laps of the twenty-mile circuit to complete.

Bob was on holiday from Abbotsleigh School. His father was racing team manager for the Connaughts, and he had brought his son over to watch the Grand Prix. Bob wore overalls, and he helped in the replenishment pit, although there was nothing to do now that the race was almost run, and but one car of the team left running.

"Ricardo should be coming through in two minutes!" a mechanic called hoarsely from the other end of the pit, where he and two others bent over a battery of stop-watches and timing-charts.

"Danny's due in eight minutes, sir," another mechanic called.

"Keep the 'all out' signal flying for him!" Bob's father growled the words from where he was bending over the unconscious mechanic.

Mr. Royd was a thick-shouldered man, and he could not bend his left arm. He had crippled it in a crash in a big race at Brooklands. In his day Bob's father had been as famous as Danny Moore was now, and it was Bob's own ambition to learn to handle a speed machine.

He realised, of course, that he was a lot too young. This event, run off through a storm of dust and wind and searing heat, was showing him that a speedman needed more than mere driving skill; he had to be tough and resolute.

At school Bob did his best to make himself hard and fit. Although he had only just got his remove into the Fifth Form, he had already played one season as wicket-keeper for the first eleven, and nobody could beat him for hard work on the footer field.

He was full of quick-moving muscle, which rippled over chest and shoulders, and his face, though now smudged with oil, and on which wind-borne dust had caked, held a determined look.

Bob knew that Danny Moore had once been at Abbotsleigh, and the dour, dark-eyed speedman seemed to like him. Danny's picture, taken in racing kit, hung in the Small Hall. He had performed daring feats at school which had never been equalled, though it was more than twelve years since he had left.

Bob crouched as yet another machine surged past the grand-stand and the pits. It was a second French car, travelling like a mad thing down the road, with the driver bent over his steering-wheel, a silk handkerchief flapping where it was tucked around the neck of his overalls to keep out the dust.

As its roaring died, there came a similar sound from overhead. Bob craned above the pit-plank to look up through the whirling dust, and sighted a red biplane. It was flying low, almost skimming the fluttering flags on top of the stand.

Bob could make out the head of the pilot, and even the shape of the camera strapped to the side of the fuselage. The pilot raised his hand as he went past, and Bob grabbed a swab to shake in reply.

The chap in that 'plane was "Blam" Cooper. He had flown over from England specially for the race, and he was another Abbotsleigh old boy. Bob had fagged for Blam, and even in those days his senior had enjoyed a reputation for recklessness. He was now the star camera man for a big newspaper combine, and he was trying to get unique pictures of the race. He was staying at the same hotel as Bob and the Connaught team, and he shared Bob's admiration of Danny Moore.

As the 'plane vanished, the mechanic with the stop-watches yelled:

"Ricardo's Brescia is now due, sir! He's late!"

At the words Bob's father jerked from the stretcher and came to the tool-cluttered pit-plank.

"His engine's beginning to crack up," he said. "It's a miracle that everybody hasn't been finished by this heat! How late is he now?"

"Thirty seconds, sir!"

Bob leaned farther out and peered along the line of pits, which were like little sheds, open at the front and back, and joined up to one another. He could see the Brescia pit, with half a score of anxious Italians leaning out to stare down the road and watch for the first sign of their car.

"One minute late, sir!"

"The later he is, the more chance Danny stands of catching him up!" Mr. Royd growled.

Then, almost with his words, they heard the distant crackle of an approaching car.

The road stretched away white, wide and straight, with the wind driving down it, sending the dust skating in streaky clouds that masked everything more than a hundred yards away.

The bellow of the car drew nearer, then it appeared as a hazy red smudge which swiftly became more definite, and suddenly showed as the Brescia handled by Ricardo. It was coming down the straight at two miles a minute, and at the back of it dust spread like a comet's tail.

Full into the burning heart of the sirocco the Italian was hurtling, visible only as a pair of goggles, a crash helmet, and hands clamped on a steering-wheel, while the man's head was inclined so that he could look past his little wind-shield, which was caked heavily with dust.

"He's just ninety seconds late, sir!" the mechanic yelled to Mr. Royd.

Bob saw that the men in the machine's pit were frantically signalling the Italian to go all out. He heard them yelling, and then



"Get him out o' this!" Danny's words came hoarsely, and Bob hurriedly reached for the huddled figure of the mechanic, who was knocked out by the heat and strain.

came a fierce blast of the hot wind which banked the dust on the road, flapped the banners and the flags in the enclosure opposite, and tore away the roof of the end pit, so that it crashed to the course.

Instantly officials darted out, bending against the dust-storm to clear away the debris of the roof, just as two cars came hurtling into sight and went howling in pursuit of the leading machine, both of them actually a full lap behind it.

"Danny's due in five minutes, sir!" Bob heard a mechanic call.

"All right. One of you stand by with the all-out signal!" Mr. Royd called.

"I'll do it, dad!"

Bob reached for a white-handled pole, the head of which carried a white disc, with a red circle in the centre. It was a signal for Danny to kick the throttle wide open and drive as hard as he possibly could for the last two laps of the race.

Bob slid with the pole over the front of the pit and stood waiting there. Dust slashed at his face, and he patted the pair of goggles closer over his eyes. Every man in the pit was wearing goggles. The wind whipped and tore at him, dust blasted into his ears and nostrils, and the wind drove it like mist up the road.

Minutes ticked away, and he heard the mechanic counting them off.

"Due in four minutes, sir! Danny's due in three minutes, sir!"

It was as the man said this that there come a shattering bellow down the road, a raucous boom which made every man in the pit leap to the plank, because they recognised the sonorous sound as the exhaust note of Danny Moore's Connaught.

"That's Danny. He's gained two and a half minutes, sir! He's only a hundred an' fifty seconds behind the Brescia!"

"Here he is!" Bob shouted as he braced himself and raised his signal, holding it steady to face the approaching machine.

He saw the low-hung green car rip out of the dust-storm, and even as he saw it he heard the screeching drone of its brakes. The car weaved on the road, then, slowing, came streaking to the pit, half skidding as it stopped.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

Two Laps to Go!

Bob dropped the signal when he saw the car stopping. He glimpsed Danny's mouth open, and knew that the driver was shouting something, which was lost in the squealing of tyres and brakes.

Men and car were all grey-white from dust. The windscreen was solid with it. The stuff was all caked in the folds of Danny's overalls, and on the huddled form in the seat beside him.

That was his mechanic. The man was doubled up, knocked out by the heat and strain of riding in a wildly driven car over three twenty-mile circuits of mountain roads.

"Get him out o' this!" Danny's words came hoarsely, and Bob jumped to the other side of the machine, reaching to lift the inert man.

He got him half up, and track officials came to aid him. They dragged the man clear, and it was then that the driver shot out a dusty gauntlet and gripped Bob's forearm.

"Get in!" Danny yelled. "Ride it out with me, boy—quick!"

Bob stared. He heard his father shouting as he came across the pit-plank.

"Get in—unless you're scared!" the driver gasped. "Abbotsleigh's going to win this race! Come on!"

Bob almost fell over the side of the cockpit. The instant that his feet left the ground Danny Moore sent the machine surging forward, screaming in gear. For half a minute Bob struggled against the dust that smashed into his face, then got down to the hard little seat and hugged the smooth side of the cockpit, giving Danny plenty of room.

It was like the inside of a furnace. From the engine fumes and burning heat swept through the foot-grid; dust came with it, and more dust plastered in stinging grains against Bob's face.

"How do I stand?" Danny yelled to him through the roar of the engine as he changed into top gear and held the machine to the middle of the road.

"You were two and a half minutes

behind when you stopped," Bob answered.

"I say, this is jolly decent of you to take me!"

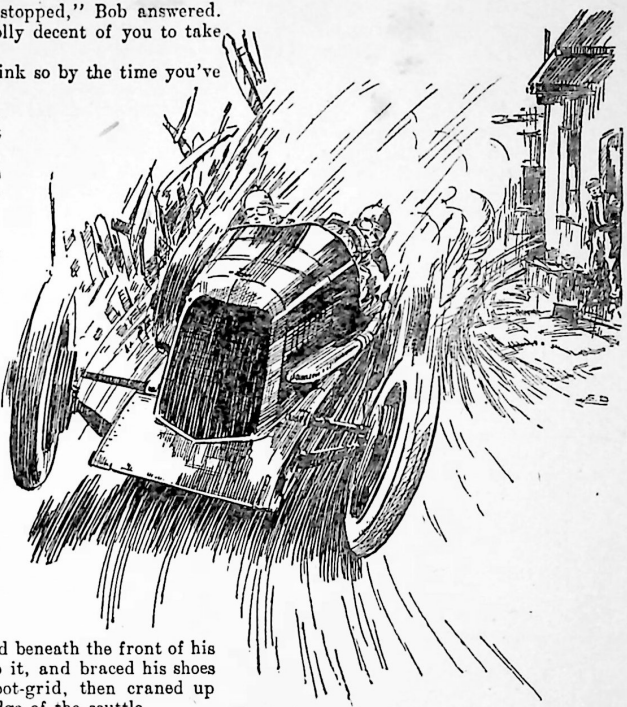
"You won't think so by the time you've been round here once or twice. But you won't conk out, I know. How many laps have I got to go?"

"Two."

"Good! About three minutes behind, and only two laps to do. Come on, Connaught! Bring that Brescia back!"

After that Danny said no more.

Bob had been round the circuit during practice, but never with Danny Moore at speed. As the car began to bounce on the road, he caught and held a leather hand-hold beneath the front of his seat. He clung to it, and braced his shoes against the hot foot-grid, then craned up to peer over the edge of the scuttle.



As the Connaught rocked round the corner, there was a sound of rending woodwork, and broken palings flew high in the car's wake!

He saw the sirocco sweeping huge streamers of dust across the road, and through it he sighted where the course bent to the left and the white-walled buildings of San Viente village showed. They were among them a moment later, plunging into the shadow thrown by the buildings.

Bob saw blurred faces at the black openings of windows and doors. He saw yellow palisades, with empty, open ground behind them, from which spectators had been driven by the heat. Then the village slid away, while, on the left of the road, there rose the bold side of a mountain.

Here the course was like a shelf cut daringly, with only a foot-high parapet of boulders to mark where the road ended, and where began a two-hundred-foot gulf, which fell sheer to a river sparkling below.

Bob had glimpses of the river—a closer glimpse than he wanted when Danny swerved suddenly to avoid a machine which had stopped for something, and was just pulling out on to the road again. It was one of the French cars, and they went by it with a roar, wheel-hubs all but nudging the little parapet, so that the precipice appeared to drop straight from their side.

Across the valley Bob made out where the

wind was wiping the very earth from the bare hillsides, sending it out like rain on to the air. He had heard something about siroccos, but this was the first time he had ever been in one, and he didn't want to experience another!

For a mile and a half they hurtled along the rocky ledge, almost dead straight all the time; then came the furious screech of brakes, the car's tail wagged a little, and they went ripping round an abrupt bend where the mountain bulged.

There came a second, a third bend, and with the last the road turned so that the wind was now behind them, while the course dipped steeply to a valley which was almost a ravine.

On the right reared the tremendously high and steep shape of what Bob had named Black Mountain. It was a colossal height, ugly and dark, and faced with boulders which seemed likely at any moment to plunge into the dip.

To one side was the little village of Arcayos, and from this the Rio Escudo wound in a silvery streak, passing under the road at the bottom of the dip. Bob, as they hurtled to the clearer air, could see the river, and the bridge like a camel's hump.

Down towards it the Connaught flung itself, seeming barely to touch the road, travelling faster than it could move at any other part of the course. Bob could see a car in front, already beyond the bridge, and dwarfed to a speck by the distance of two miles or more.

The rush of hot air past Bob's face caught his breath. Heat came burningly from the engine, wrapping about his ankles and legs, and making his insteps tingle. He braced himself in the cockpit, and tried to keep his head high to avoid the fumes which were sweeping up through the foot-grid.

It was then that he glimpsed Blam Cooper's 'plane. The machine was above them, diving steeply and a little ahead. Bob would have waved, but he was too occupied holding on, and, in any case, the racing car was travelling faster than the red 'plane.

Bob watched the craft wheel and dive still lower, until it was coming towards them. He made out the black eye of the camera, then they had dived beneath, and the humpy structure of the Escudo Bridge was fairly lifting itself from the valley to meet them.

There was a little crowd of spectators sheltering in the shade of rocks near it, and the men seemed to grow larger as the car rushed on. When it appeared to Bob as though they could never stop in time to take the bridge safely, Danny reached for the brakes.

The car slowed, magically it seemed, then they were at the bridge, flying up it, leaving the ground for a moment at the summit of the hump, and landing with a crash on the far side, giving Bob a kind of switch-back sensation before the car caught him and carried him streaking on.

Beyond the bridge the road was in shadow. It was stiflingly hot, and there was not much wind down here. When the course began to wind and climb, he sighted the car he had previously seen. It was not the Brescia they were chasing; it was the yellow and red Spanish car, and the driver pulled close to the edge of the road to give them room to pass when they finally overhauled him.

Another village at the end of the valley, and after that the course was all wild corners and turns, with glimpses of steep drops waiting for the car should it leave the road. The sirocco caught them in its grip again, and Bob huddled down to keep out of the stinging dust.

"Keep your—head up! Mind—fumes!" Danny's wind-snatched warning came to him.

The engine fumes were pungent and sickly; they had knocked the other two mechanics out. Bob sat up, loosing one hand to hold it before his nose and mouth, so that he could breathe easily.

The machine was rocking and bucking under its speed. Again and again his back was thudded sickeningly against the swab, while on one corner he cut his cheek against the leather side of the cockpit, from the

violence with which Danny was forced to skid a curve.

Presently Bob picked out Pino, the village marking the last corner before the grand-stand straight and the end of the lap. Dust half blotted it out, and as they stormed towards the buildings, he sighted a wrecked car in the heart of a torn-down palisade.

They went between the buildings, raising the dust behind, swung round the corner in the heart of the place, and then fairly leaped to the straightaway beyond.

"Look out—for signals!" Danny thundered the words at him, which were half lost in the engine's mad roaring and the screech of the supercharger.

Bob craned in his seat to peer ahead. They were driving full into the teeth of the sirocco now. Dust-grains hit him like rain, stinging the cut on his cheek, silting up in his ears and clogging his nostrils.

He sighted the grand-stand and the line of pits. He picked out his own, and saw the white disc with the red centre flying. Below it was a board bearing "2 m." Every man in the pit was waving and cheering them on.

"We're two minutes behind the Brescia now!"

He put his lips close to Danny's ear and shouted the words, and the speedman nodded.

His face was like a clown's, with its grey mask of dust all streaked by little channels of sweat. Bob could see the muscles sticking out at the side of Danny's jaw as he rammed his foot hard on the throttle pedal, his gaze steady on the sweeping dust before them.

"Last lap!" Bob called, and the driver nodded.

"I'll get him somehow!"

San Viente village whirled at them. There was a corner here for which Danny had previously braked. He did not use his brakes now.

They went into the village, rocking from their speed. Bob saw the walls which hemmed the corner and a palisade, then they were rushing at it, skimming the fence! He heard the crash of woodwork, saw palings fly high, splinters showered across their tail, and men ducked back into a near-by doorway. Then they were through the corner, with the fence broken behind them and their tail dented, while the shelf-like road opened ahead.

On to it they went, travelling at mad speed. The wind seemed to have died a little, and the road was now clear. Bob marked bunches of cactus at the edge, growing among the boulders. He saw two abandoned cars here, with Spanish soldiers looking after them—and then he saw Blam Cooper's 'plane!

It was coming round the bluff in front, where three corners lay before the steep, fast drop down to dangerous Escudo Bridge. The 'plane was flying low, and it swung out over the gulf, then turned, still ahead of them.

Bob thought that he saw Blam waving, but he was not sure. The machine dropped until it was almost level with the road, and now Bob could see the pilot raised in his seat, leaning from the cockpit, waving one arm.

"Telling us to go a bit faster!" Bob thought. "I bet he's seen that Italian not so far ahead!" And he waved back.

'Plane and racing-car were near now, and Blam was still waving. Then suddenly he drew his arm in, and an instant after the craft came sweeping towards the road just ahead of them and dipping close to the cliff.

Bob watched him. He clearly saw Blam look round. Still closer came the 'plane.

"He's going to land in front of us!" Bob gasped, panting the words into the gale which screeched past his head.

As he spoke, one wing-tip of the machine dipped to the little parapet at the roadside. Instantly wood and fabric broke against the boulders, dragging the craft round, so that it seemed to be diving straight for the car.

Danny's foot crashed on the brake pedal, and the machine slid sideways, then slewed the other way as the brakes locked the wheels.

The 'plane lurched on to the road, drove full across it, then smashed its propeller



Facing page 129

TAKING A CHANCE!

H.A.

on the rocky face opposite, canted sideways, broke its other wing, and come to a juddering stop, barring the course.

THE THIRD CHAPTER
To the Victor . . .

BOB thought they must crash full into the wrecked craft, but they stopped a yard short of it. As the droning brakes held the wheels, Blam Cooper came tumbling from his cockpit, blood streaming where he had cut his face. His shoes hit the ground, then he lurched towards them, hanging on to the damaged wing of the machine.

"Had to—stop you!" He came closer, bending to yell the words through the roar of the car's engine. "The bridge is down!"

"What?" Danny jerked up in his seat.

"The sirocco—loosened earth on the mountain—avalanche!" the pilot gasped. "Road's clear, but boulders smashed a great hole in the middle of the bridge!"

"Where's Ricardo?"

"He raced the avalanche—got across!"

"Then unless we can get over he'll win!" Danny shouted through the engine's beat. "Is the bridge down altogether?"

"No, there's only a hole in the crown of it," Blam answered. "I had to stop you. You'd have been killed!"

"A hole in the middle of the bridge? Then we might—jump it!" Danny spoke through gritted teeth. "Bob, swing the tail of that machine out of the way!"

Bob scrambled from the car. Blam, though he staggered, aided him to haul the 'plane's tail over so that half the road was clear. The moment there was room for the car to go through Danny sent it forward, yelling:

"Good man, Blam! See you later!"

Bob made a dive for the cockpit as the machine went by him, and was jerked off his feet as he scrambled in. Danny slowed.

"You get out! This is too risky for you!"

"I'll see it through!" Bob gasped, and struggled into his seat.

There was no time for argument. Ricardo was getting farther away with every second. The Connaught screamed through its gears, then plunged into the corners, and left them behind as the dip opened down to the valley.

Bob saw the bridge. At one side was a mighty mass of fallen, crumbled rock and earth. It was piled up about the river. The road was scattered with dirt and stones, and right on the crest of the bridge showed a yawning cavity.

"We can do it!" Danny leaned towards him and roared the words. "If I take the bridge as fast as we can go, the speed will make us jump that hole! There'll be a devil of a smash the other side, so hang on! Duck if we go off the road and crash!"

Bob tightened his grip as they flung down the slope. Nearer came the bridge. He saw Spaniards rushing to the roadside to warn them. Flags waved madly, but they did not slow.

Faster and still faster they went. The bridge seemed to rise to meet them. Bob saw more clearly the debris which was strewn across the road, and the bridge with the black hole gaping in its crown.

"Hang on!"

Danny shouted. Bob wedged his feet against the grid, gripped his leather holds, braced his every muscle, and then saw the bridge swoop at them.

He felt the car kick from stones as its tyres bit on them. The machine tilted upwards, front springs bottoming as the nose of the car took the rise of the hump-backed bridge. The hole showed below them, then they were clear of the ground, and flying through the air!

One fleeting glimpse Bob had of the broken road beneath and the shadowy river through it. For what seemed an age they streaked on, dropping now; then came a colossal crash, and the car skidded almost broadside.

He saw Danny fighting the wheel, forcing the car straight, mastering it, and sending it streaking safely on through the valley.

"Done it!" Bob gasped, and he saw Danny grin. "Good old Abbotsleigh!"

Up the rising ground now, through the shadows and the village at the head of the

valley, and into the wild corners and bends beyond.

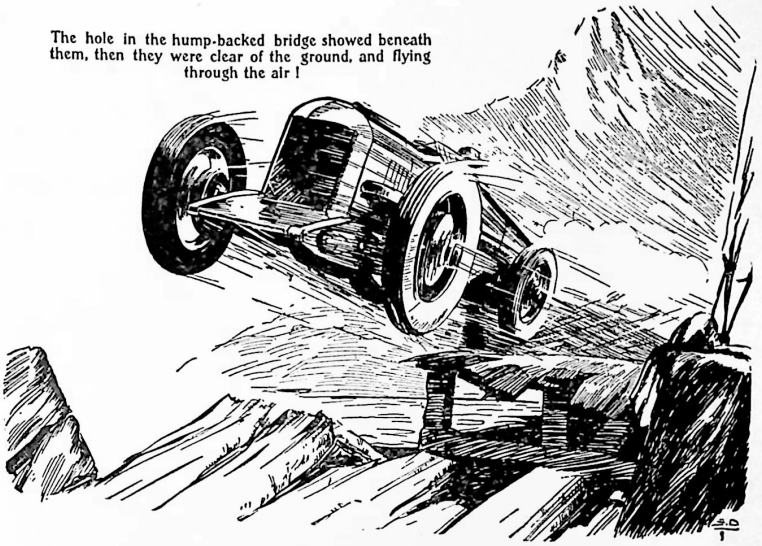
How Danny took them Bob did not know. They approached turns at such speed that it seemed beyond possibility that they could get round, yet they always did. When a cliff wall seemed to block their path, the wheel-hubs would all but scar its face, tyres and brakes would scream, then the road would open before them.

And it was as they entered Pino that they saw the red Brescia!

gritted teeth filmed by the stuff. The man's head was bent, he was shouting through the uproar, and his dark eyes were blazing as he asked his machine for one last wild spurt.

For half a mile the two machines ran dead level, then the Connaught gained slightly.

Tantalisingly slowly, it seemed to Bob, the Connaught nosed ahead. So far as he could tell, he thought that Danny now had the car all out. He knew, too, that it was



The hole in the hump-backed bridge showed beneath them, then they were clear of the ground, and flying through the air!

It was then two hundred yards in front of them, already slowing for the last dangerous turn on the mountain course.

After it went the Connaught, and they were at the Italian's tail as they came to the corner. On went the brakes, and the Connaught leaped and juddered like a wild thing, skidding. Danny fought it round, held it close to the fencing, then cut inside the red machine, and came from the corner dead level.

Bob saw Ricardo, face grey from dust, only Danny's skilful driving that had given them this slight lead. Unless they could gain on or keep the half-length difference between the two cars, victory might yet be snatched from their grasp—that is, if the Brescia had some reserve power. Had it? Bob wondered.

The thought made him glance over his shoulder at the Italian. His face now held a grim smile, for the red Brescia was no longer receding; it was holding the Connaught's tail! No, it was creeping up!

The Brescia had more power—unless the Connaught was failing at the critical moment! That awful thought made Bob hastily swish his glance round to Danny.

"He's holding us!" he shouted through the roar of both madly-driven engines. "Got any reserve in her?"

Danny greeted Bob's words with a smile. That was all, but it was a reassuring smile, and Bob felt relieved.

The Italian car had by now practically crept level again with the Connaught. Then suddenly Bob heard the pulsating roar of the Connaught engine grow louder, and when he looked round at the Italian it was to see him dropping behind. He smiled to himself. Danny had kept a card up his sleeve, so to speak!

"We win!" Bob yelled.

He saw the stand in front, and the dust of the sirocco hazing the group of officials who stood at the side of the road with the winner's flag.

Bob looked behind again. The red machine was about five yards in the rear of them now, dropping farther and farther away—beaten!

Twenty seconds later, the winner's flag slashed in the air, signalling the Connaught across the line.

. . . . .

In the Small Hall at Abbotsleigh School, by the photograph of Danny Moore, there is a small gold cup, a replica of the trophy which Bob helped to win in the Spanish Grand Prix. Flanking it is a picture of a wrecked aeroplane and a photograph of a dusty, battered racing-car, with Danny and Blam and Bob standing by it.

New boys at Abbotsleigh are taken into Small Hall and shown these things, and are told the story connected with them. They are then asked to say who did most towards winning the race: Danny or Bob or Blam?

Nobody has yet satisfactorily solved the problem.

THE END



Troublesome Tom!



By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Popular Tom Merry, whose adventures at St. Jim's have for many years delighted thousands of young readers, actually began his career at Clavering—before that school became part of St. Jim's. This story of his early days at Clavering will therefore have a special interest to all HOLIDAY ANNUAL readers.

THE FIRST CHAPTER
Hare and Hounds!

TOM MERRY laid down his pencil. He had written fifteen names on as many slips of paper. Monty Lowther took the slips and shuffled them in a hat-box.

It was a cheery spring afternoon. A bright sun looked in at the windows of the Form-room where the fifteen lads had met to draw for hares. It was a half-holiday at Clavering School, and the Shell were getting up a paper-chase. All of them had been busy the previous evening, tearing up old exercise-books and impot paper for "scent."

The boys were already in their running-shorts. Tom Merry looked very fit and trim. Tom had been training hard lately, and was in excellent condition for a long run. Manners took charge of the hat-box.

"Tom Merry!" he exclaimed. "Hallo, Tommy, you're a hare!"

Tom's name was the first out of the box.

Tom Merry nodded cheerfully.

"Oh, what rot!" exclaimed Gore. "He can't run. What's the good of having Spooney for a hare? We sha'n't get anything like a run!"

Tom flushed red. The name of "Spooney" had been bestowed upon him when he first came to Clavering, and it must be admitted that it was not then undeserved. For Tom had been the darling pet of Miss Priscilla Fawcett, his old nurse, at dear old Huckleberry Heath, and he had been very much spoiled.

He had come to Clavering in a pretty velvet suit and a big bow, though he was fifteen years old, and he had the most polite

and elegant manners imaginable. But a very short stay at Clavering had knocked most of the nonsense out of him, and the boys, who had chipped him mercilessly at first, had come to like him very well in the long run.

But Gore had never liked him. Gore watched his growing popularity with disfavour, and did his best to revive the old feeling against him.

"Better draw again," went on Gore. "Spooney's no good for a hare. He'd crack up in the first quarter mile."

"I don't think I shall crack up," said Tom politely. "I've been training, and I am sure——"

"Oh, rats! You're no good!"

"Shut up, Gore!" said Manners. "Bless us, that chap's always talking! Lemme see, who's the next? Hallo, it's Gore!"

"Oh, it's me, is it?" grunted Gore. "And you want me to run with that image, do you?"

"You needn't if you don't want to. Keep out of the chase, and a good riddance to you," said Manners.

"My idea is," said Monty Lowther, "that Tom Merry will leave Gore miles behind. Gore can't run for toffee. He smokes too many cigarettes."

Whereat Gore turned red and let the argument drop.

"Don't mind that brute, Tom," said Manners, linking his arm in Tom Merry's as they left the Form-room. "He's a pig, and he can't help it. The trouble with him is that you won't let him bully you. What he wants is a hiding. Mind he doesn't play any mean trick on you during the run."

Tom's eyes opened.

"Why, what could he do, Manners?"

"Lots of things, and he's mean enough for anything. What Monty said is quite true. He can't run so well as he ought, and you'll simply walk away from him, if you put your best foot foremost. And he wouldn't let you do it if he could help it."

"All right, I'll look out for him," said Tom.

The hares and hounds reached the starting-place, on the border of Clavering Moor, not far from the college gates. Tom and Gore had their bags of "scent" slung on. It could not be denied that Tom looked by far the more fit of the two, though Gore was much bigger and older than the former.

"Five minutes start," said Monty Lowther, taking out his watch. "Are you ready?"

"Quite," said Tom, in his cheery way.

"Yes," growled Gore.

"Off, then."

The hares started off. The way lay across the breezy, heathery moor, and was to extend as far as the lighthouse, a run of six miles. The hares soon disappeared behind a belt of trees.

"Come on," said Gore. "I know this ground a good deal better than you do, Spooney, and you'd better follow my lead."

"Certainly," said Tom, in his polite way.

"Keep up with me, if you can."

"Oh, I think I can, Gore, thank you!"

Tom was running very easily, side by side with Gore, and as a matter of fact he could have shot ahead if he had wanted to. The ta-ra-ra of Monty Lowther's bugle came floating faintly from afar.

"Hallo!" said Gore. "They've started. This way."

They left the moor behind, crossed a stile, and ran on over some fields. The ground was heavy, but Tom did not appear to notice it as he ran fleetly on.

"Don't run yourself out in the first lap!" growled Gore. "What's the good of pumping yourself, Spooney?"

"I'm not pumping myself," said Tom. "I could keep this up for a long time. I could go quicker if you like."

"I don't like. Just slack down a bit till we get on better ground. I'm thinking of you, not of myself."

Tom Merry smiled, but he slacked down. There was a louder ring of the bugle behind. Gore knew what it meant; the hares were sighted. He glanced anxiously back, and saw thirteen pink shirts streaming from the moor.

"Buck up!" he exclaimed.

They accelerated their pace. Behind them, as they ran, fell the trail of torn

paper. Gore led the way down to the canal bank. A mile had now been covered, and Gore was looking very puffy. Tom was as fresh as paint.

"Can you jump it, Spooney?" asked Gore. "This will settle some of them. If you can't do the jump you can stick here and get caught."

He slung his bag of scent across. The canal was twelve feet across, so the jump was a good one. Tom followed his example.

"I think I can do it!" he exclaimed.

"Wait a bit! I'll go first, and then if you don't quite do it I can lend you a hand."

"Well, that's really kind of you, Gore!" exclaimed Tom, who had by this time, in the excitement of the run, quite forgotten about Manners' warning.

Gore took a run and just cleared the canal. He went down on his knees on the other side and grunted, but he was quickly up again.

Ta-ra-ra-ra! rang out from the distance.

"Jump it!" called out Gore.

Tom ran and jumped. Right across he went in fine style, and his foot came down on the bank, and at the same moment Gore reached out as if to help him land, and by apparent accident knocked him in the chest. Tom made a desperate effort to save himself, but in vain. Back he went, falling with a sounding splash into the canal.

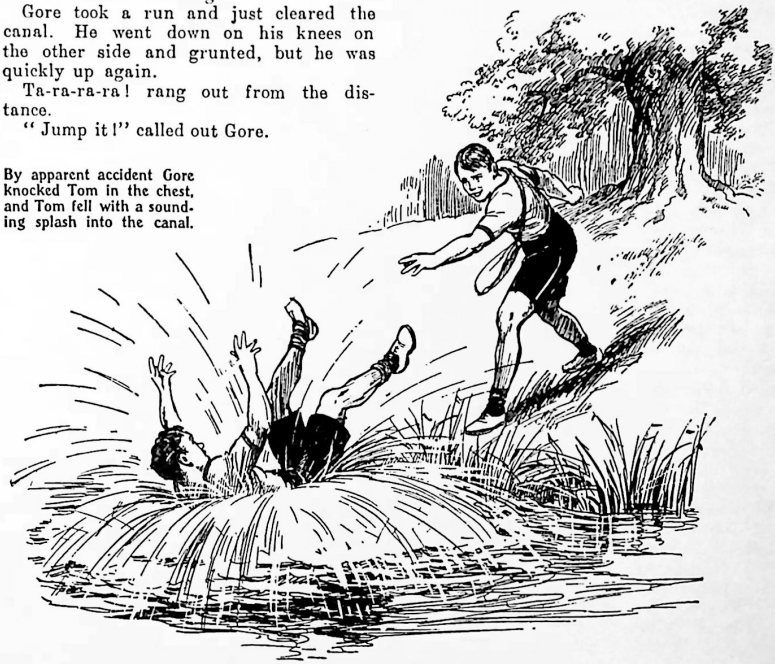
"Ha, ha!" yelled Gore. "Well, you are clumsy!"

Tom's head popped up from the water, and he scrambled up the bank.

"What did you do that for?" he exclaimed.

Gore stared at him.

"Do you think I did it on purpose?" he exclaimed. "Why didn't you take hold of my hand? It was all your own clumsiness."



By apparent accident Gore knocked Tom in the chest, and Tom fell with a sounding splash into the canal.

"It wasn't anything of the kind!" exclaimed Tom hotly. "You shoved me in the chest and knocked me back into the canal!"

"Oh, rats! Come on, and don't argue!"

And Gore, shouldering his bag of scent, started off.

Tom wrung the water as well as he could out of his clothes and followed him. He felt almost certain that Gore had played him that scurvy trick on purpose, and now he was on the look-out for anything of the kind to occur again.

His spill had soaked his clothes, and he knew that he must keep in rapid motion to avoid catching a cold. He put on speed and passed Gore.

"Hallo, where are you bolting to?" exclaimed Gore. "That isn't the way."

"This is the way to the lighthouse."

"Yes, but we don't want to go straight ——"

"Well, buck up and show me the way, then!"

"Don't pump yourself out. There's no such hurry, and——"

"You've said that before," said Tom. "If you can't keep pace you had better chuck it."

After the spill in the canal he was not inclined to have mercy on Gore.

The latter scowled, but he quickened his pace and joined Tom. He now led the way over some ploughed fields. If he had hoped that Tom's spill would spoil his form, he was mistaken. Tom Merry was running as well as ever, and he seemed good enough for hours yet.

From the top of a rise in the ground Tom looked back. Six pink shirts were collected on the farther side of the canal. Seven had crossed it, and were taking up the chase. Among them he recognised Manners, Monty Lowther, and Jimson.

"Nearly half of them are out of the running!" exclaimed Tom, with satisfaction. "Come on, Gore! Which way now?"

"Through that gate."

"But that leads through a farmyard!" exclaimed Tom.

"Well, what about it? That's the way!"

Gore vaulted over the gate, and sprinted through a flock of quacking ducks. Tom, not to be outdone, followed him, though he had his misgivings, especially when he saw a stout, red-faced man coming towards them, a cart-whip in his hand.

"Scoot!" gasped Gore. "That's Farmer Oliphant. Beastly unlucky the brute should spot us. Get on!"

The boys fairly flew. The farmer was red with rage at the liberty taken with his farmyard, and the whip in his hand looked very business-like. He was giving chase at the top of his speed and gaining round.

Gore looked back apprehensively.

"My hat! He's gaining! Put it on!"

Tom kept pace with his companion. He could easily have escaped by himself, but he felt that he could not desert Gore. They left the farmyard, and sprinted down a lane, but the farmer was not appeased. A thudding of footsteps behind showed the boys that they were still pursued, and the farmer, big man as he was, was gaining.

Gore gasped with exhaustion. He was run out, and he felt that he could go no farther. He stopped where a park wall bordered the lane.

"Here, give us a leg-up!" he exclaimed. "I'll help you up from the top. Buck up, for goodness' sake, or he'll have us! He'll skin us with that beastly whip!"

"Right-ho!"

Tom gave Gore the required leg-up, and Gore grasped the top of the wall. He drew himself up with a quick jerk, rolled over the wall, and disappeared on the other side. Tom looked up anxiously at the wall. It was impossible to climb it without aid.

"I say, Gore!" he called out.

"I'm awfully sorry," came a voice from the other side of the park wall. "I slipped over, Merry. You had better hook it."

Tom set his teeth.

It looked very much as if Gore had left him in the lurch on purpose; but whether that was so or not, certainly Gore could not help him now. He could no more gain the top of the wall from the inside than Tom could from the outside.

Tom gave a last look up at the wall, but it was too high for a spring, and the thudding footsteps were close behind. He turned round.

The farmer was within twenty paces of him, the cart-whip flourishing in the air. His red face expressed the liveliest satisfaction. He was certain that he had caught one of the culprits now.

But Tom Merry was not so easily caught.

Now that he did not have to keep a slower pace with Gore, he felt that he had at least a chance of escape, and he sprinted off as fast as he could go.

But Farmer Oliphant was good for a race, and he came thundering on behind Tom, his long legs covering the ground in great style.

A flick of the whip, curling round his calves from behind, warned Tom that the enemy was close on his track.

He cast a desperate look round.

A sudden gleam shot into his eyes. A wide ditch bordered the lane, and it was full and flowing with water. Tom swerved towards it, as if intending to jump across.

The farmer's heavy footsteps were pounding close behind, and he felt an outstretched hand touch his shoulder. The moment had come, and Tom flung himself down on the very edge of the ditch, with such suddenness that the slow-witted farmer was not in the slightest degree prepared for the trick.

His knees knocked against Tom, and he flew over the boy head first, and went into the ditch with a mighty splash.

Tom was on his feet in a second.

A furious face glared at him from amid a coating of mud and green slime as the farmer arose erect in the ditch, the water flowing up to his armpits.

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Tom. "How's that, umpire?"

Without waiting for an answer, he darted off.

He hurried back to the spot where he had parted from Gore, in the hope of rejoining the other hare. The hounds were well behind, and he was not afraid of falling into their hands. As he drew near the park wall again, he heard Gore's voice raised in anguish:

"Lemme alone! Leggo my ears!"

Tom stopped. There was a gate in the wall, not far from the spot where Gore had entered, and now it was open, and Gore was being led out by a couple of men dressed as keepers, each of whom grasped him by an ear, and with no gentle grip to judge by his face.

Judgment had evidently overtaken Gore.

"Leggo, you beasts!" howled Gore. "You're hurting me!"

The two keepers grinned at one another.

"You don't mean to say so," said one of them humorously. "We're letting you off lightly. You'll get hurt a good deal more the next time you trespass in Sir Alexander's park, my lad! Get along with you!"

They gave Gore a spin that sent him reeling out into the lane. He spun round and sat down in a bed of nettles. The keepers, laughing loudly, re-entered at the gate, and closed it behind them.

"Can't you give a chap a hand up," snarled Gore, "instead of standing there grinning like a rotten Cheshire cat?"

"Ha, ha!" laughed Tom. "You look funny, Gore. Next time you may not play such a beastly mean trick."

"I couldn't help tumbling off the wall, could I?" snarled Gore.

"Yes, I believe you could. You did it on purpose, and what you've got serves you right," said Tom unceremoniously.

"Do you want me to give you a thick ear?"

"Oh, rats!" said Tom. "For goodness' sake buck up, if you're going to, and come on! There goes Monty Lowther's bugle again!"

"Where's that beastly farmer?"

"I left him in the ditch. We'd better not go that way. Come on!"

The hares started running again. It was high time, for the hounds were coming down the lane in full cry, and were not two hundred yards away. Manners and Monty Lowther were still in the lead, and Jimson, Clarke, and French were still at their heels. The rest had tailed off or given up the chase.

Ta-ra-ra-a! sounded the bugle.

To be caught half-way on the outward run would be too humiliating. Gore and Tom ran hard, putting on a spurt. Again the distance between them and the hounds increased. But Gore was getting spent.

"Can you stick it?" asked Tom anxiously.

"Yes, confound you!"

"Let's go through the wood and do some dodging."

"Right!" gasped Gore.

By leaving a winding trail in the wood the hares puzzled the hounds a little, and gained more ground. They slacked and ran steadily, and though Tom seemed still fresh, Gore was glad enough when the light-house rose to view against the sky. The lighthouse, overlooking the North Sea, was the outward limit of the run. With their feet trampling in the yellow sands, the hares stopped for a breather.

"Done them so far," muttered Gore. "They're close behind, though. That beastly bugle seems to haunt me. Can't spare more than a minute here."

Ta-ra-ta-ra-ra-a!

The hounds were in sight again. As they came into view, Tom Merry counted them, and found that they were four; French had dropped out.

"We're thinning them down," said Tom. "Manners and Monty will stick it to the end, I think. Come on, Gore!"

Gore grunted as he took up the run. They went along the shore for half a mile, and then turned inland. Again the hounds vanished from sight, but the notes of the bugle came from afar at intervals.

Gore was now pretty well blown, but he would not give in. He plodded steadily on, and Tom slacked to keep pace with him. Tom kept an anxious look-out behind. He did not want to leave Gore, in spite of the scurvy tricks his companion had played him. But he did not intend to get caught.

They reached the old bridge over the mill-stream, and there Gore reeled against the low stone parapet and gasped. He was fagged out.

Tom Merry stopped.

"Are you done, Gore?"

"Yes, hang you!" snapped Gore. "Go on if you like. I'll punch your blooming head when we get back to Clavering, see if I don't!"

Tom looked back. Ta-ra-ra-ra went the bugle, and then Monty came into view. He was running steadily, and Manners was close at his heels. But they were the only two. The rest of the pack had been unable to "stick" it.

"Well, at any rate, they won't catch us both," said Tom cheerily. "I'll——"

He broke off suddenly.

From the stream below the little bridge came a sharp cry.

Then a woman's voice was heard, raised in a scream of terror.

"Help! Help!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER
Just in Time!

TOM MERRY looked quickly over the low stone parapet. At a glance he saw what was the matter.

A woman was standing on the bank, wringing her hands and screaming wildly. On the surface of the stream glimmered a mass of flaxen hair for a moment ere it went under.

A child had fallen into the stream, and Tom felt as if a hand of iron had gripped his heart when he saw that the current would bear the child towards the huge mill-wheel, grinding there, to be crushed and killed as soon as she reached it.

"My hat!" gasped Gore. "She—she'll be killed!"

The child's face came up from the water, white and unconscious. The woman on the bank seemed about to throw herself into the river.

"Stop!" shouted Tom. "Stop! I will save her!"

The woman glanced up to the bridge, and saw the two boys.

"Save her!" she shrieked. "Save her! The mill-wheel!"

Tom heard no more.

He threw his hands together and dived boldly into the stream.

Splash!

Right under he went, right down into the deep, cold waters. But up again, up like a cork! He dashed his hand across his eyes and looked wildly round. The woman on the bank was excitedly pointing, and Tom caught a glimpse of flaxen hair on the rushing water.

He struck out bravely.

Every stroke, assisted by the strong current, carried him nearer to the grinding wheel, and he rapidly overtook the little girl, but before he could reach her she sank again. He swam on, and caught her hair as she came up. In a moment he shifted his grip to the collar of her dress.

A little white face and closed eyes came out of the water. The woman on the bank cried out with relief, but Tom knew that the danger was not over, that it had scarcely begun. For he was in the grip of the strong current, and whether his strength would be equal to battling against it he did not know. And if not, then it would be two deaths instead of one.

Yet the thought never crossed his mind of abandoning his burden. Supporting the unconscious child, he fought against the current.

Monty Lowther and Manners came running upon the bridge. They had seen Tom's leap, but had no idea of what was the matter.

"What is it, Gore?" cried Monty. "What has happened?"

For the time being the game of hare and hounds was forgotten. Gore, without speaking, pointed to the stream.



The farmer, coated with mud and green slime, rose erect in the ditch, and glared furiously at the laughing Tom.

Monty looked, and his face went white as a sheet.

"Heavens! Tom!"

Manners turned as white as Monty as he saw Tom's fearful peril.

The brave lad was battling against the current, which seemed to be savagely striving to hurl him upon the grinding wheel.

He was just holding his ground, but

that was all. He could not gain an inch, but ere long his strength must be spent, and then——

Monty clenched his teeth, and sprang upon the parapet. But Manners seized him by the arm and dragged him back.

"No good, Monty," he muttered huskily—"no good. You couldn't do it. But the punt!"

He pointed to the miller's punt, which was moored to the bank below the bridge.

"Come on!" muttered Monty.

Together they raced down to the bank. The woman, who seemed to be the miller's wife, was watching the swimmer with staring, straining eyes. The two boys reached the punt and sprang into it. Monty shoved off.

Tom was fighting hard for his life, and the life of the child.

But the strong current was too much for him. He could not reach the shore, and as his strength failed him, he was slowly but surely sucked away towards the wheel.

He knew his terrible peril, and even yet he might have saved himself had he let the child go and exerted all his strength to save his own life.

But he did not even think of it. It was to be both or neither, and Tom Merry fought a losing battle with dogged British pluck.

"Buck up, Tom!"

The voice of Monty Lowther came like music to the ears of the brave lad, who had already felt himself doomed. His wild glance swept the water, and he saw the punt rapidly approaching him, and Manners, with his hands stretched out, ready to seize him.

But Tom was nearly spent now. Swifter he went with the current, and the roar of the water under the wheel sounded in his dazed ears with the noise of thunder. His senses seemed to be floating away in a maze, and if he struggled still it was from instinct, and through no conscious effort.

The water was over his head, but a strong grip was on his collar, and up he came again, and he felt the weight of the child taken from him. He came to his senses with a start. The child was lying in the punt, and Manners was dragging him in. He made an effort to help himself, and rolled into the bottom of the punt.

Monty Lowther was poling, and Manners now went to his assistance, while Tom lay gasping and exhausted. Not without difficulty the two boys brought the punt safely to land, where a man in a white smock seized it and made it fast, and then lifted the child out.

It was the miller, who had come too late to the scene of his little daughter's peril. He shook hands with the boys, half crying, and fairly hugged Tom. The woman hurried up to the house with the unconscious child.

"God bless you, lad," cried the miller again and again—"God bless you! I never saw such a plucky 'un—never!"

Tom stood up with some difficulty. He was exhausted by the fight with death after the long run in the paper-chase, and his narrow escape had left him white and shaken.

"That's all right," he gasped. "I hope the little girl is safe. Monty, old man, cut off for a doctor as quick as you know how."

Monty was off like a shot.

"Oh, I say, Tom," cried Manners, who was half laughing and half crying in his excitement, "you are a scorcher! Fancy anybody calling you a spooney! I—I thought you were a goner!"

"So did I," said Tom.

"God bless you!" said the miller. "Come into the house and get into some dry things, my lad. You must stay here and rest a while."

Tom hesitated.

"I say, Manners, this busts up the paper-chase!" he exclaimed. "I couldn't run now, even if you gave me a start. It's a capture."

Manners thumped him on the back.

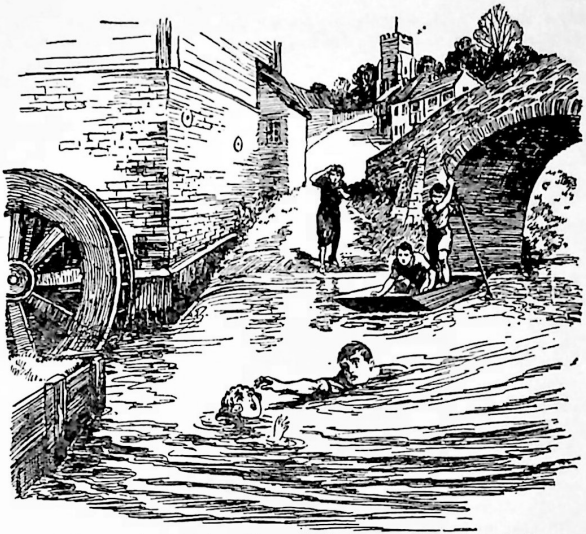
"Don't talk rot, Tom! It isn't a capture. We shouldn't have caught you this side of Christmas. You're a giddy hero—and blow the paper-chase! Come and change, before you catch your death of cold!"

"Yes, do come, young gentlemen!"

exclaimed the miller anxiously. "My wife will give you all some tea when the doctor's seen to the girl."

The invitation was too good not to be accepted. Gore came down from the bridge, and the three of them went into the miller's house, where Tom was given a hard rub down by Manners which did him a world of good.

Then arose the question of clothes. The miller had offered him a change, but he could only provide a suit of his own; and as the miller was fat and forty, and Tom was slim and fifteen, the fit was not exactly a good one. However, it was Hobson's choice, so Tom tumbled into the miller's clothes, and with a good deal of furling and reefing he made it possible to walk in them.



Bravely Tom struck out and rapidly overtook the drowning girl, while Manners and Lowther put out in a punt to their aid.

But his aspect was so comical that Manners could not help laughing, and even the miller, stolid man as he was, grinned at the sight of the heroic rescuer in a suit of clothes a dozen sizes too large for him.

By the time Tom had changed, Monty Lowther returned with the village doctor. The latter attended to the little girl first, and the chums were glad to hear that she was in no danger. The mother thanked Tom with tears streaming down her cheeks, much to his discomfort. She insisted upon the doctor examining Tom, to see if he was damaged, and the village medico did so; but Tom was, as he expressed himself, "all sereno!" Then the four boys sat down to a substantial tea with the miller and his wife.

After a hard run in the keen air they enjoyed a homely meal of bread-and-butter and tea and cake, and they felt in a satisfied mood when they took their way back to Clavering. But Tom was not exactly pleased when they came out on the high-road, and passers-by began to stare at his peculiar raiment.

With huge trousers turned up a foot or more at the ankle, and bagging round his legs like sacks, and a coat that reached down past his knees, the sleeves rolled back nearly a foot, and a cap that came down over his ears and almost over his eyes, Tom Merry certainly looked what Gore called him—"a funny merchant."

Tom's first arrival at Clavering had been in a garb strange to the eyes of Clavering lads, but now he bade fair to outdo the sensation of his first arrival.

"Well, my hat!" said Tom. "It's too bad, but it can't be helped!"

And with that philosophical reflection he

marched on to Clavering, in the midst of his grinning chums and the giggles of all who beheld him.

THE THIRD CHAPTER
Spoofing the Herr !

HERR SCHNEIDER could hardly believe his eyes. Herr Schneider, the German master at Clavering College, had a "down" upon Tom Merry, and he was always determined to find something wrong in whatever that youngster did. Tom was not without his faults, of course, but to Herr Schneider's eye he was all faults. His high spirits and frolicsome disposition were the head and front of his offending to the dry, crusty old gentleman from the Fatherland.

With or without reason, Herr Schneider was always finding fault with Tom; but he thought he had never had better reason than he now had, as he stood at the gates of Clavering and saw the merry party coming up the road.

Monty Lowther, Manners, and Gore were grinning, and there was a smile on Tom's face. He saw the humorous side of the situation. But the German master's frown was portentous.

Otto Friedrich Schneider could not for some moments believe that he had seen aright. He took off his spectacles and wiped them, and perched them again on his little fat nose, and took another look.

"Mein Gott!" murmured Herr Schneider. "Tat Merry is up to his dricks again. Tat poy is te vorst in te school, ain'd it? I vill gif him vun lesson, and in dis case even Mr. Railton cannot find an excuse for him."

The German's lips came tightly together over the name of Mr. Railton. The Head of Clavering was a young man—much younger than most of his masters—and with Herr Schneider especially he often had difficulties.

Herr Schneider belonged to the old school of masters, who believed in driving knowledge into the heads of boys as you drive a nail into wood—with repeated blows. He never ran the risk of spoiling a child by sparing the rod. He believed that boys could never be sufficiently sat upon.

Mr. Railton was different. He was an old Blue, strong on every kind of athletics, and believed in being a friend and counsellor rather than a driver to his boys. He did not disapprove of high spirits and frolic on principle, though he could draw the line tightly enough when required.

Herr Schneider stared at the party coming up the road with a fixed gaze, which somewhat disconcerted them as soon as they saw it.

"Hallo!" groaned Monty Lowther. "There's old Schneider, looking at us like an owl! He's spotted your rig, Tom."

"And he looks shocked!" said Gore maliciously. "You're coming in for something this journey, I fancy, Merry."

"Stuff!" exclaimed Manners. "Why, when we tell him that Tom jumped into the mill-stream to save——"

Tom Merry turned red.

"Oh, rats!" he interrupted. "Don't tell him anything of the kind. I don't want to make capital out of that. I'll tell him I've had a ducking; and that's the truth, and quite enough of it."

"He doesn't look as if he would listen to much," said Gore. "Look how red his face is. That always shows he's boiling. You'd better keep your distance while you explain."

The boys walked on, looking rather doubtful. They could not pass in, as the German had placed his portly figure in the centre of the gateway, with the evident intention of stopping them.

"Good-afternoon, Herr Schneider!" Tom ventured.

The German glared at him through his spectacles.

"Merry, how dare you go apout te public street dressed like tat?"

"If you please, Herr Schneider——"

"Tat is another of your silly tricks."

"I have had——"

"Silence!"

"But——"

"Hold your tongue! You have deliberately dressed in tat manner to pring discredit on te college."

"I do assure you, Herr Schneider——"

"Mein Gott! You pass all bounds, Merry. I have said pefore tat you are te vorst poy in te college!"

"Yes, sir," said Tom demurely. "I think I have heard you make that remark, sir."

Monty Lowther giggled and Manners grinned. The German master turned purple.

"Merry! Tat impertinence vill do you no goot!"

"I did not mean to be impertinent to you, sir. I assure you that I respect you too highly," said Tom, with a touch of his old manner. "If you would have the kindness to give me your attention for a few moments, I will explain——"

"I tink tat dis matter does not require explaining," said the German dryly. "You have dress like te mountebank, and you shall be punish!"

"I have had a duck——"

"Follow me!"

"Certainly, sir; but if you will allow me to explain that I have had a duck——"

"Silence!" shouted Herr Schneider. "Anoder vort and I cane you!"

Tom Merry was silent.

It was evidently of no use to argue with the incensed German.

Herr Schneider strode across the Close, his fat face purple with wrath and his eyes gleaming behind his spectacles. Herr Schneider had a peculiar half-military strut, which the boys of the lower Forms at Clavering often amused themselves by mimicking. Tom had been told to follow the German master, and he followed him. He had not been told how to walk, so he pleased himself about that—and it pleased him to imitate exactly the pompous strut of Otto Friedrich Schneider.

There were a good many boys in the Close, and every eye was, of course, turned at once upon Tom in his peculiar garb. His aspect in those clothes would have been funny at the best of times. But as he strutted after the German, with a face as solemn as an owl's, the sight was excruciatingly funny.

The boys yelled and howled with laughter.

Herr Schneider strode on, hearing the laughter but not heeding it. He put it all down to Tom's ridiculous clothes. As they proceeded, the merriment redoubled, for Monty Lowther and Manners, seized with the spirit of mischief, fell in behind Tom Merry, strutting along in the same absurd way. Gore, not to be outdone, joined in. It was now a regular procession, with the unconscious German at the head of it.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He, he, he!"

The spectators were nearly in hysterics.

The unbounded merriment on all sides excited Herr Schneider's suspicions just before he reached the door of the schoolhouse.

He turned his head and looked behind him.

The movement was unexpected, and it took his followers by surprise. Caught in the very act, the four lads strutted on for a moment without being able to stop, and nearly ran into the German.

Herr Schneider gasped with rage.

Words were too weak to express his feelings—much too weak. He stretched out both hands and caught hold of Tom Merry.

Tom gave a roar as the angry Herr began to box his ears right and left.

Having relieved his feelings a little this way, Herr Schneider marched Tom into the house with a grip on his collar, taking no notice of the others.

Straight to the dormitory occupied by the boys of the Shell and some of the Lower Fifth the Herr marched Tom, and thrust him inside, and put the key in the outside of the lock.

"Tat is vhere you spend te rest of your half-holiday!" he exclaimed, with a withering look. "You can tink over your conduct till tea-time!"

"Oh, I say!" exclaimed Tom, in remonstrance.

But the German took no notice of him. He went out, locked the door on the outside, and went away to his study to soothe his ruffled breast with a big German pipe.

"Well, my hat!" exclaimed Tom. "This won't do! That man has absolutely

no sense of humour. He wants a lot of educating!"

There was a tap at the door.

"Are you there, Tom?"

"I am," replied Tom. "Is the key there, Monty?"

"No; our kind teacher has taken it away with him."

"How am I to get out, then?"

"Well, Herr Schneider must have forgotten that you want to get out," chuckled Monty. "Very thoughtless of him!"

"Go and stand under the window, and catch me if I fall."

"You are not going to get out of the window?"

"Yes, I am. Buckez-vous up!"

Monty went away. Tom looked at the window. It was a good height from the floor, but by dragging a washstand there and climbing upon it he was able to reach the sill. To open the window and get out on the sill was quick work.

Monty and Manners were standing below, looking up. Tom Merry sat on the window-sill, his legs dangling, and looked down at them.

"You can't do it," called out Manners. "You'll break your giddy neck. Get in!"

"I only want a rope," said Tom.

"But you haven't got one."

"Oh, that's all right! I'll take the sheets off the bed and make one."

"Oh, I say! Remember whose window is underneath!"

Tom whistled.

He had forgotten that. Under the end window of the dormitory was the window of the study shared by the chums. Under that again was the window of Herr Schneider's room. If Tom came sailing past his window, it was very likely that the German master would spot him.

"You can't do it!" called out Manners.

Those words settled it for Tom.

When he had made up his mind to do a thing he never turned back, and to be told that he couldn't do it only made him anxious to try.

"Well, I can't stick here for a couple of hours, and such fine weather!" he exclaimed. "That's out of the question—isn't it? I think I can dodge that window. Wait a bit!"

He disappeared into the domitory again.

His fingers worked rapidly in making a rope of sheets.

He twisted them together and tied them securely at the ends, and ere long had an improvised rope sufficiently long for the purpose.

This he slung over his arm and mounted to the window again.

The end he had tied round a stick, so that when the window was closed down upon it, it could not possibly slip out.

Manners grinned as he saw Tom at the window again.

"I say," he called out. "If you're coming, you may as well change your clothes first!"

"Good idea!" agreed Tom.

He hadn't thought of it, but it was evidently advisable. It did not take him long, and he left the miller's clothes neatly folded up upon a bed. Then he got out of the window and closed down the sash upon the end of the rope.

The rope of twisted sheets he carefully lowered, contriving to make it pass on one side of the German's window.

Manners and Monty watched him with interest. They were not alone, either. This part of the Close was screened to some extent by the old elms, but a number of boys had discovered what was going forward, and they had gathered to see how it would turn out.

Tom Merry swung himself off the sill and began to lower himself hand below hand.

"The giddy ass will break his neck," said Gore, who had joined the watching crowd. "Jolly good thing, too!"

But Tom did not look like breaking his neck.

He came down steadily and swung in front of the study window; but, of course, the rope hung straight now that his weight was upon it, and it descended directly in front of Herr Schneider's window.

Still, unless the Herr's attention was directed towards the window, there was no reason why he should notice it; and, besides, he might not even be in his study.

Anyway, Tom had made up his mind, and he risked it.

He hung in front of the study window belonging to the chums, and descended cautiously lower, till his feet were on a level with the top of Herr Schneider's window.

His idea now was to slip down quickly and cover the last bit of distance like a flash of lightning.

But it did not work out exactly like that.

He slid down, but the rope of twisted sheets was full of big knots, and so Tom's descent was decidedly zigzag, and his attempt at rapidity made it more so.

He swung to and fro right in front of the German's window. A warning cry came from Monty Lowther, who had heard a sound of the window opening. It startled Tom, who twisted his head round to look at Monty and see what was the matter. Naturally enough, his foot swung against the window and went through the glass.

Crash!

Herr Schneider, as he sat smoking his big German pipe, had become aware of something that looked like a wriggling snake hanging outside his window.

He had risen to ascertain what it was, and he had the window half open when Tom Merry's foot came crashing through the glass.

The German master staggered back with an exclamation:

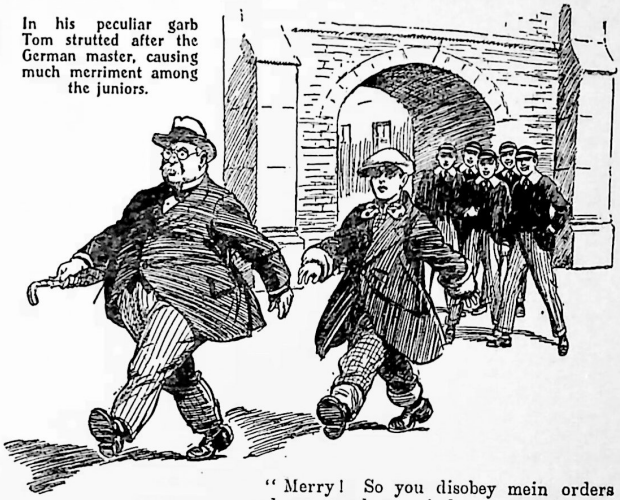
"Mein Gott!"

Then he sprang angrily to the window again. The rope was gyrating, and Tom was swinging round with it. Startled by the crash, he had ceased to descend. The German master reached out and grasped him by the shoulder and stopped his gyrations.

"Merry! So it vas you?"

Tom looked at the German master. He had recovered his coolness in a moment, and he met Herr Schneider's angry stare with a sweet smile.

"Yes, sir; it is I," he said cheerfully.



In his peculiar garb Tom strutted after the German master, causing much merriment among the juniors.

"Merry! So you disobey mein orders and you preak my vindow?"

"I am very sorry I broke it, sir!" said Tom, truthfully enough.

The German smiled grimly.

"I have no doubt apout tat, Merry. As you have come to my vindow, you may as vell get inside mit you, and I vill give you somet'ing for coming!"

"I don't think I could get in, sir," said Tom, who knew what that something was likely to be. "Hadn't I better go down, sir, and come up the stairs?"

" You vill come in at vunce!"

Tom began to sway on the rope. The German clutched him angrily, and suddenly Tom loosed his hold on the sheets and slid down so swiftly that he was torn from Herr Schneider's grasp. He went down with a rush and alighted on his feet, but in an instant he was on the ground, flat on his back. The German put his head out of the window and looked down anxiously. He saw Tom lying prostrate, motionless, with his eyes closed, and Herr Schneider turned pale.

Tom's action had been so swift that many of the boys thought he had fallen. Manners ran forward quickly and knelt by his side.

" Tom! Tom!"

" It's all right, fathead," whispered Tom, without moving or opening his eyes. " I only want to give Fatty a scare!"

Manners grinned.

But the grin was only momentary. An expression of grief and horror came over his face as natural as life as he looked up towards the German at the window.

" You've killed him!" sobbed Manners. " Oh-oh-ooh! Tom's killed, and Herr Schneider is his murderer!"

The German's fat face became the colour of putty. He leaned out of window, in imminent danger of falling out himself.

" Is he hurt?" he called out anxiously. " Has te poy hurt himself?"

" Oh-ooh-ooh! Tom's killed!"

" Oh-ooh-ooh!" roared Monty Lowther, joining in the demonstration of grief, and the other boys were not long in tumbling to the joke and taking it up.

Handkerchiefs came out and were applied to eyes, and also served the purpose of hiding broad grins. A weeping and wailing was set up such as had never been heard before within the precincts of Clavering.

" Oh, oh, oh!"

" Ooh, ooh, ooh!"

" Poor Tom!"

" Poor old Tommy!"

" Oh, oh, oh!"

Herr Schneider clutched at the window-sill, and then at his scanty locks. Tom lay still, his eyes closed, a peaceful look upon his face.

" What is the matter here?"

The grief of the youngsters ceased as if by magic.

For the new voice was that of Mr. Railton, and the Head of Clavering, with a frown upon his handsome face, strode upon the scene.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER
The Hero!

MR. RAILTON looked at Tom Merry, and then at the boys round him. Tom had opened his eyes at the sound of the master's voice, and he now sat up.

Herr Schneider gave a gasp of relief.

But the next moment his relief changed to rage as he realised how he had been made a fool of.

Mr. Railton's glance was very stern.

" Merry! What are you doing?"

" Taking a rest, sir," said Tom glibly. " I'm a bit fagged, sir, after running in a paper-chase, and I thought a rest would do me good."

There was an outburst of chuckles on all sides.

"He pretend to be hurt!" shouted Herr Schneider. " He make me tink that—that he keel!"

Tom looked up at the window with an innocent expression.

" Well, I declare!" he exclaimed. " Did you think I was dead, sir?"

" You pad poy——"

" Merry," said Mr. Railton sternly, " it is clear that you have been guilty of a practical joke upon Herr Schneider, which I cannot excuse."

Tom looked very meek.

" I am sorry for that, sir."

He did not state which part of the Head's sentence his sorrow applied to.

Mr. Railton concealed a smile.

" What does this rope from the dormitory mean?"

" I put it there, sir."

" Why did you put it there?"

" I wanted to come down from the window, sir."

" I mean—never mind. Herr Schneider's window has been broken, and you have played a trick upon him——"

"He play more tan vun drick!" exclaimed Herr Schneider. "He come to te school in absurd clothes, and I lock him in te dormitory for te punishment. Den he get out of te window."

"This is very serious, Merry."

"Yes, sir," said Tom.

"And it is very unfortunate," went on Mr. Railton, "as for a particular reason I am very unwilling to punish you this afternoon."

Tom looked at him in wonder.

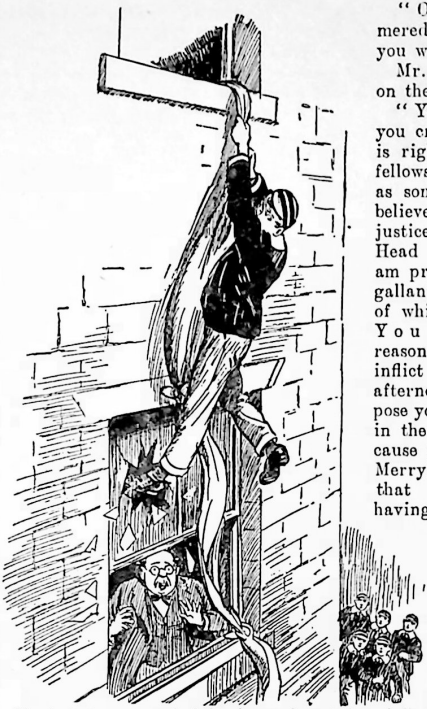
He had expected a flogging at the least. He was ready to stand it, and why Mr. Railton should let him off he could not guess.

The Head of Clavering glanced round at the boys, most of whom were looking as surprised as Tom Merry, and curious, too.

"My boys," said Mr. Railton very quietly, "I am glad to be able to tell you that a most heroic deed has been performed by a boy belonging to Clavering. I have just come from the village, where I heard the story of what Merry had done."

Tom knew what was coming now, and he blushed scarlet.

"Merry," continued Mr. Railton, "jumped into the mill-stream, and ran a terrible risk of losing his life to save a drowning child."



Tom's foot swung against the glass and went through it with a crash. Herr Schneider, in the room, sprang angrily to the window. "Mein Gott!"

"Oh, I say, sir," stammered Tom, "I—I wish you wouldn't——"

Mr. Railton patted him on the shoulder.

"Your modesty does you credit, Merry, but it is right for your schoolfellows to know, especially as some of them have, I believe, hardly done you justice so far," said the Head of Clavering. "I am proud to have such a gallant lad in the school of which I am the Head. You understand my reason now for wishing to inflict no punishment this afternoon. And as I suppose you came to the school in the miller's clothes because your own were wet, Merry, I have no doubt that Herr Schneider, having punished you under an error, will be willing to overlook your present offence."

Herr Schneider, when it was put like that, could hardly refuse.

As a matter of fact, it occurred to him that he had been rather hasty.

"I am quite willing to do so," he said, with a not very good grace. And he withdrew into his room and closed the window.

"Now, Merry, you are pardoned," said Mr. Railton. "I could pardon a good deal of a boy who has acted as you have done to-day. But mind, no more of these tricks."

"No, sir," said Tom.

And then Mr. Railton shook hands with the boy who had been called "Spooney" by half Clavering; but no one wanted to call him Spooney now.

As the Head turned away, a rush was made for Tom, and he was seized in a dozen pairs of hands and hoisted into the air.

"Hallo! Hallo! What's the row?" ejaculated Tom, in some alarm. "What are you up to?"

"You're a giddy hero," explained Jimson. "We're going to chair you round the close. That's the wheeze."

"Rats! You're not going to do anything of the kind."

"Aren't we? That's all you know. Come on, chaps!"

Tom, willy-nilly, was flung up on the shoulders of Jimson and Manners, and the rest crowded round in array.

"I say, chuck it!" exclaimed Tom. "Let me down, you asses!"

"Rats! Bring him along!"

"March!"

Monty Lowther produced a mouth-organ, and placed himself at the head of the procession. He began to play, and they started off round the close.

"Here, I say, Monty," exclaimed Gore, "why don't you play the 'Conquering Hero'? That would be about the tune."

Monty Lowther removed the musical instrument from his lips for a moment, and bestowed a glance of withering scorn upon the questioner.

"I am playing it," he replied.

"Well, blessed if I knew it, Monty."

"What did you think I was playing, then, fathead?"

"Didn't know you were playing anything. Thought you were just blowing away, tuning up or something of that sort," said Gore innocently.

Monty Lowther contented himself with bestowing another crushing look upon Gore, and recommenced with the mouth-organ.

Now that the boys knew what tune he was supposed to be playing, some of them recognised the strains of the "Conquering Hero," or thought they did; anyway, Monty was making plenty of noise, and that was what was chiefly wanted.

Round and round the close they went, tramping and shouting, the blushing hero borne high upon their shoulders. They were passing the gymnasium when Devigne of the Upper Fifth came out. Devigne was captain of his Form, and not very popular outside it.

He stared at the procession.

"Hallo! Have you kids gone off your rockers?" he demanded.

Now, if there was anything the boys of the Shell could not stand, it was being alluded to as "kids." Their position, midway between the Lower and Upper school, laid them open to the imputation of being still kids, and they didn't like to be reminded of the fact.

"Oh, rats to you!" said Manners. "Get out of the road!"

"What are you carrying that kid about for?"

"I'm the conquering hero," said Tom cheerfully. "No dogs or members of the



"Oh, oh, oh!" wept the juniors. "Poor old Tommy! He's killed!"

Upper Fifth allowed to get in the way. Skedaddle."

Devigne scowled, and reached out for Tom; but the procession closed up, and Devigne was hustled out of the way. He thought it prudent not to come to close quarters, on second thoughts, with such odds, and so the procession passed on and left him scowling.

Thrice round the Close they went, and then into the house, and they tramped upstairs with Tom still in his elevated position. At the door of the chums' study they set him down, breathless and a good deal dishevelled.

Tom was glad to get upon his own feet again.

"Now make a giddy speech!" exclaimed Jimson.

"Oh, rats!" said Tom.

"Speech! Speech!" howled the procession.

"Oh, all right!" said Tom Merry. "Let me see! I'm highly honoured by the ovation you've given me——"

"Hear, hear!"

"And I hope you'll never give me another!" concluded Tom.

And he dodged into the study.

"Well, that's a beastly measly speech," said Jimson. "Never mind! He's a hero, ain't he? Let's go and give him three cheers outside Devigne's study."

That idea caught on, and the whole of the Shell, with half the Lower Forms, crowded the wide corridor where the Upper Fifth studies opened, and at Jimson's word they began to cheer.

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!"

The volume of sound was deafening. Devigne had gone to his study to read Greek, and the sudden uproar outside the door made him jump off his chair.

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!"

Devigne tore open his door and glared out.

But the Lower Form boys were strong in numbers, and they were not afraid of the savage senior.

"Go it!" shouted Manners. "We're only cheering Merry, Devigne. We know how much you love him. Three times three, kids! Hurrah!"



The German master's face went white as he saw the weeping juniors and the still form of Tom Merry. "Has te poy hurt himself?" he called anxiously.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!"

Devigne slammed his door. The Shell, very well satisfied with themselves, gave three more threes and marched off. Manners and Monty Lowther joined Tom in their study, in high good humour.

"Devigne didn't seem pleased, somehow," said Manners. "He doesn't like you, Tommy. When they first stuck you into this study, kid, we wanted to chuck you out of the window. We didn't know we were entertaining a hero unawares."

"Oh, dry up!"

"A giddy hero——"

"Shut up, won't you?"

"Don't hide your light under a bushel," said Manners serenely. "We're proud of you, ain't we, Monty?"

"We are," said Monty solemnly. "We is. And how pleased Miss Priscilla will be when she hears about it!"

Tom Merry looked up in alarm.

"She mustn't hear about it!" he exclaimed hastily.

"Why not?"

"She'll—she'll come down. She'll think I caught a chill or something, and she'll come down with a barrelful of cod-liver oil, and want to wrap me up in cotton-wool!" exclaimed Tom, in distress. "I wouldn't have her know for anything."

Manners chuckled.

"Well, unless I'm greatly mistaken, Mr. Railton will write to her and tell her," he opined. "Of course, she ought to know that her darling boy is a noble hero——"

"Shut up!"

"Sha'n't! Far as I'm concerned, I'd like Miss Fawcett to come down to Clavering again. She stood us a stunning feed last time!"

"What-ho!" exclaimed Monty. "Don't be selfish, Tom. Surely you can stand the cod-liver oil if we get a jolly good feed?"

"Oh, hang it!" said Tom uneasily. "I hope Mr. Railton won't write."

But Mr. Railton did.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER
Gore Sends a Telegram!

TOM MERRY awoke on the following morning with a cold. It was only a slight cold, and after his adventures of the previous day he was fortunate to escape so lightly. But it was enough to start him sneezing and sniffing.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Manners, at the first sneeze. "You've got it, Tom! Won't Miss Fawcett be anxious when she sees you?"

"Oh, rats!" said Tom. "She's not going to see me. Dry up!"

"I'll bet the Head has written to her."

"I hope he hasn't."

"He's bound to," chuckled Gore, "and the old lady will be awfully frightened for her dear little boy. We must be on the look-out for her when she arrives, chaps, and receive her with all honours."

"Rather!" ejaculated Jimson, the joker of the Shell. "I only hope she won't arrive during lessons. That would be a pity."

Tom turned red. Clavering College had never forgotten the two visits of Miss Priscilla Fawcett.

On the first occasion she had insisted upon stopping all night, because Tom had not turned up and she was afraid something had happened to him. On the second occasion she had opened Tom's shirt at the neck to examine his chest before half the Form. The sturdy lad of fifteen was still a dear little boy in the loving eyes of his old nurse, and Tom, though he was very fond of her and very grateful for her devotion to him, wished that she would be a little more considerate "before the fellows."

He couldn't help wishing that, especially as the boys never allowed him to forget the solicitude Miss Fawcett showed for his health and comfort.

"Oh, she won't come during lessons!" said Gore, who had evidently given the matter some thought. "Of course, we take it for granted she'll come by the first train to see how her darling ducky is."

"Of course," said Jimson.

"But the first train from London doesn't get into High Clavering till a quarter-past twelve, and then there's the drive here."

"You know all about it, Gore!" exclaimed Manners. "Perhaps she won't come after all."

"Oh, yes, she'll come!" said Gore confidently.

"I don't see how you can be so beastly certain about it."

"Well, you'll see."

Atchoo-oo-ooh! That was Tom Merry's contribution to the conversation. Gore looked at him with an expression of great sympathy.

"Feel very bad, Merry?" he asked. "Poor chap! Poor chap! You must have forgotten to put on your chest-protector before you jumped into the river!"

"Never mind," said Jimson. "Miss Fawcett will soon be along with a bottle of cod-liver oil. Do you think you can hold out till midday, Merry? If you can't, I'll get a can of cycle oil for you to go on with."

This generous offer caused a loud laugh, in the midst of which Fatty Daly put his head in at the door and asked the boys if

they were coming down, or whether they wanted him to come to them.

"Merry's ill," said Gore. "We're worried about him."

"Merry ill!" exclaimed the prefect. "He looked all right yesterday. What's the matter with you, Merry?"

"Nothing," said Tom indignantly. "I'm not ill. It's all rot. I've only got a bit of a cold in the nose, Daly."

"His nurse is coming to wrap him up soon," said Gore. "You don't happen to have any cod-liver oil about you, do you, Daly?"

"No," said Daly, laughing, and he went out of the domitory.

"You'll have to wait till Miss Fawcett comes, Merry," said Gore. "I—— Ooch!"

Tom had had enough of it, and he had cut short the flow of Gore's chaff with a sponge soaked with water, which he hurled with unerring aim. It squelched in Gore's face, and ran down the shirt he was fastening. Gore gave a shout of rage.

"You little beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" exclaimed Tom. "You've no sense of humour, Gore. That's just as funny as chipping me about the cod-liver oil, if you could only see it!"

Gore seized the sponge, soaked it in his basin, and hurled it back at Tom. Tom was crossing to the door, and it was in that direction that Gore hurled the sponge. Tom saw it coming and promptly dodged.

The missile flew over his head. Every bullet, it is said, has its billet, and that sponge certainly had. For precisely at that unfortunate moment the master of the Shell put his head into the dormitory to see why the boys were late in coming down.

"Boys, I——"

Squelch! The soaking sponge smote the speaker full in the face. He staggered back with a startled cry, and Gore, as soon as he saw what he had done, stood frozen with terror.

The master of the Shell wasted no words. He went for Gore, and boxed his ears till they rang and sang. Gore yelled, but he had to stand it, and he sat down on a bed blinking and gasping when the angry master had finished with him.

"Now, be quick down," said the master sharply. "If you are more than two minutes longer, I will give the whole Form an imposition of fifty lines."

And he strode away.

"Well, of all the cheek!" ejaculated Manners. "Fancy chucking a sponge at a master!"

"I meant it for Merry!" howled Gore.

"Then all I can say is that you're a blithering ass," said Manners. "Come down, kids. We don't want that fifty to do."

"I'll make you pay for this, Merry!" exclaimed Gore.

"Why, what have I done?" exclaimed Tom. "I didn't want you to chuck the sponge, did I? You've had your fling, Gore, and you ought to be satisfied."

"Some people are never satisfied," chuckled Manners.

The Shell trooped downwards. Gore did not go in to breakfast. Tom Merry saw him wheeling his bike towards the gates.

"Hallo! Where's that kid going?" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "I suppose he's got a permit to go to High Clavering before school."

"He'll miss his breakfast, then."

"Oh, you can get a better breakfast at the tuck-shop, if you can pay for it, than you can get here!" said Monty Lowther. "I suppose that's Gore's idea. He got a pass from Daly, I suppose, with some yarn. He's an artful dodger. But what he wants to go off so early in the morning for is more than I know."

They soon forgot, however, about Gore and his early morning ride.

Gore came in in time for first lesson with a satisfied grin on his face that some of his Form-fellows noticed at once.

"What have you been up to, Gore?" asked Manners. "Playing a beastly mean trick on somebody?"

"Mind your own business," was the reply.

Tom glanced at Gore and caught his eye. Gore grinned, and the thought flashed through Tom's mind that the visit to the

village had something to do with himself. But the next moment he dismissed it.

He did not guess that Gore's destination had been the village telegraph office, and that he had sported one and a penny upon the following telegram:

"Miss Fawcett, Laurel Villa, Huckleberry Heath, Kent.—Tom caught cold. Come at once."

Gore had not signed the wire, but had put as the address of the sender "Clavering College," which went with the wire.

Whether the Head's letter brought Miss Fawcett to Clavering or not, there was no doubt that Gore's wire would do so.

It did.

While Tom Merry sat in class with the Shell, hoping that Miss Priscilla would never hear of his adventure, that estimable lady was speeding towards Clavering as fast as an express train could carry her.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER
The Invalid I

As soon as they were at liberty, the boys of the Shell trooped down to the school gates to watch for the expected arrival of Miss Fawcett.

None of them knew the trick Gore had played, but Gore's certainty that she would come had infected the others. Of course, they all hoped she would. To the fun-loving youngsters, the coming of the dear old lady promised a rare treat.

Tom, needless to say, did not share the general delighted anticipation. He knew that if Miss Priscilla came, his slight cold would alarm her as much as an attack of smallpox or plague, and he did not enjoy the prospect of being made to look absurd.

The rest of the Shell enjoyed it, though. Not that they loved Tom less, so to speak, but they loved a joke more.

Tom saw the crowd at the gate, and Manners, catching his expression, grinned.

"Tommy," he said, wagging his finger at our hero, "I fear that you have not an affectionate heart. Dear Tommy, are you no longer the loving child who played in innocent babyhood in the giddy garden at Huckleberry Heath?"

"He is not," said Monty Lowther solemnly. "The coming of his loving nurse does not make his bosom thrill with joy."

"Perhaps he is disguising his feelings," suggested Manners thoughtfully. "Under that external expression of frowning discontent he may be throbbing with joyousness unlimited. Is it so, Tommy?"

Tom grinned in spite of himself.

"Oh, don't rot!" he exclaimed. "Miss Priscilla has been awfully kind to me, and I'd do anything for her. I'd even let her make a fool of me rather than hurt her feelings. But a chap doesn't like being made a guy of."

"Never mind," said Manners comfortingly. "Think of the cod-liver oil. You'll be able to have a good, long drink ——"

"Oh, dry up!"

And Tom Merry went into his study.

There was a buzz at the gate. Jimson was keeping watch on the road, and he turned and waved his hand to the rest lounging in the gateway. Gore looked at him.

"Sister Anne, do you see anyone coming?" he inquired.

"I do, I does," grinned Jimson. "I see an ancient vehicle, which bears a strong resemblance to Noah's Ark on wheels, but which by experience I know to be the station hack from High Clavering. Ten bob to tuppence it contains the revered relation of our darling Tommy!"

Gore raised his hand.

"Now, this thing has got to be done in style!" he exclaimed. "Merry is not here to receive his devoted nurse, and we must take his place and give her a good reception. Keep your eyes on me, and do as I do."

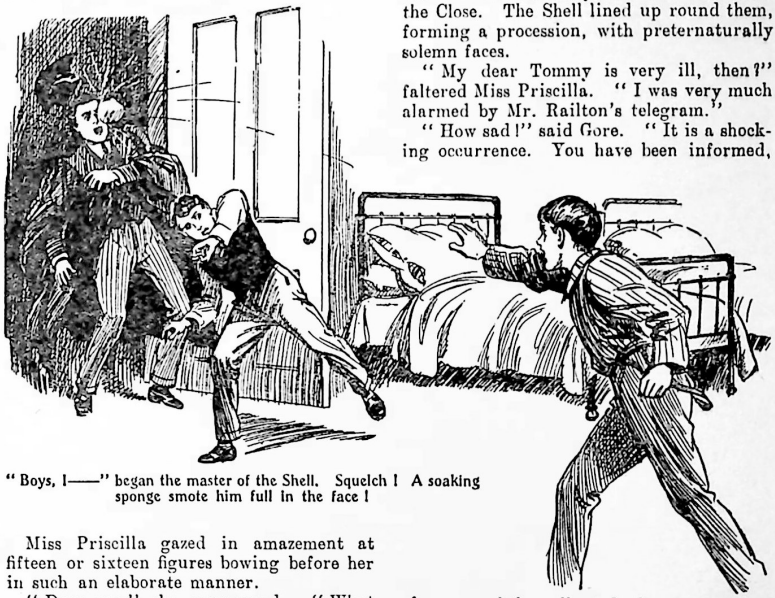
"Right-ho!" was the general reply.

The station hack from High Clavering drove up to the school gates. A kind old lady's face looked out of the window. It was so kind and so anxious that some of the boys relented. But it had no effect upon Gore.

Gore signed to the driver to stop, which he had to do, as the boys were blocking up the gateway. Then Gore stepped forward and opened the door of the hack.

Miss Priscilla Fawcett looked out.

Gore placed his left hand on his heart, and raised his cap with his right, at the same time bowing till his nose nearly touched his knees. And the boys of the Shell followed his lead as if moved by clockwork.



"Boys, I——" began the master of the Shell. Squelch! A soaking sponge smote him full in the face!

Miss Priscilla gazed in amazement at fifteen or sixteen figures bowing before her in such an elaborate manner.

"Dear me," she murmured. "What exceedingly polite boys! What is your name, my little man? Are you a friend of my dear Tommy?"

The question brought a giggle from the Shell, and Gore turned red.

He was the biggest and oldest fellow in the Shell. To be called "my little man" was about the deadliest insult possible.

He rose erect with a sort of jerk.

Miss Priscilla's kind face beamed on him from the hack. Gore recovered himself in a moment.

"Madam," he said politely, "we are all the friends of dear Tommy, and are most anxious about his health. May I have the distinguished honour of assisting you from this vehicle and leading you to our dearest chum?"

Miss Priscilla accepted Gore's assistance.

Then Gore gave her his arm, and with a wink to the other boys marched her across the Close. The Shell lined up round them, forming a procession, with preternaturally solemn faces.

"My dear Tommy is very ill, then?" faltered Miss Priscilla. "I was very much alarmed by Mr. Railton's telegram."

"How sad!" said Gore. "It is a shocking occurrence. You have been informed, of course, of the gallant deed perpetrated—I mean performed by our darling Thomas?"

"Mr. Railton wrote me an account of it, which I received this morning. Then I had the telegram. I came at once. How is Tommy now? Where is he? Has he been asking for me?"

"He has been asking for no one else," said Gore solemnly. "His first words when he woke up this morning were: 'Oh,

where is my dear old nurse?' You heard him, Jimson?"

"I did," said Jimson, with positively owl-like gravity. "'Where is my dear old nurse?' were his very words. Then he began to cry."

"My darling Tommy!"

"It was really due to his carelessness," said Gore. "Before jumping into the river he ought to have put on his chest-protector, and taken a good dose of cod-liver oil. He did neither. He has been getting simply reckless about his health."

"He is so delicate," murmured Miss Priscilla.

It was very hard for the Shell to retain their gravity during Gore's explanation. Some of them dropped behind to grin.

"I hope you have brought plenty of cod-liver oil with you, Miss Fawcett," said Gore anxiously. "Tommy has been asking for it. 'If I only had a good, steady drink of cod-liver oil' is what he has said a dozen times this morning."

"The dear, dear boy," said Miss Priscilla. "And it used to be so hard to persuade him to take it at Laurel Villa."

"Indeed?" said Gore, with an air of surprise. "You astonish me, Miss Fawcett. He simply thirsts for it now. I hope you've brought plenty."

"Yes, I have a large bottle in my bag," said the innocent old lady, "and I will send for some more from London. I have also brought a large bottle of Dr. Bones' Marvellous Mixture for Sorrowful Sufferers."

"Ah, that's what he wants!" exclaimed Gore enthusiastically. "Dr. Jones' Marvellous Muck for Seedy Duffers——"

"Dr. Bones' Marvellous Mixture for Sorrowful Sufferers," corrected Miss Priscilla.

"Ah, yes, I had it wrong! Marvellous Humbug for Silly—— Hallo, here's Tommy!"

Tom Merry was standing in the doorway, watching the advance of Miss Priscilla and her escort in silent wrath and indignation.

Miss Priscilla uttered a cry as soon as she saw him, and flew to embrace him. Tom tried to dodge, but it was no use. He was folded in a loving embrace and hugged. The Shell stood round admiringly. So did a number of lads of other Forms. There was quite a crowd on the steps of the house and in the hall. Tom wriggled.

"Leggo!" he exclaimed. "Chuck it!"

Miss Priscilla released him. She tore open the bag. Out came a bottle of cod-liver oil, and the stopper was drawn in a moment.

"Tommy, take a little quickly, and——"

"Drink, puppy—drink!" howled Gore.

Tom stared at Miss Priscilla in amazement.

"I won't!" he yelled. "I'm not ill! I'm all right! And I wouldn't take that beastly stuff, anyway. Chuck it away!"

Miss Priscilla looked amazed. This certainly did not agree with what Gore had told her. She looked round at Gore, and he tapped his forehead.

"Delirious," he murmured. "He was light-headed all last night, and saying all sorts of things. He's raving."

"You—you howling fibber!" shouted Tom. "If you tell such lies about me I'll punch your beastly head!"

Miss Priscilla looked horrified.

At Laurel Villa, at dear old Huckleberry Heath, her darling Tommy had never dreamed of threatening to punch anybody's beastly head. The only explanation was that he was delirious. Certainly at that moment he looked extremely excited.

"My darling Tommy! Calm yourself!"

"Pray be calm!" cried Gore. "Dearest Tommy, don't be angry with your dear friends, who are so anxious about you. Remember how I sat up with you, and held your hand, and whispered sweet words of comfort when you——"

Gore was interrupted.

Tom went for him; he had had enough of it. Gore received a thump on the nose that sent him against the wall.

"Hold him!" yelled Gore. "He's delirious! He's mad! Collar him!"

Five or six of the Shell, entering into the joke, collared Tom promptly. Gore fixed a grip on the back of his collar. Tom Merry struggled in vain. The bottle of cod-liver oil fell from Miss Priscilla's hand and smashed on the tiled floor.

"Oh, oh, oh!" wailed Miss Priscilla.

"My darling boy! My sweetest Tommy! Put him to bed at once, my dear lads, and send for a doctor. Oh——"

"What is the matter here?"

It was Mr. Railton's voice. The headmaster of Clavering came on the scene with a frowning brow. He closed his lips a little at the sight of Miss Priscilla.

"My dear Miss Fawcett, I am glad to see you. Pray excuse this disgraceful scene in your presence. I——"

"Dear Mr. Railton, help these kind boys to put Tommy to bed, I beg of you!" cried Miss Priscilla, wringing her hands. "He is delirious, and ——"

"Delirious! Impossible!"

"I assure you it is the case. He refused to take his cod-liver oil, and he attacked one of his dearest chums in a savage manner. Dear Tommy was always the gentlest boy! Oh, get him to bed and send for a doctor!"

"We'll soon have him in bed," said Gore cheerily. "It's all right, Mr. Railton. We can manage him. He's awfully savage, though."

"I—I—I——" gasped Tom Merry.

He could get out no more, because Gore was twisting his collar from behind and choking him. Gore did not intend to let him do any explaining.

"This is mere nonsense!" exclaimed the Head. "I—— Oh, goodness gracious!"

The latter exclamation was caused by Miss Priscilla falling into his arms.



As Miss Priscilla saw Tom, she flew forward and embraced him lovingly. "Leggo!" exclaimed Tom. "Chuck it!"

"Dear me!" exclaimed the Head, in great distress. "This is most annoying! Merry—Gore—I—yes, dear madam, I beg of you to calm yourself. Merry is quite well—very well indeed. You are quite right. I beg of you—— Dear me! Goodness gracious!"

The Head hardly knew what he was saying.

Miss Priscilla was developing hysterics of an alarming character, and Mr. Railton had not the faintest idea of what he ought to do.

"Pray calm yourself, madam!" he entreated. "I beg of you—think of your ward. He—he needs your care. He needs your care, my dear Miss Fawcett."

This was a brilliant inspiration. It worked like a charm. Nothing but anxiety for her darling Tommy could have brought Miss Priscilla out of hysterics at that moment.

She made a great effort to recover herself.

"Is he put to bed?" she murmured faintly. "Is the doctor sent for?"

"Ye-es!" gasped the distracted Mr. Railton. "Gore, Jimson, put Merry to bed immediately. Merry, I command you to go to bed quietly. French, go for the doctor—run all the way. Miss Fawcett, pray calm yourself. Oh, dear, dear me!"

Tom was still struggling. He was too furious to heed even the headmaster's order. But the boys of the Shell, backed up by Mr. Railton's authority in this way, soon had him up the stairs and in the dormitory.

"You beast!" yelled Tom. "I—I—I——"

"Oh, you shut up!" grinned Gore, twisting his collar. "You're a giddy invalid in this act. How can you cause your loving nurse such anxiety? Drag his togs off, chaps, and get the darling to bed."

"I won't go to bed. I w-w-won't——"

"Yes, you will."

Tom was plumped on the bed, and they began to strip him. Manners and Monty Lowther, who had learned what was going forward, came bursting into the dormitory. They came to Tom's aid with a rush, but the odds were against them. They were hurled back, and Tom, half-clad, was shoved into bed and covered up. Then the boys sat on his bedclothes all round him, to keep him from throwing them off.

"Done it!" gasped Gore. "Keep quiet, you bounder! Don't you know you're an invalid? Oh, crumbs, this is the howlingest jape I've ever heard of!"

"Dear, dear Tommy!"

It was Miss Priscilla's voice. She came into the dormitory, leaning weakly on the arm of Mr. Railton. If Mr. Railton's face was an index to his feelings, they must have been very mixed.

"Boys, you can go," he said sharply. "Merry, lie still. I command you to do so. Miss Fawcett is anxious about you, and you must remain in bed till the doctor has seen you."

"I'm all right!" howled Tom. "It's only their rotting, sir!"

"See how excited he is, sir," said Gore. "Hadn't we better remain in case he gets violent again, sir? He might go for you, sir—— Ow, ow ow!"

Mr. Railton's finger and thumb closed tightly on Gore's ear, and he was twisted away from the bed towards the door.

"You may go," said Mr. Railton quietly.

The boys left. Downstairs they shouted themselves hoarse with laughter. Manners and Monty were indignant, but they could not help laughing, too.

Miss Priscilla sat by Tom's bedside, and her anxious expression did more than Mr. Railton's authority to calm the injured Tommy.

"Pray calm yourself, dear Tom! You know me, don't you?"

"Of course I do," growled Tom. "I'm not ill. It's all a joke."

"My dear, dear boy! Of course, you don't know how ill you are. Try to go to sleep," said Miss Priscilla soothingly.

"How can I go to sleep in the daytime? I tell you I'm not ill. It's all a joke of Gore's. I'm all right. Can't you see I'm all right?"

"Yes, yes, but be calm."

Mr. Railton frowned.

"My dear Miss Fawcett," he said, "I think Merry is speaking the truth. He has a slight cold, and nothing more. There was really no necessity for you to come here to see him. If I had known that my letter would have had such a result, I should certainly not have written it. I assured you when I wrote that Merry had suffered no injury whatever."

"Yes, but your telegram——"

"My what?"

"Your telegram, which I received this morning soon after your letter arrived ——"

"You must be dreaming, madam. I sent no telegram."

"Sir, I do not understand you! Perhaps you are attempting to deceive me in order to reassure me? It is useless."

"I tell you that I sent you no telegram."

"And I tell you, Mr. Railton, that I received one, telling me to come at once."

"There must be some—some mistake," said the bewildered Head. "I certainly did not send it."

"Then it was sent by someone here who felt the anxiety which you, as headmaster, ought to have felt," said Miss Priscilla, with unusual asperity.

"It must be some—some joke."

"I should think the health of my dear Tommy too serious a subject for joking," said Miss Priscilla, with crushing dignity. "Ah, thank goodness, here is the doctor!"

Gore had just shown the doctor to the dormitory. The medico came to the bedside. He looked inquiringly at Mr. Railton as they shook hands.

"I wish you to see this boy," said Mr. Railton with an effort. "Miss Fawcett is alarmed—needlessly, I believe—about his health."

"I'm all right!" growled Tom.

The doctor looked at him with a smile.

"Ah, this is the lad who rescued the miller's little girl yesterday," he said. "I saw him then. A brave lad—a very brave lad. I sincerely hope there is nothing wrong. But we shall soon see!"

The examination of poor Tom was brief, but it might have been an operation of the most dangerous kind by the way Miss Priscilla watched and waited.

She awaited the doctor's verdict with breathless anxiety.

She clasped her hands nervously as he turned to her again.

"Oh, doctor, doctor, tell me what is the matter!"

"Certainly."

"What is it? What is it?"

"Nothing!"

"What—which—how——"

"Nothing at all but a slight cold in the head," said the doctor blandly. "I am glad to tell you, madam, that your anxiety is groundless."

"He is so delicate——"

"On the contrary, he is one of the strongest and heartiest lads I have ever examined," was the reply. "I don't see how anybody could ever have thought him delicate."



Miss Priscilla developed hysterics of an alarming character, and Mr. Railton had not the faintest idea of what he ought to do.

Mr. Railton smiled slightly.

"You see, my dear madam——" he began.

But Miss Priscilla was not listening.

"You do not think the dear child ought to get up yet?" she said to the doctor, almost imploringly.

The man of medicine hesitated.

"Well, it won't do him any harm to stay in bed and nurse his cold," he admitted. "I'll send him down some simple medicine."

"Oh, thank you, doctor, but I have the best medicine!"

"Oh, have you, madam?" said the physician huffily. "If you know my business better than I do, I wonder you took the trouble to send for me!"

"Pray excuse me, but doubtless you have heard of Dr. Bones' Marvellous Mixture for Sorrowful Sufferers, and——"

"Yes, I've heard of it. Humbug—sheer humbug, madam! Simply water, with a little colouring added. The best that can be said of it is that it is harmless, or nearly so!"

Miss Priscilla was the most patient and gentle of old ladies, but she couldn't stand that. She had pinned her faith to the Marvellous Mixture for some thirty years or more, and she wasn't inclined to have her idol shattered by a mere country practitioner.

"Thank you," she said icily. "We need not discuss that."

"Certainly not," said the doctor blandly. "Keep the boy in bed till to-morrow morning if you like, and throw the Marvellous Mixture out of the window, and all will be well."

And he marched off, chuckling to himself.

Miss Fawcett looked gloomy and anxious.

"Are you sure that man is to be relied upon, Mr. Railton?" she asked.

"Absolutely, madam. He is my own physician."

"But he shows astonishing ignorance for a medical man. He cannot see that dear Tommy is a delicate child!"

"My dear madam——"

"I hope you do not intend to repeat his absurd assertions, Mr. Railton?"

"N-no," said Mr. Railton feebly.

"There is, of course, no objection to my remaining here to look after Tommy until he is well?" said Miss Fawcett.

"N-n-n-no," mumbled the Head. "I—I shall be—be delighted!"

"Thank you, Mr. Railton. Tommy, my dear, you would like me to stay, wouldn't you?"

Poor Tom could do nothing but nod assent. He wouldn't have hurt the dear old soul's feelings for worlds. But he registered a mental vow to make Gore sorry for the part he had taken in the matter. For he guessed who had sent the telegram. Gore's early morning spin to the village was explained now.

"The dear boy!" murmured Miss Priscilla. "I will read to you, Tommy, and compose you to sleep. I have a little book in my bag, called 'Naughty Georgie: the Story of a Boy who was Tossed by a Mad Bull when Stealing Apples in an Orchard.' I am sure it will compose you nicely to sleep!"

"Yes, I am sure it would," groaned poor Tom.

"And perhaps Mr. Railton would let that good, kind lad sit with you as well?" said Miss Priscilla.

"What, old Manners?" said Tom, a little more brightly.

"I do not know his name. The dear lad who sat up with you and held your hand during the night."

Tom gritted his teeth, and Mr. Railton, coughing hard to keep back a laugh, walked out of the dormitory. Miss Priscilla went on innocently:

"Would you like to see him, Tommy? He is outside, I perceive, and he appears to be still anxious about you."

As soon as Mr. Railton was gone, Gore peered into the dormitory. He was wondering whether it would be possible to squeeze any more fun out of the joke.

"Yes," said Tom, with a light of vengeance in his eyes, "I should awfully like Gore to come in for a minute, nurse!"

He took a firm grip on his pillow.

Miss Fawcett beckoned to Gore.

"Please do come in, my dear little man. Tommy would like to speak to you."

Gore came in, grinning blandly.

Whiz went the pillow, so suddenly and swiftly that Gore could not guard against it. It caught him on the chin and curled round his head and swept him fairly off his feet. He went down with a crash that made every bone in his body ache.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Tom. "Bowled out first ball of the over! Isn't it funny, Gore?"

Gore sat up, looking exceedingly dazed and stupid.

"Tommy!" shrieked Miss Priscilla. "Dear me! It's the delirium again!"

"Yes, I may as well have the game as the name," said Tom.

And as Gore rose, scowling, he sent the bolster after the pillow, and Gore reeled and crashed into a washstand. There was a terrific smash of china.

Gore gave a wild howl and went for Tom, but Miss Priscilla jumped in the way.

"Please go." she said softly. "Your presence excites him, and——"

"I'll excite the beast!" howled Gore. "I'll—I'll——"

"Please go."

And Gore thought he had better, for Tom had grabbed up one of his boots and was taking aim with it. Gore dodged away, and the boot crashed on the door as he closed it behind him.

"Oh, pray, pray be calm!" cried Miss Priscilla.

"That's all right," said Tom, somewhat relieved in his mind now. "I'll be as calm as you like, and you can read me that giddy rot about the bull that was tossed by a mad apple—I mean the apple that was tossed by a mad boy—— Hang it, you know what I mean!"

Miss Priscilla produced that valuable piece of literature and began to read, and the effect was all that she could have desired, for ere she had finished the first chapter of the adventures of Naughty Georgie, Tom was asleep as sound as a top.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER
Tom Merry's Ordeal I

Miss Priscilla stayed until the evening, and Tom did not get up all the rest of that day. When he wanted to do so, the old lady was alarmed, and broached the subject of staying over the morrow to continue to look after him. That prospect was so terrifying that Tom gave in at once and remained in bed.

It was what he afterwards described as a "rotten" time. He wasn't particularly sorry to miss the afternoon classes, but when school was over, and in the golden spring evening he heard the shouts of the boys from the playing-fields, he felt that he could have enjoyed kicking somebody.

The Shell were at cricket practice, and Tom had to lie there and listen to the dreary adventures of Naughty Georgie; how that naughty boy was tossed by a mad bull while stealing apples, and turned over a new leaf in consequence, and became an insufferable prig. At least, that was how Tom put it when he told Manners, though the author used quite other words.

But everything comes to an end at last, and so Tom's trial ended finally when the boys of the Shell came up to bed.

Miss Priscilla took an affectionate leave of him—implored him to wire to her at once if he took a turn for the worse—and then at last departed. She was going home by a late train, and the Head could not do less than drive her to the station.

But Mr. Railton would willingly have driven her a hundred miles to get her away from Clavering. Her concern for Tommy was very creditable to her heart, but it was liable to pall upon disinterested outsiders.

Tom, of course, had to endure a storm of chaff.

It was not till the Shell had gone to sleep that he was left in peace, and as he had been in bed most of the afternoon, it was a long time before he could fall asleep himself.

However, he woke with the others in the morning, his cold almost gone, and was the first to jump out of bed. Gore yawned and sat up.

"How do you feel, Spooney?" he asked. "I hope your chest is all right. Have you taken your giddy Mixture for Howling Duffers?"

Tom looked at him with a flash in his eyes.

"Was it you sent that telegram to Miss Fawcett?" he asked.

"What telegram?" asked Gore innocently.

"She had a telegram after she received the Head's letter. It was that, and not Mr. Railton's letter, that brought her to Clavering."

"Was it? I suppose Mr. Railton sent it."

"I heard him say that he did not."

"Perhaps it got sent to her by mistake."

"And perhaps a rotten cad sent it to her," said Tom scornfully. "A miserable rotter who didn't care if he caused her anxiety so long as he had his fun!"

Gore flushed and jumped out of bed.

"Are you calling me a cad, Merry?"

"I say you're a cad if you sent that telegram," said Tom unflinchingly. "I can take a joke as well as anyone, and I don't mind being chipped. I think I've stood that pretty well, and goodness knows I've had enough of it to stand."

"He's about right there," said Jimson. "Spooney's right. He's stood it like a little man!"

"But this is past a joke," said Tom. "So long as you go for me, I don't care; but your telegram made Miss Fawcett anxious, and she's an old lady, and only a cad would play a trick on an old lady!"

"And you believe I sent that telegram?" asked Gore, coming towards Tom with a dangerous gleam in his eyes. "What proof have you got?"

"Well, I know the Head didn't send it, and it must have been sent by somebody for a joke. Nobody really thought I was ill. It was just the trick a fellow like you would play, and you were gone to High Clavering about the time it would be sent. No other fellow in the Form was there."

"It's clear enough," said Monty Lowther. "You're bowled out, Gore, and you may as well own up and tell the truth."

"Suppose I did it," said Gore defiantly. "It was a joke. But if Merry intends to give me away to Mr. Railton——"

"You know I don't intend to do anything of the kind," said Tom quietly. "I don't think any chap here can say I've ever been a tell-tale."

"Gore knows you won't tell," said Manners. "That's only his rot. Why don't you own up, Gore? Why can't you say out plain you did it, and not beat about the bush?"

"Well, I don't care," said Gore. "I did it! There! It was a joke, and a jolly good joke, too. Now Merry can make as much as he likes of it. What have you got to say, Merry?"

"Only what I said before," said Tom.

"And what's that, my dear, delicate Tommy?"

"That you're a howling cad, and ought to have a hiding."

"Perhaps you'll give me one?" sneered Gore.

"Yes, perhaps I will," said Tom. "I'm going to have a try, anyhow. You've been trying to bully me ever since I came to Clavering, and now you've done this. I'm going to give you a hiding, or you're going to give me one, Gore."

The bully of the Shell burst into a laugh.

"Hold him back, chaps!" he exclaimed. "Mammy's darling is going to whack me!"

Tom did not flinch under the laugh that went up.

He was in serious earnest, and he meant every word that he said.

"Yes, that's what I'm going to do," he said. "You have been asking for it for a long time, Gore, and if I can give it you, you're going to get it at last!"

"I feel awfully nervous," said Gore. "I never guessed that mammy's baby boy would blossom forth as a giddy warrior, or I'd have minded my P's and Q's very carefully."

"You can take that for a start," said Tom, flicking his open hand across Gore's cheek. "Now you can come on as soon as you like!"

Gore turned scarlet with rage.

"My hat! I'll break you into little bits for that!" he exclaimed.

And he went for Tom like a bull.

But Manners and Monty Lowther jumped in the way and held the combatants back.

"Let me go!" howled Gore, wriggling in Monty's grip.

"Hold on, infants," said Manners coolly. "You can't fight now. If we ain't down in five minutes there'll be a master on our track, and this affair can't be settled in five minutes. Just hold in your hosses, kids, and wait till the proper time!"

"Oh, all right," said Gore. "I'll



Miss Priscilla clasped her hands nervously as the doctor turned to her. "Oh, doctor, tell me what is the matter!"

smash him up to-night, if you like. I don't care when I do it!"

"I suggest Saturday afternoon," said Monty. "Then you'll be able to get away and have it out without danger of interruption."

"I'm agreeable," said Tom.

"All right," growled Gore. "To-morrow afternoon, then. And I'll make Spooney wish he had never been born. You mark my words!"

The boys finished dressing and went down. The coming encounter between Tom Merry and Gore was a topic of great interest that morning. Gore was the biggest fellow in the Form, and, as a matter of fact, was old enough to be well up in the Fifth long ago. There was no one in the Shell who could tackle him, and even Manners, who was a boxer, fought shy of Gore. That Tom would be hopelessly and absolutely licked few doubted for a moment. The only question of interest was what kind of fight he would put up, and how long he would stand up against Gore before he was knocked out.

When the Shell were at work, Mr. Railton came into the class-room at the end of a lesson and addressed them. He explained how the telegram had been sent to Miss Fawcett, and asked the boys if they knew anything about it.

The Shell were silent. Gore shifted rather uncomfortably in his seat, and Tom Merry kept his eyes fixed upon the desk before him.

"This is a serious matter," said Mr. Railton. "The telegram was practically sent in my name, and it caused Miss Fawcett a great amount of needless anxiety, and put her to the trouble of taking a long and unnecessary journey. I can pardon a joke among my boys, but this is far beyond the bounds of a joke. I must, therefore, insist upon knowing the name of the culprit. I cannot promise to pardon him, but if he takes the manly course of confessing frankly, I can say that his punishment will be lighter than it would be otherwise."

A long silence followed the Head's remarks.

The boys looked at each other, but no one was inclined to speak.

Mr. Railton waited a full minute for the reply that did not come, and then his brow darkened.

From Phipps, the Head worked his way through the Form to the top boy.

The answer was the same in every case.

"No, sir!"

Gore gave the reply without flinching. He felt a slight inward discomfort at telling a barefaced untruth, but it was not sufficient to make him own up.

The Head's brow was darker than ever when he finished. He felt certain that one of the boys had told him a falsehood, though he could not guess which.

"The matter does not end here," he said. "This compels me to pursue the matter in a way I wished to avoid. Merry!"

"Yes, sir!"

"You are doubtless aware of the identity of the boy who sent the telegram. As the joke, such as it was, was against you, you are probably aware of the joker's name."

Tom flushed a little and was silent.

He would as soon have bitten out his tongue as told a deliberate lie, but he felt that he could not give Gore away.

The Head's quick eye at once read his flush aright.

"You know whom it was, Merry?" he repeated.

"Am I bound to answer that question, sir?"

"Certainly you are. I command you to answer me at once!"

"Yes, sir. I know whom it was," said Tom slowly.

Gore clenched his teeth.

"Oh, you rotten sneak!" he muttered. "See if I don't pay you for this!"

"Who was it, Merry?" asked Mr. Railton.

"I don't think I can tell you, sir."

"What! You have just told me that you know!"

"Yes, sir. But it wouldn't be cricket to give him away, would it?"

The whole Shell held their breath. They were accustomed to surprises from Tom Merry, but they had never expected to see him hold an argument with the headmaster.

The red crept into Mr. Railton's cheeks, but he remained quite calm.

"Merry, it is not for you to think for yourself when your headmaster gives you an order. I have put the question to you before the whole class in order that the imputation of tale-bearing cannot be made. Your Form-fellows will know that you speak by my direct order, which you have no choice but to obey."

Tom Merry was still silent.

"Merry! You can either give me the name of the boy in question, or take yourself the punishment that would otherwise fall upon him!" exclaimed Mr. Railton very angrily.

Tom brightened up wonderfully.

"All right, sir," he exclaimed. "I'll take the punishment, if you don't mind."

"The punishment," said Mr. Railton grimly, "will be a severe flogging, which I can assure you will not be pleasant when you come to endure it."

"I don't mind, sir."

"Very well," said Mr. Railton. "You will come to my study after morning lessons, Merry."

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Railton left the room. The morning's work went on, and many a sympathetic glance was cast towards Tom by his Form-fellows, and many a condemnatory one towards Gore.

Gore himself was feeling and looking very uneasy.

He felt that he had played a very unmanly part in sitting silent while the burden of his fault fell upon another who had already suffered by it.

But he had not the pluck to own up and "take his gruel" like a man.

He kept his eyes down while the lesson lasted, meeting none of the expressive glances thrown towards him. But when the class was dismissed, he could not help learning the opinion of the Shell upon his conduct.

"Of all the rotten cads," said Monty Lowther, "I think Gore is about the rottenest!"

"The very rottenest," said Manners. "He ought to be scragged!"

"He wants a Form licking," said Jimson.

"The beast!"

"The sneak!"

"The rotter!"

In the midst of all these compliments Gore took himself off, followed by a chorus of groans and hisses.

Tom, on the other hand, came in for something like an ovation. His cool "cheek"—though he had not meant it for that—in refusing to answer the headmaster's question had taken the Shell's breath away. But they couldn't help admiring his nerve and pluck, and such of them as knew what a flogging by the Head was like gave him great sympathy.

"You're really going to take the flogging then, Tom?" asked Manners as Tom Merry turned to make his way to the headmaster's study.

"Rather! There's no getting out of it, is there?"

"It would serve Gore right to give him away. He deserves it, the beast!"

"Oh, I can stand the licking!" said Tom, more cheerfully than he felt.

"You don't know what it's like," said Jimson. "I've been there, Merry, and I know. Look here, I'd advise you to tell the Head the truth and get out of it!"

Tom smiled and shook his head.

"He can lay it on," said French, with a reminiscent wriggle. "He knows how to hit scientifically, and he makes you fairly squirm!"

"Well, I'm off," said Tom, who fancied the flogging the less the more he heard it talked about. "Better get it over!"

And he walked away to Mr. Railton's door and tapped.

"Come in!" said the deep voice of the Head of Clavering, and Tom entered.

Mr. Railton fixed a scrutinising glance upon him.

"Well, Merry," he said, not unkindly, "have you come to tell me the name of the culprit?"

"No, sir," said Tom respectfully, but very firmly.

The headmaster's brow contracted slightly.

"Very well, I will ring for Giles."

Giles, the school janitor, came to the ring. It was his business to "hoist" the unfortunate youngsters condemned to a flogging, and, to judge by his expression at such times, he found it a pleasing task. He grinned as he came into the study. He knew what he was wanted for.



Tom hurled the bolster after the pillow, and Gore reeled and crashed into a washstand as he was hit.

We will draw a veil over the next few minutes.

They were minutes of anguish to Tom Merry, but he stood it all with clenched teeth, and did not allow a single cry to pass his lips.

And probably Mr. Railton, who liked pluck more than anything else, let him off a good deal more lightly than he would have let off the culprit had he been revealed.

But the flogging, which was a totally new experience to Tom Merry, was the most painful one of his life so far, and he went from the headmaster's study with a white face, twisting about in a most uncomfortable manner.

His comrades of the Shell met him with sympathy.

They could see that he had been "through it." Some of them had waited outside the study to hear the expected yells of Spooney. They had heard the rhythmic swish of the instrument of torture, but the expected yells had not come. A boy who could go through a flogging without a cry was entitled to respect in the opinion of the young gentlemen of the middle school. They patted Tom on the back and thumped him on the shoulder in the keenest admiration.

"Well, you are a real plucky 'un," said Jimson. "As for that beast Gore, he ain't fit to be in the school. I vote we give him a Form licking."

"Or frog's-march him round the Close," said French.

"Make him run the gauntlet," exclaimed Monty. "A double row of chaps with knotted towels or slippers, and——"

"Good wheeze! That's the idea!"

"I say," exclaimed Tom, "let Gore alone. He's got to fight me to-morrow afternoon, and if I can give him a licking he's going to have one."

"But you can't!"

"We'll see about that," said Tom; "anyway, let him alone now. You needn't go for him on my account. I don't suppose he feels very comfy about it, anyway."

"Well, come to think of it, I don't suppose he does," said Monty Lowther thoughtfully. "Let the rotter alone, chaps. As for his licking Tom so easily to-morrow, I don't believe it. Merry has been our pupil for some time—hasn't he, Manners?—and I fancy at least he's got a sporting chance."

"That's so," said Manners, with a nod. "Far as I'm concerned, I shouldn't be surprised to see Merry knock Gore out to-morrow afternoon."

"I'll do my best," said Tom quietly.

"I'll give you another boxing lesson to-night," said Manners, taking Tom's arm as the latter walked away, with a rather uncertain wriggle in his gait. "I don't suppose you feel up to one just at this minute, do you, Merry?"

Tom made rather a wry face.

"N-no, not exactly, Manners, old chap. But to-night I shall be fit enough."

"Good! I'll put you through it once more, and if you don't lick Gore to-morrow it won't be my fault," declared Manners.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

A Fight to a Finish!

In the morning, when Tom Merry rose, he still felt the smart of the flogging, but he was very fit.

During the morning school a good many impositions fell to the lot of boys who discussed the coming fight instead of attending to their lessons.

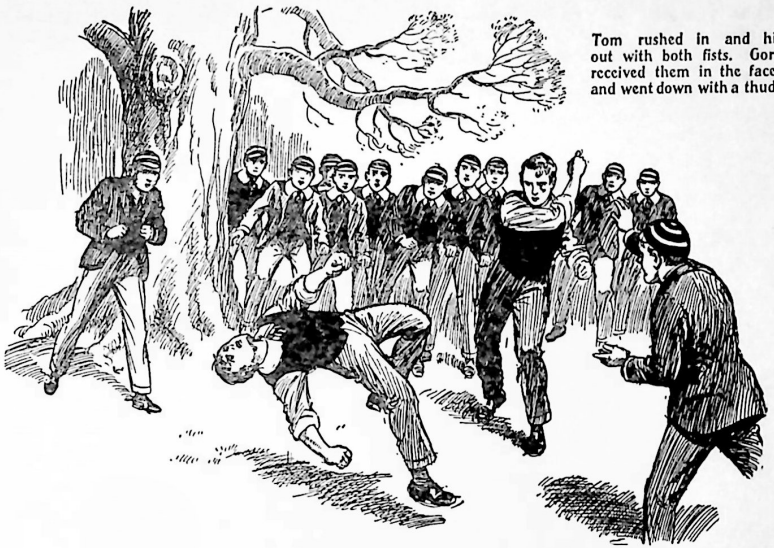
When at last the welcome hour of dismissal came, the Shell crowded out of the school, greatly relieved, and after dinner they betook themselves to the chosen spot.

This was at some distance from the school, a secluded space behind the boathouse, shaded by ancient elms that had been the abode of innumerable rooks for generations.

Under the elms, in the golden afternoon, a crowd of boys of all the Lower Forms at Clavering gathered. Not only the Shell, but Upper and Lower Fifth, and half the Fourth Form came to see how Spooney would show up in the fight.

Their glances were approving as Tom Merry came on the scene with Monty Lowther and Manners. Whether a licking awaited Tom or not, he certainly didn't seem the least bit scared. His face was calm and cheerful as ever.

Gore came down to the spot with a swagger. Jimson had offered to act as his second, and Jimson bore a huge sponge and a bottle to fill with water in the stream. Monty Lowther was to act for Tom.



Tom rushed in and hit out with both fists. Gore received them in the face, and went down with a thud.

Devigne, of the Upper Fifth, volunteered to keep the time and was accepted. Devigne did not like Tom Merry. He was a bit of a bully himself, and was inclined to favour Gore. He had really come there to see Tom Merry licked.

The two boys stripped and faced each other. Gore was so much the bigger of the two that most of the spectators, comparing them, dismissed from their minds the belief that Tom had even a sporting chance.

"Now, then," said Devigne, looking at his watch, "shake hands and buckle to! Time!"

The adversaries shooks hands and "buckled to." Gore commenced with a confident swagger, which seemed justified by his weight and size. But there was a surprise in store for him and for the lookers-on. He drove Tom Merry twice round the ring, and then his fist came home on Tom's nose with a whack that brought the water to the recipient's eyes.

But Tom countered swiftly, and before Gore could recover his guard, Tom's knuckles had come in contact with his mouth, and Gore gave a gasp. He rushed on furiously, and then came Tom's chance. Up came his left in a rapid upper-cut. Gore wasn't looking out for it in the least. Tom's fist caught him fairly on the point of the chin, and he staggered back and fell heavily on the grass.

"'Ray, 'ray, 'ray!" shouted Manners jubilantly. "That's a sample of the Merry upper-cut, kids! He's my giddy pupil! What price Gore now?"

Jimson helped Gore to his feet. He sponged his heated face, and whispered words of counsel.

"You'll have to look out, Gore. He ain't such a spooney, after all. If you fancy you're going to carry it off with a high hand you're mistaken, old chap."

"Rats!" snapped Gore. "That was a fluke."

"Hum!" said Jimson.

"Do you think it wasn't?" snarled his principal angrily.

"Time!" called out Devigne.

Gore stepped up to the mark. Tom came up smiling, as cool as a cucumber. The second round commenced, and Gore, though he had snarled at his second for his counsel, acted upon it. He was a good deal more careful, and used more science. Tom received a couple of heavy blows in the face, but he returned them with three harder ones, and at the end of the round it could not be said that Gore had recovered his lost ground.

The opinion of the onlookers was veering round now. The fact that Spooney had stood up to Gore for a couple of rounds and had decidedly not had the worst of it showed that he was, in fact, a "dark horse," and that he possessed a quality hitherto undreamt of.

The fight now became more keenly interesting than ever. The possibility of Gore being licked was freely discussed, not without an expectant satisfaction. The bully of the Shell was not popular. The third round was more to Gore's advantage, and it finished with Tom on his back on the grass. Monty Lowther looked rather anxious as he helped him up.

"I'm all right," said Tom, reading his expression. "I let him get one in straight from the shoulder then, and he can hit! It won't happen again."

And Tom played very carefully in the fourth round.

Both the combatants received severe punishment, but neither gained a decided advantage until the end of the round. Then Tom's swift upper-cut came into play, and Gore "got it" on the chin a second time. He went down as if he had been shot, every tooth in his head jarred by the impact.

Monty and Manners exchanged glances of satisfaction. Tom was coming out strong now, with a vengeance. Gore was looking extremely groggy as he came up for the fifth round.

"Better chuck it, Gore," said Devigne curtly. "You can't stick it out."

"I'm going on," said Gore obstinately.

"All right. Time!"

The last round—for such it proved—commenced. Tom was feeling the effects of the hard tussle, though not so severely as Gore. He felt that he had the fight in his hands now if he played his cards carefully. Taking care to keep out of reach of Gore's desperate drives, he kept his adversary on the move, and suddenly, deceiving him with a feint, rushed in and hit out with both fists.

Gore received them both in the face, and went down with a thud. He staggered up again, and reeled into Jimson's arms.

"I—I'm done!" he gasped.

Gore was gasping for breath. He was utterly and hopelessly licked, and he knew it. Tom's face, however, did not express anything like exultation over a fallen foe. He held out his hand.

"Shake!" he exclaimed. "We've had it out, fair and square, Gore, and it's over and done with. No need to bear malice."

Gore was not proof against that appeal. He took Tom's hand.

"You're a decent sort," he said. "I've felt rotten about not owning up to that telegram. I wish I had now, and taken the licking. It serves me right what I've got, and I don't mind saying so. So that's off my chest!"

"Well, that's decent to say so," said Manners. "You'd both better wash off some of the marks of the fray now."

The advice was too good to be neglected. Tom and Gore washed off as much as they could of the signs of combat, and made themselves as presentable as possible to return to the school. Mr. Railton met the boys in the Close, and he looked from Tom to Gore, and from Gore back to Tom, very sharply. Perhaps he guessed the facts; at all events, he turned away without making a remark, and the delinquents breathed more freely.

"I suppose you don't feel up to any cricket practice, Tom?" Manners remarked.

"Don't I?" said Tom promptly. "I can bat with one eye shut, and my nose has stopped bleeding. Come on!"

And they were soon at work at the nets.

THE END

£500 Reward!



By CECIL FANSHAW

In this rousing story of African adventure the pluck and resource of young Jerry Mason prove more than a match for two "wanted" diamond thieves!

THE FIRST CHAPTER
Jerry Acts Swiftly!

"Hold hard, Bart!" cried Jerry Mason excitedly. "What's that up there?"

At his young pal's shout, Bart Simmonds twisted in his seat at the wheel of the small motor-lorry, and stared up at the blue South African sky. He shaded his eyes with his hand, staring over the tin roof of the little trading-store, to see a black speck that grew rapidly larger and larger.

"It's not a vulture!" burst out Jerry.

"It's a 'plane, man," Bart drawled, with a laugh. "But what the deuce can it want out here, I wonder?"

Lean, sunburnt, and not easily excited, Bart was South African born, and called everyone "man"—colonial fashion. Red-cheeked Jerry, with whom Bart ran his Kafir store and transport-riding business in this remote part of Cape Colony, was not long from England, and was always going off like a box of fireworks. Chockful of life and energy was Jerry.

There was reason, however, for Jerry's excitement, for the 'plane was suddenly seen to dip, then come roaring down straight for the store and its thatched out-buildings.

"It will get wrecked!" Jerry cried. "I bet the pilot takes that green swamp down there for sound turf."

"Man, you're right!" gasped Bart.

"Come on, then!" Jerry yelled. "We must signal the fellow, or he'll crash!"

Switching off, Bart leapt out of the lorry, and both lads raced down towards the treacherous, marshy "vlei," stared at by a group of stolid, ox-eyed Kafirs. They

yelled, whooped, and wildly brandished their hats, for they saw the 'plane prepare to land.

They could see the helmeted pilot, who plainly took the treacherous patch of green, surrounded by thorn scrub and boulders, for the best landing-ground. But their voices were drowned by the deafening roar of the 'plane's engine, and it seemed they were not observed.

"Crumbs! He'll crash!" Jerry yelled, in horror. "Not there! Not there! Land at the sheds!" he shouted, and frantically pointed towards the store sheds.

Both lads were aghast, for disaster seemed imminent. But abruptly Jerry stooped, snatched up a large rock, and hurled it with all his strength at the swamp.

Splash! Up shot a fountain of green ooze; then the lads were relieved to see the pilot wave his hand, to see him zoom up once more. A moment later he banked and planed down just in front of the store, and taxied, bumping over the stony ground, to a standstill.

"That was a very bright notion, my lad!" The pilot grinned, leaning down from his cockpit as Bart and Jerry raced up, panting. "I couldn't understand your antics, and sure took that swampy vlei for grass until you buzzed that rock in."

He was a smart-looking fellow, with a close-clipped moustache, and revealed a pair of shrewd grey eyes as he thrust his goggles up.

"Man, you nearly dived into ten foot o' duck weed!" said long Bart.

"I see that now, and I'm mighty grateful to your smart young pal," said the pilot. "But there's no time to lose. I'm Nichols—John Nichols, of the S.A. Police."

"Phew! We haven't pinched anything!" Jerry grinned cheekily.

"Ha, ha! I never said you had," laughed Nichols. "It's Joe Roberts I'm after—Diamond Joe, the boss of a gang of diamond thieves, from the Namaqualand diggings. Joe and a pal lit out with about ten thousand pounds' worth of rough stones. They're believed to be afoot, and thought to be heading this way. Have any suspicious-looking characters passed your store, fellows?"

"Only Kafirs," replied Bart, shaking his head.

"We've seen no white chaps for a week," added Jerry. "But what does Diamond Joe look like?"

"Tough, strong as an ox, and wears a black beard," replied Nichols crisply. "Since you've not seen him, I'll fly back over the bush and scour the country for him. There's a five hundred pounds reward offered for Joe and his pal, but don't try to tackle them, for they'll shoot without hesitation. If you get wind that they're about, take the news to the nearest police post as quick as blazes!"

"Right-ho!" cried Bart.

Bart and Jerry swung the 'plane's propeller, and a few minutes later they were staring after the machine as it rapidly dwindled to a black speck in the blinding blue sky, the pilot flying back in the direction whence he had come.

"We shall have to keep our eyes open for Diamond Joe, Bart," said Jerry.

"Yes; but I can't waste time hanging about here on the chance of Diamond Joe showing up," Bart said to Jerry. "I've got to pick up Pete Merwe's mealies and run 'em to the dorp. Then Evans wants stores up at his farm, so I'll make my return trip round through Springbok Drift. I guess I'll pass through that Drift on the way to Evans' place at about three o'clock, and be back here about dusk."

"O.K.," replied Jerry. "Leave the store to me. If Diamond Joe blows along, I'll sell the bounder some beads and blankets."

A few minutes later Bart clattered off in the shaky little lorry to convey Pete Merwe's mealies to a distant little town and from there to take a load of stores to the Evans farm, passing through a gap, known as Springbok Drift, in the hills on his roundabout return journey.

Bart did all the transport riding, while Jerry's job mainly was to run the store, selling Kafir truck to natives from the local villages.

"A mighty dull job this is sometimes,"

the high-spirited lad said to himself as he unlocked the tin-roofed building, before which a dozen Kafirs had squatted on their haunches. "What for you to-day, Candle? A pound o' copper wire? Here you are! No, Sixpence, I don't sell cartridges, guns, or dynamite, but here's a corking fine line in glass beads. No? Well, try our tinned fish and coloured blankets."

The business of the store proceeded, the cheery Jerry talking himself hoarse as he bargained with the Kafirs. He heartily wished, however, that something exciting would happen for a change. He little guessed how his wish was to materialise, and what unpleasant excitement was awaiting him!



Bang! There was a flash from the window of the store, and Jerry's pony suddenly collapsed. Through the air shot Jerry like a catapulted stone, to strike the hard ground with a dull thud, and lie motionless.

Jerry paused for breath, and mopped his brow when his last batch of ebony customers had shambled off; and at that moment he heard the thud of hoofbeats.

Glancing up, Jerry saw two men riding up the dusty trail through the thorn bushes. Both wore the khaki uniform of the South African Police, and had rifles handy across their saddles; and while one, who wore a sergeant's stripes, was burly and jolly-looking, his companion was short, thick-set, and looked somewhat grim.

"Crumbs! More coppers!" murmured Jerry to himself, coming out of the store. "Who are you chasing, sergeant?" he asked.

"Diamond Joe, my lad," smiled the sergeant, twisting his long black moustache as he reined up. "Have you got any news of him? He's the scoundrel who——"

"Diamond Joe! I know all about him," replied Jerry. "One of your pals hunting

for Joe in a 'plane landed here about an hour ago. Nothing doing, so he pushed off. Say, sergeant, don't go on without buying a few glass beads or something!" the lad added cheekily.

"We sure need a rest," growled the thick-set trooper, "and a drink o' water."

"Come on in," Jerry invited.

"I guess I'll search your store and sheds," said the big sergeant. "Maybe Diamond Joe reached here and hid up without your knowin'."

With keen eyes Jerry watched the two policemen as they dismounted from their dust-grimed horses, which they hitched to the veranda rails. What a top-hole life the S.A.P. must be, the lad told himself, looking very hard at the two policemen.

"What the thump are you gaping at, kid?" growled the trooper harshly.

"You and the sergeant," said Jerry. "Crumbs! D'you reckon I could be a trooper?"

The big sergeant laughed, and both clumped into the little store, carrying their rifles, which they propped against the counter, while Jerry nipped behind some big packing-cases to get the troopers a drink of water. In a moment he was beside them with a couple of glasses and a brimming jug.

"Thanks, lad!" smiled the sergeant; then abruptly: "Shut the door, Milton—quick! Ouch! Gosh! What the——"

The sergeant ended with a roar of rage, for quick as lightning Jerry hurled half the contents of the jug in his face. It was done without warning, and the rush of cold water down his throat sent the sergeant staggering, to cannon up against the thick-set trooper.

"Blazes!" howled the latter as his foot struck both rifles and sent them clattering to the ground.

He tried to grab Jerry, but got the rest of the water in his face and the jug as well.

Instantly the store was in chaos, resounding with the roars and stamps of the raging men. Then:

Thud! Thud! Crash! Out of the store Jerry had hurled both rifles, to follow himself in one bound, slamming and locking the stout door behind him.

"I've nabbed both you stiffs!" the lad hooted triumphantly. "You don't kid me, sergeant! Sergeant my eye! You're Diamond Joe himself!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER
The Tables Turned!

BELLOWS of wrath came from inside the store. Then there sounded a thunderous drumming as the two captured men flung themselves against the strong door, hammering and kicking the panels in vain.

"Kick away, you bounders!" Jerry hooted as he nipped out of the veranda and unhitched the two horses. "That door was made to keep out Kafir thieves, and you won't break it down in a hurry. Likewise the window's well barred! Ho, ho!"

"Open up, you young scoundrel!" sounded the booming voice of the sergeant. "You've made a mistake that'll cost you somethin' if you don't open this door!"

"It's you who's made the bloomer!" shouted Jerry. "You put your kit on wrong!"

"Open up! Open up!" There came more bellows, together with a deafening racket of fists and boots hammering on the door.

"No fear!" Jerry laughed gleefully. "You didn't guess I spotted anything when I was staring at you, eh? Where did you pinch your kit and the horses? We'll soon know, for I'm off to the police post in two shakes!"

Even as he finished, Jerry dashed for the thatched shed in which he stabled his Basuto pony. Guessing that his damp prisoners would escape sooner or later, he was leading the two horses, so that the men should not have any mounts when they did escape. Nor would they have rifles, for cute Jerry had bagged their weapons, too, and slung them over his shoulder.

Now the most blood-curdling threats rang forth from the store. Next followed promises of wealth; a bribe of a hatful of rough diamonds was offered Jerry, to induce him to return and open the door; for, in

fact, the sergeant and the trooper were bogus policemen.

They were none other than Diamond Joe himself and a scamp named Milton. They had bolted from the Namaqualand Government diggings with thousands of pounds' worth of stolen diamonds, seizing their kit and horses by ambushing a genuine sergeant and trooper, as Jerry had guessed.

Despite their disguise, and the fact that Joe had shaved off his beard, cute Jerry saw through them when he studied their stolen uniforms, incorrectly worn.



"Stop, Bart—stop!" yelled Jerry frantically through cupped hands. But to Jerry's dismay the lorry ploughed on, churning up clouds of dust; and it was plain that Bart could hear nothing above the thunder of the engine.

"I fairly fooled the bounders!" Jerry chuckled as he saddled up swiftly. "Nabbed Diamond Joe and his pal with a jug of water! Won't that 'plane pilot and Bart laugh when they hear!"

In a few minutes Jerry was galloping from the stable-shed, mounted on his own pony, and leading a troop-horse on each side of him.

Aloud the lad yelled gleefully as he thundered past the brick-built store which contained his prisoners. It would take them a good time to break out, and then they would be horseless! The two desperate ruffians had been outwitted by a mere lad.

Jerry was laughing in reply to the threats, for he could see the furious faces and clenched fists of the bogus sergeant and trooper at the strongly-barred window.

"A hatful of pinched diamonds, Joe!" he cried, thrilling with triumph at his success. "No, thanks! You can dry yourselves on the blank——"

Jerry broke off with a shout of anger.

He had glimpsed Diamond Joe's hand flying to his tunic pocket, then appear again, holding a revolver.

Bang! There was a flash from the barred window, and down fell Jerry's pony like a pole-axed ox.

Through the air shot Jerry like a catapulted stone, to strike the hard ground with a dull thud. He landed on his head, and lay stunned and motionless.

. . . . . .

Jerry returned to consciousness, to find he was unable to stir. His limbs seemed

paralysed, and a thousand painful hammers seemed to be throbbing in his brain.

Slowly the lad opened his eyes. It was to see Diamond Joe and the thick-set Milton, in their stolen and wet uniforms, leering at him. In a flash he recovered his scattered wits, and discovered that he was back in the store, tightly bound in a wooden chair.

Diamond Joe, the bogus sergeant, no longer smiled pleasantly. His eyes held a baleful glitter.

"Not so mighty smart, after all, cub!" he leered. "You ought to ha' reckoned on the mauser pistol in my pocket."

The tables were turned with a vengeance, and, spellbound with wrath, Jerry glared at his captors, while thoughts rioted through his brain.

What a chump he had been to gallop past the store within range of the barred window! Why on earth hadn't he reckoned on a pistol? Of course, after bringing him down, Diamond Joe and Milton had burst their way out, to recover their weapons and horses, then to pick him up, senseless.

A missing sheet of iron from the roof told Jerry how the ruffians had escaped. Fiercely the lad's eyes blazed at sight of Bart's safe in a corner, overturned, broken open, and cleaned out. Then he remembered his Basuto pony, his dearest possession.

"You shot Ginger, my pony!" he barked hoarsely.

"Sure, kid, clean through the head!" Diamond Joe grinned. "It was smart shooting, too!"

Jerry writhed in his bonds.

"You cur!" he forced out.

"Cur, am I?"

"Yes, a low-down, thieving——"

"Maybe this'll gag you, then!"

With the words, Diamond Joe viciously punched the lad in the mouth, drawing blood. Then he swiftly tore up a blanket, pieces of which he crammed between Jerry's teeth, binding them round his head.

"That'll stop you hollering to Kafirs." He laughed evilly. "Not but what," he muttered, drawing out his mauser pistol again, "it mightn't be safer to blow your head off! A kid like you is too smart to live——"

"Here, none o' that, Joe!" growled the stocky Milton. "The kid can't hurt us now."

"'Umph! He might."

"I'm not out for a swinging job, anyway," Milton growled. "Lock the cub in here, gagged and bound, and any passing Kafir'll think the store's shut up."

"All right." snarled Diamond Joe. "Come on—quick, then! Thanks to this young rip, we've lost a heap o' time, and that 'plane he talked about may come back."

"Not it!" said Milton. "The kid himself told the pilot there was no news of us this way."

"Sure! But we'll get away right now in case," said Diamond Joe. "By the time the S.A.P. find our trail, we'll be away in the hills and the bush belt. We'll soon reach the sea, and make a clean getaway with the best haul o' diamonds I ever lifted."

Despite the quantity of rough diamonds they had on them, however, the two scoundrels took all the ready cash in the store, as well as what they had taken from the safe, reckoning they might need it. Then they saw to Jerry's bonds and gag, after which they departed, locking the lad in the store.

Writhing in helpless fury, Jerry heard the horses' hoofbeats fade in the distance.

Again and again he called himself a chump. Plain it was that Diamond Joe and Milton merely came to the store intending to loot it for cash and food, as they had done. They had willingly entered the store quietly, not wanting any scrimmage outside, which strolling Kafirs might witness.

Jerry had seen through their disguises, and had cleverly captured both, only to lose them through over-confidence. He was now a fast prisoner. And his pony had been killed. The thoughts were maddening.

In vain Jerry fought with his bonds; nor could he shout. No one would hear him if he did. No more Kafirs were likely to come along until dusk. The chances of

the police 'plane returning were very slender. In any case, at sight of the locked, silent store visitors would depart.

"But I'll beat 'em somehow! Diamond Joe's not going to escape scot free if I can stop him!" Jerry gritted as he struggled furiously. "If only Bart was due back before dusk!"

Thought of his pal Bart, however, suddenly sent a scheme flashing into Jerry's brain.

Lanky Bart would pass through Springbok Drift about three o'clock, on his way to the Evans farm, with a load of stores from the dorp. If Jerry could get to that drift in time to turn Bart, then by swift pursuit in the light motor-lorry Diamond Joe and Milton might yet be captured.

At his thoughts, Jerry struggled even more vigorously. Suddenly he found that by thrusting at the floor with his toes he set the chair swaying.

Securely bound was Jerry in the chair, but he had hit on a scheme for escaping.

"I hope it works," he said to himself, and thrust harder and harder.

At every shove the chair tilted farther backwards, to swing forward again as he relaxed his pushing. Jerry's arms were pinioned, and his knees and ankles were lashed to the chair-legs, but he got good purchase on the floor with his toes. Backwards and forwards he swung, looking very determined, and at last lad and chair went clean over backwards.

Crash! The back of the chair landed among some empty jam jars, to smash them to pieces. A joyous exclamation escaped him, for the heavy fall had smashed the chair-back, just as Jerry had hoped it would. The wooden spokes of the chair-back were now broken, so that the cords binding Jerry's arms hung in loose coils.

"Done it!" the lad cried triumphantly. "Now to stop Bart at the Drift, then to get after Diamond Joe!"

It took Jerry only a few minutes to get free of his loosened bonds, then he wrenched the gag from his mouth. But that moment his eyes fell on a clock, jammed between bales of blankets on a shelf, and he noted the time was a quarter to three.

"Fifteen minutes to reach Springbok Drift—more than two miles across rough country!" he gasped. "Can I do it? I must—I will!"

He leapt on to the store counter, and then to the gaping hole in the iron roof, torn by Diamond Joe and Milton.

Two minutes later Jerry was legging it across country, running as fast as he could. His eyes flashed grimly, for Diamond Joe had shot his pony, besides stealing all the cash in the store. That cash represented the profits of months of hard work, and the robbery would break Bart and Jerry, who ran the store on a half-share basis.

Hard ran Jerry. Overhead the sun was like a ball of brass in the cobalt sky, and its rays smote down on him relentlessly. Moreover, the veldt was rugged and stony, and dotted with clumps of thorn bush, which hindered progress.

There was small chance of Bart being late at the Drift either. Lanky Bart was always on time with his light motor-lorry.

Gasping, sweating, Jerry ran on, bursting through thorny thickets, stumbling over stones. At last he crested a ridge, then shouted delightedly, for below him he saw the banks of a long dry "donga," with a dusty wagon trail running through what was once a ford.

"Springbok Drift!" Jerry cried hoarsely at sight of the dusty defile. "And there's Bart's lorry!"

It was Bart's laden lorry, chugging and clattering through the Drift. It seemed that Jerry had arrived just in time, but the tail of the lorry was towards him.

"Stop, Bart—stop!" he yelled frantically.

Faster and faster ploughed the lorry through the Drift, churning up clouds of dust. To Jerry's dismay, it was gaining speed, and it was plain that Bart could hear nothing above the thunder of his engine.

THE THIRD CHAPTER
A Dash for Life!

"STOP, Bart! Stop!"

Again Jerry roared with all the strength of his lungs. But all seemed in

vain, and in desperation Jerry snatched up a lump of rock, to send it hurtling after Bart.

Crack! The stone struck the tailboard, but still the lorry went on. Jerry hurled another stone, and this time his aim was good. Struck on his left shoulder by the hurtling missile, Bart jerked round abruptly, to see Jerry away behind him, torn, dust-grimed, and wildly waving his arms.

"Great Scott!" gasped Bart, and promptly pulled up.

"Man, what's happened?" he cried as Jerry dashed up to the lorry, gasping for breath and reeling.

"Diamond Joe!" yelled Jerry. "He and a pal turned up in stolen police rig—looted the store—shot Ginger! I nearly nabbed the bounders, but——"

Jerry's tale was soon told—how he had got the better of Diamond Joe and Milton by sousing them with water, then locking them in the store; how Joe had turned the tables by shooting Jerry's pony. Briefly Jerry told how he had been left bound in the store, but had contrived his escape.

"They pinched all our cash, besides a pile of grub!" the lad added fiercely. "And they've got thousands o' quids'-worth of stolen diamonds—just as that police pilot said."

"Man!" barked Long Bart. "Which way did they go?"

"Heading for the sea," said Jerry. "They'll be in that thick bush belt to westward by dusk, and will never be seen again!"

"We'll catch 'em!" Bart gritted. "Out with this junk, Jerry! Your rifle's under the seat, as well as mine!"

Quick as lightning, both lads heaved the heaviest cases out of the one-ton lorry, then Bart leapt to the wheel, and Jerry scrambled up beside him. Fortunately, both lads' rifles were in the lorry, for they often got a shot at duiker or other buck when running a load together.

Grimly Jerry loaded the rifles' magazines as Bart switched on and the little lorry's engine roared to life.

"Step on it, Bart!" Jerry bawled above the din. "We'll have a job to catch those bounders in time."

Bart stamped on the accelerator after he whirled the lorry round, and it went thundering back through Springbok Drift.

Followed a desperate dash back to the store to pick up their quarry's tracks. From patches of tall yellow grass or scrub there leapt forth bushbuck and duiker as the lorry thundered past, but neither lad heeded the animals.

At last the tin-roofed store was reached, and the tracks of Diamond Joe and Milton were soon picked up, heading to westward.

"The tracks of two horses!" Jerry cried, pointing to fresh hoof-prints in the dust. "It's our sham policemen all right!"

"And they won't reckon on a motor chasing 'em!" Bart said grimly.

Forward again rushed the light lorry, Bart gripping the wheel and glaring at the trail, Jerry holding both loaded rifles between his knees.

Past a Kafir village thundered the lorry, bumping and swaying, dust billowing in its wake. The lads heard startled yells from the natives as they left the village, then again they were roaring across wild veldt, which stretched away on each side of them. They saw miles of rolling grassy plains, broken in places by rugged ranges of stony kopjes, with here and there deep bush-grown dongas.

Crash! Bart smashed his way through a thorny thicket.

Thud! He dropped his near wheel into an ant-bear hole, to clatter out again and roar on at full speed.

The wind whistled in the lads' ears; it made their eyes smart and water, for they had no glass windscreen. Ever in their ears was the throbbing thunder of their engine.

"Faster!" cried Jerry. "Those stiffs got a long start. If they reach those hills yonder, they'll slip us!"

He pointed to a shadowy line of bush-clad cliffs right ahead.

"Man, if I go any faster she'll bust!" Bart shouted. "She's boiling already!"

But on they roared, easily following the

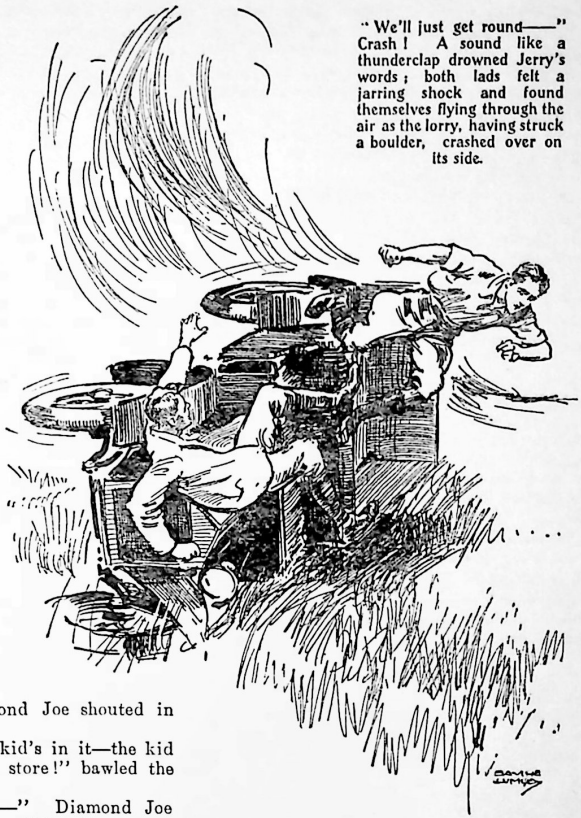
distinct tracks of two horses in the white dust.

At last a yell of triumph burst from Jerry.

"There they are!" he shouted. "We'll catch 'em, after all!"

Sure enough, Bart also saw two khaki-clad horsemen away ahead of them, and he echoed Jerry's shout of glee. There could be no doubt who the two horsemen were.

They were, in fact, Diamond Joe and Milton, who had just reined in, hearing the thunderous clatter away behind them. From under their stolen police hats, the two scoundrels glared back, seeing a column of dust, with the on-rushing vehicle just in front of it.



"We'll just get round——" Crash! A sound like a thunderclap drowned Jerry's words; both lads felt a jarring shock and found themselves flying through the air as the lorry, having struck a boulder, crashed over on its side.

"A motor!" Diamond Joe shouted in fury.

"And that darned kid's in it—the kid we left locked in that store!" bawled the thick-set Milton.

"How the deuce——" Diamond Joe gasped in amazement. "I told you we ought to shoot him, Milton. He's a sight too smart to live! Gosh! Who's the fellow with him?"

For a moment both scoundrels glared at the pursuing vehicle in dumb fury, knowing that escape on horseback was impossible, for the range of bush-clad hills was yet some miles ahead. Then Milton whipped up his rifle.

"We'll ha' to start shootin', after all!" roared the thick-set scoundrel. "I'll plug the driver!"

"Stop! I know a better trick than that!" Diamond Joe shouted. "And we'll run no risk of getting plugged ourselves."

Grinning evilly, he swung to the ground.

That very moment Jerry, craning forward in the lorry, had his rifle half raised, ready to shoot if scrapping was started. He saw Diamond Joe dismount, then:

"Crumbs, Bart," he cried, "the bounder's firing the grass!"

Bart, too, saw a puff of smoke billow up close to Diamond Joe, saw a gush of flame, then he got a brief glimpse of the two khaki-clad scoundrels galloping off.

"You're right, man!" he said to Jerry. "By thunder, we must beat that blaze or we'll roast to death!"

"Not going back?" yelled Jerry.

"No fear, man! I'll drive round it. We'll catch those stiffs yet!"

Diamond Joe's vile trick to cover their flight was plain. He had fired the tough yellow grass, dry as tinder, and, fanned by the wind, the flames were sweeping rapidly across the veldt, setting light to thickets.

But no intention had either Bart or Jerry of giving up. Bart drove on at full speed, determined to race round the spearhead of the blaze, which was now roaring half a mile ahead.

Fast thundered the light lorry, bumping, bounding, swaying dangerously, but faster spread the flames.

In a moment a thick yellow pall of smoke was sweeping across the blue sky, and the sun became a red ball, dim-seen through the dun cloud. Fiercer crackled the rushing flames, and now both lads heard a dull, devouring roar above the thunder of their engine.

Thickets burst into sheets of fire, thorn-trees seemed to explode and hurl gushing flames skyward. The heat became terrific, and the smell of burning foliage came down the hot wind.

"We'll do it!" Bart gritted, but he gasped for breath as he bent over his steering-wheel.

"Faster! Farther to your left, Bart!" Jerry shouted, his voice faint above the crackling din.

Bart was sweeping round in a big half-circle already, to escape the blaze, but he was forced to bear even farther to his left for the flames were rushing as though to head the lorry off.

Somewhere behind that crimson curtain, Diamond Joe and Milton were galloping off for the safety of the hills, doubtless laughing at their pursuers' awkward plight.

Now the heat was like a furnace-blast; half the horizon seemed to be a sheet of flame. Bright tongues of fire gushed skyward in all directions. But Jerry judged the distance with his eye and uttered a whoop.

"We'll do it!" he roared, clinging to his seat. "We'll just get round——"

Crash! A sound like a thunderclap drowned Jerry's voice; both lads felt a jarring shock, then found themselves flying through the air, to land with a thudding impact on the ground and roll over and over.

The lorry had struck a hidden boulder, and such was the violence of the collision that the lorry had crashed over on its side.

Dazed by the shock, Jerry staggered to his feet, to see Bart rising from the ground, also, apparently unhurt. The light lorry was lying on its side, and a shout of dismay and anger burst from Jerry's lips.

"We're done, Bart!" he cried. "We can't catch those bounders now!"

"No; and it was my fault, man," Bart said. "I ought to ha' seen——"

"You couldn't!" interrupted Jerry; then: "Come on! We've got to run for our lives! The fire will be on us in a second!"

There was nothing else for it. It seemed that the lads had not only lost their quarry; they were in peril of the most awful of deaths, for the red wall of flame was sweeping down on them at express speed. They made a desperate dash to recover their dropped rifles, but the fearful heat drove them back. It scorched their faces, forced them to whirl round and run for their lives.

But fast as they ran the blaze drove after them. Hissing tongues of fire raced across the ground and licked at their boot-heels. Searing bits of grass blew down on them, to singe their clothes. They dashed on, staggering, stumbling, breath whistling through raw lungs.

It seemed there was no escape. A deafening explosion in their rear told that the petrol tank of their lorry had blown up. A choking curtain of smoke rushed over



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SALVATION FROM THE SKY!



Down swooped the 'plane to the ground, to bar the way of Diamond Joe and Milton; and out sprang Bart and Jerry, firing pistols as they advanced, followed by Nichols with a magazine rifle.

them, and they got a brief vision of flights of terrified birds wheeling skywards. Past them dashed buck and jackals, in headlong, panic-stricken flight.

From close behind the lads now red flames were spouting skyward with a dreadful roar. The whole world seemed a red, raging inferno.

Still Bart and Jerry staggered on gamely, racing side by side, hoping to reach the safety of some deep donga. It seemed impossible, however.

But all at once, above the savage thunder of the blaze, there came to Jerry's ears a steady, roaring sound. He looked up, to see an aeroplane swooping down towards them.

"There's a 'plane!" he shouted, in amazement. "I hope the pilot sees us!"

For a second of horror the two lads wondered if the 'plane's pilot had really seen them. Then they saw that he had, as they shouted and waved their arms; and eagerly they dashed forward as the 'plane swooped to the ground and landed. It was to find that the pilot was Nichols, of the S.A.P.,

who had previously visited the lads' store in search of Diamond Joe.

"What the deuce are you two fellows doing out here?" Nichols shouted above the roar of his engine.

"Chasing Diamond Joe!" yelled Jerry, as both lads wildly clambered to the second cockpit.

"Chasing Joe! Where the deuce is he? I was heading for your store to tell you ——" shouted Nichols.

"He's there—with Milton—just beyond the fire!" Jerry broke in, his voice thrilling with excitement. "After the bounders—quick! They'll escape in the hills yonder! You can't land in the scrub and kopjes up there."

"Well, I'm darned!" gasped Nichols, and he yanked fiercely on the accelerator.

The 'plane taxied across the grass, and a pull on the joy-stick saw it rise from the ground like a bird.

Up the 'plane sailed, in a breathless climbing turn. Then it was thrumming through the air, high above the seething inferno of flame.

Five minutes later a yell of delight burst from Bart and Jerry, for they saw their quarry away below them, galloping in desperate flight.

Diamond Joe and Milton had almost reached the safety of the scrub-clad range of hills when down swooped the 'plane to bar their way. Out sprang Bart and Jerry, armed with pistols loaned them by Nichols, who followed with a magazine rifle.

Followed a brisk fight at close range, in which Jerry received a flesh wound, Bart had his hat riddled, and Nichols had his cheek gashed by a ricochet. But Milton was shot dead. Diamond Joe's horse crashed down in a hidden hole, and a few seconds later the notorious scoundrel was secured.

"I told Milton that young cur was too smart to be left alive!" snarled Diamond Joe, glaring furiously at Jerry.

"Eh—what's that?" exclaimed Nichols, turning. "I was racing back to your store, my lads, to tell you I'd learnt that Joe and his pal had secured police kit, and were last seen making for your place. That's how I happened to spot you behind that blaze. But it seems you saw through the stiffs' disguise for yourselves."

"'Twas Jerry did, man," said lanky Bart. "If it hadn't been for Jerry, you'd never ha' set eyes on Diamond Joe again!"

Nichols agreed when he heard the lad's story. Delightedly he laughed on hearing how Jerry had got the better of both scoundrels with a jug of water, how the lad had escaped from the store, and fortunately caught Bart with the lorry at Springbok Drift.

"You've jolly well earned the reward for Joe, my lad," he told Jerry. "For here are all the stolen diamonds in his saddle-bags!"

"And all our looted cash, too!" cried Jerry.

Shortly afterwards Jerry's pluck and smartness were rewarded with a fat cheque for Diamond Joe's capture.



This Time—

OUR IMAGINATIVE REPORTER!

We have just appointed Kipps, of the Remove, as reporter for the "Greyfriars Herald." The news items brought in by him within a few hours are so sensational that we are unable to guarantee their absolute truth! However, here they are.

Rascal's Repentance

Harold Skinner, of the Remove, was seen under the Elms this morning, poring over a copy of "Eric; or, Little by Little." When he lifted up his face to our reporter it was noticed that tears were streaming down his face, and an honest light was shining in his eyes. Later he was observed thoughtfully making a bonfire of a packet of cigarettes and a roulette-board.

News from the Fag World

Dicky Nugent was reported yesterday to have been seen with only two ink-stains on his fingers. It is understood that when the fact was commented on derisively by some other Second Formers young Nugent blushed and hurriedly put matters right by sprinkling half a bottle of best blue-black over his hands and face.

High Life News

Billy Bunter received a postal-order by the first post last Wednesday. In delivering it, the postman apologised for the delay of several years, explaining that this was due to strikes, or the rotten system of local deliveries, or something. It is rumoured that later in the day several titled people, claiming to be relations of Bunter's, were shown into the Visitors' Room, and the distinguished party, with Bunter in their midst, afterwards proceeded to Bunter Court for a bun-fight.



Harold Skinner was observed thoughtfully making a bonfire of a packet of cigarettes and a roulette-board.

Change of Accent

Hurree Singh has just spent a week-end in Scotland with one of his fellow-princes from India. The effect on his pronunciation of the English language has been truly surprising.

"Hallo, Inky!" I called out, on spotting him in the Rag after his return.

"Hoots, mon, an' hoo are ye?" was his reply.

"Enjoyed your holiday?" I ventured.

"Aweel, aweel, the weether mi' hae been a leetle brighter-r-r, ye ken," purred the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Glad to be back among us again, eh?"



Billy Bunter, with the intention of paying off a few old scores, gave Bolsover a dot on the eye.

"Ay; it's no' likely that up awa' in the Hielands I'd be forgetting the auld skule!" replied Inky, with a dusky smile.

If our esteemed Nabob returns to Bhanipur and starts speaking like that to his native instructor, we can foresee that the ructionfulness will be terrific!

A Peaceful Pugilist

Percy Bolsover delivered a lecture last evening on the subject of "Peace in Public Schools." He stated that, in his opinion, the time had arrived when public schoolboys should abandon the practice of settling disputes by the old method of bashing each other. He was all in favour of peace at any price, and personally, if ever he were smitten on the cheek, he would turn the other one, and shame the silly ass who did it. (Sensation.) He believed in the Brotherhood of Boys and the sanctity of human bokos. At this juncture, Billy Bunter, with the intention of paying off a few old scores, gave the speaker a dot on the eye, and Bolsover, with a glassy but still benevolent look in his peepers, sat down amid wild applause.

Coker gets his Cap!

Wingate has decided to play Coker as centre-forward in the First XI. for their match with Rookwood. When asked the reason for his decision, he stated that he had never in his life seen anyone play football like Coker—a remark with which we all agree!

THE END

ANAGRAMS.

Here are eight teasers that will test your knowledge. Rearranged correctly, the letters in each sentence will form the solution. To help you to do this a clue is given to each sentence.

1.—Will rob—get a meringue.
(A famous character at Greyfriars.)

2.—Ye bright realm.
(A popular boys' paper.)

3.—I will shame a speaker.
(Famous English poet.)

4.—Outdo a chum on bathing.
(The title of one of his plays.)

5.—Unfed—I'm flaring.
(A celebrated character at Rookwood.)

6.—More shell-shock.
(Famous detective in fiction.)

7.—Ogre—I fry scholars.
(A world-famous public school.)

8.—Yarns for all the year! I hug Dian.
(The best book for boys and girls.)

The answers to these Anagrams will be found on page 278.

The Romantic Defence of the Bass Rock



An epic of the 17th century.

Telling how four young cavalier prisoners of war captured the Bass Rock, an island fortress, and, with other Jacobites, successfully defied the Government for four years.

Prisoners of War

THE most amazing and romantic siege in English history was that of the Bass Rock, the island—or, rather, great pinnacle of rock in the Firth of Forth, about a mile and a half from the shore of Haddingtonshire, in Scotland.

Nearly of a round shape, the rock resembles the base of a huge sugar-loaf, with the top, measuring seven acres in area, cut off at an angle of forty-five degrees, so that one side is much higher than the other. Everywhere the cliffs rise precipitous and sheer from the sea, and are unscalable except on the lowermost side, that facing the Scottish coast. There the rocky face is broken by a steep and slippery chasm, leading down to the only possible landing-place, which is most difficult to use, even in calm weather, owing to the heavy surf.

Some ninety feet above this landing-place still stand the remains of an old fortress and state prison, which was surrounded by a battlemented wall, loopholed for musketry and embrasured for twenty-one pieces of heavy cannon.

In the year 1689 four young Scottish cavalier officers, who had been captured while on their way to join King James II's forces after the famous battle of Killiecrankie, were confined as prisoners of war in the fortress.

Their names were Lieutenants Haliburton and Michael Middleton, and Ensigns Roy and Dunbar, and four dashing, adventurous young blades they were. In charge of the rock was a detachment of twenty Scots Foot Guards, under a Lieutenant Wood.

Not being confined to their cells, but allowed to wander at will about the lofty surface—to fish over the precipices and gather the eggs of the solan geese frequenting the rock in myriads—the four young cavaliers noted that whenever the supply boat came with coal and provisions the entire garrison, save only three men, descended the chasm to the landing-place to bring up the stores.

Seizing the Fortress

On the 15th of June, 1689, Lieutenant or Governor Wood was absent in Edinburgh when the supply boat came, and a sergeant named La Fosse was in authority. As soon

as the soldiers, with the exception of Sergeant La Fosse, the master gunner—Swan—and the sentinel on duty at the entrance, had gone down the rocks as usual, the four bold young cavalier prisoners acted promptly.

Rushing upon the sentinel, they overpowered and disarmed him, and also quickly made prisoners of La Fosse and Gunner Swan. Then they dropped the massive iron portcullis, or grille, and closed, locked, and barred the three strong gates. Next, the cavaliers seized the loaded muskets in the guard-room, and when the startled and unarmed soldiers came stumbling in hot haste up the steep path from the landing-place, they were hailed by Middleton through one of the loopholes and told to take themselves off in the boat, or they would be fired on with both cannon and musketry. So the shut-out soldiery had no option but to clear off in the tender.

Hoisting the standard of King James, the four young heroes then fired a salute of a couple of guns, and determined to hold the rock fortress against all comers.

The astounding news quickly spread, and six young Jacobites ashore immediately put off under cover of the darkness to join the intrepid quartet on the island. These six men were Captain Maitland, David Blair, William Crawford, Crawford's servant-man, and two Irish seamen named Newport and Cornelius O'Brien. The six landed safely, and were warmly welcomed.

Warned Off!

Steps were speedily taken by the Scottish Privy Council to recover the stronghold, but the ten defenders warned off the boats of armed men, who did not dare to approach for fear of being blown out of the water by the heavy guns trained upon them.

The only thing that could be done was to blockade the islet with two small ships of war, which cruised between it and the shore. As these could achieve nothing in the face of the fourteen guns pointing their way, a sergeant and a drummer, bearing a flag of truce, were sent in a boat to summon the defenders to surrender. Captain Maitland, who was now in command, allowed the pair to land, and then made prisoners of them.

Another boat was then sent to a part of the isle which was not overlooked by cannon, and the officer in charge demanded the release of the two men and their craft. The sergeant and the drummer were allowed to depart, as their mouths would have helped to deplete the food in the fortress, but the boat was not surrendered. Along with the two other boats in which Maitland and his five companions had gone to the isle it was hoisted up by means of a crane to the gateway of the castle and kept there.

Securing Stores

Next, a Danish galliot came within range of the cannon of the island. A shot was fired over it, and Maitland compelled it to come alongside the landing-place and put ashore all its stores of food, etc.

After this the little garrison of ten men took it in turn to sally forth at night-time in one or other of their three boats and run up or down the coast to get in more provisions. On one of these daring night expeditions a ship out of Leith, laden with salt, was seized and taken to the island fortress, where it was covered by the guns until the ship's owners agreed to ransom it, and sent the ransom to the isle.

On another occasion, though, Lieutenant Haliburton and three others were captured by one of the blockading vessels while trying to return to the isle with a ship, loaded with grain, which they had held up. Haliburton and his three companions were hanged by the enraged Government, which was powerless to bombard the rock, as it was too far from the mainland for cannon to carry.

It was considered too hazardous to attempt to take the place by storm, as cold shot, dropped from the hand over the fortress wall, would dash any boats to pieces at the landing-place. One dark night, however, nine infantrymen were landed quietly at the rock. They crept undiscovered up the chasm to the gates of the fortress, and found one of the boats lying, upturned and unsecured, just outside.

Stealthily they carried the boat down the steep path, launched it, and towed it away to the mainland.

Shortly afterwards Lieutenant Middleton and William Crawford slipped away from the isle in one of their two other boats, with the intention of bringing back ample provisions within a fortnight at latest.

The fortnight went by, and they had not returned. Provisions were running low on the isle; and, seeing nothing before him but starvation, Captain Maitland sent Ensign Dunbar to Castleton to confer about a capitulation. But before Dunbar could return or terms be agreed upon, a large barge ran the blockade and got to the island. It was manned by Middleton, Crawford, and eight others, and was loaded with stores; so Maitland broke off the negotiations, and declared he would continue to hold the place.

Ensign Dunbar was, of course, detained as a prisoner by the Williamite officer at Castleton.

Reduced to Six

About a week later the barge was detected trying to get away from the isle at night by one of the blockading vessels. It was captured, and in it were found four seamen, four women, Swan the gunner, and the soldier who had been sentinel when the fortress was seized. The garrison was thus reduced to five men and one prisoner.

Nothing occurred after that for more than a year. The tiny garrison of the Bass Rock was impregnable, and had a good store of provisions, including thirteen sheep, which were put to graze on the lofty summit, sixty stand of arms, ten casks of powder, and plenty of small shot, as well as 400 cannon-balls.

Then a small vessel from France ran the blockade, and brought more stores and two boats for the use of the defenders, whose number was brought up to sixteen all told by certain volunteers who remained behind when the craft departed.

At last, in March, 1692, the Admiralty dispatched two frigates to bombard the Bass. These frigates were the *Sheerness*, under Captain Roope, and the *London Merchant*, under Captain Orton. The *Sheerness* carried thirty guns and 130 men, and she and her consort vigorously bombarded the island for several hours on end, but in vain. Their shot only killed a few of the sheep and a goat, and drove away the wild geese.



Rushing upon the sentinel, the four prisoners of war quickly overpowered and disarmed him.

The garrison was not slow in responding, and with their heavy cannon killed and wounded over a dozen men on board the frigates, and nearly crippled both craft by bringing down spars and rigging. They were forced to draw off.

On a daring night expedition for provisions, four of the Bass Rock garrison captured a ship out of Leith and held it to ransom.



A 50-gun ship, the *Lion*, commanded by Captain Burd, was then sent to try to reduce the place, in conjunction with a large armed pinnace and a six-gun "dogger." They did no better, and also had to withdraw baffled and much the worse for the hot reception they got. The *Lion* and another ship of war, the *Neptune*, now blockaded the isle in the hope of starving its defenders into surrender.

A French privateer from Dunkirk managed to elude their vigilance, and put ten men ashore on the rock, but was discovered and forced to run before it could land any stores. This was in August, 1693.

Surrender on Terms

The beginning of the next year saw the gallant little garrison starving. They held out until the 18th of April, when Lieutenant Middleton, who was again in command as Captain Maitland was ill, raised a white flag and offered to surrender on certain terms.

It was useless to continue the defence in the circumstances. There was no hope of succour. King James had been beaten out of Ireland, and was an exile in France.

So glad was the Williamite Government to get possession of the Bass Rock that they readily acceded to the terms Middleton proposed, and these were truly as amazing as the defence itself.

Not only did the little garrison march out with all the honours of war, but the members were to be allowed absolute freedom. All the booty the garrison had seized was to be retained, and *every one of the Scottish officers was to receive four years' back pay from the Exchequer, just as if they had been fighting for the Government instead of against it!*

These astounding conditions were actually observed!

THE END

REFORMING THE REMOVE

By ALONZO TODD

Here are a few suggestions for the improvement of the Remove at Greyfriars. Coming as they do from the gentle Alonzo, they should be "digested" with the proverbial grain of salt.

WHILE I have for my Form-fellows the utmost admiration and esteem, I really consider that there are certain features in their behaviour which are sadly in need of reform.

Consequently, I am very happy indeed to avail myself of the opportunity so kindly offered by the Editor of the HOLIDAY ANNUAL for putting forward my suggestions for the moral improvement of the Remove Form at Greyfriars.

Now, the first improvement I would suggest is the abolition of slang. How often have I grieved to hear my brethren using such terms as "Cheese it!" or "Buzz off!" Would it not be better if they substituted "Pray terminate your remarks!" and "Your proximity is no longer desired!" for two such unfortunate expressions? Again, at leap-frog, I have many times heard the particularly absurd command: "Tuck in your tuppenny!" Surely, my friends, it is just as easy to call out: "Kindly arch your anatomy for the purpose of my proposed leap!"



At leap-frog I have many times heard the particularly absurd command: "Tuck in your tuppenny!"

Turning from slang to eating. I am afraid many members of the Remove do not exercise enough discrimination in food. To see Bolsover masticating stewed steak in the Hall immediately after consuming doughnuts in the tuck-shop is horrifying to one with a knowledge of the digestive system, while as to Bunter—— But let us not dwell on the habits of that unfortunate boy! The problem of food is a big one. It is seldom meet to eat meat, while fish is usually foul, and a fowl is often fishy. Personally, I recommend my friends to adopt the same diet as myself, namely, plenty of cold water and an occasional caraway seed.

Another point where my ideas are not

quite in harmony with those of the rest of the Form is practical joking. My Uncle Benjamin always impressed me with the fact that practical joking causes unnecessary mental suffering to fellow human beings. In the Remove the suffering would appear to be physical as well as mental. Only yesterday I saw a pail of dirty water fall on the head of Skinner when he innocently opened the door of his study. How much nicer it would have been had the practical joker put a basket of flowers there instead!

Then we come to sport. The sports and pastimes of the Remove are, I fear me, much too rough and lacking in refinement to merit the approval of a genuine reformer. The brutal art of fisticuffs is encouraged on the plea that it makes the fellows nimble on their feet and quick-witted. But cannot the excellent games of tag and hopscotch produce equally good results? At football the fellows charge each other in the fiercest manner imaginable.

On last compulsory practice day Bolsover, who was playing against me, deliberately impeded my progress, in spite of the fact that I called out: "My dear Bolsover, pray allow me to kick the ball for my side!" How much more noble and altruistic it would have been if he had gracefully stood aside! At such a gesture, I would cheerfully have allowed him to kick the ball.

Instead of which, I was unceremoniously and brutally charged to the ground, suffering excruciating pain from the force of the impact with which I struck the earth. It was some seconds before I regained my equilibrium and equanimity, and by that time Bolsover had, I regret to say, suffered in the same ungentlemanly manner with which he had treated me. The perpetrator of the cruel action was Cherry, and he smiled broadly at the unhappy Bolsover and said: "How d'you like your eggs cooked?" What the translation of that slang expression is I am unaware.

Ah, my friends, there are many suggestions I could make for reforming the Remove. But I am sorely afraid that the Remove will take a lot of reforming!

THE END

High Days & Holidays



CHRISTMAS AT WHARTON LODGE

THE Close is carpeted with snow,
The elms agleam with icicles;
Gay schoolboys scurry to and fro
With boxes, bags, and bicycles.
The Christmas Vac. begins at last,
The cream of all the holidays;
Term, with its fights and feuds, is past—
Now for a feast of jolly days!

The Famous Five set off from school;
There's Wharton and the gay Bob,
And smiling Frank, and beaming Bull,
And Hurree Singh, the Nabob.
To Wharton Lodge they wend their way,
The scene of great festivities;
Footer and snow-fights every day,
And other gay activities!

The gallant Colonel Wharton's there;
He greets his guests with cheeriness;
And, gathered round the log-fire's glare,
They soon forget their weariness.
Soon, in the spacious drawing-room,
They romp and revel merrily;
For Christmastide dispels all gloom
From schoolboy hearts—yea, verily!

Swiftly the days go speeding by,
Days crammed with fun and jollities;
With not a cloud in all the sky
To mar the gay frivolities.
Then trunks are packed; the motor waits;
Our chums are in the dolours;
For Greyfriars opens wide her gates
To welcome back her scholars!

THE IRON BUSHRANGERS

By "SHARP-SHOOTER."



A vividly-written article of the adventures of the notorious Kelly Gang of Australia, and of how the four outlaws were eventually rounded up by the Mounted Police.

Exciting News!

GREAT excitement prevailed in Melbourne, and especially among the younger members of the Victorian Mounted Police, of which I was a member, when the news came by telegram on Saturday, June 27th, 1880, that the Kelly Gang was at Beechworth. That town was, and still is, the chief one of the Ovens Goldfields district in north-eastern Victoria, and is about twenty miles from the New South Wales border.

It was reported that the gang had just murdered a man named Aaron Sherritt at a place called Sebastopol, eight miles from Beechworth. Sherritt had been a former accomplice of the gang, but had given information to the Mounted Police, and this was the gang's revenge.

A strong body, myself included, of the Mounted Police at Melbourne was promptly told off to proceed by rail to Beechworth, which was about 185 miles distant, and a special train was requisitioned for us. We were all well armed, and took horses, and we were under the command of Sub-inspector O'Connor.

The Kelly Gang

The Kelly Gang comprised four desperadoes, who had been outlawed and had taken to the trackless bush and ranges of the border. Their names were Edward Kelly (invariably called Ned Kelly), his younger brother Dan, Steve Hart, and Joe Byrne.

Ned Kelly looked rather a handsome man, as, according to the great fashion of that day, he wore a full, flowing beard, which hid the harsh lines of his mouth and

jaw. Joe Byrne had a somewhat square, heavy type of face, clean-shaven except for short "sideboards." I do not recall what Steve Hart's face looked like, although I saw portraits of him. Dan Kelly, if I remember rightly, had a sharp, foxy, hatchet face, the nose and jaw being particularly prominent.

They had terrorised the borders of Victoria and New South Wales for two years, and £8,000 was the reward offered by the two Governments for their apprehension. Nevertheless, all efforts to bring them to book had hitherto failed, owing to their being aided and abetted by numerous family connections and other accomplices, and the wide, desolate stretch of mountainous and bush-covered country affording them at all times a safe refuge.

The father of the Kelly brothers was an ex-convict, who had settled in the district on a small cattle farm and married into a family which was shrewdly suspected of horse stealing and cattle lifting. Ned Kelly became a horse thief while but a boy. His brother Dan was seven years his junior. Steve Hart, who was only 19 or 20, and Joe Byrne, who was 23, were neighbours and friends of the Kellys.

The Kelly brothers first came into prominence by resisting arrest for cattle stealing in March, 1878, when they shot and made prisoner a police-trooper named Fitzpatrick. It was then that they took to the bush and lived the lives of outlaws.

The Fate of Four "Mounties."

On October 25th, in the same year, they surprised the bivouac of four Mounted Police, who were hunting for them in the ranges.

Two constables had been left in camp. The Kellys, Hart, and Byrne suddenly stepped out of the surrounding thicket, covering the pair with rifles, and ordering them to put up their hands. Disregarding the mandate, one of them, named Lonigan, made a dash for his rifle, whereupon Ned Kelly shot him dead. The other constable did not dare to make a move.

Hearing the shot, the two other troopers, Sergeant Kennedy and Constable Scanlan, came hurrying upon the scene, to be at once fired upon by the outlaws. Scanlan was killed at the first volley, but Kennedy, who dismounted to take cover, put up a desperate fight.

His horse bolted through the camp, and the captured and disarmed constable, McIntyre by name, vaulted upon its neck as it was passing him. He got away, but he had a narrow escape, a bullet passing through his hat, and the horse was so severely wounded from another shot that it was in a dying condition, and he had to abandon it later and continue his journey to the nearest township on foot.

Sergeant Kennedy dodged from tree to tree until at last he fell mortally wounded. He begged Ned Kelly to spare him, and the outlaw promised to send a message to his wife, so that she might be with him before he died. But one of the other bushrangers sent a bullet through his heart even while he was uttering the words: "God bless you, Kelly!"

The Bank Hold-up

Next, on the 18th of December, 1878, in Delatite County, the gang made prisoners of all the inmates of Mr. Younghusband's farm, or "station." This they raided, and then drove in two of the farm vehicles into the neighbouring township of Euroa, where they boldly entered the bank and presented revolvers at the heads of the officials. They secured about 25,000 dollars'-worth of retorted gold, notes, and gold and silver currency.

The Victorian Government sent a detachment of colonial militia, with artillery, but the bushrangers eluded all pursuit. It is said that once at least Ned Kelly, who had been a blacksmith, had the gang's horses' shoes *reversed*, so that the police believed that they were riding in the opposite direction, and galloped that way. Had the police had a "black tracker"—an aboriginal and a human bloodhound—with them, or been a little sharper in noting the footprints, they must have detected the trick.

The bushrangers were next heard of in February, 1879, at Jerilderie, a small place



Aaron Sherritt opened the door, to be at once greeted with a shot which killed him! It was the Kelly Gang's revenge on a treacherous accomplice.

in New South Wales. There they went quietly in the dead of night to the little police-station and knocked for admittance, calling out that a man was being murdered at a place close by. When the door was opened by a policeman, they clapped revolvers to his head; then, rushing in, overawed the other troopers in their beds, and locked the whole "garrison" up in the cells.

Dressing themselves up in captured policemen's uniforms, they proceeded to the best hotel, and, describing themselves as relief or extra constables, passed the remainder of the night there.

Next morning they repaired to the bank, which was next door, held up the manager in his bath, and forced him to open the bank safe and deliver up the contents, amounting to about £1,450. For two whole days they then terrorised and plundered the townsfolk

The Shooting of Sherritt

It was now that the two colonial Governments increased the head money for the gang to £8,000—at first without result. As some months passed without further news of them, it was believed that they had cleared out of that part of Australia and gone northward to Queensland.

At length an old acquaintance of theirs, Aaron Sherritt, and a suspected confederate, came forward, no doubt tempted by the big reward, and informed the police

that they were still in the vicinity. He did not know exactly where they were hiding, but they had visited him at his house at Sebastopol, and wanted him to join them in a raid on Goulburn, the chief town of the county of the same name, just over the border of New South Wales.

They were to let him know later when the raid was to take place.

Consequently four policemen were stationed in Sherritt's house. But the Kellys learned in some way, probably through their numerous "bush telegraphs" or scouts, that they had been betrayed, and on the night of Friday, June 26, 1880, Sherritt paid for his treachery.

A knock came at the door, and, deceived by the voice of a German neighbour named Wicks who called to him, Sherritt opened the door, to be at once greeted with a shot which killed him. Wicks was afterwards found outside, with his hands bound.

The Kellys had forced him, under penalty of death, to call the murdered man to the door.

The four police within the hut did not venture to show themselves or even to fire a shot at the murderers, who sent a volley into the hut and made an attempt to burn it down. After staying outside the hut all night, the gang rode off to Beechworth, whence a telegraph messenger contrived to send word of their presence to Melbourne. So it was that a strong force of police was dispatched.

The Light on the Line

Less than half-way to our destination, the special train stopped at Benalla, 122 miles from Melbourne. There we picked up Superintendent Hare, of the district police, with eight more mounted troopers and their horses.

As it was feared that the bushrangers or some of their numerous confederates might have pulled up the rails somewhere between Benalla and Beechworth, a pilot-engine was in readiness to precede us. On we flew once more through the night, the pilot-engine steaming well ahead to give us timely warning if the line were tampered with.

A few miles short of Glenrowan Station, which was about six miles due north of Greta, where the Kelly family lived, the men on the pilot-engine saw in the darkness ahead a man with a lighted candle, frantically waving a red shawl.

They stopped, and the man raced up and breathlessly told them that the rails behind him, near Glenrowan, had been torn up by the Kelly Gang, which had come across from Beechworth and were at the time in Glenrowan.

He was, I believe, the schoolmaster of the place, and his name was Curnow.

It was now well into the morning of Sunday, June 28th. Mr. Curnow told Sub-inspector O'Connor and Superintendent Hare that late on the previous day (Saturday) the Kellys had suddenly invaded the village, rounding up the few inhabitants, and herding them together at the Glenrowan Hotel, which was kept by a Mrs. Jones.

Ned Kelly said that no one would be hurt unless resistance was offered. Dan Kelly insisted on a dance, and the utmost conviviality prevailed, Ned Kelly even competing in a jumping match with a wheelwright, who, however, beat him.

The Kellys had brought three of their sisters along with them from Greta.

The Arrival of the Mounted Police

The enforced merriment at the Glenrowan Hotel was still in full swing when the Mounted Police from the special came galloping upon the scene. The bushrangers had evidently counted upon our train being wrecked at the point where they had destroyed the line, and they had no opportunity for a get-away, for we promptly surrounded the place.

It was a wooden, one-floor building of two shacks, one behind the other, the front building having a veranda. A wooden fence partly enclosed the place, and all around the outside of the enclosure were trees and bushes, which provided us with admirable shelter.

The police force now numbered about

thirty men. Under our chief, Sub-inspector O'Connor, were Superintendents Hare and Sadlier, of Benalla, and Sergeant Steele, from Wangaratta. The two last-mentioned had met us *en route*.

It was still dark, and before we had quite time to complete our cordon, a volley of three or four rifle-shots was fired at us from the front of the building. Superintendent Hare received a bullet through

made prisoners by the bushrangers, and were shut up either in the hotel or in the stationmaster's house near by.

Sub-inspector O'Connor called out for us to cease firing the moment he learned that there were women and children in the house. The echoes of our volley had hardly died away when, to our amazement, a tall, powerfully built man, wearing a long grey overcoat, stalked slowly forth from the



The Glenrowan Hotel, the scene of the Kelly Gang's fight against the Mounted Police, and where three of the outlaws lost their lives.

the wrist, so that he was incapacitated immediately.

We fired a return volley, and were horrified to hear the agonised shrieks of women and children within the building.

Subsequently we learned that an old platelayer on the railroad named Cherry, whom Ned Kelly had forced to take up the rails, was badly wounded.

Altogether forty-seven persons had been

veranda, firing at us right and left with a revolver!

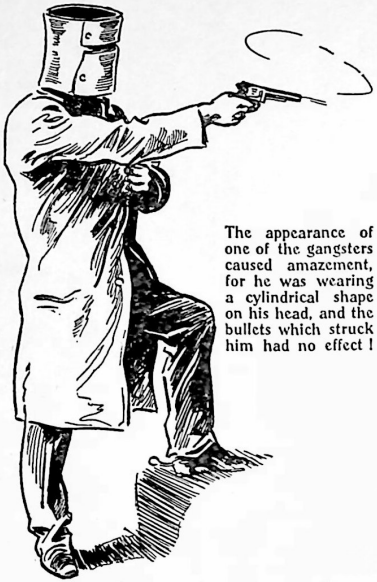
"Come on, you dirty *Joeys, you!" he shouted.

It was too dark to see him plainly, otherwise we must have noticed something peculiar about the shape of his head. Here was an enemy we *could* shoot at, and we

*A "Joey" was the slang name for a trooper of police.

promptly did so. But, to our further amazement, *the bullets which struck him apparently did not have any effect!* He came on defiantly, limping a little, it is true.

As the newspapers truthfully enough said afterwards of us, we "felt a superstitious terror, and began to think he was a diabolical fiend!"



The appearance of one of the gangsters caused amazement, for he was wearing a cylindrical shape on his head, and the bullets which struck him had no effect!

The Armoured Gangsters

Sergeant Steele aimed at his legs, and shot him twice in rapid succession through the right one. He immediately sank down helplessly, and, as there were no shots being fired from the house, some of our fellows rushed forward and secured him, when the mystery of his seeming invulnerability from our body-shots was explained.

On his head was a *rude cylindrical iron helmet*, completely covering it and his neck, and under his overcoat he had on a suit of heavy plate-armour, consisting of a breast-plate and a back-plate, both being rounded to the shape of his body, and strapping together at the sides. There were also shoulder-plates to hold them together, and attached by straps below were other curved iron plates, protecting the upper half of both his thighs.

Our captive was none other than the fierce and ruthless Ned Kelly himself, the ring-leader of the gang. No wonder he could not jump so well as the wheelwright, with such a load of iron upon him, under his overcoat!

In spite of his desperate resistance, he was bound hand and foot, and taken to the rear of our firing-line, where he was quickly stripped of his armour.

It was then found that he had sustained four wounds, one of them being in the right foot from our original volley and the cause of his limping.

Later, when we came to examine his armour, we found that *it had no less than eighteen bullet-marks on it*, and that it weighed 97 lbs. altogether. It was a quarter of an inch thick everywhere, and had, we subsequently learned, been made to his order by two country blacksmiths out of ploughshares and old boiler iron.

As a matter of fact, all four members of the gang were similarly accoutred!

Firing the Hotel

We now received instructions not to fire except when shot at from a door or window, and then to shoot high. But very few more shots were fired at us, and the grey light of dawn stole over the scene. Slowly the hours dragged by, the lull continuing.

At about ten a.m., Superintendent Sadleir boldly approached the house alone, and called out for the innocent people inside to come out, if they could.

A constable and another man joined the superintendent, reiterating his call, and some thirty or more persons—men, women, and children—came rushing forth, casting themselves prone on the ground. No shots were fired during this scene, but as soon as the mob of released prisoners were hurried to our rear, shots began to rattle out vigorously from different parts of the house.

Among those who had come out were the

three sisters of the Kellys—Kate and Rose Kelly and Mrs. Skillian.

We learned from some of the people we had freed that Joe Byrne was lying dead in the building, killed by one of our first bullets, but that Dan Kelly and Steve Hart had sworn that they would resist to the last.

They had retired on the first alarm to another room to put on their armour, and were unaware of the capture of their leader —could not understand where he had got to.

It was decided to send to Melbourne for *artillery* to blow the wooden building to pieces, and I understand that a 12-pounder gun was dispatched to us; but the fight was over before it could reach us. One of our fellows, Constable Johnston, contrived, under cover of our continuous fire, to ignite some straw, soaked in kerosene, against one of the wooden walls.

The flames quickly spread, and half the building was on fire when some of the people who had been confined in it called out that the old platelayer, Martin Cherry, was still inside, too badly wounded by our first volley to come out with the others.

On that, a priest named Father Gibney* fearlessly rushed forward, holding up a crucifix, and entered the building. Mrs. Skillian, one of the sisters of the Kellys, also wanted to go in and call on her brother Dan and Steve Hart to surrender. But Superintendent Sadleir intercepted her, and would not permit her to do so.

*The priest's name was also given as Tierney.—AUTHOR.

The End of the Kelly Gang

No shots had been fired from the hotel for some little time, and a few of the police, who had got up close, followed Father Gibney within. They and he came out, bearing the expiring form of Cherry and the corpse of Joe Byrne. The fire had got such a hold upon the hotel, however, that the attempt to find Dan Kelly and Steve Hart had to be abandoned, and we all stood around helplessly while the building was consumed.

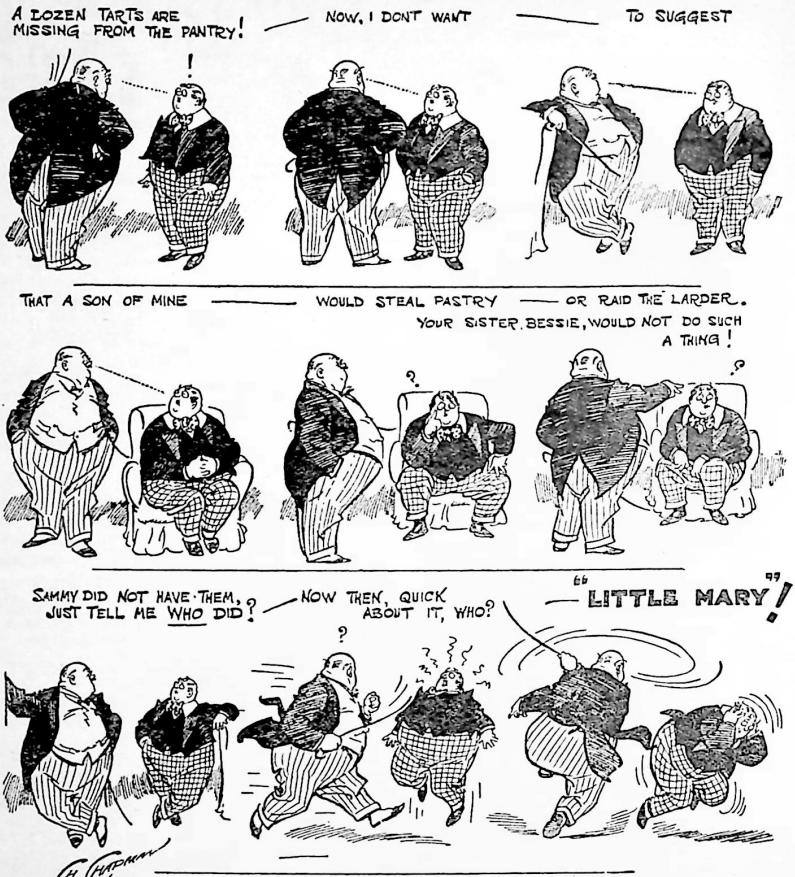
Mrs. Skillian and her sisters, Kate and Rose Kelly, kept weeping bitterly, moaning and wailing, and calling us murderers.

When at last we could enter the smouldering ruins, we found the dead bodies of Dan Kelly and Steve Hart, much burnt, lying close to each other, with their armour, *all twisted by the heat*, close alongside them. It was the general supposition that they had put aside their armour owing to the intense heat of the burning building, and then, realising that escape was out of the question, agreed to simultaneously shoot each other rather than surrender.

Ned Kelly was taken in the special train to Melbourne in a state of collapse from his wounds, although these had been promptly dressed. It was thought that he would die on the journey, and he had to be given repeated doses of stimulants to keep him alive. He lived to be tried on the capital charge before Mr. Justice Barry, and was found guilty and sentenced to death. He was hanged on the morning of November 12th, in the same year as his capture, 1880.



A TALE OF WOE!



It is well known that William George Bunter's great weakness is tuck-hunting, but in the cartoon above he gets little sympathy from his father, even though, metaphorically speaking, he told the truth for once!



With Bat and Ball!

A Cheery Chat concerning Greyfriars Cricket

by

George Wingate

(Captain of Greyfriars)

I AM sometimes asked if the Greyfriars First Eleven has ever played through a whole season without losing a match. Yes; this feat has been accomplished on two occasions. In 1862 (which was a trifle before my time!) our seniors played 20 matches, and won 19, the other being drawn owing to bad weather. And last season, under my captaincy, 18 matches were played, 14 won, and 4 drawn. Not quite so good a record as the 1862 one; yet we had some formidable opposition to face, including a powerful Old Boys eleven, a military team from Wapshot, and a team of smart young Australians touring this country.

• • •

OUR most exciting match was that against our old and doughty rivals of St. Jim's. It was a thrilling game, of fluctuating fortunes, and at one time we stood in real danger of defeat. But a display of "batting fireworks" by my friend, Pat Gwynne, pulled the game round, and in the end we snatched a narrow victory by two wickets.

• • •

GWYNNE has "come on" by leaps and bounds as a batsman. His cricket slogan is "Hit hard—and hit often!" No stolid stonewaller is Gwynne. His bat is given no chance to develop roots! He plays a daring yet confident game, jumping out to hit, and timing the ball to perfection. Some of his big hits this season have done considerable damage to the pavilion roof! But the biggest hit of all time—made by R. B. Standish in 1906—has yet to be surpassed. Standish hit the ball on to the roof of the school gymnasium!

• • •

THE bowling honours go to Faulkner, who is unplayable on a wet wicket, and not easy to play on any sort of wicket. He gets a deal of "spin" on the ball, and his pace is terrific. The ball comes down the pitch with the velocity of a bullet from a machine-gun! Naturally, Faulkner is apt to tire quickly; but we have some excellent change-bowlers.

• • •

THE Remove Eleven is probably the second best combination of cricketers at

Greyfriars. I have just finished writing about the *best!* The Fifth is a fairly sound side, but somehow they seem to lack the whole-hearted enthusiasm and "will to win" which are such features of Remove cricket. The Shell team is like the curate's egg—good in parts—while the Upper Fourth, under the captaincy of Cecil Reginald Temple, was twice beaten by the Remove last season.

* * *

IN point of fact, last season was a very good one for the Remove. Of the fourteen matches played, they were only once defeated. And I believe that was due to Wharton's having to field a weak side through two or three of the regular First Team men being ill or injured. I umpired in this game, which was against a strong Bagshot team, and although the Remove put up a good show, they were ultimately beaten by 20 runs.

* * *

ANOTHER of the Remove matches which I remember particularly well was the first of the two matches played against the Upper Fourth. Wharton didn't field too strong a side, and Temple's eleven put up a very good fight, probably because Wharton had offended their dignity! However, as I have already said previously, the Remove won, but only by the narrow margin of three runs! Temple put on 45 of his side's total of 130 runs, and it was a good knock. But the highest scorer in the game was Bob Cherry; he put on a faultless 60, and was not out at the finish. He also made the winning hit, and was the only Remove man who could do anything with the Upper Fourth bowling. It was a very keen and exciting game.

* * *



Billy Bunter keeps appealing to me, as Head of Games, to secure him a place in the Remove side.

WHAT is the secret of the Remove's success? Why, the qualities I have already mentioned, plus Harry Wharton's fine generalship, plus Bob Cherry's brilliant batting, and Hurree Singh's really deadly bowling, backed up by remarkable keenness in the field. The Remove fellows are triers all the time; and whether the game is going against them, or swinging along merrily in their favour, they put all they know into the tussle.

* * *

BOB CHERRY topped the Remove batting averages last season, and Wharton and Vernon-Smith finished close behind him. Hurree Singh carried off the chief bowling honours. Billy Bunter keeps appealing to me, as Head of Games, to secure him a place in the Remove side. But I am afraid that Bunter is not a Grace—though his initials happen to be "W. G." In the Remove team he would undoubtedly prove a dis-Grace!

THE END

STURGIS FORGETS!



A complete, humorous story of Greyfriars School as it will be—perhaps—in the year 1950!

By FRANK RICHARDS

Plain Speaking!

"I'LL jolly well tell him what I think of him!" said Sturgis, of the Fourth Form.

He was staring from his study window at Greyfriars, at a distant figure across the quadrangle.

It was the figure of Lashwood, a prefect of the Sixth.

Lashwood was strolling under the elms, his hands in his pockets, serenely indifferent to Sturgis and all other such small fry. Probably he had already forgotten having given Sturgis "six," though it had happened only a quarter of an hour ago.

Sturgis, naturally, still remembered it. "Six" from a prefect's ashplant was not to be forgotten in fifteen minutes—by the recipient thereof.

Sturgis' face was red and wrathy.

"I'll jolly well tell him——" he repeated.

Dawson, his study-mate, sitting on a corner of the study table, shook his head.

"Chuck it, old man," he advised. "You can't tell a Sixth-Form man, and a prefect, what you think of him."

"What's going to prevent me?" demanded Sturgis.

"Well, you'll get another six."

"Not if he doesn't know who talked to him."

"Oh!" said Dawson. "You mean ——"

"I don't mean that I'm going to walk up to him in quad. and tell him that I think he's a pie-faced gorilla!" said Sturgis sarcastically. "You can't do that to a prefect! But when I get him on the wireless 'phone, how's he going to know who's speaking?"



Lashwood boiled with wrath as he listened to the cheeky remarks coming through on his receiver.

"It's risky."

"Rot! Might be any man at Greyfriars talking to him—or out of Greyfriars, for that matter."

"But you're such an ass, you know," said Dawson doubtfully. "What did Lashwood give you six for, anyway?"

"Because I forgot——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Dawson.

Sturgis glared at him.

"What are you cackling at?" he demanded.

"Well, you're always forgetting something," grinned Dawson. "Never knew such an absent-minded beggar! You forget everything. Best thing you can do now is to forget that Lashwood gave you six."

Sturgis wriggled.

Sturgis of the Fourth was undoubtedly the most absent-minded fellow at Greyfriars, and he had a frightful memory. It was true that he forgot most things. But a licking from Lashwood of the Sixth was not one of the things he could forget in a hurry. When the pain wore off, no doubt Sturgis would forget Lashwood, and the licking, too. But the pain had not worn off yet. Lashwood did these things scientifically and thoroughly.

Sturgis' absent-mindedness was a standing joke in the Greyfriars Fourth.

He had been known to walk into class with his pocket wireless receiving-set in his waistcoat pocket and absent-mindedly turn it on, without remembering where he was, with the result that Latin irregular verbs were suddenly interrupted by a burst of jazz music, or one of those interesting talks about the prices of Fat Stock or the latest fluctuations in the supply of mangel-wurzels.

Once, when the fellows had been doing amateur theatricals, Sturgis had played the part of Chingachgook, the Last of the Mohicans. Immediately after the show, and without removing his make-up, Sturgis rang up his mater at home on his wireless television gadget, to tell her about it.

Mrs. Sturgis, taking the call, was startled and terrified to find a frightful-looking Red Indian, his face daubed with war-paint, glaring at her from the instrument.

The poor lady almost fainted.

On another occasion, when Sturgis went for a spin on his air-bike on a half-holiday, he forgot to fill up with juice, and his machine conked out while he was crossing the Pyrenees. Sturgis was very late home that night, and received a whacking imposition from the Head.

But Sturgis' latest exploit, which had earned him "six" from Lashwood, was really, the fellows considered, a corker. In a game of air hockey that afternoon, Sturgis had forgotten to fasten the anti-gravitational floater on his stick. It was, Sturgis said, a thing any fellow might forget. But the result was unfortunate.

In 1950, air hockey was played at Greyfriars at an altitude of fifty feet over the football ground. Sturgis, of course, dropped his stick. That was like Sturgis. It would not have mattered had he not forgotten the floater. But, in the actual circumstances, it did matter a lot. A foot-

ball match was going on below, and Lashwood of the Sixth was taking a shot at goal when Sturgis' stick came whizzing downward and caught him on the head.

Lashwood, of course, was very sick about it; but Sturgis was sicker when the prefect had done with him. Hence his present intense desire to tell Lashwood what he thought of him.

He looked from the window again. Lashwood was still in sight, strolling loftily under the distant elms. Once he withdrew a hand from his pocket, to rub his head. No doubt at that moment he remembered the unimportant existence of the junior he had caned.

Sturgis gave him a vengeful look.

"Listen to me," he said to Dawson. "Lashwood is going to know what all the fellows think of him. Keep an eye on him, and see him turn green when I begin."

"But——" objected Dawson.

"Rats!" said Sturgis.

He had made up his mind, and was beyond argument.

Dawson took up a position at the study window, to keep an eye on the Sixth-Form man. There was no doubt that the prefect would be astonished and enraged to hear what the juniors thought of him; any prefect would have been! So he would be worth watching when Sturgis began to talk.

Sturgis took out his pocket 'phone.

These little wireless 'phones had been quite expensive at one time, but mass production had done its work, and now any fellow could buy one with a week's pocket-money. They were, of course, very convenient. When a fellow was stony, for instance, he could ring up the pater at home, and explain in a sad voice how very sorely he needed a remittance; and as all these instruments had the televisional attachment, which was turned off and on with a little switch, he could add a long, sad face to his sad voice, to move the paternal heart.

"Oh!" ejaculated Sturgis suddenly. "Blessed if I haven't forgotten Lashwood's wave-length."

"Like you, isn't it?" said Dawson

"Oh, rats! I'll get it in a minute. Now listen—and watch his face!"

Dawson watched from the window.

He saw Lashwood give a slight movement as Sturgis rang him, which showed that he had got the call.

The prefect slipped a finger and thumb into his waistcoat pocket, and took out his pocket instrument.

"You're through," said Dawson.

"Good!"

"Don't let him recognise your voice."

"Teach your grandmother!" retorted Sturgis.

And in a husky, disguised voice he began to talk to Lashwood of the Sixth.

Dawson chuckled, watching the expression on the prefect's face as the instrument in his hand repeated Sturgis' words to him.

"Hallo, you pie-faced, piffling fat-



"Hallo, you pie-faced, piffling fathead!" spoke Sturgis into his transmitter. "Where did you get that face?"

head!" began Sturgis in that carefully-disguised voice which no one could have recognised as his. "Hallo, you monkey-featured mugwump!"

Lashwood gave a violent start.

"Where did you get that face?" went on the wireless 'phone. "Did you win it in a raffle, or pick it up on a dust-heap? Do you call it a face?"

Lashwood seemed petrified.

It was the first time that the lofty ears of the Sixth-Form prefect had listened to conversation of this kind.

"Don't you think yourself no end of a big gun? It would do you good to hear the fellows chortle when you turn your back! You think a frightful lot of yourself, Lashwood! You're the only man at Greyfriars who does!"

Sturgis was enjoying himself.

Lashwood, to judge by his looks, was not.

He still seemed petrified, but red wrath was coming into his face. Dawson chuckled.

"You're making him sit up, old man," he remarked.

"I haven't finished yet," grinned Sturgis.

And he went on:

"Lashwood! You hear me, you bone-headed gorilla? I saw you playing footer to-day. I never laughed so much in my life! Keep on playing footer, Lashwood! It's the funniest thing going, the way you play! Enough to make a cat laugh!"

Lashwood, out there in the quad. under the elms, made a sort of convulsive movement. Lashwood rather prided himself on his footer.

"I say, Lashwood! How did you get into the Sixth? There are kids in the Third could teach you a lot of things! Does the Head know you crib?"

Dawson chortled.

The prefect's face was as red as a newly-boiled beetroot by this time.

"He's getting wild!" remarked Dawson.

"I'll make him wilder!" said Sturgis.

And he proceeded:

"Lashwood! I say, fathead! What sort of a howling ass do you call yourself? Would you mind telling me something? Lots of fellows want to know. Why did they send you to Greyfriars instead of sending you to a home for idiots? I've often wondered."

"I say, he's coming to the House!" ejaculated Dawson.

Sturgis grinned.

"Let him! He's got a couple of hundred fellows to choose from if he wants to find out who talked to him."

"He looks frightfully wild!"

"I thought he would."

Sturgis chuckled gleefully; but Dawson, at the window, was a little alarmed.

Lashwood disappeared into the House, and Dawson turned from the study window.

"Better get that 'phone out of sight," he said. "Safer not to have it on you when Lashwood starts rooting about for the fellow who's been talking to him."

"Put it behind the books in the bookcase," said Sturgis.

Dawson took up Sturgis' pocket 'phone. Then he gave a sudden start. His face was full of horror.

"You priceless ass!" he yelled aghast. "You forgot to turn off the television switch!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"The television switch was on, fathead! So Lashwood saw you all the time you were talking to him!"

"Oh, my only aunt Sempronia!" gasped Sturgis.

He had no time to say more.

The study door burst open.

Lashwood of the Sixth rushed in. His ashplant was in his hand, and red wrath was in his face.

He did not speak. He was too enraged to speak. He collared Sturgis of the Fourth with his left hand, and with his right——

But let us draw a veil!

. . . . .

The next day, Sturgis of the Fourth swopped his pocket 'phone with a Remove man for some white rabbits. He was fed up with it!

THE END

French Leave!

by Owen Conquest





A bright and breezy story of Jimmy Silver & Co., the cheery chums of Rookwood

THE FIRST CHAPTER
Left to Lovell !

"LEAVE it to me!" said Arthur Edward Lovell.

"'Um!"

Jimmy Silver, Raby, and Newcome seemed dubious.

Arthur Edward Lovell, of the Classical Fourth at Rookwood School, had no doubts.

He never had!

Lovell's confidence in himself was without limit. In a case of doubt or difficulty, all that Lovell's friends had to do—in Lovell's opinion—was to leave it to him. Then it would be all right!

Unfortunately, Lovell's friends' confidence in him did not equal Arthur Edward's confidence in himself. Hence the dubious tone in which his comrades remarked:

"'Um!"

Lovell frowned a little.

"If you're going to argue——" he began.

"You see——" remarked Jimmy Silver.

"Leave it to me!"

"But——" murmured Raby.

"I've got a wheeze," Lovell condescended to explain. "I've thought it out, and I know what to do."

Even then his comrades did not look enthusiastic.

Arthur Edward Lovell was convinced that he was the brainy man of the end study. But he had that conviction all to himself.

"Well, give it a name, anyhow!" said Newcome resignedly.

"Leave it to me, and I fancy I can pull it off," said Lovell. "Leave it to me, and I guarantee that we get over to Latcham this afternoon to see the circus."

"Well, that's what we want," said Jimmy Silver. "But it's class this afternoon, and Dicky Dalton isn't likely to let us off to see a circus. Form-masters don't think a circus so important as class."

"Silly of 'em, but they don't!" said Raby. "Still, if we asked Dalton very nicely, there's a sporting chance——"

"A ghost of a chance," agreed Newcome.

Lovell shook his head.

"Not an earthly!" he said. "If we told Dalton we wanted to cut class to see a circus, he would merely glare. No good telling him that it's only at Latcham for one day. He simply wouldn't understand. We've been at Rookwood long enough to know that it's not much good expecting a Form-master to see sense."

"Well, then——"

"There's such a thing," said Lovell, "as strategy. Leave it to me to work the oracle."

"Well, how?" asked Raby, showing signs of impatience.

"It's not jolly long to class now," said Newcome. "If we don't manage it before the bell rings——"

"We shall manage it all right, if you give a man a chance to speak, instead of keeping on interrupting him," said Lovell. "You fellows know that Bohun, the master of the Third, is in sanny with 'flu."

"What the merry dickens——"

"Let a fellow speak! A man is coming to Rookwood to take Bohun's place while he's knocked out—man named Bright, I've heard."

"What the thump——"

"He's coming this afternoon," pursued Lovell.

Jimmy Silver & Co. gazed at Lovell.

The Fistical Four, of Rookwood, had gathered in the end study to discuss the possibility—the bare possibility—of getting off classes that afternoon to visit the circus which was performing at Latcham that day, positively for one day only.

What Mr. Bohun's influenza had to do with the matter in hand, and how Mr. Bright was connected with the subject, were mysteries to three members of the Co.

It seemed to them that Arthur Edward Lovell was wandering in his mind—admitting that he had any mind to wander in, which they doubted.

Lovell smiled the smile of superior wisdom.

"You don't see the connection?" he asked.

"I jolly well don't, for one!" answered Jimmy.

"Nor I!" said Raby.

"Same here!" concurred Newcome.

"You wouldn't!" said Lovell. "I'll explain—and put it in words of one syllable, if I can."

"Look here, you ass——"

"Let a fellow open his mouth," said Lovell. "I've heard about this man Bright who's coming to take Bohun's place. The Head's got him from the usual agency, and he's a stranger to Rookwood—never been here before, of course—just one of those johnnies that the agency sends along when a man is wanted for a week or two——"

"What about it?" demanded Raby.

"What the merry thump——"

"Let a fellow say a word or two. This man Bright being a stranger in the land, wouldn't it be civil for Rookwood fellows to meet him at Latcham station, and bring him to the school?"

Lovell's chums stared at him.

"I dare say it would!" said Jimmy Silver. "But——"

"Well, that's the idea," said Lovell.

"My hat! Is that an idea?" asked Newcome, in astonishment.

"Yes!" roared Lovell. "It is! That's the wheeze! I'm going to Dalton, not to ask leave to go to the circus at Latcham—that's rot! I'm going to ask him to give us leave from class to meet this Mr. Bright at the station, and bring him to Rookwood."

"Oh!"

"Dalton's bound to be pleased," said Lovell. "It will seem jolly kind and thoughtful, to say the least."

"But——"

"It's not common for fellows to care much about a master, or to worry whether he loses his way or not, or anything like that," said Lovell. "Dalton's bound to think that it's jolly thoughtful of us, and kind, and considerate, and all that. Well, we get leave to go to Latcham and meet this new master at the station——"

"Do we?" murmured Jimmy Silver.

"We do! Well, we met him at the station, according to arrangement. We're bound to do that, of course, if we're given leave to do it. But what's to prevent our dropping in at the circus afterwards?"



Lovell came up at last, and his gloomy face told his chums that he had not succeeded in getting an exeat.

Lovell gazed triumphantly at his chums.

Evidently he considered that he had propounded a masterly wheeze that could scarcely fail.

His opinion was not shared by his comrades.

This wonderful wheeze, so far from convincing them that the matter had better be left to Lovell, only convinced them that Arthur Edward was the fathead they had always thought him.

"Well, what do you think of it?" asked Lovell.

"My only hat!" said Raby. "Think Dicky Dalton will have his leg pulled so easily as all that? Rot!"

"Rubbish!" said Newcome.

"Piffle!" said Jimmy Silver.

There was no doubt that Lovell's comrades lacked faith in Lovell's wheeze. Their remarks left no doubt whatever on that point.

Lovell glared.

Opposition always confirmed Lovell in his opinions. He had, in the first place, regarded this as a sporting chance. Now he immediately regarded it as infallible. It was his idea—a poor thing, but his own, as it were. If other fellows regarded it as rot, rubbish, and piffle, nothing remained but for Arthur Edward to regard it as the last word in wisdom, to assert that it was unfailing, and to defend it, so to speak, with his last breath.

"So that's what you think?" snorted Lovell.

"Just that!" said George Raby. "Utter rot!"

"Frightful rot!" said Newcome. "You haven't a dog's chance of pulling it off!"

"Tosh!" said Jimmy Silver. "If we go to Dicky Dalton and put that up to him, it will simply be a wash-out!"

"If we all go—yes!" said Lovell. "I admit that much—if you fellows have a hand in it, it will be a wash-out. Everything you have a hand in is a wash-out! That's nothing new! But I'm not proposing to go to Dicky Dalton with three silly idiots to spoil the whole game. I'm proposing to go by myself, and put it tactfully and carefully—and pull it off."

"Rats!"

"Rot!"

"Rubbish!"

Arthur Edward Lovell breathed hard and deep, gazing at his chums.

"Well, that's the idea!" he said, with a take-it-or-leave-it air. "Leave it to me, and I'll get you to the circus at Latcham. If you prefer class, of course——"

"Fathead! I tell you——"

"Oh, give Lovell his head," said Raby. "It won't do any harm—though, of course, it won't do any good. Let him try to stuff Dalton, and let him come back and own up that he's a silly ass!"

"Look here——" roared Lovell.

"Piffle!" said Newcome. "There's nothing in it. Let's try to think of some way——"

"What are you going to try to think with?" asked Lovell sarcastically. "Not with your brains—you haven't any. But have your own way—no good arguing with fatheads! Leave it to me, and I guarantee that we get to the circus! If I don't pull it off, you can use my head for a football!"

Lovell spoke with heat.

He had not been quite certain before, but he was quite certain now. Adverse criticism had that effect on Arthur Edward Lovell.

No longer did he entertain the slightest doubt that his wheeze would be a howling success—if his chums left it to him. Any lingering doubt had been banished by opposition.

"Look here, old chap——" urged Jimmy.

"Chuck it!" said Lovell. "Let it drop! Let's go in to class, instead of going to the circus. It's maths this afternoon. I've no doubt you'll enjoy maths more than the circus!" Lovell was growing bitterly sarcastic. "Maths are so jolly compared with a circus! What?"

"Oh, try it on, if you like," said Jimmy Silver resignedly.

"Do you leave it to me, or don't you leave it to me?" demanded Lovell categorically.

"Anything for a quiet life!" said Raby. "Go ahead!"

"Well, you fellows get your coats on, and wait for me at the gates," said Lovell. "There's no time to lose if we're going to get to Latcham in time. We shall have to start the minute I've got an exeat from Dalton. Don't keep me waiting."

"But——"

"If you're leaving it to me, you're leaving it to me," said Lovell. "For goodness' sake don't argue!"

"Oh, all right!"

So it was left to Lovell. Three members of the Co., in coats and caps, walked down to the gates, to wait there for Lovell, while Arthur Edward, brimming with confidence, took his way to Mr. Dalton's study.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

Nothing Doing!

MR. RICHARD DALTON, master of the Fourth Form at Rookwood, did not look pleased to see Lovell. He was rather busy, preparing some papers that would be required in class that afternoon. His expression indicated that he did not want to be interrupted. However, he bade Lovell come in, and inquired tersely what Lovell wanted.

"If you please, sir——" began Lovell very politely. Then he paused.

"Kindly be brief," said Mr. Dalton.

"Yes, sir. We——"

Lovell paused again.

His Form-master was obviously busy and impatient. And in the actual presence of Mr. Dalton, under his searching eye, it was borne in upon Lovell's mind that "stuffing" Dicky was not an easy task. Not nearly so easy as it had appeared, in the heat of argument with his chums, in the end study.

However, Lovell was "for it" now.

He could not retreat.

His comrades were waiting for him—and an exeat—at the gates. Lovell had told them to leave it to him—and they had left it to him. Somehow or other, he had to pull it off. He simply had to!

"I—we—that is, us—I mean——" recommenced Lovell lucidly.

"What do you mean, Lovell?" asked his Form-master, in great astonishment.

"I—I mean Bohun—I mean Mr. Bohun—is knocked out—that is, laid up—with 'flu, as you know, sir."

"I am aware of it, Lovell. I trust that

Mr. Bohun is no worse?" said Dicky Dalton.

"Oh, no; not that I know of. I mean, a man named Bright is coming here to-day to take his place for a time, sir, as master of the Third," said Lovell.

Dicky Dalton's eyes fixed on Lovell, hard.

What the junior was driving at was a mystery to him, and he was beginning to suspect a rag.

If this was a little game, to waste his time and pull his leg, Mr. Dalton was prepared to deal with Lovell in quite a drastic way.

"He — he — he's coming to Latcham by train this afternoon, sir," said Lovell, stammering a little under the Form-master's penetrating glance. "He—he's quite a stranger in these parts, sir."

"No doubt. But what——"

"Latcham's a good distance from Rookwood, sir," said Lovell. "He—he might lose his way."

"What?"

"I—I mean, suppose he did, sir?" stammered Lovell. "The—the weather's rather uncertain. It looks rather like snow, sir."

"Snow?" repeated Mr. Dalton.

"Yes, sir. There was a man lost in the snow on Woody Ridge last winter, sir," said Lovell. "He would have been frozen, very likely, if he hadn't been found by the bobby——"

"The what?"

"I mean the policeman, sir."

"You had better say what you mean when speaking to your Form-master, Lovell—and please be quick."

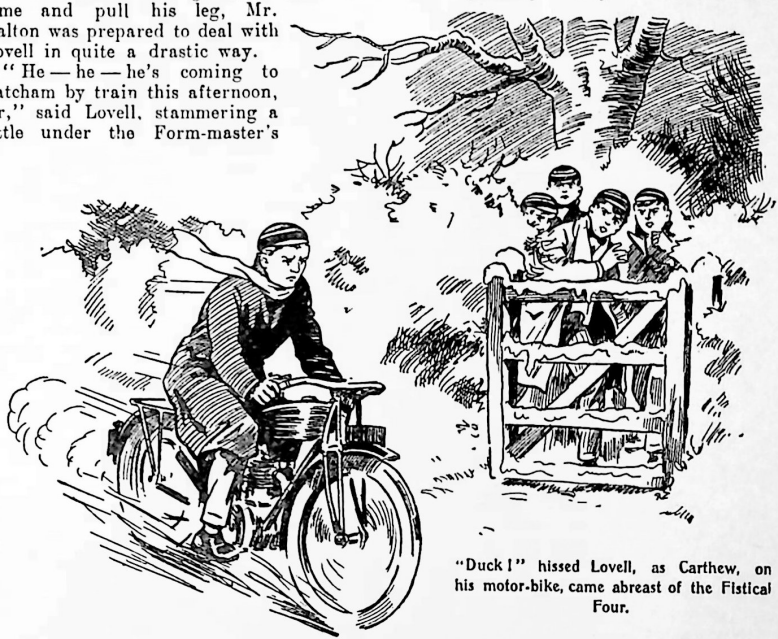
"Oh! Yes, sir. Well, sir, if Mr. Bright walks from Latcham, and—and gets lost in the snow or something——"

"Lovell!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"I cannot understand you. If this is a foolish jest, to waste my time——"

"Oh, no, sir!"



"Duck!" hissed Lovell, as Carthew, on his motor-bike, came abreast of the Fistical Four.

"Then what do you mean?" demanded Mr. Dalton. "Why have you come to my study and uttered this arrant nonsense?"

"Oh!" gasped Lovell. "I mean——"

Mr. Dalton's glance wandered to his cane.

"I—I mean, I—I was thinking that I'd like to meet Mr. Bright at the station, sir, at Latcham. I—I'm sure he would be pleased at Rookwood fellows meeting him at the station, sir."

"Indeed!"

"As—as he's a stranger here, sir, it would be only—only civil. And—and obliging," said Lovell. "I'm sure he would take it kindly."

"If it were a half-holiday, Lovell, there would be no objection to your doing so, though I fail to see the necessity. But there are classes this afternoon," said Mr. Dalton.

"I—I shouldn't mind missing class for once, sir."

"Eh?"

"In the—the circumstances," stammered Lovell.

"You would not mind missing class?" repeated the master of the Fourth, staring at Lovell.

"Not—not very much, sir. In the—the circumstances——"

A faint smile hovered for a moment over Mr. Richard Dalton's countenance.

"No doubt your friends would not mind missing class, either?" he asked. "Is that the case?"

"Yes, sir," said Lovell eagerly. "Three fellows, sir——"

"I thought so."

"We—we should like to walk over to Latcham, sir, and—and meet Mr. Bright at the station, and—and see that he came to no harm. I mean——"

"A very kind thought on your part, Lovell," said Mr. Dalton. If there was an inflection of sarcasm in his voice, Arthur Edward did not notice it.

"We—we really mean to be kind, sir," said Lovell. "You see, this Mr. Bright being a stranger in this part of the country, and—and——"

"I have no doubt that Mr. Bright would be pleased and gratified," said Mr. Dalton.

"That's what we thought, sir."

"He could scarcely fail to be gratified by this concern for him on the part of Rookwood boys," said Mr. Dalton. "Especially as your action would involve such a sacrifice as giving up lessons for a whole afternoon."

This time Lovell noted the inflection of sarcasm.

"But I shall not allow this sacrifice to be made, Lovell," added Mr. Dalton. "I have no doubt that Mr. Bright is quite able to take care of himself, without assistance from Rookwood juniors."

"But, sir——"

"And I have no intention whatever of giving you leave from lessons," said Mr. Dalton. "By the way, Lovell——"

"Ye-e-es, sir."

"You have not yet told me why you wish to go to Latcham this afternoon."

Lovell started.

It was well known in the Classical Fourth that Dicky Dalton was a "downy bird." But Lovell had not expected him to jump to conclusions like this. But apparently Dicky Dalton guessed that he had some ulterior object in view. Lovell wondered, for a dismayed moment, whether Dalton had heard of the circus at Latcham.

"I—I—I——" stammered Lovell.

"For what reason do you and your friends desire leave from classes this afternoon, Lovell?"

"To—to meet Mr. Bright," stuttered Lovell.

"And for no other reason?"

Lovell was silent.

There was another reason, certainly, but not one that he could state to his Formmaster.

He stood crimson and dumb.

Mr. Dalton smiled again. He was a good-tempered young gentleman, and it was not very, very long since he had been a boy himself. So he could make allowances.

He turned to his papers again.

"You may go, Lovell."

"But, sir——"

"That will do, my boy! You may go."

Lovell's heart sank almost to his boots.



"This is the footpath to Coombe, I think?" asked the stout gentleman. "That's right, sir," answered Jimmy.

His friends were waiting for him—expectant. He could picture the derisive grins on three faces when he came along to tell them that there was no leave that afternoon.

"I—I say, sir——" he gasped.

"Come, Lovell, it is useless to say more."

"But, sir, we—we—we——"

Mr. Dalton's hand strayed to his cane.

"Kindly leave my study, Lovell," he said.

"But, sir, c-c-can we go to the circus—I mean, can we go to meet Mr. Bright at Latcham?" stammered Lovell, losing his head a little in his dismay.

"You may leave my study," said Mr. Dalton, "and if you utter one more word before you leave I shall cane you, Lovell! Go!"

And Lovell went.

Obviously there was nothing doing.

Lovell went, in utter dismay. He had told his friends to leave it to him. They had left it to him—and this was the result!

THE THIRD CHAPTER

French Leave!

JIMMY SILVER & Co., standing at the gates, watched Arthur Edward Lovell come down from the House.

They were getting tired of waiting for him.

Not for one moment did they believe that Lovell's wonderful wheeze would prove a winner. Not for one second did they expect him to arrive with an exeat for four. And it was cold at the gates. The sky was overcast, and light flakes of snow were beginning to fall, and a sharp wind blew along the road. The three Classical juniors stamped their feet to keep them warm, hugged their coats close about them,

and waited, each revolving in his mind the things he was going to say to Lovell when that masterful youth came along and owned up that he had failed. And when he appeared in the offing at last, the expression on his face did not hint at success.

Lovell's look was gloomy and thoughtful.

Three faces assumed grinning looks at once. Lovell spotted those derisive grins from afar, and coloured uncomfortably.

"The silly ass!" murmured Raby. "Keeping us hanging about here in this wind for nothing!"

"The burbling chump!" said Newcome. "Of all the fatheaded wheezes I ever heard of, that was the fatheadedest!"

"Only a few minutes to class now!" sighed Jimmy Silver. "And we might have been helping the fellows punt that ball instead of getting frozen here!"

There was an uproarious scrimmage going on in the quad. Mornington and Erroll, Conroy and Putty Grace, and a crowd more Classical juniors had bagged a ball belonging to Tommy Dodd & Co., of the Modern Fourth. They had punted it over to the Classical side, and a crowd of Moderns were making desperate attempts to retrieve the ball.

From their cold and lonely post at the gates, Jimmy Silver & Co. had watched the lively scene, longing to join in it.

But they had told Lovell they would wait at the gates, and they waited.

Lovell came up at last.

He gave his comrades a gloomy look.

"Nothing doing, of course?" asked Raby.

"What's the good of asking?" said Newcome. "We knew jolly well there was nothing doing, and we were silly asses to waste our time hanging about here. Let's go and help rag those Modern bounders!"

"Come on!" said Jimmy. "We've still got a few minutes before the bell goes. Never mind, Lovell! We know you can't help being an ass, old chap!"

Lovell drew a deep breath.

"What did Dicky say?" added Newcome sarcastically. "Did he see right through it at a glance?"

"Did he lick you?" asked Raby.

"Oh, don't waste any more time!" said Jimmy Silver. "We're not going to the circus, that's a cert."

"Of course it is!" said Newcome, with intensifying sarcasm. "We left it to Lovell! That makes it a cert.!"

Lovell made up his mind with a jump, as it were. He could not, and he would not, own up that it was a frost. He had said that they should go to the circus that afternoon. What he had said, he had said! Leave was not to be obtained, but there was an alternative—French leave!

"Lovell said that if he didn't pull it off we could use his head for a football!" grinned Raby. "Anybody got any use for a wooden football?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

That settled it, in Lovell's mind. He had said that they should go to the circus! They were going!

"Are you fellows coming?" asked Lovell, and he walked out at the gates.

The three juniors jumped.

"What?" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

"Mean to say you've got leave?" yelled Raby.

"My only hat!" gasped Newcome.

They stared after Lovell. Then they hurried after him. Jimmy Silver caught him by the arm.

"Lovell, old man, mean to say——"

"I mean to say that I'm going to the circus, as I said!" snapped Lovell. "You fellows can come or not, as you like."

"Of course we're coming!" said Jimmy. "I never supposed for a moment that you'd get leave, old bean."

Grunt from Lovell.

"Well, I'm blessed if I understand it," said Raby. "Lovell's pulled it off, but it beats me! I thought Dicky Dalton would tumble at once!"

"Must be getting jolly unsuspicious in his old age!" said Newcome. "If Dalton's as easy to stuff as all that——"

"Well, we've got off, and that's the principal thing," said Jimmy Silver cheerfully. "Lovell's done it! Bravo, Lovell!"

"Hear, hear!"

Lovell made no remark.



Facing page 209

WHILE ROOKWOOD SLEPT!

While Rookwood Slept!

Four days before Mary Queen of Scots set out from her cell at Fotheringay Castle to suffer a tragic and ignominious end at the hands of Queen Elizabeth's headsman a band of Londoners planned an attempt to rescue the ill-fated queen. Among them was a Donald Bruce, who had left the ivy-clad walls of Rookwood but a year since. Head prefect, captain of games, and generally popular, Bruce's name and his exploits were still subjects of discussion and admiration among the schoolfellows he had left behind him. Thus it came as a blow to his youthful hero-worshippers when the news leaked out that Bruce was flying for his life, with a posse of Elizabeth's soldiers hard on his heels.

For three days Bruce, making in the direction of the Hampshire school, eluded them, only to fall into their hands when his escape seemed a certainty. The officer in charge elected to lodge his captive in the Rookwood tower over-night, with a sentry on guard at the foot of it.

Three Rookwood Fourth-Formers, however—Ashbooth, Marks, and Finlay—all hero-worshippers of Bruce, conceived the plan of liberating him. The night was favourable when the three juniors, having laid their plans carefully, stole out of the Classical House, carrying a long ladder between them. The heavy, stertorous breathing of the sentry, who was leaning against the tower, told the plucky juniors that he was asleep. Without a sound, the long ladder was reared against the wall of the tower. Then followed an anxious half-hour while Ashbooth made desperate efforts to file away two of the iron bars at the window. The job was accomplished at last, and Ashbooth, perched precariously on the narrow ledge, beckoned Bruce to essay the descent. The Rookwood old boy squeezed through the gap, and rapidly climbed to the quad. below, and, after shaking his rescuers by the hand, darted off into the night, eventually making good his escape from the country.

THE END

In a few minutes the Fistical Four would be missed from their places. By that time it behoved them to be at a safe distance from the school. It would not have been a happy ending to the adventure had they been marched back to Rookwood by a master or a prefect.

And the four juniors trotted, and Rookwood was soon left at a safe distance behind.

Lovell breathed more freely when they passed through Coombe, and took the road for Latcham.

The snow was falling in earnest now.

But the cheery juniors did not mind the snow. Snow was seasonable in December, anyhow, and their rapid motions kept them warm.

By the road, it was a good distance to Latcham; but the juniors were not going by the road. There was a short cut to the town across Woody Ridge, by a footpath that the Rookwooders knew well.

It was a wild and lonely path in winter, by a dark, dank wood, and wayfarers had been known to lose themselves there when the snow was on the ground, covering the path that wound among the old trees and draggled thickets. But the chums of Rookwood knew every inch of the way, and had no fear of losing themselves if the snow had been a foot deep.

A heavy mist hung over the wood as they entered it, hanging low and grey among the trees. The leafless branches over the path were ridged with snow, and gleamed white; but the well-trodden path was plain to the view, only strewn here and there with flakes of snow.

There was a mile to walk by Woody Ridge, and the four Rookwooders tramped cheerily along.

Lovell by that time had dismissed from his mind the thought of the consequences of taking French leave.

His friends, anyhow, were safe from the consequences, for, of course, he intended to explain to Mr. Dalton that they had left the school in the full belief that he had obtained leave for four. Dicky Dalton was a sportsman, and he could take a fellow's word. All the more because he had drawn unsuspecting fellows into his escapade,

punishment was certain to fall severely upon the headstrong Arthur Edward. But what couldn't be cured had to be endured. And what was the use of worrying, anyhow? As he was "for it," the best thing Lovell could do was to enjoy the freedom of the afternoon, enjoy the circus, and leave the consequences to take care of themselves. Consequences could be dealt with when they came along. Taking that philosophic view of the situation, Lovell, so to speak, packed up his troubles in his old kit-bag and smiled.

"This is jolly!" said Jimmy Silver as he tramped cheerily through whirling white flakes. "Beats the Form-room!"

"Beats maths hollow!" grinned Raby.

"What-ho!" chuckled Newcome.

"Lovell, old scout, you're a giddy genius!" said Jimmy. "I admit I never believed for a minute that you'd pull it off! But——"

"But here we are," said Raby. "Good old Lovell!"

"I take back a lot of things I've thought about you, old chap," said Newcome.

Lovell coloured rather uncomfortably.

"Well, we're going to see the circus, anyhow," he remarked. It was useless to tell the cheery trio that a terrific row was going to follow the circus.

"We are!" agreed Jimmy Silver.

"Put it on," said Raby. "We don't want to be late, as we're going to see the jolly old circus after all!"

The Fistical Four tramped on rapidly and cheerfully. They came down the slope of Woody Ridge at last to the gate at the end of the footpath, on the Latcham road.

Latcham was in sight from that point, its old red roofs white with snow, looking a good deal like a Christmas card. In a field close by the little country town was a large circus tent. From that spot strains of merry music proceeded, reaching the ears of the Rookwooders.

In spite of the falling flakes, a good many people were heading for the circus field.

Circuses came seldom to a little place like Latcham, and when they came they did not remain long. Chumgum's Celebrated Circus was staying for positively one day only, and giving only two performances, afternoon and evening. But it was likely to have a full house on both occasions, in spite of unpropitious weather. The strains of the circus band were not, perhaps, very harmonious, but they came like the music of the spheres to the four Rookwood juniors.

"There's the jolly old circus!" said Newcome.

"Come on!" said Jimmy Silver briskly.

Chug-chug-chug!

Lovell glanced round, over the gate.

Mingled with the sounds of the circus band from one direction on the Latcham road came the chug-chugging of a motor-bike from the other.

Lovell gave a start.

"Hold on!" he breathed.

"What——" began Newcome.

"It's Carthew."

"Who—what——"

"On that motor-bike!" whispered Lovell.

The juniors glanced round.

The motor-bike, at a short distance, was coming up the road towards Latcham, and the rider was recognisable as Carthew, of the Sixth, a Classical prefect of Rookwood.

With the snow-flakes dropping round him and on him, Carthew was giving all his attention to his jigger, and did not glance towards the roadside gate where the juniors stood looking over.

"Carthew!" said Jimmy. "Going to the circus, too, I suppose. He's got off class same as we have. Let's get on."

"Keep back!" whispered Lovell.

"But what——"

"We don't want Carthew to spot us."

Jimmy Silver stared at him.

"Why not?"

"He's a prefect and a beastly bully, and —and——"

"That doesn't matter as we've got leave. We've only got to tell Carthew we're on leave, if he thinks we're out of bounds."

"Keep back!"

Jimmy was opening the gate, but Lovell grasped him by the arm, and by main force jerked him back.

Chug-chug-chug!

The motor-bike was almost abreast of the gate now as Carthew, of the Sixth, drove it on towards Latcham.

"Duck!" hissed Lovell.

"But——" stuttered the bewildered three.

"Duck, you idiots!"

Lovell ducked down behind the gate. His comrades followed his example, in utter wonder.

The motor-bike chugged by, and Carthew disappeared in the direction of Latcham. The chug-chug-chugging died away in the distance, and Lovell gasped with relief.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER
Meeting Mr. Bright I

ARTHUR EDWARD LOVELL breathed hard and deep.

It had been a narrow escape.

His comrades, on seeing the Rookwood prefect heading for Latcham on his motor-bike, might conclude that Carthew was going to the circus. Lovell knew better.

A Sixth Form man was extremely unlikely to get off class to visit a circus. Lovell had no doubt whatever what had brought Carthew of the Sixth to Latcham. He had been dispatched by Mr. Dalton to find and bring back the four truants. If Carthew was going to the circus tent, it was to look for the four juniors, to hook them out, and to march them back to Rookwood.

Lovell hadn't thought of that!

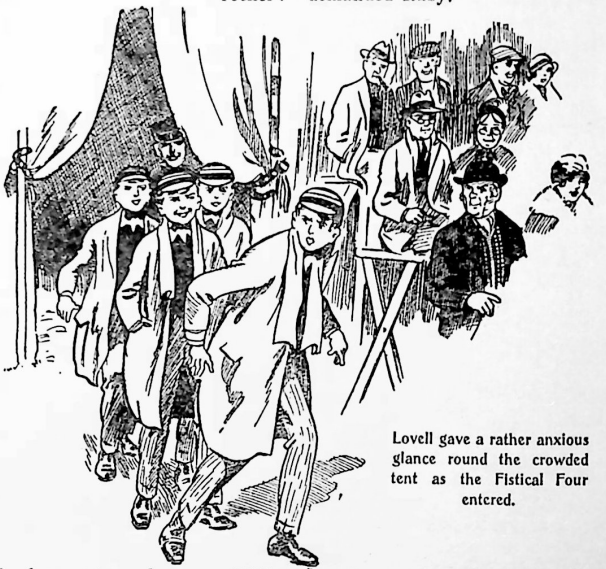
Arthur Edward, as a matter of fact, was not quite so bright as he supposed, and it had not even occurred to him that the master of the Fourth might take any steps to round up the truants. Yet it was quite an obvious step for Mr. Dalton to take.

Being perfectly well aware that Lovell and his friends had cut class to go to the circus at Latcham, it was quite natural for Mr. Dalton to call on a prefect to fetch them back. Lovell had concluded that the matter would be left over till roll call. But Lovell's conclusions were not always well founded.

"My hat!" murmured Lovell as he rose from cover and peered over the gate at the vanishing figure of Carthew. "That was a close thing!"

Three fellows stared at him blankly.

"Look here, Lovell, are you off your rocker?" demanded Raby.



Lovell gave a rather anxious glance round the crowded tent as the Fistical Four entered.

"What the thump does it matter if Carthew sees us when we've got leave from our Form-master?" demanded Newcome.

"He's pretty certain to see us, anyhow, if he goes to the circus—and I suppose

that's what he's come to Latcham for," said Jimmy Silver. "You've only got to show him your exeat, Lovell, if he butts in."

Lovell did not reply.

He did not desire to explain that he had no exeat to show the prefect, if Carthew butted in—as he was quite certain to do if he spotted the four truant juniors.

"Blessed if I make you out, Lovell," said Jimmy. "Carthew's a bit of a bully, but he wouldn't interfere with fellows on leave."

"He couldn't!" said Newcome.

"Oh, don't jaw!" said Lovell.

"Anyhow, he's gone now," said Newcome impatiently. "There's nothing to be afraid of, if he wasn't. But he's gone!"

"Give him time to get clear," answered Lovell.

"Look here——"

"Don't jaw, old chap!"

"We're wasting time. The circus will have started."

"A few minutes won't hurt."

"But look here——"

"For goodness' sake, don't jaw!" said Lovell crossly.

Lovell leaned on the gate, evidently not intending to walk on to Latcham yet awhile. His chums stared at him, perplexed and impatient. The merry strains from the distance showed that the performance was beginning, or about to begin, and the juniors naturally did not want to miss any of it. But Lovell was not to be moved. Carthew of the Sixth had to be given time—plenty of time—to get clear. That was important, though the juniors, who did not know that they had taken French leave, did not realise its importance.

"If you're tired——" said Jimmy, at last.

"Well, a bit of a rest won't hurt us," said Lovell.

"We're missing the show!" grumbled Raby.

"Oh, rot!" grunted Lovell. "Better miss a bit of it than miss the lot."

"Eh? No reason why we should miss the lot, is there?"

No answer.

There was no doubt that the juniors would miss the lot if the prefect spotted them. But Lovell was not disposed to explain that to his comrades.

They waited at the gate—three of them with growing impatience. In the distance, they could see that most of the crowd had gone into the circus tent, which was filling rapidly.

"The best seats will be gone!" growled Raby.

"Oh, let Lovell have a rest, if he's tired!" said Jimmy. Uncle James of Rookwood was always considerate.

"I'm not tired!" grunted Lovell.

The suggestion that he was tired by a mile's walk was an aspersion upon his powers of endurance.

"Then what are we stopping here for?" demanded Newcome.

Grunt!

More and more perplexed, and more and more impatient, the three juniors lingered, waiting for Lovell to move. Still Lovell did not move. The coast had to be clear before Lovell moved.

The snow was falling more thickly now. Light, whirling flakes had been replaced by a steady, heavy fall.

The leafless branches overhead did not afford much protection. Standing there in the snow was neither grateful nor comforting.

Still Lovell did not stir.

"For goodness' sake shift, Lovell!" snapped Raby. "Here's somebody wants to come through the gate."

Lovell had to move at that.

From the direction of Latcham, a stout gentleman, in an overcoat, a bowler-hat, and a pair of horn-rimmed glasses, arrived at the roadside gate.

He paused there, glancing over the gate into the snowy footpath and then at the schoolboys.

Lovell, who had been leaning on the gate, moved back, and Jimmy Silver opened it politely for the horn-rimmed gentleman.

"Thank you, my lad," said the stout gentleman as he passed through.

"Not at all, sir," answered the polite Jimmy.

The stout gentleman gave another glance along the footpath, winding away among leafless trees, and then again looked at the juniors.

"This is the footpath to Coombe, I think?" he asked.

"That's right, sir," answered Jimmy.

"I was directed at the railway station," said the stout gentleman. "They told me that this footpath led direct to Coombe, and from Coombe it is only a short walk to Rookwood School."

"Quite right, sir," said Jimmy.

The juniors regarded the stout gentleman with some little interest on hearing that he was bound for Rookwood.

"Perhaps you boys are well acquainted with this neighbourhood?" said the stout gentleman, blinking at the four through his horn-rimmed glasses.

"Quite!" said Jimmy.

"Then perhaps you could tell me where to obtain a taxi."

"Not nearer than Rookham, sir," said Jimmy—"about five miles from here."

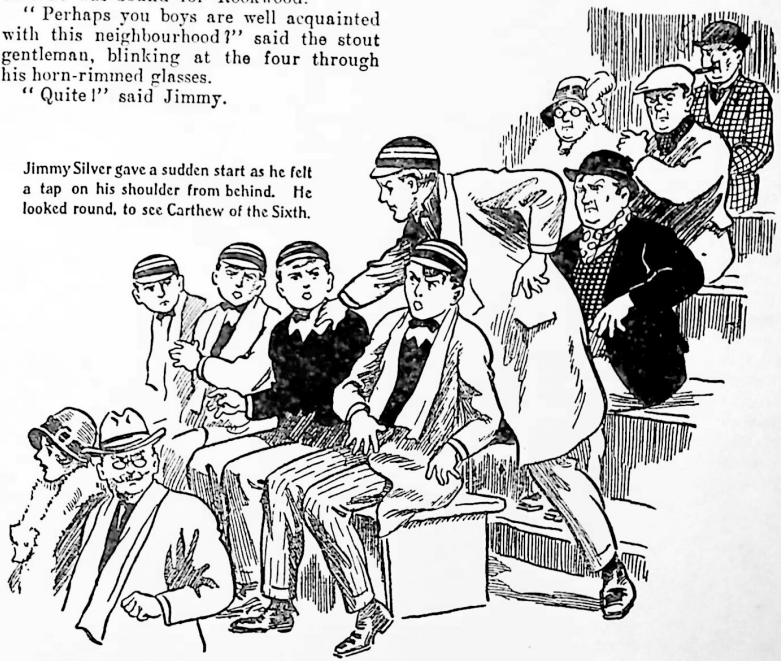
"Dear me! That is more than twice as far as Rookwood School, is it not?"

"That's so."

"You should have got out of the train at Rookham if you wanted a taxi, sir," said Raby. "There's none at Latcham—only an old horse cab."

"I have already discovered that," said the stout gentleman ruefully, "and the driver has declared that his horse could not make the journey in this weather. It is a long way by road, I understand."

The juniors smiled. They had no doubt that the ancient horse that drew the ancient hack at Latcham would have



Jimmy Silver gave a sudden start as he felt a tap on his shoulder from behind. He looked round, to see Carthew of the Sixth.

perished dismally had it undertaken the long journey by road in the thick snow.

"Well, as I must walk, I must walk by the shortest route," said the stout gentleman. "Fortunately my bag is not heavy. You are sure that this footpath is the shortest way to the school?"

"Oh, quite!" said Jimmy. "We belong to Rookwood, sir, and we've used this path dozens of times."

"You are Rookwood boys?" asked the stout gentleman, with interest. "I am glad to make your acquaintance, especially if you belong to the Third Form."

The Fistical Four suppressed their feelings. A man who supposed that the heroes of the Fourth might be Third-Formers was, of course, a benighted ass; but, after all, he was a stranger in the land, and allowances had to be made for his state of ignorance.

"We're in the Fourth, sir," said Jimmy Silver, with undiminished politeness. "The Classical Fourth."

He regarded the stout gentleman with renewed interest. A man who was going to Rookwood School on that especial afternoon, and who was especially interested in the Third Form, could scarcely be any other than Mr. Bright, the gentleman who was to replace Mr. Bohun, the master of the Third—the gentleman who, as three members of the Co. believed, they had come to Latcham to meet at the station.

"Perhaps you're Mr. Bright, sir?" said Jimmy.

"That is my name," said the stout gentleman, with another blink at the juniors. "No doubt you have heard that I am expected at the school, my young friends."

"The fact is, we were going to meet you at the station, sir," said Jimmy, "and —and direct you, and—and so on."

Mr. Bright blinked again.

"I am sure that is very kind of you, especially as you are not members of the Form I am to take at Rookwood," he said. "Is it a half-holiday at the school today?"

"Oh, no; we've got leave——"

"We're delaying Mr. Bright," interrupted Arthur Edward Lovell hastily. "If you're going by the footpath, sir, you'd better get along as quickly as possible, before the snow's thicker."

"You are right!" assented the stout gentleman, with a dubious glance into the snowy wood. "Perfectly right! I had better lose no time. Good-bye, my boys, and thank you very much!"

And, shifting his bag from one hand to the other, the stout gentleman tramped away down the footpath, and was soon lost to sight in its windings under the trees.

Jimmy Silver, Raby, and Newcome looked curiously at Arthur Edward Lovell. He avoided their eyes.

"Well, that's Bright, and we've put him on the right way for Rookwood," said Jimmy Silver. "But——"

"But didn't Dicky Dalton tell you what time his train got into Latcham, Lovell?" asked Raby.

"No," grunted Lovell.

"Didn't you ask him?" exclaimed Newcome.

"No."

"Well, you must be an ass—and Dicky Dalton another!" said Newcome, in astonishment. "We come over here to meet a man at the railway station, without knowing the time his train gets in!"

Lovell coloured.

His friends, of course, were under the impression that Mr. Bright was to have been met at the station, though Lovell, in the circumstances, had not given that matter a thought.

"We've run into him entirely by chance," said Raby. "If we hadn't stopped at this gate we should never——"

"Well, we did stop at this gate!" interjected Lovell. "And whose idea was it to stop at this gate for a bit? Mine!"

"Mean to say you knew that Bright was coming along?"

"I mean to say that if you leave things to me it will be all right," answered Lovell obstinately. "We've met the Bright bird, and put him on the right road for Rookwood, and what more do you want?"

"But you never——"

"Oh, don't jaw! Are we going to hang on here for ever, while you fellows wag your chins?" demanded Lovell.

"Why, you fathead, it's you that's hanging on here, and we're only waiting for you to get a move on."

"Well, we've waited long enough, and if you fellows have done jawing, we may as well get along to the circus," grunted Lovell.

"Oh, come on!" said Jimmy Silver.

And the juniors went on at last towards Latcham and the circus tent. Three of them were puzzled and rather irritated. They simply could not make out Arthur Edward Lovell that afternoon.

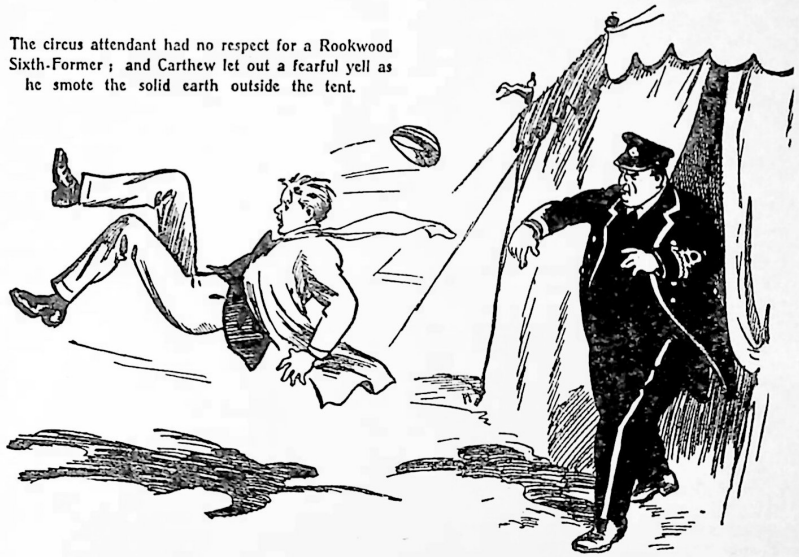
The snow ceased to fall almost suddenly as they reached the circus tent. A gleam of wintry sunshine came out in the overcast sky.

That burst of sunshine and the merry strains of the circus band had the effect of banishing the irritation of the juniors. With cheerful faces, they walked into the tent, paid their money, and sought their seats.

Lovell gave a rather anxious glance round the crowded tent as they entered. The tent was fairly full, but there were plenty of benches at the back, and seats—though not front ones—were easily to be had.

"This way, Lovell!" said Raby. "What are you staring about for? There's no empty seats in front."

The circus attendant had no respect for a Rookwood Sixth-Former; and Carthew let out a fearful yell as he smote the solid earth outside the tent.



"I was looking round for Carthew," muttered Lovell.

"What about him?"

"He might be in here."

"What does it matter if he is?"

Lovell only grunted in response to that question.

"Sit down!" said Jimmy.

The juniors sat down in a row, and their eyes fixed on the performance that was going on in the ring. And three of them,

at least, dismissed all other matters from their minds.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER
Trouble at the Circus !

"BRAVO !"

"Ripping !"

Jimmy Silver & Co. were enjoying their afternoon.

Chumgum's Celebrated Circus was, as its show-bills announced to the public, unrivalled. It had performed to a large numbed of crowned heads, and doubtless a much larger number of uncrowned ones. Chumgum's strong man was the strongest man on earth; his acrobats were the activest acrobats in the universe; his tight-rope walker was the most agile rope-walker in the solar system; his riders were the most wonderful riders ever ! All this Mr. Chumgum told the world, in bills large and small, and if Mr. Chumgum drew the long bow a little, at least it was certain that the Celebrated Circus satisfied its patrons at Latcham, and not least the four juniors from Rookwood, who were so happily there, while their schoolfellows were grinding in the Form-rooms.

Jimmy Silver & Co. felt that it was their lucky day.

They joined vociferously in the cheering at every turn, and when the rest of the audience clapped, the Fistical Four clapped their hands like pistol-shots.

The chums of Rookwood had come there to enjoy themselves, and they were doing it.

They enjoyed every one of the time-worn wheezes of the circus clown. They gazed with breathless interest at the wild riders. They listened with joy to the beat of galloping hoofs, and to the strains of the band. It really was a ripping afternoon.

"Good old Lovell !" said Jimmy Silver, with genuine gratitude, in a pause of the performance.

Lovell glanced at him.

"Eh, what ?" he asked.

"You've done this, old scout," said Jimmy. "You got leave for us to come here, when we thought there wasn't a dog's chance."

"Oh !"

"We thought it wasn't worth trying on, old chap," said Newcome. "But you did it ! Goodness knows how you managed to work the oracle, but you did ! Good old Lovell !"

"Um !"

"We've often pulled your leg, old fellow," said Raby. "But we own up now that leaving it to you was the right stuff ! We left it to you, old thing, and here we are !"

"I fancy a lot of the fellows would like to be here, too !" grinned Newcome. "What ?"

"Yes, rather !"

"Only we had Lovell to work it for us," said Jimmy Silver. "Lovell did the trick ! I can't guess now how a downy bird like Dicky Dalton fell for it, but here we are ! What ?"

"What-ho ! We ought to pass a vote of thanks to Lovell," said Raby heartily.

"Hear, hear !"

Lovell did not speak.

It was not modesty that kept him silent while he listened to the hearty praises of his chums. He was wondering what they would have said had they known that they were at the circus without leave, and that a frightful row awaited them when they returned to Rookwood.

But it was no use spoiling their pleasure by telling them that. It was no use meeting troubles half-way. Lovell judiciously kept that trifling detail to himself.

"Here they come !" exclaimed Newcome. "This is the cowboy bareback act. Jolly good, I think."

"Bravo !"

Attention was riveted on the ring again.

Jimmy Silver gave a sudden start as he felt a tap on his shoulder from behind. He looked round.

A newcomer had passed along the empty row at the back, and arrived just behind the Fistical Four. It was Carthew, of the Rookwood Sixth.

"Oh, you !" said Jimmy Silver indifferently. "You're rather late, Carthew !

You've missed a lot of good things."

"More than half over now," remarked Raby, glancing round at the prefect.

Carthew gave them a sour grin.

"I've been looking for you," he said.

"Have you?" ejaculated Jimmy, in surprise. It was not usual for a Sixth Form prefect to seek the company of Fourth Form juniors. "Well, you've found us now. Sit down!"

Lovell sat as if turned to stone.

He did not speak.

He couldn't!

"Sit down?" repeated Carthew, staring. "Do you think I've come here to see this silly show?"

"Eh? I suppose so, or what have you come for?" asked Jimmy, staring in his turn. "And it's not a silly show—it's jolly good! Ripping, in fact! Anyhow, sit down, and don't interrupt!"

"I suppose you think it won't cost you anything extra to be cheeky, considering what you're going to get, anyhow," said Carthew.

"What the dickens do you mean?"

"You jolly well know what I mean!" sneered Carthew.

"Blessed if I do!" said Jimmy. "Anyhow, it doesn't matter. Look here, you're interrupting the show. I want to see what's going on. See? Sit down and be quiet!"

"That's enough!" said Carthew. "I'm here to take you back to Rookwood. Follow me from this tent at once!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"You hear me, Silver?"

"I'm not deaf."

"Follow me at once!" said Carthew, raising his voice. "Do you think for one minute that I'm going to let you see the rest of it?"

"Yes, rather!" said Jimmy, with emphasis. "What the thump are you butting in for, Carthew, I'd like to know?"

"I'm taking you back to the school——"

"Rats!"

"What?" roared Carthew.

"Look here! You're making a fat-headed mistake," explained Jimmy Silver patiently. "We're not breaking bounds, as you seem to suppose. We're here on leave from our Form-master."

Carthew laughed.

"You want me to swallow that?" he asked banteringly.

"It's the truth," grunted Newcome.

"Dalton gave you leave to cut class and come to this circus, did he?" grinned the bully of the Sixth.

"Yes, he did. That is, he gave Lovell leave for the lot of us."

"Well, of all the cheek, I think this takes the cake," said Carthew, in sheer amazement. "You've got the neck to tell me that, when Dalton specially sent me after you to fetch you back?"

Jimmy Silver jumped.

"Dalton sent you?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, he did."

"Gammon!" exclaimed Newcome angrily. "As if Dicky would send you to fetch us back, after giving us leave!"

"He never gave you leave, you young rascal!" exclaimed Carthew. "What's the good of telling me crammers like that, when I'm here on Dalton's instructions."

"Gammon!"

"Dalton sent me after you, knowing that you were going to the circus. I've been hunting through the tent ever since the show started. Now I've found you, you're coming! Get a move on!"

"Sit tight!" said Jimmy.

His comrades sat tight.

"Follow me!" snapped Carthew.

"You've got it wrong," said Jimmy. "I keep on telling you that we're here on leave, and you can't gammon us. Lovell's got the exeat, signed by our Form-master."

"Let him show it, if he has!" sneered Carthew.

"Show up, Lovell," said Jimmy.

Lovell did not stir. He did not speak. He sat on his bench as if he were turned to stone there. Jimmy nudged him.

"Let Carthew see it, Lovell. A prefect has a right to. He's making a silly mistake, but as soon as he sees Dicky Dalton's fist he will know it's all right."

No answer from Lovell.

"Look here, I'm fed up with this

foolery," exclaimed Carthew impatiently. "Dalton sent me to fetch you back, and if you don't walk quietly out of this tent at once, I'll walk you out—sharp! Now then!"

"Sit down there!" called out several voices. "Quiet!"

"Order!"

"Sit down!"

Carthew gave a supercilious glance round. At Rookwood, a prefect of the Sixth Form was a great man. In the circus tent at Latcham he was a nobody. But Carthew did not realise that there was anywhere where he could be considered a nobody. After that supercilious glance, which expressed the contempt he felt for Latcham and all its inhabitants, he turned his attention to the Fistical Four again. Not one of them had stirred, and Carthew dropped a heavy hand on Jimmy Silver's shoulder.

"Up you get!" he remarked.

He jerked at Jimmy. Jimmy held on to the seat. He was powerfully inclined to hit out, and Uncle James' left was famous at Rookwood for its dire effects. But punching a prefect was a serious matter, even when the prefect was making a silly mistake, and intervening where he had no right to intervene. Jimmy restrained the impulse to hit out, and clung to the seat.

"No, I jolly well won't!" answered Jimmy Silver determinedly.

Lovell found his voice at last.

"Pip-pip-perhaps we'd better——" he began stammeringly.

"Rot!" exclaimed Jimmy hotly. "We're here on leave, and we're staying! Let go, Carthew, you bully!"

Carthew wrenched, and Jimmy Silver held on. The bench rocked, and two or three people farther along almost slipped off. There was a buzz of anger and indignation.

"Stop that!"

"Quiet!"

"Sit down, there!"

An attendant came along behind the seats. He touched Carthew on the shoulder, and the Rookwood prefect stared round angrily at him.

"Hands off!" he snapped.

"You must not make a disturbance here, sir," said the man, civilly enough. "Please sit down and be quiet. You're disturbing the folks."

"I'm taking these boys away!"

"If you young gentlemen are going, please go quietly."

"We're not!" bawled Raby. "We're jolly well staying!"

"We're not going!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver indignantly. "Rather not! Let go, Carthew, you rotter!"

"Get up, you young sweep!" roared Carthew, thoroughly out of temper now, and he gave Jimmy a wrench that almost dragged him over backwards.

The bench rocked again. Jimmy Silver held on to it, and Raby and Newcome, on either side, held on to Jimmy. Three or four people were on their feet now, bristling with indignation, and voices shouted from all sides.

"Sit down, there!"

"Chuck him out!"

"Order!"

"Are you coming?" roared Carthew.

The attendant touched his arm again.

"Stop that, sir, please."

"Mind your own business!" hooted Carthew. "Stand back! These schoolboys are playing truant, and I——"

"That's nothing to do with me, sir. Stop that row at once!"

"Hold your cheeky tongue!" snapped Carthew, and as the man, who was getting angry himself now, seized him by the arm in a muscular grip, the Rookwood senior struck his hand away savagely.

That tore it, so to speak.

"Out you go!" said the circus attendant, grasping Carthew with both hands now, in a grip that was much too strong for Carthew. "I've 'ad to deal with your sort afore! Out you go!"

"Hands off!" shrieked Carthew, struggling frantically.

"Outside!"

"Chuck him out!" roared a score of voices. "Put him outside!"

"Order!"

"Sit down!"

"Leggo!" raved Carthew as he was hooked along the benches by the muscular circus attendant. "You rascal—you scoundrel—you cheeky ruffian! Yarooogh! Oh, my hat! Whoooooop!"

Carthew disappeared.

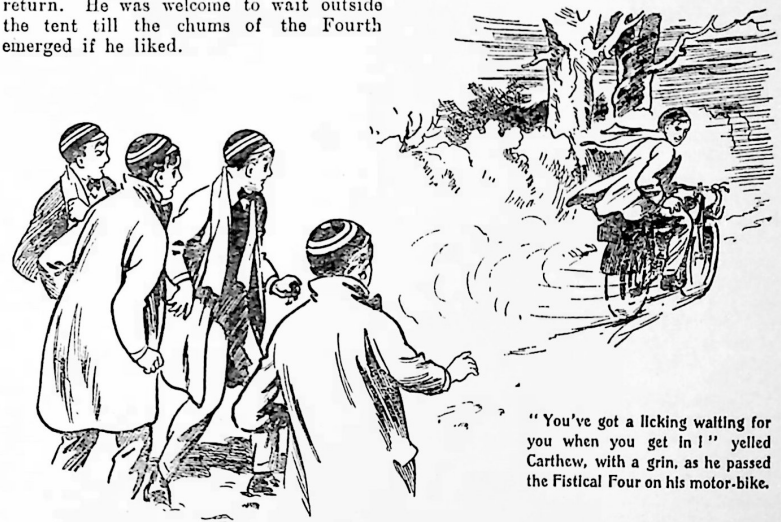
From the distance, at the exit, a bump was heard and a fearful yell. Both proceeded from Carthew as he smote the solid earth outside the tent.

Carthew was gone! Jimmy Silver & Co. and the people round them settled down again to watch the performance. Carthew was gone, and certainly was not likely to return. He was welcome to wait outside the tent till the chums of the Fourth emerged if he liked.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

Not so Clever of Lovell!

JIMMY SILVER & Co. came out of the circus tent, in the midst of a streaming crowd, at the end of the show. They came out with cheery faces, into a world of white. No snow was falling, but fields and hedges, trees and roofs, were carpeted with it, gleaming in the wintry sunshine that was now fading to early dusk. Across the field to the road lay a trampled, muddy track, but on either side of it and all around the glimmering white of the snow was unbroken. Some of the younger members of the audience disported themselves with snowballs as they departed, and the Fistical Four were rather disposed to follow suit. Then they came on Carthew.



"You've got a licking waiting for you when you get in!" yelled Carthew, with a grin, as he passed the Fistical Four on his motor-bike.

"Of all the cheek!" said Jimmy Silver, breathing hard. "Jumping on us like that when we've got our Form-master's leave!"

"Cheeky rotter!" said Newcome.

"Beastly bully!" said Raby.

Lovell did not speak. But his brow was very thoughtful as he watched the performance. He was thinking, and not wholly of the unrivalled entertainment provided by Chumgum's Celebrated Circus.

Carthew was waiting for them, watching the stream of people passing and dispersing to their homes. At the sight of the four juniors, the Rookwood prefect started towards them.

"There's that rotter again!" muttered Raby.

"Better hook it, I think," said Lovell.

"I don't see it! We're within our rights," said Jimmy Silver. "Carthew asked to be chucked out of the circus, and it can't be put down to us."

"No, but——" murmured Lovell uneasily.

"But what?"

"Oh, nothing!"

Carthew had reached them now. Three of the juniors eyed him defiantly, one uneasily. Carthew's look was black and bitter. Carthew never was a good-tempered fellow, and his experience at Chumgum's Celebrated Circus had not had a mollifying effect on him.

"You young sweeps!" he growled.

"You old sweep!" retorted Jimmy Silver. "What do you want?"

"I want you!" growled Carthew. "I've got to get you back to Rookwood. Dalton never supposed that you would disobey a prefect's order when you were actually caught. I shall report it to him."

"Report and be blowed!" said Raby.

Carthew's eyes gleamed.

"You've got it coming to you for this cheek," he said. "You refused to leave the circus at my order."

"Certainly we did!" answered Jimmy Silver. "You may be no end of a big gun, Carthew, but we've got master's leave."

"You've got nothing of the sort, and you know it," said Carthew. "I can't make out why you keep up that silly tale! You can't expect me to believe it, when Dalton sent me specially after you."

"Oh, rot!" said Jimmy. "He couldn't have, when he gave us leave."

Carthew looked puzzled, as well as angry. He could see that Jimmy was speaking sincerely, and in the circumstances it was perplexing. Certainly Mr. Dalton had sent him after the four truants, and that made it quite impossible that the four had their Form-master's leave.

"Look here, Lovell, trot out that exeat!" said Newcome. "You have to show it to a prefect, if he asks. Well, trot it out!"

Lovell stood silent.

"Dalton can't have given you leave, and forgotten all about it, and then sent me after you," said Carthew. "That's impossible. Look here, Lovell, if you've got a paper signed by Dalton, show it to me."

"I—I haven't!"

It was out at last.

"You haven't?" ejaculated Jimmy Silver, staring at his chum.

Raby and Newcome stared at him also, blankly.

"No!" muttered Lovell.

"But Dalton gave you leave?" shouted Raby.

"He didn't!"

"Didn't?" gasped the three.

"No."

"But you said——" howled Newcome.

"I never said he gave me leave," said Lovell. "I said I was going to ask, certainly. Well, I did ask."

"And he refused?" stuttered Jimmy.

"Yes."

"But you led us to believe that you'd got leave!" yelled Raby.

"I suppose you supposed so," said Lovell. "You fellows needn't worry. I'm going to tell Dalton I did it. He won't lick you when he knows you supposed you were on leave."

"He'll jolly well lick you!"

"Let him!"

Carthew stared at Lovell.

"So that's it!" he said. "You took these young asses in, and they fancied they were on leave."

"I didn't take them in," said Lovell obstinately. "But they fancied they were on leave all right."

"Oh, my only Aunt Eliza!" groaned Newcome. "You ass, Lovell——"

"You howling ass, Lovell——"

"Of all the burbling chumps——"

"Oh, chuck it!" said Lovell crossly. "You've been to the circus, haven't you? You've had a good time. Ten to one Dicky Dalton will let you off when I tell him."

"You'll get a flogging!" roared Jimmy.

"Well, if I do, I'm not asking you to worry about it," said Lovell sourly. "Give us a rest!"

"You silly chump——"

"You footling ass——"

"Leave it to Lovell!" groaned Newcome. "This is what comes of leaving it to Lovell! Lickings all round!"

"We—we—we've cut class—without leave—and me head of the Fourth!" gasped Jimmy. "Oh, you footling fathead, Lovell——"

Carthew burst into a laugh.

"You'll get six all round, and Lovell will get a Head's flogging," he said, "and serve you jolly well right, in my opinion! You young sweeps can make out that you were taken in, but I fancy you weren't so taken in as you make out. Anyhow, you've got to get back to school, and I shall report you for refusing to leave the circus. Get a move on!"

"We're going back to Rookwood now," growled Jimmy Silver. "Give us a rest, Carthew! You don't want to give us a lift back on your stink-bike, do you?"

"I'll see you started!" snapped Carthew.

"Come on, you men!" said Jimmy. "We're for it—and the sooner we get it over the better. Come on!"

Faces that had been very bright were clouded as the Fistical Four started down the road towards the gate on the footpath over Woody Ridge.

Carthew left them, to go into Latcham for his motor-bike. But a little later the juniors heard him on the road, chug-chugging along on the motor-bicycle.

Carthew passed them, and grinned back at them as he passed.

"Get on!" he called out. "You've got a licking waiting for you when you get in!"

"Go and eat coke!" growled Lovell.

Carthew laughed, but the next moment his laugh died away in a gasp of alarm. It really was not safe, on a snow-covered road, to look back and relax his attention to his jigger. The bike skidded in the snow, and Carthew shot away dizzily.

"Oh, crumbs!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

"Oooooooop!" gasped Carthew.



The footprints, clearly defined in the snow, showed that Mr. Bright had taken the wrong turning!

Fortunately the jigger righted, and Carthew regained control. But he did not look back at the group of juniors any more. He gave them no further heed.

The motor-bike chugged on and disappeared in the distance.

Jimmy Silver & Co. walked on dismally to the gate on the footpath. As they proceeded, the Co. told Lovell what they thought of him.

They told him at great length and with great emphasis. They told him what they thought of his wheezes, and of his intellect, and of his nerve. All that they told him was uncomplimentary.

They had wondered at Lovell's success in getting leave for the afternoon. They had been driven to believe that there was more in Arthur Edward Lovell than met the eye.

Now they had discovered that they had not been given leave at all, and that Lovell was still the frabjous fathead they had always thought him, only more so than they had ever imagined.

They had cut class—taken French leave—broken bounds—bunked! It was really awful to think of. Mr. Dalton might, or might not, lay all the blame on Lovell when he heard the story. That made little difference to the Co. They did not want a caning themselves, and they did not want Lovell flogged. All Lovell's wonderful cleverness had boiled down to this—that he had broken bounds and taken French leave, as any fellow could do if he was fatheaded enough. And three fellows, generally as well behaved as any at Rookwood, had played truant along with him!

"Leave it to Lovell!" said Raby, with concentrated sarcasm. "Ripping idea, what? We'd better leave it to Lovell to get us out of this awful scrape he's got us into."

"You'd better," said Lovell tartly.

"You howling ass——"

"Oh, cheese it!" exclaimed Lovell. "Go and eat coke! Rats!"

"You footling duffer——"

"Br-r-r-r-r-r!"

Lovell appeared to have heard enough of the eloquence of his comrades.

He strode ahead, hurled open the gate on the roadside, and tramped through into the footpath.

The gate swung back with a crash.

Jimmy Silver opened it a minute later, and the three passed through. They followed Lovell along the footpath, under the leafless branches that stretched overhead, like white arms.

"Hold on, Lovell!" called out Jimmy Silver.

No reply from Lovell. He tramped on doggedly ahead.

"Lovell, old man!"

Lovell tramped on in silence.

"Now the silly ass has got his back up," said Newcome. "Just what he would do, after landing the lot of us in the soup, if we don't thank him nicely for getting us into the biggest row of the term!"

Jimmy Silver sighed.

"Old Lovell means well," he said. "Come on! After all, we've had a tip-top afternoon, and if we've got to pay the piper, we've called the tune! Let's catch Lovell up."

The three juniors hurried on. But Lovell, who evidently had his back up, hurried too, and kept ahead.

"The fathead!" said Raby.

"The ass!" said Newcome.

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"Keep smiling!" he said cheerily.

The December dusk was thickening in the wood. The thick snow among the trees gleamed eerily in the dusk. Like spectres the gaunt trees stood, whitened with snow. The footpath had totally disappeared under a white carpet, but the juniors knew the way beyond the possibility of mistake. In the white, footprints could be seen leading in the direction in which the juniors were going. Evidently they were the tracks left by Mr. Bright, who had traversed the path a couple of hours ago. The juniors remembered that the snow had ceased to fall soon after the new master had entered Woody Ridge.

"Lovell!" called out Jimmy again. "Hallo, he's stopped! Come on!"

The three juniors hurried on and joined Lovell.

He had stopped at a point where a track left the footpath, winding away into the heart of the extensive and almost untrodden wood.

"That's not the way," said Raby. "Come on!"

Lovell did not come on.

He had not, apparently, halted for his comrades to join him. He was standing still in the snow, staring along the track that led off into the wood, and he did not heed the three.

"Come on, Lovell!" urged Jimmy Silver. "For goodness' sake don't sulk, old man!"

"Who's sulking?" exclaimed Lovell.

"Well, come on."

"You can get on, if you like," answered Lovell coolly. "Leave this to me."

"Eh—leave what to you?" exclaimed Jimmy.

"We're likely to leave anything to you, Lovell, after to-day!" snorted Raby. "But what are we to leave to you this time, fathead?"

Arthur Edward Lovell smiled sarcastically.

"You fellows don't notice anything special?" he asked.

"I notice that it's getting dark," said Newcome testily.

"And we shall get it extra stiff if we're late in for roll call," growled Raby.

"Look here, Lovell, what——" began Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, keep on," said Lovell, with sarcasm. "Leave it to me! I'm a fathead, I know—a frabjous ass—a silly idiot—a footling chump—and all the rest of it. But I'm not going to leave a man to perish of cold and exposure in this wood, all the same!"

"What?" yelled the three.

Lovell pointed to the snow at their feet.

"Look!" he said.

The three juniors looked, and then they noticed what Lovell had already noticed, and they stared at the carpet of snow with suddenly grave and startled faces.

"My only hat!" muttered Jimmy Silver.



The four juniors, with all the force of their lungs, shouted in unison, but there was no reply from the lost Mr. Bright!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

The Track in the Snow!

JIMMY SILVER & CO. stood silent, staring at the snow. What they read there was startling enough. From the Latcham road as far as this spot they had followed the footprints, which they guessed had been left by Mr. Bright. At this point the footprints, instead of continuing along the footpath, turned off and followed the track winding away into the wood.

The man who had preceded them by two or three hours had turned off the footpath at that point.

The footprints, clearly defined in the velvety softness of the snow, showed that he had taken the wrong turning.

That was not surprising, considering that Mr. Bright was a stranger in that part. In the summer the footpath over Woody Ridge was clearly marked, but under several inches of snow every trace of it had disappeared from sight. Any stranger, coming to the spot where the track branched, must have been hopelessly at a loss. Jimmy Silver & Co., who had been over the footpath a hundred times or more, made no mistake. There were a score of landmarks they knew. But the stranger evidently had made a mistake.

It was no light matter for a stranger to miss his way on Woody Ridge in the snow, and with the December darkness coming on. Once lost, the way was not likely to be found again. Hidden by snow as it was, it might have been crossed again and again by the wandering man seeking it without being discerned.

Obviously Mr. Bright had not, as the

juniors had taken for granted, gone on to Rookwood School and arrived there.

He was still in the wood!

Unless he had found his way out again, which was extremely unlikely, the stout gentleman in horn-rimmed glasses was, even then, wandering hopelessly to and fro in a trackless waste, and booked to pass a bitter winter's night in the open.

"My only hat!" repeated Jimmy Silver.

"The ass!" said Newcome.

"I don't see it," grunted Lovell. "How was he to know the way, with this snow on the ground? He was as likely to take one way as another."

"That track leads nowhere," said Newcome. "He would soon find that out, and turn back, I should think."

"That track leads out on the downs, if you follow it far enough," said Lovell. "It's a path that's used in summer. We've been over it ourselves. You can get to Rookham that way, if you follow it far enough."

"My Aunt Eliza! If the silly ass has wandered out on the downs——"

"Phew!" murmured Raby.

Jimmy Silver whistled softly.

In the dusk, under the whitened trees, the Rookwood juniors looked at one another. The man was lost; that was certain. If he had guessed that he was on the wrong path, he would have retraced his steps—and there was no sign of returning footprints.

And the schoolboys knew, though they did not care to utter the thought, that it was not merely discomfort and hardship that threatened the man who had wandered. The shadow of death was over one who lost his way on the downs in the snow. Many a pitfall lurked under the white mantle, and even if the wanderer avoided them by good fortune, his position would be helpless when darkness fell. He could only wander on and on till he sank down exhausted, and that was death.

The schoolboys forgot their own little differences now. They forgot the trouble that awaited them at Rookwood, forgot roll call, and everything else but the peril of the man whose footprints led away into a wild and trackless waste.

"We've got to find him!" said Jimmy at last.

Lovell nodded.

"If he's not found, he's done for," he said. "You know, there was a man lost on Woody Ridge once, in the winter, and they found him—days afterwards——"

Lovell did not complete the sentence.

"I know," said Jimmy, in a low voice.

"I—I say," muttered Raby uneasily, "if—if we leave the path we shall never find it again after dark. You know that."

"We can't leave him to it!" said Lovell curtly.

"No. But——"

Raby was silent.

There was danger—serious danger—for the schoolboys in leaving the path, with the dusk deepening. If they were overtaken by the winter darkness in the wilds of Woody Ridge, they would be little better off than the man they sought.

Jimmy drew a deep breath.

"We can't leave him to it, as Lovell says," he said. "We've got to find the chap. Come on! Every minute of daylight is precious now."

Arthur Edward started, following the footprints along the track, and his chums followed Lovell.

For a quarter of a mile or more they pressed on, with hardly the exchange of a word, covering the ground as quickly as possible.

Then Lovell halted.

"He turned off here," he said.

The track hidden under the snow led, as the schoolboys knew, to the open downs and distant Rookham. But the footprints no longer followed it. They turned off among the whitened trees.

The wanderer had left the track, without knowing that he was leaving it. He had hopelessly lost himself in the trackless woods.

"Shout!" said Jimmy Silver. "He may be near enough to hear us from here."

"Not likely," said Lovell.

"Try, anyhow!"

And the four juniors, with all the force of their lungs, shouted in unison.

"Halloo! Halloo!"

"Halloo—oo—oo!" came echoing back from the snowy woods. But there was no other reply.

They listened intently. Again they shouted. But only the hollow echo of the woods came back.

"Come on!" said Lovell. "No good wasting time."

They tramped on again, following the trail in the snow. It led them through a glimmering glade.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Lovell suddenly.

He halted again.

"What——"

"Here's another track."

"My hat!"

The juniors stared at the trail in the dimness. Another track of footprints crossed the one they were following. In one spot it partly obliterated the original trail, and was evidently fresher.

Jimmy shook his head.

"It's the same track," he said.

"But it crosses this!" said Newcome.

"That's easily enough explained. Goodness knows how far he went, but he must have walked in a circle and come back here, and crossed his own trail."

"That's it!" said Lovell, after a moment's thought.

It was clear enough.

Like most persons hopelessly lost, the wanderer had walked in a wide circle, while doubtless supposing that he was proceeding in a direct line.

How much time he had lost in describing that circle the juniors could not guess, but the new trail seemed fairly fresh, and they began to hope that the hapless man was not far away.

"If he's recognised his own footprints, and followed them back to where he started from——" muttered Raby.

"He's done exactly the reverse," said Jimmy Silver quietly.

Lovell stared.

"How do you make that out?" he asked.

"Look!"

Jimmy pointed. The new track crossed the old one, and then, a few yards farther on, turned back to it.

At that spot there were blurred marks in the snow, which showed that the man had stopped, and hesitated for some little time. From that point the trail vanished, only the old trail remaining. But from that point the old trail was marked with fresh prints.

It was easy enough to guess what had happened. The wanderer had come on that trail in the snow, had observed it, and followed it. Doubtless he had taken it for the track of someone else passing through the wood, and followed it in the hope of coming up with that someone, or at least being led to safety. Not suspecting that he had walked in a circle, he had never dreamed that the trail he had fallen upon was his own.

"My only Aunt Eliza!" ejaculated Newcome.

Lovell whistled.

"He thought that was somebody else's track, and he followed it," said Jimmy Silver soberly. "The poor chap is walking over his own footsteps a second time, and he will go right round the circle again—miles, perhaps!"

"Then," exclaimed Lovell, "we've only got to wait here, and when he gets round again he will run into us."

"Only," said Jimmy, "it will be dark long before that, and as soon as it's dark he will not be able to see the trail, and he will wander off it."

"Oh!" said Lovell.

"He won't get back to this spot," said Jimmy, shaking his head. "Goodness knows where he will get if we don't find him. Let's get on!"

The four juniors pressed on again.

The dusk was growing dimmer and dimmer now, and it was not easy to discern the footprints that were guiding them. Lovell stumbled over something in the snow and uttered an exclamation.

"What's that?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"Blessed if I know! Come on!"

"But let's look——"

"You're wasting time."

"Look, fathead! It's a bag."

"A bag!" exclaimed Lovell.

Jimmy Silver dragged a dark object from

the snow. It was a suit-case, and they recognised it as the bag Mr. Bright had been carrying.

Lovell peered at it.

"My hat! He's dropped his bag—and left it there!"

"Must have been fagged out by that time, and too jolly tired to carry it any farther," said Newcome.

"I suppose so. But——"

"I'll carry it," said Jimmy. "Come on!"

They tramped on in the thickening dimness. At intervals they uttered a shout, in the hope that the exhausted man might be within hearing. From the fact that he had left his suit-case behind, it was obvious that the man must be exhausted, and proceeding slowly.

"Halloo! Halloo!" rang echoing through the shadowy woods.

"Hark!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver suddenly.

"Only the echo——" said Lovell.

"Listen!"

"I tell you——"

"Quiet, ass, and listen!"

Lovell grunted and was silent. The juniors listened intently. Faintly, from the deepening shadows of the wood, came a distant cry:

"Help!"

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER
The Rescue!

"HELP!"

It was a faint, feeble cry, but it reached the ears of the Rookwood juniors.

"Help!"

"That's him!" exclaimed Raby, joyfully and ungrammatically.

"Hurray!"

Jimmy Silver shouted again.

"Halloo! Where are you?"

"This way! Help!"

The juniors hurried in the direction of the cry. They no longer needed the guidance of the footprints, now almost lost in the dimness.

"Help!"

They came on him suddenly.

At the foot of a frosty trunk, leaning back on the tree, where he had sunk down utterly exhausted, lay the stout gentleman in the horn-rimmed glasses.

His face, white as chalk, glimmered in the gloom, the big glasses giving it a strange, owlish look.

"Help!" he murmured feebly.

"Here we are, sir!" said Jimmy Silver cheerily. He bent down and peered at the hapless man. "You're Mr. Bright?"

"Yes," gasped the stout gentleman, blinking at him. "And you—I have seen you before—you are the Rookwood boys I met!"

"Yes. We found where you'd left the path, and followed," said Jimmy. "All serene now."

Mr. Bright gasped dismally.

"I—I think I must have lost my way," he mumbled. "But—but I came on footprints and followed them, hoping that they would lead me to a house, but—but I am quite exhausted——"

"You came on your own footprints, sir," said Jimmy Silver. "You must have walked in a circle."

"Is it possible?" gasped Mr. Bright.

"But it's all right now," said Jimmy reassuringly. "Thank goodness we found you before it was too dark to get back to the footpath."

Mr. Bright shivered.

"You—you—you can find your way back in this dreadful wilderness?" he stuttered.

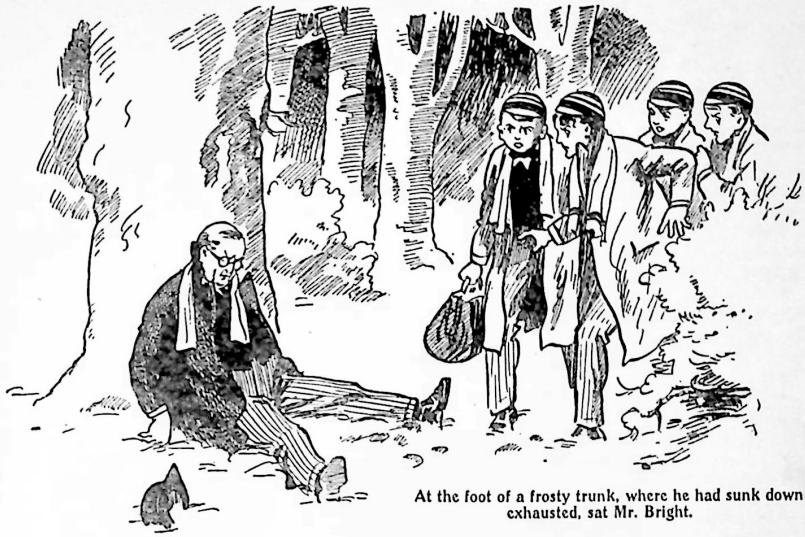
"I think so, sir. But there's no time to lose. Lend a hand here, you men," said Jimmy.

With the help of the juniors, Mr. Bright gained his feet. But he leaned heavily on them. Obviously, he had gone on till he could no longer place one foot before the other, and he was completely at the end of his tether.

"I—I fear I am too exhausted to walk," he mumbled.

"That's all right, sir—lean on us!" said Jimmy. "We'll help you!"

"My dear boy! I—I hardly care to think of what would have happened had you not found me," gasped the hapless gentleman.



At the foot of a frosty trunk, where he had sunk down exhausted, sat Mr. Bright.

Truly, it was not pleasant to think of. Had not the Rookwooders found him, Mr. Bright would have passed the long December night in the snow and darkness, and it was scarcely likely that he would have survived to see the winter sun dawn again.

But the Rookwooders were not out of the wood yet—literally and metaphorically. Darkness was falling fast now.

"Buck up!" said Lovell. "If we lose our way back, we're dished."

"Come on, sir!" said Jimmy.

Mr. Bright walked between Lovell and Jimmy, the two heftiest members of the party, and Raby carried the suit-case. Supported by the two sturdy juniors, the stout gentleman found that he could walk. But most of his weight fell on the two Fourth-Formers, and his weight was very considerable.

Manfully they stood up to the burden.

What would happen if Mr. Bright gave out entirely, the juniors hardly dared to contemplate. So bulky a gentleman would not have been easy to carry, even by four sturdy fellows.

Fortunately, Mr. Bright did not give out. Help and renewed hope kept him going.

Progress was slow. The juniors tramped on, with Mr. Bright tottering in their midst, leaning heavily on Lovell and Jimmy.

There was more than one halt to rest and to ascertain the way, for the darkness was settling blackly now, and the footprints that had guided the juniors were lost to sight. Fortunately, by the time the last glimmer of light was gone, the juniors were on a track they knew, and it led them back to the main footpath.

There, all was safe so far as finding the way was concerned, but nearly a mile's distance had to be covered to reach the village of Coombe.

Mr. Bright seemed scarcely conscious now; he tottered on like a man in a dream, his weight falling more and more heavily on the juniors.

How they got to Coombe, Jimmy Silver & Co. hardly knew.

They tottered into the village at last, with an utterly helpless man on their hands. They gasped with relief at the sight of the glowing light from the diamond-paned windows of the Red Cow.

But now all was plain sailing. The trap from the Red Cow carried four fatigued juniors and an exhausted master to the gates of Rookwood.

And, in spite of what awaited them there, never had Jimmy Silver & Co. been so glad to see the old school.

"Here we are again!" gasped Jimmy Silver as he jumped from the trap and tugged at the bell.

"Two hours late for roll call!" said Raby.

"There'll be a frightful row!" said Newcome.

"Never mind that. We're here at last," said Jimmy Silver, and he rang another peal on the bell.

Old Mack came down to the gate.

"My eye!" said the Rookwood porter as he blinked at the new arrivals. "You, is it? Which Mr. Dalton says——"

Old Mack broke off, to stare at the man who was being helped from the trap.

"Wot's this 'ere?" he ejaculated.

"Mr. Bright," said Jimmy.

"Mr. Bright!" repeated Mack. "He ain't come, and the 'Ead expecting 'im ——"

"Lend a hand, old bean, and give your chin a rest," suggested Jimmy Silver.

And old Mack grunted and lent a hand, and Mr. Bright was helped to the House. And Jimmy Silver & Co., as they came in, were hailed immediately by Carthew of the Sixth.

"Here, you!"

"Here we are, old bean," said Jimmy cheerily.

"You're to go to Mr. Dalton's study at once," said Carthew. "I may as well tell you that it's a Head's flogging for you all round! Cut off!"

And the Fistical Four, not in a happy mood, cut off, to take what was coming to them.

THE NINTH CHAPTER
Something Like Luck!

"LEAVE it to me!" said Lovell.

"What?" yelled three juniors.

"Leave it to me——"

"Fathead!"

"Ass!"

"Duffer!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. found Mr. Dalton's study vacant. The Fourth Form-master had been called away by the commotion that followed the arrival of Mr. Bright.

The four juniors waited in the study for their Form-master. There was a buzz of excited voices in the House, startled exclamations, and the sound of many footsteps. The strange and unusual circumstances of Mr. Bright's arrival had caused something like a sensation.

But the Fistical Four paid that no heed. They were thinking of themselves, which in the circumstances was excusable.

They waited for Mr. Dalton to come back, in the lowest spirits. Then Lovell suggested that they should leave it to him. Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome looked at Arthur Edward as if they could have eaten him.

"Leave it to me," repeated Lovell calmly. "I'll talk to Dicky Dalton! Don't you fellows say a word!"

"Look here——"

"You know you can't open your mouth without putting your foot in it," argued Lovell, "so leave the talking to me."

"You footling ass——"

"We're likely to leave anything to you, you frabjous ass!" said Raby. "The best thing you can do is to shut up."

"I'm going to talk to Dalton——"

"Rats!"

"I'm going to tell him——"

"Rot!"

"Look how the matter stands," argued Lovell. "I asked Dalton for leave to meet Bright at Latcham, and see him safe to the school——"

"Like your cheek!"

"Dalton refused——"

"Yes, you ass, and you never told us."

"Don't jaw! Dalton refused, and look what's happened. Bright lost his way, and

might have been frozen. Well, I'm going to point out to Dalton that I was right, and he was wrong."

"Wha-a-at!"

"Dalton's a sensible man," said Lovell. "I mean, for a Form-master, of course. Well, when I point out to him how utterly in the wrong he was, he's bound to see it."

"Great pip!"

"I shan't tell him he was an ass."



When the trap arrived at Rookwood Mr. Bright had to be assisted by two of the juniors into the school.

"Oh!" gasped Jimmy. "You won't?"

"No; I shall put it politely. But I'm going to make it clear to him that he was wrong, and I was right, and——"

The three juniors gazed at Arthur Edward Lovell. That happy youth seemed persuaded that the matter would turn out all right, after all, if left to him. But his comrades had had enough—more than enough—of leaving it to Lovell. Neither did they think that an angry Form-master might be placated by having it explained to him that he was utterly in the wrong, and that Arthur Edward Lovell was utterly in the right. It seemed improbable, at least.

"You—you benighted bandersnatch!" said Jimmy Silver at last. "We've got to take what's coming to us, and it will be bad enough without you making it worse."

"If you leave it to me——"

"If you say one word to Dalton," said Jimmy Silver, in concentrated tones, "we'll scrag you!"

"Look here——"

"All you've got to do is to shut up!" hooted Raby.

Lovell's countenance assumed its most obstinate expression.

"I shall certainly tell Dalton what I think," he said. "All you fellows have got to do is to keep your silly mouths shut and leave it to me."

It was the last straw! It really was the thing-too-much! Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome exchanged an eloquent glance, and then they hurled themselves on Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Bump him!" roared Jimmy.

"Yarooogh! Leggo! Mum-mum-my hat! Yoooop!"

Bump!

Ink and papers danced on Mr. Dalton's table as Arthur Edward Lovell smote the floor of the study.

A Form-master's study was not, perhaps, an appropriate place for Lovell's chums to demonstrate thus what they thought of him. But that was forgotten in the excitement of the moment. Arthur Edward had asked for it—he had begged for it—and now he was getting it.

Bump!

"Whoooooo!"

"Give him another!"

Bump!

"Yooooooooooooooooooop!"

"Now, you fathead——"

"Now, you ass——"

"Now, you burbling chump——"

"'Hem!"

That gentle cough in the doorway had a more startling effect on Jimmy Silver & Co. than a thunderclap.

The three juniors released Arthur Edward as suddenly as if Arthur Edward had all at once become red-hot.

They spun round. Mr. Richard Dalton was standing in the doorway of the study. He had come in at a rather unpropitious moment!

"'Hem!" he repeated.

"Oh!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

Three juniors stood crimson and confused. Lovell sat up, crimson and enraged.

"Ow!" he gasped. "I'll—— Ow! Oh! Oooooh"

Mr. Dalton stepped into the study.

"You may stand up, Lovell," he said quietly.

Lovell stood up. He gave his comrades a look. In the presence of the Form-master he could give them nothing more than a look, but his look was expressive.

There was a moment's silence. The chums of the Fourth waited for their Form-master to utter the words of doom.

"You have played truant to-day!" said Mr. Dalton at last. "You have left the school without leave, missed classes, and refused to return at a prefect's order, though I sent him specially to fetch you back."

"We're sorry, sir! You see, sir——" said Lovell.

"Shut up!" hissed Newcome.

"Shan't! You see, sir," said Lovell, "I should like to say—— Yow-ow-ow!"

Lovell had not intended to say that. He said it involuntarily as his foot was fiercely tramped on.

"Order, please!" said Mr. Dalton severely. "Silence! You need say nothing! It was my intention to report you to your headmaster for a flogging, but——"

The juniors hung on Richard Dalton's words. It seemed that there was a 'but.'

"But——" said Mr. Dalton slowly.

A pin might have been heard to fall in the study.

"But it appears that your reckless, thoughtless, foolish conduct has led to an unexpected but very happy result," said the Fourth Form-master.

"Has it, sir?" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

"Are you not aware that it has, Silver?"

"I—I don't quite——"

"Had you not broken bounds to-day, as you recklessly and unthinkingly did for the trivial purpose of visiting a circus, you would not have been returning by Woody Ridge, and would not have found Mr. Bright there," said Richard Dalton.

"Oh!"

The juniors saw light.

"By seeking him in the wood, with darkness falling, you ran very considerable risk yourselves," said Mr. Dalton, his severe face relaxing. "You might not have succeeded in saving him, but might have shared his fate."

"Oh!"

"There is no doubt that you have saved this gentleman, Mr. Bright, from severe hardship—possibly from death."

"Oh!"

"I am bound to take this into consideration," said Mr. Dalton.

"Oh!"

"Nothing more, therefore, will be said about your reckless escapade."

"Oh!" gasped the juniors.

"You may go, and may regard the

matter as closed," said the Form-master. "But," he added in a deep voice, "if anything of the kind should occur again——"

Mr. Dalton did not finish. He left the rest to the imagination of the juniors.

He made a gesture of dismissal, and the chums of the Fourth left the study. Very gladly they left it, scarcely daring to believe in their good luck.

"Well, my hat!" said Jimmy Silver as they went down the passage. That was all he could say.



Jimmy Silver, Raby, and Newcome were heartily bumping Lovell when a gentle cough sounded in the doorway. It came from Mr. Dalton!

He was too astonished at their good fortune, as were the others. Even though they had saved Mr. Bright, not for one moment had the Fistical Four expected Mr. Dalton to take such a lenient view of their taking French leave. But in the circumstances, perhaps, it was the only course left open to the Fourth Form-master.

"This is what comes of leaving it to me," remarked Lovell. "I told you so!"

Jimmy Silver, Raby, and Newcome looked at Lovell with an indulgent smile.

"Another time," continued Arthur Edward, "perhaps you won't need persuading so much——"

This was too much for the others.

"You ass!"

"You burbling chump!"

"You fathead!"

And the Fistical Four walked on down the passage in silence.

"Licked?" asked a dozen voices as they came into the junior Common-room.

"Flogged?"

"Sacked?"

Jimmy Silver & Co. smiled. They could smile now!

"My dear men," said Arthur Edward Lovell patronisingly, "we're all right! We've been to the circus, and we've had a jolly good time! That's all!"

"And you're not licked?" howled Tubby Muffin.

"Not at all!"

"But you cut class!" exclaimed Mornington.

"We did!"

"You went to the circus!" said Townsend.

"We did!"

"And you're not licked?"

"We're not."

"Then how did you manage it?" demanded Mornington.

Lovell smiled.

"These fellows left it to me," he explained. "When a thing's left to me, it's all right! That's all!"

THE END

Our Incurable Interviewer Calls On PERCY BOLSOVER

(The bully of the Greyfriars Remove.)



"COME in, idiot!" bellowed a powerful voice, in response to my timid tap on the door of Study No. 10.

Trembling, I obeyed.

A grim, broad-shouldered youth was dancing up and down the study, pummelling the walls for all he was worth. Ornaments and furniture were scattered about the floor as though a whirlwind, a cyclone, a monsoon, and a hurricane all rolled into one had recently visited the study.

"P-please I've called to interview you, Mr. Bolsover, on behalf of the HOLIDAY ANNUAL," I began.

"Just in time!" bellowed Bolsover, giving me a genial thump on the back that shot me into the far corner of the room. "You can jolly well interview me while you're sparring with me. I'll tell you all about myself. First of all, I'm the strongest chap in the Remove. Take that!"

"Yaroooooh!" I yelled as I took "that"—"that" being a crashing blow on the jaw.

"But in spite of that I'm an awfully nice chap," grinned Bolsover. "Anyone who tells you I'm a bully is talking out of his hat! Of course, I dish out lickings galore to the fags, but that's for their own good. Here's one for your boko!"

"Whoooop!"

"My motto is: Be kind! Take that!"

And Percy Bolsover, in two brief seconds, presented me with a thick ear and a black eye.

"My recreation is bending iron bars. My favourite author is Jack Dempsey, and my favourite song, 'Two Lovely Black Eyes.' And here's another for you, by the way!"

"Yooooop!" I roared. "Look here, Mr. Bolsover——"

"Dunno that there's much else to tell," continued Bolsover. "You can tell your readers that I'm a gifted member of the Remove Debating Society, and I regularly bring forward very weighty arguments—like this!"

Biff!

Bolsover's weighty argument took the form of a pile-driver on my chest that sent me to the floor, a huddled heap.

I suppose that ended the interview. I have a dim recollection of being carried off by the Remove Ambulance Corps on a stretcher and afterwards waking up in hospital.

Perhaps the Editor will be merciful now, and send me to interview somebody like Alonzo Todd or Sidney Snoop. The next time I'm asked to interview Percy Bolsover, my reply will be more forcible than polite!

HOLIDAY BATHING



Why not do some REAL swimming next time you go away on holiday? This article contains useful hints—for the learner and for the swimmer—that will make future bathing much more enjoyable!

GIVEN fine weather, blue sky, and warm sunshine, and no chilly wind to set one shivering, outdoor bathing, no matter whether it is the sea or river or lake, is certainly one of the most enjoyable of holiday pastimes. And the boy—or girl—who has the good fortune to spend a holiday where swimming is available and who doesn't take advantage of the opportunity scarcely deserves a holiday at all!

You go to the sea. Bathing is possible, and you know something about swimming. You will be slopping about in the water several times a day, enjoying yourself—doing a bit of *real* swimming, perhaps—and enjoying it all. But when your holiday is over, have you improved as a swimmer? Have you learned anything? Can you do anything in the water at the end of your holiday that you could not do before?



To breathe correctly is the first stage in learning to swim. Inhale and lower the body in water up to the neck; raise the body and then exhale.

If not, why not? Why not make use of the holiday to improve your swimming?

First, as to breathing. We have all seen swimmers dash into the water, thrash their arms and legs about for some minutes, and then badly need a rest. They are "winded." One of the things you can do during your holiday is to learn to breathe when in the water.

Breathing is something to which most swimmers do not pay half enough atten-

tion. And yet correct breathing means three-fourths of success in swimming. Every swimmer doesn't know that when in the water all breathing-in should be done through the mouth, *not* through the nose. I used to think differently. I know better now. You try it for yourself. If you're a bather and not a swimmer—that is, if you're afraid of getting out of your depth and have to be content with paddling about in waist-high water—just try this scheme. When you can manage it, you will be well on the road to being a real swimmer, and you won't be "blown" after ten minutes in the water.

Let yourself go all slack, open your mouth wide, and take in a mouthful of air, but don't exert yourself to fill the lungs. Now purse up your lips, just as if you were blowing a cornet, and force the air out through the lips. Repeat this several times. When you can do that correctly, try it in the water.

Stand waist-deep, flat-footed, hands holding a rope or board or the end of a groyne. Take in a breath as described. Shut the mouth, bend the knees, and lower the body up to the neck. Don't get on your toes or stiffen yourself anywhere.

Now rise up and blow out your breath between compressed lips. Repeat this a dozen times.

The next stage is to carry the sinking into the water so far that the face up to the eyebrows is brought under water. Bend chin on the chest to prevent the water running up your nose. Stay under a couple of seconds, come up, and expel your breath forcibly. Do this a dozen times.

Then try taking two dips below, one after the other, quickly, taking in air each time your head comes up. Before very long you will find that you can repeat this as many as twenty or thirty times. You will not get winded, and you will learn such control of your breath that a real bout of actual swimming will not leave you gasping.

And not enough attention is given to floating. Remember to be quite limp and relaxed when floating. Become stiff, with muscles set — then down you go. Be sure to carry your head well back. If you feel your legs are going down, move your arms upwards, but don't bring them out of the water. Any part of you out of water is dead weight, dragging you down. Floating is largely confidence. Try to increase your stock of it.



Don't force a non-swimmer under water. It will make him nervous and impair his progress.

Practise opening the eyes under water. This will be good for you as a swimmer, and good for your eyes. It may seem disagreeable at first, but this feeling will quickly wear off. It is a common thing with a swimmer in difficulties to close his eyes under water. People who do so become panicky. They imagine all sorts of things—that they're drowning. They get scared, scramble around, lose their heads, raise their arms out of the water, and sink. Keep your eyes open and you will see, and you won't fear drowning.

When floating, no matter whether face downwards or on the back, how do you get to an upright position? Do you do it

quickly? If so, it is time you practised doing it slowly. Slow movements in the water are the novice's greatest safeguard. If face downwards, bend your knees and move your legs slowly until they are under you. Your head will rise, leaving your mouth clear, so that you can breathe. Be sure to keep all muscles slack. A body with slack muscles floats; with tense, set muscles it sinks.

Do you know the "dog paddle"? If not, learn it if you can really swim. It is a most useful "bathing" stroke, though, of course, you wouldn't use it in a swimming race. It is easy and restful, and you do not need an instructor. If you can float face downwards, you can dog-paddle. The stroke is just that which a dog performs when he is swimming.

With mouth just above water, move your arms forward alternately, just stabbing them into the water ahead, and then bringing them down. Keep palms down. The leg stroke is no more than a simple kick out behind. Don't let the hands or arms come out of the water at all. If you do, there will be splashing, and you will get water in the eyes. The "dog paddle" is really crawling through the water. Take in breath in gulps. Remember that when in the water air should always be taken in gulps. Never attempt to fill the lungs just as full as possible, and never breathe out all the air they contain.

Another simple trick worth practising is treading water—useful when tired and when life-saving. Keep as nearly upright in the water as possible, the water just up to your lower lip. With elbows out at sides, move hands and forearms, both arms together or alternately, with semi-circular action, in towards your body, palms down. The legs move in an ordinary slow marking-time action; but slowly, easily, and not too high.

Don't spend all day in the water, and *never* go into it shortly after a square meal. That means cramp, and cramp may mean an end to the holiday. At least one and a half hours after a meal is soon enough to go bathing.

THE END

High Days & Holidays



FOUNDERS' DAY.

THIS is the day of all the year,
Observed for generations;
It brings, to those who persevere,
Prizes and presentations.
It is, indeed, a glorious day
For studious swots and scholars;
But other fellows, sad to say,
Feel somewhat in the dolours!

The Governors arrive in force;
For hours on end they prattle,
Giving us sage advice, of course,
On how to fight life's battle.
And many a fellow nods his head,
Hearing those droning voices;
Till, when the final speech is said,
He wakes up and rejoices!

The Chairman hands the prizes out
To all the meritorious;
A mighty and stentorian shout
Greets those who are victorious.
Mark Linley, loaded to his eyes,
Comes tottering and staggering;
While Bunter, bearing one small prize,
With pompous pride is swaggering!

The rest of Founders' Day is spent
In schoolboy japes and jollities;
Cricket, and cycle rides in Kent,
Tea-fights, and such frivolities.
But swots are swotting, as before
(No time for japes or quarrels!),
To add fresh prizes to their store,
And new leaves to their laurels!

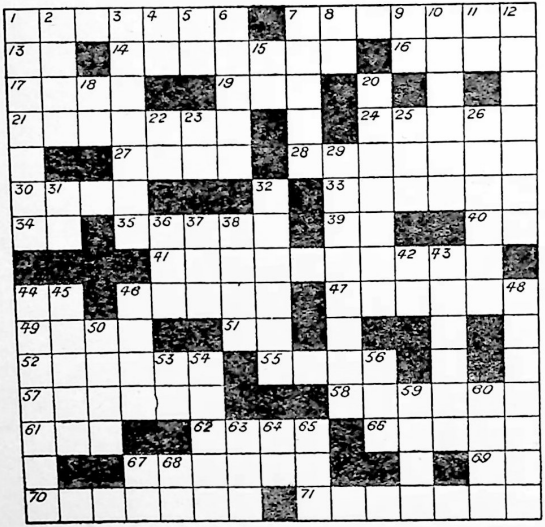
THE "HOLIDAY ANNUAL" CROSS-WORD PUZZLE.

Are you smart at doing cross-word puzzles? Yes! Well, here's one that will give you a pleasant half-hour—or longer!—in the solving of it.

CLUES.

ACROSS:

1. Popular School Captain.
7. Fattest boy at St. Jim's.
13. Hurree Singh (initials).
14. Popular Housemaster.
16. Greyfriars junior.
17. High-pitched male voice.
19. Finish.
21. Greyfriars junior.
24. To tap again.
27. Hurree Singh's nickname.
28. Kind of ball bowled in cricket (plural).
30. St. Jim's junior (New House).
33. Ferocious.
34. Point of the compass.
35. Rookwood junior.
39. Famous Victory (abbr.).
40. Same as 13 across.
41. Beams of light.
44. Tom Merry (initials).
46. To gather.
47. What a goalkeeper does.
49. Pertaining to the air.
51. Sergeant Kettle (initials).
52. St. Jim's junior.
55. Period of time.
57. Greyfriars Fifth-Former.
58. St. Jim's Form-master.
61. Local Yachting Society (abbr.).
62. Kind of ball bowled in cricket (plural).
66. Naval rank.
67. St. Jim's junior.
69. Point of the compass.
70. Fame.
71. St. Jim's junior.



DOWN:

1. Greyfriars junior.
2. Island.
3. Getting taller.
4. Automobile Association (abbr.).
5. Musical note.
6. Mournful poem.
7. Peter Todd's nickname.
8. Royal Navy (abbr.).
9. Bachelor of Medicine (abbr.).
10. Famous fat boy at Greyfriars.
11. Larry Lascelles (initials).
12. Passes away (as time).
15. Tom North (initials).
18. Tommy Dodd (initials).
20. Act of arriving.
22. Not "out."
23. Not known (abbr.).
25. To increase or lengthen.
26. One who shoots with bow and arrows.
29. A Public Officer.
31. I and others.
32. Frank Nugent's nickname.
36. Any greasy liquid.
37. Wren (curtailed).
38. Periods of time.
42. Point of the compass.
43. Boys undergoing military training.
44. St. Jim's porter.
45. St. Jim's junior.
46. Vanished.
48. Greyfriars junior.
50. Laments.
53. Dicky Nugent (initials).
54. Screams.
56. A bone.
59. Nothing (North country dialect).
60. English river.
63. Old Boys' Society (abbr.).
64. Said to a goose.
65. St. Jim's Tennis League (abbr.).
67. Tommy Cook (initials).
68. Initials of Lovell of Rookwood.

Solution is on page 278.

In "The Good Old Days."



By The Emperor's Command!

An old-time romance of the Napoleonic Wars, in which two young British officers—absent without leave from H.M.S. Bellerophon—twice find themselves face to face with death!

THE FIRST CHAPTER
Stranded!

THERE was a heavy, sullen swell rising rapidly under the influence of the coming gale. Already the wave-crests were being lashed off in clouds of stinging spindrift, and the strong tide was sweeping down the French coast off Dunkirk like a mill race. Shorewards, the glow of innumerable lights, twinkling fitfully, showed where Napoleon was encamped, with his invading army of eighty thousand men, ready to swoop down on the English. Out at sea, where the storm-clouds raced across the lowering sky, a few dancing, heaving, bright specks were faintly visible.

The lights of the British watch-dogs—the blockading fleet under Nelson and Collingwood—the one barrier which could save England from the incursion of an alien host, tireless, indomitable, grim, and war-worn, but invincible.

And between the two, almost unmanageable, staggering from wave-crest to wave-crest, swept along remorselessly by wind and tide, half full of water, was a ship's boat, a mere black speck in that wild, tumultuous waste.

There were but two men in her; one Rodney Howard, a sub-lieutenant, the other Jack Arnold, midshipman, both of his Majesty's ship Bellerophon.

They were in the last stages of exhaustion, and it seemed as though nothing short of a miracle could save them from speedy destruction.

Howard was at the oars, making desperate efforts to keep the cockleshell's head up against the sea; Arnold in the stern-sheets, bailing furiously.

"Spell O!" he shouted, in a momentary lull, having by frantic efforts got the water down to the level of the thwarts.

Howard nodded. He was too exhausted to speak. And watching their chance as

the dinghy shot down into the hollow between two big hills of water, they changed places. Arnold seized the oars, and gave a half-stroke just in time to prevent her being caught broadside on; whilst Howard, seizing the bailer with his blistered hands, started the weary task of getting rid of a fresh rush of water which had just lopped inboard.

The coast thereabouts is a particularly dangerous one, littered with sunken wrecks and shifting sands. The tides, at their strongest, become torrents of racing, boiling water as they rush over the hidden banks, and a terrific sea churns up in a short half-hour. All along, too, about a mile from the coast, lies a gigantic sand-bar, just awash. And it was on to that they were rapidly drifting, its edge gleaming in the darkness where the water broke into foaming whirlpools of surf. On the far side lay the comparatively smooth water of the "roads."

They had slipped off unobserved from the Bellerophon some four hours earlier, intent on a spree, and with the hope of getting a nearer view of the French encampment. But the sudden rising of the gale had caught them in its clutches, and return was impossible.

"We must watch our chance, and try to cross the bar," yelled Howard in the teeth of the wind. "Keep her up—keep her up hard, man!"

A gigantic wave rushed up beneath them and hurled them forward as though shot from a catapult, the water racing by on a level with either gunwale.

"The wind's still rising, and we can't last another quarter of an hour outside here."

Jack signified that he had heard; he was too breathless to be able to answer.

Rodney Howard balanced himself in a crouching attitude, and peered ahead.

"Keep her just as she is, and go easy," he cried. "We shall be among the breakers in a jiffy. When I say row, row like a madman. We must try to get over on one big wave. If we touch we're done, and it'll be Davy Jones' locker. Steady, steady! Wait till I shout."

Gripping the tiller with both hands, and leaving the bailing to look after itself, he braced himself for the final effort. Three or four small waves followed each other in quick succession, and Jack, obedient to orders, rested on his oars, contenting himself with an occasional stroke as they were swept onwards towards the ominous, gleaming line.

Rodney Howard risked a glance astern over his shoulder. A huge mountain of water, broken-crested, was coming up behind them, gathering in volume till it seemed to tower above their heads. The dinghy's stern lifted and lifted till she seemed to be trying to stand on her head.

There came a rushing, roaring swirl, and Jack heard Rodney's yell of "Row!" ring out above the din.

It was life or death! He lay on to his oars until he felt as though every sinew and muscle in his body was cracking and wrenched past endurance. On and on they rushed, borne higher and higher on the hissing crest, frantically endeavouring to keep pace lest they should be dropped on the iron-hard bank and dashed to splinters.

Already the waters were slipping from under them, and they could hear the sucking as the sands were momentarily laid bare.

There was a horrible, grinding crash, which threw them both on to the floorboards; a snapping of wood as the rudder touched for an instant, and tore away from the bolts; and the great mountain of water swept on, leaving them still afloat and under the lee of the bar. Almost sinking, it's true, but in calmer water. Bruised and sore, they recovered themselves, and bailed desperately.

The rudder was gone, one oar snapped short at the rowlock, and the timbers badly sprung in several places. But the vicious force of the waves was broken, and inside half an hour they found themselves driving through the broken water at the foot of the sand dunes.

Water-logged, and with but one remaining oar, they were helpless; but the danger was nothing compared to that outside. A wave caught them, jerked them forward as



Cautiously Rodney and Jack peered through the window into the lighted room, to see three men deep in discussion.

the boat slewed, and the next moment gripped them broadside on.

"Jump!" yelled Rodney, suiting the action to the word.

Simultaneously, they went overside just as the dinghy turned bottom up, and a last wave flung them headlong on to the shore, with the battered fragments of the dinghy between them.

Rodney was the first to pick himself up. He gave himself a shake, stretched himself cautiously to see if he was damaged anywhere, and helped Arnold to his feet.

"About as near as no matter, eh?" he bawled. "The poor old tub is done for, anyhow! Let's get out of the wind."

Painfully they toiled up the first line of sand dune, and took shelter under the far side of it.

"Well, we're in a deuce of a mess," said Jack. "We've escaped Davy Jones, it's true—I never thought we should manage the bar—but it seems to me that, having done so, we've got the alternative of being shot as spies, or spending the next few years in a vile hole of a French prison, to say

nothing of getting into the deuce's own row for absence without leave."

Rodney laughed, though his teeth were chattering with cold.

"Cheery beggar, you are! One thing at a time, my boy. We've escaped drowning so far, and we're not shot yet. You personally, I should say, will be hanged in due course; and as they don't hang officers in his Majesty's uniform, I regard the fact as a good omen."

Jack Arnold grinned.

"Uniform!" he cried. "You might pass as a tolerable second-hand scarecrow. But what's left of your rig-out isn't worth talking of. Hallo! I say, what's that solitary light over there? It doesn't look like an outpost. Maybe it's a fisherman's hut, where we could wring ourselves out. They're mostly smugglers, and don't care whether a chap's French or British so long as they get paid, and can run their cargoes of cognac and tobacco all right. Let's go and explore! We can always beat a retreat if it looks unhealthy."

Half a mile inland, straight across the dunes, they could see the faint, steady glow of a light as from a cottage window. The camp fires of the great invading host lay a good three miles away on their right.

It was probably, therefore, as Jack had suggested, an isolated hut, half fisherman's, half smuggler's, belonging to one of that class of men on either side of the Channel who cared nothing for politics, but made the most of their opportunites for running cargoes, and, for a consideration, passengers who wanted to slip into or out of France without ostentation.

They approached it carefully, their footsteps making no sound in the soft sand, though, for that matter, it was hard to hear anything above the roar of the gale.

When within about fifty yards of it, Jack caught his foot in something and stumbled heavily forward.

The obstacle proved to be the remains of an old gate. They were weaponless, barring a short service dirk apiece, and in those rough times it was best to face a stranger with something in one's hands. So, before going farther, they wrenched off a couple of broken bars, which a little whittling converted into two serviceable cudgels.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

Face to Face with Napoleon I

THEY could see clearly now that the building was indeed nothing more than a hut—timber-built and dilapidated at that. Apparently it contained but a single room, or at most a couple, and the light which they had seen proceeded from a small glazed window on the near side.

Cautiously they crept forward on tiptoe and peered in, being careful to keep as far as possible out of the direct rays of the light.

The hut was certainly a fisherman's—meagrely furnished, with a pile of disused netting in one corner, and an open hearth, on which a wood fire was blazing merrily; but equally certain was it that the present occupants were no fishermen. They were three in number, and apparently deep in discussion, though no words were audible from without.

Facing the window stood a tall, dark man in a blue-and-silver uniform, with high knee-boots and a cavalry sabre. He was talking quickly and earnestly, though with a strange air of deference, and occasionally he stopped to appeal to the second man, who also stood with his back to the fire, a sombre, drab figure with a cunning, sallow face and close-set, beady eyes. At first glance he appeared unarmed, but a telltale bulge in the breast of his tightly-buttoned coat betrayed the fact that he had a pistol concealed there.

The third figure, wrapped in a cloak, was seated with his back to the two boys, and though his face was turned from them, they could tell by an abrupt movement of his shoulders that from time to time he interrupted the speaker with short, sharp questions.

On the table at his elbow lay a litter of papers and plans, and a large scale map, which was plainly visible in the lamplight.

This map was evidently one of the main objects of the discussion, for the man had his back constantly bent over it, and now and again one or other of the two standing

figures would take a pace forward, and point to some position on it with an outstretched forefinger.

This aroused the watchers' curiosity to such an extent that, forgetful of their own danger, they became anxious to see more. Rodney Howard, too, had been eyeing the sallow-faced man closely with puzzled, puckered brows, as though making an effort to recall some half forgotten likeness or memory.

Presently he turned to Jack and whispered:

"Look here, youngster, you're the lighter, and I'm the taller of us two; just get upon my shoulders, keep out of the light as much as possible, and have a good squint at what they're up to. I'm certain I've seen that shifty-eyed brute before somewhere, but this infernal window is just too high for me to be able to get a fair look at that chart. Up with you—quietly now! Steady! That's it!"

Jack clambered nimbly up, and from his new position was able to look down on the table.

In half a second he was down again, quivering with excitement.

"By Jove, Roddy," he said hurriedly, "do you know what they're up to? It's the plan for invading England they've got there—neither more nor less! That chart is the chart of the Essex coast, and it's covered all over with notes and special markings. I couldn't read them, of course, but I could see that they were freshly done, and there are a lot of lines marked out, all leading to the flats round Mersea and the Backwater. From there to London isn't more than a couple of days' march, allowing for fighting on the way. We must get those papers somehow. I tell you, they're discussing all the details now—that's why they keep pointing and arguing."

Rodney Howard brought down his hand on the other's shoulder.

"I have it," said he. "That man, the sallow-faced brute—he's been puzzling me from the first, and now I know him. He's a spy of Boney's. When you said Essex, it gave me the clue. I was down there last autumn, and one day there was the very deuce of a row. That man—La Mole is his name—was caught sending carrier pigeons with plans and despatches. The villagers were all for stringing him up to the nearest tree, for he had always been hated by the country folk; but by bad luck he managed to escape and get clear away. I saw him on the day of his arrest. I recognise him now, and those notes on the chart are his handiwork. He knows every inch of the country and the coast."

"I wonder who the other two are?"

"Oh, hang it, it doesn't matter who they are! The thing to do is to get hold of all their papers. If we can once get them safely away, it ought to be good for promotion for both of us, and we shall upset their apple-cart into the bargain. I wish we could hear what they're saying."

"Give me a leg up again, and I'll see if I can force the window up a little with the point of my dirk."

"Right you are," said Roddy. "Only be careful."

Jack, seated astride the other's shoulders, slipped his dirk from its sheath, and gingerly inserted it in the woodwork. For a couple of minutes or so he moved it to and fro, until the sash seemed to be loosened. At last he ventured to put on a little extra pressure, using the blade as a lever.

But luck was against them, for at the very first attempt the sash gave with a loud crack, and Jack, with a cry of dismay, slipped to the ground and gripped his cudgel.

The noise had startled the three men, too. The tall, dark one whipped out his sabre, and, followed by the two others, sprang for the door of the hut.

"Quick!" yelled Rodney.

And he and Jack also raced round the angle of the building to the entrance. They reached it just as the leader of the three sprang out. He saw them, and with a shout made a vicious lunge at Jack.

The middy skipped nimbly aside, and simultaneously Roddy brought down his bludgeon full over the man's head. He dropped like a stone, and floundered face downwards in the soft sand.

From within the hut came a harsh roar like the roar of an infuriated wild beast, and the third man—he who had been seated—dashed out, slashing wildly with a slender Court sword—his only weapon. Rodney tackled him, whilst Jack rushed at the sallow-faced man, who had drawn his pistol.

Rap, smack! The cudgel rose and fell twice. The first blow caught the man on the elbow of his pistol arm, numbing it, and rendering it useless; the second fell squarely on the side of his head, and sent him sprawling. To grasp the papers and dash out the lamp was the work of an instant; but just as the light snapped out he heard a shout of amazement from Rodney. The latter, after skilfully evading the savage attack of his adversary, had just succeeded in breaking the slender blade with a sweeping blow, which caught it just above the hilt. As he did so, his adversary sprang back, and the light rested for an instant full on his face. Rodney stared open-mouthed for half a breathing space, and then set up a yell which startled Jack.

"Boney!" he cried. "By heavens, it's Boney himself!"

Jack caught one fleeting glimpse of a massive, pale, set face, distorted with passion, and the next moment the pair of them were flying over the sand dunes, with the tall, dark man, who had recovered himself, at their heels.

But they were younger and fleeter of foot, and what with the darkness of the night and the soft ground, they soon left him far behind, hampered as he was with his heavy military boots.

Still, however, they ran on for a mile or more, dazed and startled by the memory of that pale, lowering face and the fierce, keen eyes ablaze with anger, till at last they flung themselves down, breathless and exhausted.

All fear of pursuit was over for the moment, but if their position had been desperate before, they knew that it must be well-nigh hopeless when daylight should come, for without a doubt search parties would be sent out in all directions, and it would be only a matter of hours before they were discovered and dragged off ignominiously for sentence and execution.

Thoroughly knocked up by fatigue, they agreed to take it in turns to watch and sleep till the first grey of dawn. But, as a matter of fact, the momentary strain over, they were soon both of them sound asleep—the heavy, dreamless sleep of utter exhaustion.

The eastern sky was already lightening when Rodney turned uneasily, woke, stretched himself, and realised that he was sore and bone-weary from head to foot. At first he gazed round him dully, not realising where he was; then his eyes fell on Jack beside him, still sound asleep, and looking like a worn and disreputable travesty of a street arab. Recollection came back to him. He jabbed him in the ribs with his elbow and roused him.

They were both ravenously hungry and horribly stiff, but of getting food there was not a chance, and to make a move of some sort was absolutely imperative.

In an hour at most search parties would be out hunting for them.

Jack still had the papers which he had snatched from the table bundled in the breast of his shirt. They smoothed them out and carefully examined them. First of all there was the chart, with notes of depths of water at various stages of the tide; facilities for landing at the several points indicated, and other notes, presumably in La Mole's handwriting, giving estimates of fodder and supplies obtainable on landing, and defensible positions on the route to London. Other papers went into further details on this point. The whole had evidently been planned with the utmost care and foresight.

Folding them up again as neatly as they could, and in as small a compass as possible, they stowed them away in their belts, each carrying half for greater security.

The sun was just showing over the horizon now, and the long, level rays glinted on some glistening white objects five miles or more out at sea. They were the sails of the British fleet, patrolling up and down, keeping their incessant watch. The one obstacle to the carrying out of those very plans which

they had just been reading. Behind them and away to their right the smoke from thousands of camp fires was curling lazily upwards in the still morning air. The gale had died away in the night, and the sea, which falls as quickly as it gets up in those shallow waters, was calm and placid.

"Jack, old boy," said Rodney at last, "I believe I've got an idea—there's just one chance for us, and only one—and it's pretty desperate at that. Can you figure out where we piled up the old dinghy last night? I've lost my bearings."

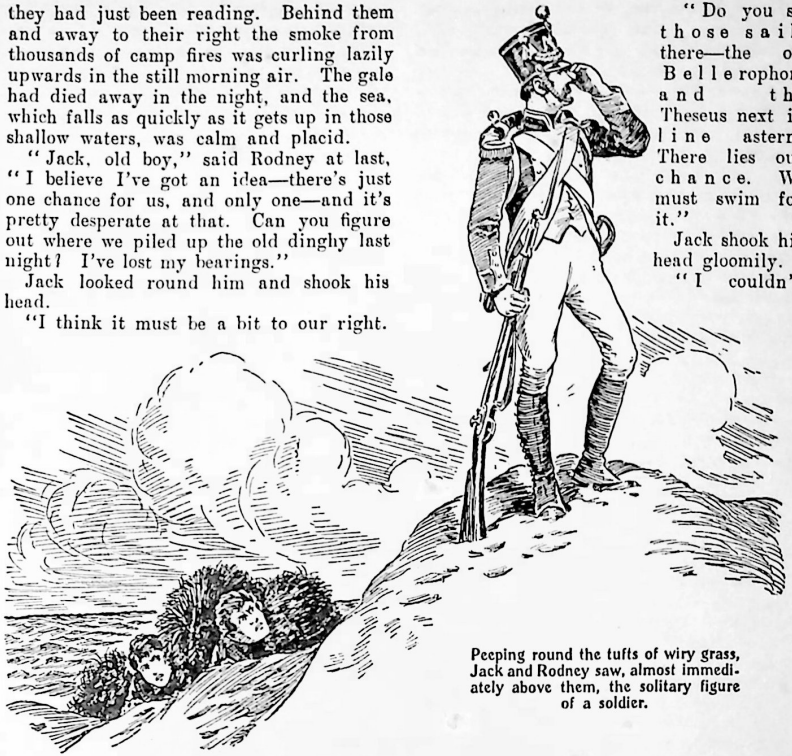
Jack looked round him and shook his head.

"I think it must be a bit to our right. Wait a minute; I'll look round."

He crawled carefully to the top of the sand dune behind them—a high one—and lay flat, looking inland, and avoiding as far as possible showing himself against the sky-line. Presently he came slithering down again.

"Yes, it must be to our right, because the hut is in that direction, and when we drifted ashore we made a pretty straight line inland. But what on earth do you want her for? She's no good. She crumpled up like an eggshell in the final smash."

Rodney pointed seaward.



Peeping round the tufts of wiry grass, Jack and Rodney saw, almost immediately above them, the solitary figure of a soldier.

"Do you see those sails there—the old Bellerophon, and the Theseus next in line astern? There lies our chance. We must swim for it."

Jack shook his head gloomily.

"I couldn't do more than half the distance," he said.

Rodney Howard glanced round and again pointed—this time to the tussocks of coarse, wiry grass, which grew all about them to a height of nearly three feet.

"See that stuff! I've been thinking. The tide just here sweeps out seawards, strongly on the ebb. That's in our favour. For it must be close on the turn now. We'll make half a dozen big bundles of that grass, and tie them up with a twist of the same stuff. It's as strong as a rope, and floats like a cork. I've seen the same dodge out in the West Indies.

"Then we'll lash these bundles to any

spare bits of timber we can wrench away from the old dinghy, and make a rough sort of raft. It'll keep us afloat for a good ten hours, and with luck we ought to get within hail of the fleet within three; if we don't, we're done. And, anyway, drowning's as clean a death as being shot by a file of beggarly froggies. What do you say?"

Jack's answer was to the point. He slipped out his dirk and began hacking at the grass tufts nearest him. In less than an hour they had six bundles compactly made, as much as they could carry between them, and were stumbling along the foreshore, looking out eagerly for the dinghy's remains.

From inland they could hear the harsh blare of the bugles sounding the "Réveillé," and the distant hum of a multitude of sounds as the great camp roused itself into another day of life.

They had gone nearly half a mile in this fashion when Rodney suddenly threw himself flat on his face, dragging Jack down with him into a shallow declivity of the sand.

"What is it?" whispered the latter.

"Peep round the edge of your bundle and you'll see; but, whatever you do, don't raise your head!"

Jack did as he was bidden, and on the top of the sandhill, almost immediately above them, he saw the solitary figure of a soldier, evidently on the look-out, and showing up clearly in the full glare of the rising sun.

He was scanning the foreshore in both directions, shading his eyes with his hand.

Presently he turned and signalled. By a lucky chance they were just out of his range of sight; another ten yards more, and it would have been impossible for him to have overlooked them. Another figure a quarter of a mile farther along replied to his signal, and both men disappeared.

"Humph!" said Roddy, rising cautiously. "They haven't lost much time, have they? So far, at any rate, our luck's in. I don't suppose they're likely to come this way again. Let's push on."

Picking up their bundles again, they went forward at a run. Their best chance now lay in speed, for the search parties having started work, sooner or later they were bound to come across their tracks.

A quarter of a mile more brought them to the wreck of the dinghy. The waves of the gale had carried her high up the beach, and left her there a battered relic.

Hacking furiously at her timbers, wrenching, tearing, and using the one remaining oar as a lever, they managed to break away half a dozen stout timbers. These they lashed together with the strong grass ropes; across them again they lashed a couple of thwarts, and finally tied on the grass bundles.

It was a sorry contrivance at best, but it served their purpose, for, having carried it down to the water's edge and waded in with it as far as they could, they found that not only would it float with the top boards high and dry, but that it would support the combined weight of the upper half of their bodies with ease. One by one they kicked off their boots, and, taking the spare oar with them to use as a paddle when they got tired of swimming, they started on their perilous journey.

The tide was just turning, but at first it was so slack as to give them little or no assistance, and for the first half-mile they seemed to be making but slow progress, swimming and pushing their raft before them.

The water was fairly warm, and, barring a slight swell, as smooth as glass; and they felt their hopes rising as they left the shore farther and farther behind.

They had covered, as nearly as they could judge, well over a mile, and the outward sweep of the tide was already bearing them along in its grip when Rodney, tired of swimming breast stroke, turned over on his back for a change. Hardly had he done so when he gave a cry of dismay. In his new position his face was naturally turned shoreward, and there, on the sandhills, in a direct line with them, stood a man, gazing intently in their direction, with his hands to his eyes. They swam on desperately, with beating hearts. At first they hoped that even if he saw the raft he might take it for merely a piece of wreckage, the result

of last night's gale. But this hope was quickly shattered. After one final look, the man suddenly raised a bugle to his lips and sounded an alarm, at the same time waving wildly to another man, invisible from their low position. The bugle-call was taken up and passed on again and again, and they realised that their last chance was slipping from them.

The fleet looked temptingly near. When they were raised momentarily on the top of a swell they fancied that they could distinguish the officers on the quarter-deck of the leading ship; but they themselves, on the water level, must seem little more than an insignificant speck, a lump of drifting seaweed.

Nevertheless, they struggled on bravely, for while there was life there was hope. Ten long minutes passed, a quarter of an hour, and, helped by the tide, they were leaving the shore farther and farther away. The sandhills began to diminish in height, when out from the mouth of the harbour shot a low, dark, swiftly moving object.

Rodney groaned.

"It's all up, Jack! The guard-boat is after us!"

Like some great water insect, the boat swept out in chase, six oars aside, and pulling strongly.

The boys swam with the energy of despair, but the guard-boat travelled ten yards to their one.

They could see the officer in the stern, standing up and urging on his men, swaying forward at every stroke. Soon they could see the faces of the crew, and the white swirl of water under the boat's forefoot.

"No good, Roddy!" gasped Jack. "I'm about done. Let's ease up and save our breath. We'll make a fight for it yet! I've got my dirk free. Put yours on the raft handy. Hallo!"

Boom!

At last the fleet had perceived that something out of the ordinary was happening. The Bellerophon had luffed up into the wind, and fired a signal gun. They could see a billowy cloud of white smoke shoot out from her side. In a twinkling a couple of boats were manned, armed, and lowered away.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Roddy excitedly, raising himself breast-high on the raft. "They've seen us, and they've seen the guard-boat. It's a race! They guess it's prisoners escaping!"

It was a race indeed, but a hopeless one. The guard-boat was barely a quarter of a mile away, the English boats nearer three. The ship's crews pulled like demons, but the handicap was too great.

There was a swirling rush as the guard-boat came sweeping down on them on the top of a swell, and the men backed on their oars.

The two boys, with their dirks in their hands, hacked desperately at their assailants; but a huge French sailor in the bows armed with a boathook soon knocked the weapons out of their hands.

A rap apiece on the head to quiet them, and they were hauled ignominiously overside, too exhausted to show further fight.

The boat turned rapidly, and to save time a rope was made fast to the small raft, and it was towed astern, to be searched later.

The English boats, seeing that further pursuit was useless, gave up the attempt.

THE THIRD CHAPTER
At the Eleventh Hour!

THE quayside was crowded as the guard-boat swept into the narrow entrance with its prisoners—a curious medley of uniforms, chasseurs, guardsmen from the line regiments—all eager to see the two mad Englishmen who had made such a desperate venture.

At the steps the two boys were bundled out, a soldier on either side, and marched off to the open square. Behind them came a couple of sailors, carrying their raft.

On the far side of the square stood the Hôtel de Ville, part of which had been temporarily turned into a gaol.

And into this they were unceremoniously bundled. Their cell was barely twelve feet square, and had a small barred window giving on to a courtyard at the back of the building.

A couple of bundles of straw, a piece of black, coarse bread, and a jug of water were handed to them by the gaoler; the door shut on them with a clang, they heard the grating of the heavy lock, and then, chilled and soaked through as they were, they flung themselves down on the straw and slept the sleep of utter exhaustion.

It was long past noon when Roddy recovered his senses. He was stiff and worn, but refreshed by his long sleep, and famishing with hunger. Eagerly he seized the black bread, and, tearing it in half, began to devour it ravenously. Having finished his share and taken a long pull at the water-jug, he shook Jack into wakefulness; and, having watched him start to his scanty fare, began to walk about and stretch his limbs. Almost his first act was to go over to the window and examine the bar and the outlook. The bar itself was of half-inch iron, embedded at either end in a socket of cement, and divided the narrow window exactly in two from top to bottom.

Beyond lay an empty, paved courtyard, and beyond that again a low wall—that was the extent of his field of view. His dagger had been knocked out of his hand when the guard-boat caught them, but he still had in his pocket a small marlinspike, and with this he made one or two tentative picks at the cement.

In a second he was back, whispering excitedly to Jack.

"Look here," said he. "I believe we can get out of this infernal place all right if they'll only leave us alone long enough. You keep a look-out by the door, and if you hear anyone coming, cough. The cement in which that bar is set is as old as the hills, and cracked all over the place. We'll take it in turns."

"Right you are," whispered Jack, and Roddy darted back and set to work.

The cement, though old, was harder than he had bargained for in places, and at the end of half an hour his hands were so sore that he was compelled to rest for a bit and give up his place to Jack. The sun was well below the horizon by now, but the bar was loosening fast, and by their combined efforts they were able to shift it perceptibly.

Spell and spell about they worked. From the camp far off they could hear the bugles sounding "Lights out." Roddy gave a frantic heave at the bar; there was a crack, a trickle of falling fragments of cement, and the lower end shifted clear of its socket.

The other was comparatively a simple matter. A few minutes of tugging and straining, and the leverage of the iron itself did the rest. It came away with a jerk, and, slipping through their blistered fingers, fell with a clang on to the courtyard pavement, some eight feet below.

They held their breaths in suspense. Should anyone have heard, or should a passing sentry chance to see the thing, all their work would have been in vain.

They lay down on the straw, listening intently. A minute—five minutes—passed, yet no sound came, either from the corridor or from the courtyard.

"It's now or never," said Roddy. "Up with you, Jack!"

But Jack hung back.

"You first," he replied. "I can slip through as easy as winking, but I fancy your shoulders are a bit broad, and you'll need coaxing through, just like a tailor man trying to stuff you into a new uniform without splitting the sleeves."

"Right you are, then," said Roddy. "You stuff me through legs first, then I can catch you outside. Here goes! Give me a leg up."

He wriggled first one leg, then the other into the narrow opening, and using Jack as a support, squeezed himself through as far as the elbows. Then came the real difficulty.

"I'll manage all right," he panted. "but it's a deuce of a tight fit! Shove old man! Never mind a bit of skin or so! That's it! She's coming——"

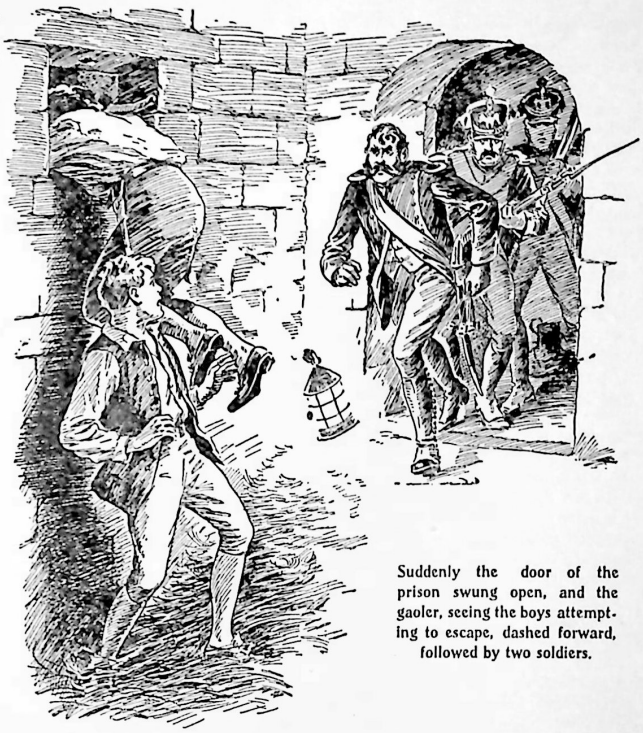
Clang! The great lock on the door shot back, there was a flash of yellow light from a horn lantern, and the gaoler appeared with a couple of soldiers, bringing them their evening meal.

For a moment he was too startled to grasp the situation. Then, as it suddenly dawned

on him, he rushed forward, followed by the soldiers. Jack was thrown violently into a corner, and Roddy dragged inwards again with a jerk which nearly dislocated his arms.

Then, supperless, and without any further talk, they were flung into separate dark cells and the bolts shot home.

"You will be tried and sentenced at nine to-morrow morning," growled the gaoler's gruff voice from the corridor, and they were left to console themselves as best they could.



Suddenly the door of the prison swung open, and the gaoler, seeing the boys attempting to escape, dashed forward, followed by two soldiers.

At nine sharp they were led once more into the square, where stands the statue to Jean Bart.

Here they found, sitting in front of a tall building which was apparently a temporary court-house, a stern-faced officer of high rank, surrounded by a group of aides-de-camp and despatch-riders.

He glanced up at them from beneath his heavy, lowering brows, and waved the soldiers back.

"Humph! Englishmen—spies!" he growled. "What have you to say for yourselves?"

"We are not spies," said Roddy fearlessly. "We are officers in his Majesty's Navy, and claim to be treated as such. Our ship is the Bellerophon, out yonder. We were blown ashore in a small boat during last night's gale, and were endeavouring to get back when your guard-boat caught us."

"Bah! Spies, I tell you. I know. We have had many such gentry to deal with, and we don't waste time on them. You will be hanged at sunset!"

"We are not spies," cried Roddy, "but if die we must, at least let it be a gentleman's death!"

"Very well," said the officer. "You will be shot at sunset, and——"

He stopped suddenly, drew himself erect, and his hand flew to his helmet. A curious

silence seemed to have suddenly pervaded the group around him and the soldiers near by. Each man stood stiffly at the salute as if turned to bronze.

The two boys, wondering, turned their heads to see the cause. A small group of men were just passing along the square. There were some half-dozen officers in brilliant uniforms of all colours and descriptions, who were conversing amongst themselves in low tones, and in the midst of them was the tall, dark man whom the boys had seen in the hut the night before.

He started slightly at the sight of them; but they had no eyes for him. All their attention was taken up by the solitary figure which walked ahead of the group. And then they understood the hush and the general sense of uneasiness, and knew that they were in the presence of the most amazing man the world perhaps has ever seen.

A pale, brooding, colourless face—a little, round-shouldered figure in a green coat with red collar and cuffs—small, well-shaped legs in tight white breeches—a slim Court sword, with a gilt hilt and a tortoiseshell scabbard at his side—a tricolour rosette in his hat. That was Napoleon as they saw him—Emperor of the French, and ruler of half Europe.

His thin hair was of a dull, reddish brown, his face inscrutable, his eyes naturally pale, but darkening when he was wrapt in thought—inexorable as Fate itself.

He paced slowly along, his eyes fixed on the ground a few yards ahead of him, neither noticing nor heeding the salutes of those about him.

Suddenly, when he was almost opposite the boys, he looked up and saw them, and came across to Rodney and Howard.

"So," said the Emperor, "it was you, was it? And you would have got away on that thing?" He pointed to the raft, then went on: "Well, and what do they say of me over there?"—with a nod across the water. "Do they look for my coming, eh?"

"They say you cannot, sire," replied Rodney, "so long as we hold the sea."

"Ah, they say that, do they?" he smiled, and pinched the boy's ear, a favourite trick of his when he was pleased. "Bah! I could land a hundred thousand men! I should fight a battle which would cost me twenty thousand men, and on the third day I should be in London. We shall see! Colonel Gervaise, has sentence been passed?"

"The prisoners were condemned to be hanged, sire, at sunset," replied a light cavalry officer, saluting.

"What did they say?"

"They asked to be shot instead, sire, on the grounds that they were officers in the British Navy."

"Ta-ta-ta!" said the Emperor, tapping his snuff-box with an impatient gesture. "I do not kill children! Look you here, young gentlemen! You are brave, and I like brave men and brave actions. Tell them that, over there. Admiral Bruix, how many men have you who would go to sea on that, eh?" And he tapped the raft again with his riding-switch.

"Morlaix, see that a boat is got ready for them, and let them return to their ship."

The tall, dark man took a pace forward, and murmured in the Emperor's ear.

Napoleon shrugged his shoulders.

"Bah! Plans! I have others—thousands of others—here!" And he touched his forehead; then, turning once more to the boys, he glanced at them with a glimmer of a smile. "Gentlemen, you are free!"

The two bowed and saluted. The next instant he had turned his back on them and was moving forward with his little, quick, nervous step, twitching his right arm, and wrapped in some vast new scheme.

It was the last they saw of him. The boat was in readiness—all the Emperor's orders, down to the veriest detail, were obeyed with lightning speed and exactitude—and in a couple of hours Roddy and Jack were clambering up the Bellerophon's side.

There they handed over the water-stained plans to the captain, and, after an official reprimand for absence without leave, were warmly complimented unofficially and thanked for their services.

THE END

KNOCKOUTS—£5 Each!

by Gordon Wallace



"Slosher" Pringle—pugilist—has good cause to remember the night Bob Evans accepts his boxing challenge, for it leads to circumstances which cost him dearly!

THE FIRST CHAPTER
The "Slosher" Gets Sloshed!

"WHY don't you have a go at him?" asked Jack Chivers.

"D'you think I'd put up much of a show against him?" asked his pal, Bob Evans. "He's a bit slick with his hands."

"So are you," said Jack. "And there's a couple of quid in it if you can stand up against him for three rounds."

Jack Chivers and Bob Evans were sitting in the gallery of the Palace Music Hall, at Southtown. It was Saturday night, and the first performance was in progress. Down on the stage, a lightweight boxer was challenging the audience, through his "manager." The man or boy who could stand up against "Slosher" Pringle for three rounds would get two one-pound notes.

"Seein' it's Saturday night, genel'men," said Pringle's manager, coming closer to the edge of the stage, "I'll go one better, and make it five pounds to anybody who can knock out the Slosher. I'm gettin' reckless, you see, because we've only got one more appearance to make in this town, and there's been nobody come up yet who can stand up to the Slosher. Now, genel'men, who's goin' to try his skill and pluck against the Slosher?"

Nobody in the auditorium seemed keen to try. The Slosher had been there, twice a night, all the week, and several of the young sports of Southtown had tried—with results disastrous to themselves. Perhaps there were no more sportsmen left in the town. The manager gave a wide grin, and turned to the Slosher, who was a tough-looking customer, who had made a bit of a name for himself in boxing circles, but who certainly had never yet won championship honours.

"All right, then, Slosher," he said. "We'll have to do a bit of exhibition boxing. Half a minute, and I'll strip."

"I'll take him on!" cried a youthful voice in the gallery just then, and for the life of him Bob Evans could never understand how he had managed to conquer his shyness and take up the gauntlet cast down.

But he had, and his face turned red as

he heard those near him in the gallery chuckle among themselves, and saw them staring at him and nudging each other.

"You will? Give your name, sir," said the Slosher's manager, who was also his sparring partner apparently. "Wot name, sir?"

Bob shouted his name down to the stage.

"I'll come along and see fair play," said Jack Chivers, rising to his feet.

They both left the gallery, and, after descending many stairs and working their way through many passages, found themselves at length behind the scenes at the back of the stage.

"I 'ope you're insured!" said the manager, when, blushing like a schoolboy and grinning rather sheepishly, Bob stepped into the limelight.

His appearance was greeted by many cheers, whistles, and other noises of an encouraging nature.

"Never mind whether I'm insured," said Bob. "I'm ready to box him. You'll pay up five pounds if I knock him out?"

"Yes," said the manager, with a wide grin. "We will—won't we, Slosher?"

"Yes; but we won't pay no funeral expenses if I knock 'im out," said the Slosher, with a wider grin, and looked round the audience for the applause he thought this bit of humour deserved. "Is yer ma willin'——"

"Get on with it!" cried the noisier element of the audience. "Don't try to be funny, Slosher! Give the lad a chance!"

That fetched out more applause than the Slosher's witticism, and the boxer frowned with displeasure as he heard it.

"Right you are, then," he said savagely. "When you're ready, kid. But don't say I didn't warn you!"

Bob went behind the scenes again, and returned a few moments later, stripped to the singlet and shorts he was wearing. When he reappeared, he got another "hand" of applause, for he looked, though very young, a remarkably healthy and well-built youngster. He was a tall boy for his age, and he carried himself well. He had a bright, quick eye, and those who knew him also knew that he was a clever chap with his hands. He did not belong to Southtown, but lived in a village some five miles out. Weldale Village knew what Bob could do with the gloves, and as there were several Weldale people there that night, he got a considerable amount of encouragement.

"Ready?" asked the manager, who also appointed himself referee and timekeeper. "Then—time!"

The Slosher was angry at what the audience had said to him; also, he had had an easy week at Southtown, and was a bit contemptuous of the boxing ability of this town. So he did not waste any time about it. He just sailed in, head low, hands well forward, and an ugly grin on his battered face.

"Where will yer have it?" he asked Bob.

"Where you like," answered Bob, dodging back smartly.

A moment later, they were mixed up in a proper whirlwind of fighting.

The Slosher repeatedly hit out with all his force and skill. Each blow, however, missed its mark, for Bob was nimble on his feet, and kept himself well covered. The Slosher bored in closer. He made the greatest mistake of his life, for suddenly Bob stopped his dodging, his left arm stiffened, and there was a sound something like a pistol-shot. The audience gasped. The Slosher's head went back with a jerk, his knees gave way under him, and he crashed on his back to the stage, where he lay still, while his manager stared down at him blankly.

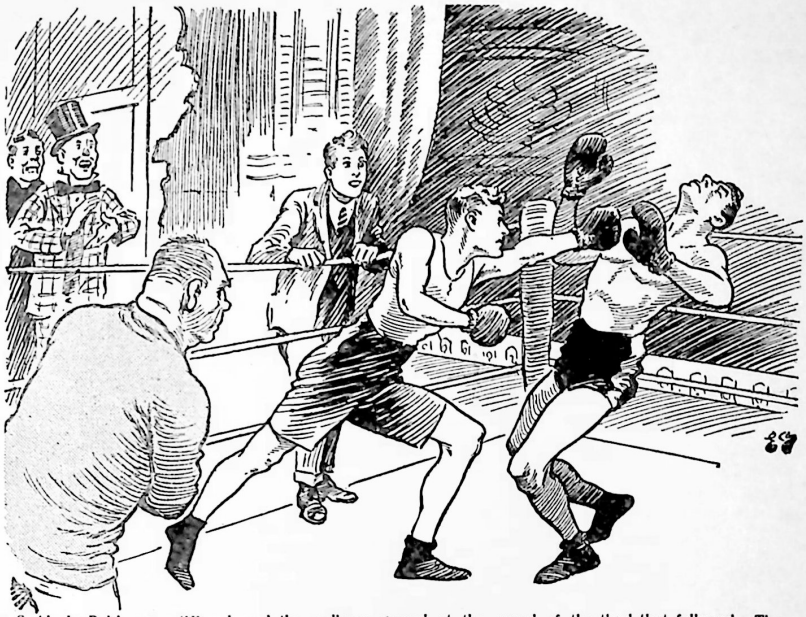
"Count!" shouted the excited audience, rising in their seats.

The manager had to count, the while he watched the Slosher, who lay there, and did not seem to show the slightest sign of rising to his feet. He counted as slowly as he could, but even then, as Bob stood over the boxer, the manager reached ten while still the Slosher lay there, eyes closed.

"He's done it!" roared the delighted audience. "Well done, lad! He's won his five pounds, never mind two!"

"But it wasn't fair!" shouted the manager. "Here, Slosher, get up, man!"

He placed his hands under the pro's arms and jerked him to a sitting position.



Suddenly Bob's arm stiffened, and the audience gasped at the sound of the thud that followed. The Slosher's head went back with a jerk, his knees gave way under him, and he crashed to the stage and lay still, clean knocked out.

The Slosher's head lolled wearily, his eyes rolled when he opened them, and his jaw hung slack.

"Yes, it was fair! Dub up the fiver!" cried Jack Chivers, fairly dancing about on the stage, to the amusement of the rest of the "house." "He's won it fairly. Pay up, and look pleasant!"

With the Slosher propped against his knee, the boxer's manager tried to argue the point further. He claimed that Bob had won by a foul. But the manager of the Palace came on to the stage then. That gentleman had the reputation of his hall to think about.

"You'll have to pay the boy," said the music-hall manager. "It was a fair knock-out, Binks. Pay up, or the audience will be getting out of hand. See them!"

Indeed, the patrons of the establishment were looking displeased with this turn of events, and were showing their displeasure in a very marked fashion.

"Oh, all right!" said Binks, and produced five dirty one-pound notes from his pocket.

These he threw at Bob's feet; but the music-hall manager, being a gentleman, picked them up, smoothed them out, and handed them with a bow to the astonished Bob.

"You have won them, sir, and with credit," he said. "Several local boxers have tried against the Slosher, but none of them did near so well as you. Now, curtain!"

Bob Evans was still a little dazed with his good fortune. He knew he had done

nothing foul, but he could hardly believe that he had knocked the Slosher out so easily. In the wings, though, he recovered himself, and was congratulated by many of the "turns," who were wishful to shake the victor's hand, having seen the short and decisive encounter.

"Give me your name, lad," said a light comedian, pumping the boy's hand up and down. "And your address. I'm pleased to meet you. I'm an American, and I know a boxer when I see one. Gosh! I wish you'd teach me that punch!"

Bob gave the comedian—who was billed as Clarence Laxton—his name and address, but was glad to get away from it all and out into the street. There several of the audience closed around him, also to congratulate him. But Bob and Jack jumped on to a bus bound for their home village, and when they were seated Bob gave a sigh of relief.

"Phew!" he said. "I never thought I'd get so much excitement when I paid my sixpence to go into the Palace!"

"Nor did I." said Jack Chivers. "Well, and what are you going to do with the fiver? We were wishing we had some spare cash, weren't we?"

"Yes," said Bob; "but we thought we wouldn't have enough. Now, by Jove, we've got enough to pay Mrs. Biddle's rent, haven't we? We'll have a few bob left over, too."

"Mean to say you'll pay all the rent she owes?" asked Jack. "It's four pounds fifteen."

"I'll pay the lot," said Bob. "Why not? She's a decent old lady is Mrs. Biddle. She must be worried to death to think that if she doesn't pay up by Tuesday she'll have the brokers in, who'll take most of her sticks, and then put her out of the cottage as well. Yes, I'll pay her rent."

They arrived at Weldale in due course, and on alighting from the bus they went straight to a little, shabby cottage, situated on the very outskirts. There the chums found an old woman, sitting huddled up over an empty grate. This was Mrs. Biddle.

"Hallo, ma'am!" said Jack. "We've brought you good news."

"I'm glad to hear that, laddie," said Mrs. Biddle. She looked very old and very weary just then. "I haven't heard any good news for a long while. This time next week I'll be in the workhouse, because the landlord won't give me time to pay the rent out of my bit of a pension."

Bob thrust his five one-pound notes into Mrs. Biddle's hand hurriedly.

"There you are, ma'am," he said. "It was easily earned."

She stared at the money, as well she might. Then she stared at the boy who had given it to her.

"If you can change one of the notes, I'll keep five shillings," said Bob shyly. "It was got honestly, ma'am, and if I hadn't won it, I shouldn't have missed it. You need it more than I do."

"Bless the dear boy!" cried Mrs. Biddle, tears coming into her eyes. "Whoever would have thought this! If only my grandson had remembered his old grandmother, living here alone, you'd never have needed to be so generous. But I'll pay you back, bit by bit, my boy. Praise be, I shan't have to go to the workhouse just yet!"

Bob was embarrassed by the old lady's gratitude, so he moved towards the door.

"Good luck!" he cried, and then bolted out of the cottage, Jack following him.

"I'll bring your five shillings to your house when I've got change," Mrs. Biddle called after him. "Bless you, you kind boy!"

"Phew!" said Bob, more composed outside. "That was a harder job than knocking out the Slosher! Well, I don't mind boxing if I can do a bit of good by it. Come on, Jack, and let's have some supper at our house."

THE SECOND CHAPTER

Twice Knocked Out!

THINGS went on in their old humdrum way for Bob Evans and Jack Chivers following the eventful Saturday night. Life in a country village is never very thrilling for youngsters of their stamp. They did their work, and they got what fun

there was to be got out of their lives. The two chums had forgotten the affair at the Southtown Palace three weeks after they had paid Mrs. Biddle's rent. Mrs. Biddle did not have to go to the workhouse, though they knew she was very poor, and they wondered how long it would be before she was in difficulties again, for her pension was very small.

Once they had helped her, they found themselves very interested in her affairs.

"That grandson of hers," said Jack, one Saturday afternoon—"I think he ought to be boiled alive, leaving her to struggle on like this! If I only knew where to find him, I believe I'd go and make him do something to keep his grandmother from want."

"But as we don't know where he is, or what he's doing," returned Bob, "what's the good?"

"He has a good job, I believe, though," insisted Jack. "She says he has, anyway. But he's always moving about the country, by all accounts. Hallo! Who's this?"

They were talking outside the garden gate of Jack's home. As Bob broke off, a motorcycle came up to them and stopped. From it alighted a young man whom both boys seemed to remember.

"'Afternoon," said the new arrival. "Don't believe you remember me, do you? But I remember you, Bob Evans! I'm Clarence Laxton, the light comedian. I was playing at the Palace in Southtown the week you knocked the Slosher out in less than a minute."

"So you are," said Bob. "Pleased to meet you! How's things going with you? Where are you showing this week?"

Laxton named a town some forty miles from Southtown. He was a very young comedian, and the boys remembered that he was rather good in his line of business. But they wondered what he had come to Weldale for.

"The Slosher is with me again this week," said Laxton. "And he is as full of brag as ever. He still offers five pounds to any local boxer who can knock him out, and two to those who can stand up to him for three rounds."

"Is he losing his money?" asked Jack, with a grin.

"No, he isn't," said Laxton, "because all the fellows who go up against him are so nervous that they can't do anything with him. But what I came to see you about is this: his manager always says, in the jawing he does before the turn, that five pounds were paid to you—and he names you—because you knocked the Slosher out by accident. Pringle's manager says that he'd pay another five pounds gladly if you would try to knock him out again. He says that, of course, because he's sure that it will never get to your ears."

"He's a long way off," said Bob, with a shrug, "and whatever he says can't do me any harm."

"The Slosher's a dirty no-sport!" said Laxton heatedly. "Well, I've come to you with an idea. "As it is Saturday night, Binks will make the same offer; so why don't you come along with me and take Pringle on again, and win another fiver?"

Bob laughed.

"Why," he said, "the chances are he'd keep his money this time. And another thing, he might see me in the audience, and not mention my name while I was there."

"I'll disguise you," said Laxton. "I can give you carroty hair and make up your face. You can accept his challenge in another name, and just before the fight you can take your disguise off. Then he'll have to fight, and if you use that same punch again, I guess you can win his money once more. You could do with it?"

"I can do with lots of money," said Bob thoughtfully, with poor Mrs. Biddle in his mind.

"Mrs. Biddle, a poor woman who lives here," Jack added, "got all his last fiver, because she——"

"Shut up!" said Bob quickly; but Laxton lifted his eyebrows in question.

"Biddle?" he repeated. "Why, I guess I do know one thing! Slosher Pringle's real name isn't Pringle; it's Biddle. I've heard him say so once or twice. Now, that's——"

"By gum!" cried Jack; and, without a

word, he left the other two, running at full speed towards the other end of the village.

In a few minutes he was back again, breathless, but with something in his hand, which was a shabby, old-fashioned photograph album.

Jack's eyes were shining, and his face was one wide grin. He opened the album, and shoved it into Bob's hands.

"I went to Mrs. Biddle's cottage," he panted, "and asked her if her grandson was a professional boxer. She said she didn't know. I asked her if she had a photograph of him, and she had. It's there, and, by Jove, it's Slosher Pringle all right!"

All three looked at the photograph in the album. Certainly they looked down at the pictured face of the Slosher.

"So that's what her grandson's doing, is it?" said Bob. "Touring about the country, getting a fine salary for doing nothing but show off with the gloves, and offering fivers to those who can beat him. Well, a few of his fivers would do his grandmother a bit of good. Mr. Laxton, I'm going to do what you suggested. It will be no end of a joke, to make him keep his grandmother by being knocked out!"

The idea tickled Jack and Laxton as well. They both roared with laughter. Then, after a bit more discussion, they set off on Laxton's motor-cycle for the town where the Slosher was appearing. It was a tight fit for three on the one machine, but it was managed, and they got to Slumpton in good time for the first house.

Before they took their seats in the pit, however, Laxton spent a few minutes in his dressing-room with Bob and Jack. Bob's hair was usually quite dark, and his face was brown. When Laxton had finished with him, his hair was a flaming red, and his face was sallow, though considerably freckled. Thus disguised, Bob, with his pal, took his seat in the pit, and waited for the show to start.

There were two others who tried their luck with the Slosher before Bob stood up and accepted the challenge; but these two were poor boxers, and they gave it up at the end of the first round. The Slosher began to beam. The audience was considerably impressed by his skill, and listened to everything the Slosher's manager had to say. At length the latter came forward to the footlights again, and addressed the audience.

"Any more?" he asked. "I remember, three weeks ago, when we were at Southtown, a boy took the Slosher on—a lad called Bob Evans. And that lad, by the greatest fluke, knocked the Slosher out. But the Slosher was a sportsman, and paid up. Now, the one dream of the Slosher's life is to have another go at that boy, and when we go to Southtown again he might realise it. In the meantime, will somebody else try conclusions with the Slosher? Two pounds to the lad as can stand up to him for three rounds, and, bein' Saturday night, five pounds to the bonny boy who can knock the Slosher out!"

"Right you are!" called Bob Evans shrilly.

"Come this way, sir," said the manager, peering into the auditorium. "Step this way! Glad to see somebody has the nerve!"

Laxton had disguised Jack Chivers a bit, too, so that, when both boys stepped on to the stage, neither the Slosher nor his manager had the slightest reason to believe they had seen them before.

The Slosher's manager tried to be funny again, in the same old way, and the Slosher made his feeble joke once more about Bob's funeral expenses being no responsibility of his, which Bob listened to, and then shrugged resignedly.

"Ready?" asked the boxer's manager again, when Bob had stripped once more to singlet and trousers—long trousers this time, and not the shorts he had worn previously. "Is yer will made?"

"Yes," said Bob, with a grin, "and I've left all my money to an old lady whose grandson won't support her!"

He did not look at the Slosher as he said it, but he was sure he saw the Slosher start on hearing the words. But the audience thought it as fine a joke as any they had heard in the house that night, and guffawed loudly.



Before Bob and Jack took their seats in the theatre, Laxton disguised them. Bob was given flaming red hair and a pale, freckled complexion, and Jack was also made to look slightly different. The Slosher would not recognise them when Bob accepted his fight challenge !

Then the call "Time!" was given, and, his gloves well fitted to his hands, Bob stepped forward to meet the redoubtable Slosher for the second time in his young life.

Bob was no fool. He did not imagine for an instant that because he had once had a swift victory over the Slosher he was going to find things as easy again. Defeated champions often meet their victors again and regain their laurels. So Bob went in carefully, and when the Slosher, anxious as usual, to end the affair as quickly as possible, aimed a terrific left-hander at him, he just ducked it, and sent a left-hander of his own drumming into the Slosher's ribs. The blow sounded as though somebody had kicked a drum, and several people among the audience gave out gasps quite as loud as the gasp emitted by the Slosher.

"Ugh!" grunted the Slosher. "Fancy yourself, don't you?"

"Not much," retorted Bob, and twisted his head sideways as his adversary's glove came for his face, and the blow passed harmlessly over his shoulder. "Like that?"

It was another thud in the ribs, and it made the Slosher very savage—so savage that he came in to clinch. But Bob ducked under, then straightened himself up

suddenly, with his right arm bent and stiff.

Thud!

Bob's glove had connected with the Slosher's jaw—a fearful crack that was heard all over the house. Once more the Slosher's neck was cricked; once more his head flew back, his eyes rolled up, and his knees gave way from under him.

"Well, I'm hanged!" yelled the Slosher's manager as the boxer lay his full length on the boards of the stage. "He's outed again!"

"Count!" shouted the audience, thrilling with excitement. For this was the very least they had expected to see. That a slip of a lad like Bob Evans should have put the swaggerer out in the first round amazed them even more than the fact had amazed the Southtown audience three weeks before. "Count!"

The Slosher's manager could do nothing else. Again he counted, slowly, uneasily, scanning the face of the Slosher anxiously as he did so. But the Slosher never moved. He just lay there, his eyes closed, and breathing stertorously.

"Seven!" called the Slosher's manager. "Eight—nine—out!"

The Slosher's eyelids flickered. He sat up stupidly, rubbing his jaw. He stared with fishy eyes at the boy who had put him down for the count. Then his eyes brightened, and he tried to rise to his feet. For Bob was doing something rather peculiar. In full view of the audience, the lad had pulled off his carroty wig, and was wiping the grease-paint off his face.

"What — say — who — why——" the Slosher began, while his manager stared with opened mouth at the grinning youngster. The audience, too, was very amused at this transformation.

"Who're you?" gasped the Slosher's manager.

"I'm Bob Evans, the fellow who knocked out the Slosher three weeks ago, of course," said Bob, so clearly that his voice carried to every ear in the big theatre. "What were you saying about me before the fight started? What—— No, you don't!"

The house went almost frantic with

In The Year 1540

EVERY age has its inventor, and almost every school its inventive genius. Thus St. Jim's was not behind the times when Septimus Thompson Gajett, a born inventor, came to the famous Sussex school in the year 1540.

Septimus Thompson was a pioneer of aeronautics, and many were the weird and fanciful structures of bamboo and canvas designed by his hands to support a human body in mid-air.

At first Septimus was regarded by his schoolfellows as being a fit inmate for a lunatic asylum. But the day dawned when, having completed in secret a glider, he announced his intention of launching himself upon it from the summit of Windmill Hill. Quite a crowd of Shell and Fourth-Formers elected to sally forth from the school to see Septimus Thompson Gajett break his neck. On the summit of Windmill Hill the youthful inventor, with a confidence that none could help but admire, launched himself into space. Then began a thrilling and never-to-be-forgotten glide to earth. With every passing second the flimsy 'plane wobbled and dived precariously, and by a miracle, it seemed Septimus kept control.

The terrified watchers were gaping silently skywards when into their line of vision suddenly flashed the glinting form of a golden eagle! The monarch of the air bore down on this strange trespasser, ready to engage in a battle to the death. Situated as he was, Septimus was practically helpless, but his luck held good. The glider, gathering impetus, charged full tilt into the eagle and hurled it earthwards, breaking its neck in the process. Septimus, having lost all control of his glider, turned turtle, and also crashed to earth on his back. Eager hands went to his rescue and hauled him clear of the tangle of wreckage. Then a cheer rose skywards, but Septimus was beyond hearing it, having fainted clean away. From that day onwards, however, St. Jim's ceased to laugh at their inventor.

THE END



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EAGLE v. GLIDER!

excitement then, for the Slosher, with a wolf-like howl, had come to his feet, and, all science thrown to the winds, he hurled himself at the youngster who had humbled him twice. His gloves swung like the sails of a windmill, and he snarled like a wild beast. The Slosher had completely lost his temper, though Bob kept his.

"Look out what you're doing, Slosher!" shouted Bob, not a bit scared by this evidence of his rage. "Or else—— Hold that, then!"

The audience went hysterical with excitement, for Bob stiffened that terrible left of his, and it connected. Once again the Slosher's head went back. For the second time that evening he was knocked out, and this time so thoroughly that several of the male turns waiting in the wings, including Clarence Laxton, came on, picked him up, and carried him off.

"Five quid, please!" said Bob coolly, addressing the Slosher's manager. "Pay up!"

"It wasn't a square fight——" the manager began.

"My pal knocked him out twice," said Jack Chivers, to the amusement of the delirious audience, "so he ought to charge you ten pounds. But we'll let you off with five. Pay up!"

"Yes, pay up! Keep your bargain!" shouted voices in the auditorium.

Again five one-pound notes were handed over to Bob, who took them, and considered he had earned them. Then he bowed to the audience, and walked off the stage, while the band gave him an admiring farewell chord.

In the wings, the artistes were crowded about the Slosher, who sat on a chair, still looking groggy.

"I wouldn't have fought you if I'd knowed who you were!" muttered the Slosher.

"Well, see here, Slosher," said Bob. "What's to stop me coming along to where you are every week and getting a fiver out of you—eh? I could do, you know. You'd have to take me on or lose the money if I offered to fight you."

"And I could disguise him so's you'd never know him," Laxton put in, with a grin.

The Slosher began to look scared, and eyed his manager.

"He'd ruin you if he did," said the Slosher's manager glumly. "You know the contract, Slosher? It'll last another three months yet. I'd buy the kid off if I were you."

"How—how much'll you take to keep away from where I am in future?" asked the Slosher.

"A pound a week, to be paid every Saturday morning to your grandmother, at Weldale," said Bob promptly. "You see, Slosher, I know all about you. You haven't given your grandmother a cent since she came to live in our village, and she needs help. I gave her that last fiver I won from you, and I'm going to give her half of this. But you'll have to send her a pound a week regularly from now on, or else——" He paused.

"Or else what?" asked the Slosher sullenly. He did not deny that he had a grandmother at Weldale, everybody noticed.

"Or else," said Bob, with a laugh, "every Saturday morning she doesn't get the quid I'll come along to where you are, and make a fiver out of you! Is that clear?"

"And I'll see the boy knows where you are each week," Laxton put in.

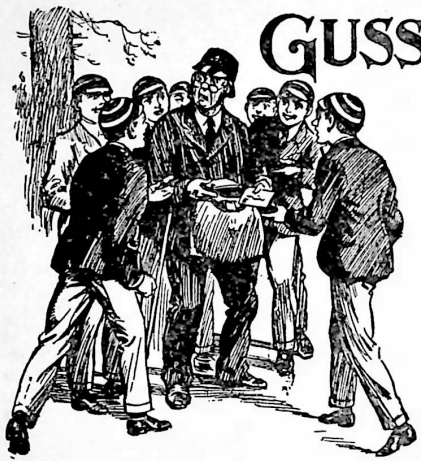
The Slosher thought about it. But he saw there was determination in Bob's face. He also knew the terms of his contract. He was, for another three months, at least, to do this act for the variety syndicate who employed him. It was quite within Bob's power to make his salary look small.

"I'll send my grandmother a quid a week, reg'lar," said the Slosher, at length. "Darn yer!"

"And remember what I promise. I'll take your word for it," said Bob.

From that time the Slosher sent his grandmother one pound every week. Mrs. Biddle has never been able to account for the sudden generosity of her grandson. Bob and Jack do not think it necessary to put her wise.

THE END.



GUSSY'S "TENNAH"!

by

George Herries

(*of the St. Jim's Fourth Form*).

Gussy's weird diction has always been the cause of much laughter at St. Jim's, but in this short, humorous story it is the cause of a big disappointment!

"I AM expectin' a tennah, deah boys!"

"Oh, good!"

Blake and Dig and myself brightened up considerably as the one and only Arthur Augustus made that welcome announcement.

Funds were low in Study No. 6. Even Gussy, for once in a way, was reduced to the unpleasant condition of being stony-broke. The news that a tenner was in the offing came as music to our ears.

"A tenner, eh?" remarked Jack Blake, with satisfaction. "Well, that's something like!"

"Welcome as the flowers in May!" said Dig enthusiastically.

"Bai Jove! I'm glad you're pleased, deah boys!" beamed Gus. "I thought pewwaps you might object!"

"Did you, though?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The idea of objecting to Gussy's receiving a tenner struck us as funny. We roared.

"When's the tenner coming, anyway?" I asked anxiously. "Before tea-time, I hope!"

"Yaas, wathah! At thwee o'clock, as a mattah of fact, deah boy!"

"Good egg!"

Three o'clock, as we all knew, was the time of the second postal delivery at St. Jim's. We concluded that Gussy had very good reason for believing that the cash would be forthcoming by that post.

"Well, it's half-past two now," said Blake, consulting his watch. "I suggest we go down to the gates and wait."

"What-ho!"

"Vewy well, deah boys! I must wemark, it is a gweat pleasuah to me to see how you are backin' me up on this occasion."

We grinned amiably at what we took to be Gussy's facetiousness, and, linking arms with him, sallied forth into the Fourth passage, en route for the School gates.

On the way we were joined by quite a crowd of chaps with nothing better to do.

Tom Merry, and Manners, and Lowther met us in the Hall.

"Hallo! Hallo! Why the serene smiles?" asked Tom.

"Gussy's expecting a tenner," explained Blake. "We're going along to help him wait at the gates until the tenner arrives!"

"Oh!"

"Can't we all join in this good thing?" grinned Lowther. "I've never seen a real tenner yet!"

"Well, you can come along if you want

to. It's a free country!" replied Blake.

So the Terrible Three brought up the rear.

Hammond, Kerruish, and Julian were sunning themselves on the School House steps as we quitted the House.

"What's on? A rag?" asked Hammond, with interest.

"No fear! We're all going down to the gates to wait for Gussy's tenner to turn up!"

"Aha! I scent a Form feed!" said Hammond. "Coming along, chaps?"

"Rather!" responded Kerruish and Julian promptly.

And the trio from No. 5 cheerfully fell in.

Several more swelled the throng before we got down to the gates. By the time we had reached Taggles' lodge, we were quite a little army.

"Ten to three!" remarked Blake, again consulting his watch.

"He'll be along any minute now," I said, with satisfaction, referring, of course, to Bloggs, the postman.

"Yaas, wathah! We shan't have long to wait, deah boys. All the same, it is vewy decent of you to take such an intewest in the mattah. I hardly anticipated that you would support me in such a gwatifyin' mannah."

Blake and Dig and I looked at one another rather blankly. Considering the fact that we had all been suffering from an acute shortage of cash for several days, it didn't strike us as at all strange that we should support the member of our Co. who was expecting a tenner. For a moment we hardly knew what to make of Gussy's remark.

But the explanation soon followed.

While we wondered, two figures appeared round the corner of Rylcombe Lane. One was a young chap not much older than ourselves, whom we recognised as Throstle, an obscure member of Rylcombe Grammar School. The other was Bloggs, the postman.

"Here he comes!" murmured Dig.

"Bai Jove, he is pwompt to time, deah boys!"

In the usual way we should certainly have been more keen on ragging the Grammar School merchant than on talking to Bloggs But for once in a way we ignored the approach of one of our rivals, and concentrated on the postman instead.

"Trot it out, Bloggs!"

"Letter for D'Arcy, please!"

We fairly surrounded old Bloggs, and bombarded him with demands for Gussy's letter as he hobbled up to the gates.

Meanwhile, strange to say, Gussy, paying no heed to Bloggs, had advanced to meet Throstle, of the Grammar School, and was shaking him by the hand.

"'Arf a minute, young gentlemen!" protested Bloggs. "Wot I say is——"

"No gassing, Bloggs! We want Gussy's letter!"

"Oh, rather!"

"That's all very well, young gents, but——"

"Don't argue, Bloggy! Shell out!"

"Hand it over, there's a good chap!"

Bloggs held up his hand to still the storm, and our chorus died down a little.

"Young gents," said Bloggs, "if you'll allow me to speak, I was goin' to tell you that there ain't a letter for Master D'Arcy!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Where's Gussy?"

In utter dismay, we turned round to our noble colleague.

"Heah I am, deah boys!" said Gussy serenely, leading by the arm the somewhat scared-looking Throstle. "What's wrong?"

"The tenner hasn't arrived!" breathed Digby, in anguished accents.

"Bai Jove! I assuah you, Dig, you are uttahly mistaken. The tennah I was wefewwin' to is heah."

"Here?" we all asked, in unison.

"Wight heah, deah boys! Allow me to intwoduce you to Mistah Thwostle, of the Gwammah School."

"But—but——"

We gazed in astonishment at the Grammarian.

"But you don't mean to tell us that this chap brought the tenner along with him?" roared Blake.

" Certainly not, Blake! Whatevah put such a queeah ideah into your head? Mistah Thwostle *is* the tennah!"

We looked at each other helplessly.

" Are you potty, Gus, or are we?" asked Dig. " Let's get it quite clear now. You say Throstle actually *is* the tenner. Is that it?"

" Pwecisely, deah boy. If you took any intewest in local musical affaihs, you would be awah that Mistah Thwostle is vewy well known locally as a pwomisin' tenah."

" M-m-musical circles?"

" Oh, my hat!"



Arm in arm with Gussy we marched down the School House steps towards the gates, eager to see the arrival of the "tennah."

" Of course!"

" He means tenor!"

" Tenor—not tenner!"

" Oh dear!"

We almost wept with disappointment.

Arthur Augustus fixed his monocle in his eye and regarded us in surprise.

" Gweat Scott! I twust you were not undah any misappwehension, deah boys! It certainly didn't occur to me that you would misintewpwet my wemark. Mistah Thwostle has vewy kindlay come to give me a singin' lesson this aftahnoon. He is the tenah I wefewwed to. Tenah, you know—not tennah!"

" Great pip!"

Blake and Dig and I felt quite limp. But Tom Merry and the others saw the funny side of it. They yelled.

" Ha, ha, ha!"

" Now, deah boys, I twust you will do everythin' in your powah to make Mistah Thwostle feel at home," said Gus genially. " Pewwaps you would like to twot up to the music-woom and heah me pwactise!"

" Ha, ha, ha!"

We did not reply to the invitation. We hadn't the heart even to bump the swell of the Fourth.

THE END

BOOKS OF THE YEAR

Reviewed by Our Literary Critic, "SQUIFF."

GREYFRIARS continues to hold the reputation of being the most literary school in England. The Head still writes critical essays on Sophocles and other classical johnnies; Mr. Quelch still accumulates data for his monumental "History of Greyfriars"; and Dick Nugent—— But you are all too familiar with his thrilling yarns to need my comments on them!

I have been asked to review the most recent works of the lesser-known literary lights of the school. Not one of the works in question has been published yet, but the budding authors responsible for them are full of hope.



"The great grizzly-bear was upon me. I fired—and missed! I felt the savage brute's hot breath on me, and I thought that my last moment had come."

How to Develop a Graceful Figger.
By W. G. Bunter.

The author of this remarkable pamphlet has some startling and original suggestions to make regarding "figger" development. He pours scorn on the food faddists who advocate a fruit diet as an aid to a beautiful "figger."

"Eat plenty of pork-pies, sos sidge-rolls, doe-nuts, and plum-cake, and drink plenty of jinjer-pop," he remarks. "Then you'll get a graceful figger—like me."

The pamphlet concludes on a somewhat sad note. It seems that, having acquired a graceful "figger," one has to put up with a terrible amount of "jellusy" from the skinny beasts in the same Form. The spelling is somewhat peculiar in places, and we conclude that the author is a member of the Simplified Spelling Society.

How to Run a Public School.
By Horace Coker (Fifth Form).

This illuminating book explains precisely how a public school should be run. Mr. Coker, in his own inimitable style, gives some pointed advice to headmasters, masters, prefects, and common

or garden schoolboys. Book I. is devoted to "The Dewties of a Master," Book II. deals with "Prefects and their Privviledges," and Book III. winds up the programme with "The Treatment of Faggs." Mr. Coker enlarges a great deal on the advantages of having in the Fifth Form of every public school a fine all-round scholar and athlete, who can be the pivot around which the school activities revolve.

This super-schoolboy should be a champion cricketer, footballer, boxer, swimmer, and gymnast, and should possess, in addition, an attractive personality and sterling character. To have made his meaning quite clear, the author should have explained that his super-schoolboy should also wear size ten in boots, have a face like a squashed dough-nut, and possess the name of Coker—then everybody would have understood what he was really getting at!

Big Game Hunting in the Rockies.
By Paul Prout, M.A.

To be quite frank, this massive work bored us to tears. Mr. Prout may have been successful with the big game, but we're afraid he'll never be successful with the writing game! We are even left with a doubt about his success in the realm of hunting. The nearest approach we get to a thrill occurs in the following passage:

"The great grizzly-bear was upon me. I fired—and missed! I felt the savage brute's hot breath on me, and I thought that my last moment had come. To my surprise, however, the monster did not tear me limb from limb. He merely put his great paw in my pocket and abstracted therefrom a bag of currant-buns, which he began to munch with evident relish. It turned out that he had only just escaped from a zoo."

Mr. Prout's book is certainly a disappointment. However, we must grin and bear it, so to speak!

The Esteemed Grammartulness of the August English Language.
By Hurree Singh.

We are reluctant to offer any criticism on this startling new volume on the English language. The book is divided into two sections—"The Esteemed Spellfulness" and "The Correctful Construction of a Ridiculous Sentence." The style of the work may be judged by the following extracts:

"A noun is the wordful description of that which contains somethingfulness, e.g., stitch-in-timefulness, or anxiousnessfulness.

"Active verbs are words denoting esteemed and august activity, e.g., to career runfully, to leap jumpfully, or to chuckle laughfully."

Might we suggest that the book be dedicated to the esteemed and ludicrous Moonshee at whose feet Inky imbibed the knowledgefulness that enabled him to compose writefully this august and terrific volume!

The Life of a Fly.
By Alonzo Theophilus Todd.

This bulky tome of six hundred pages has taken the author three years to write; it has taken his reviewers exactly three minutes to scan, using the word in its modern sense. For sheer boredom we strongly recommend this book, which deals, with uncommon sympathy, with the life of a fly from the time it spots a tasty bit of jam or a succulent knob of sugar to the time it settles on a harmless mortal's nose, and eventually gets "swatted." The author is convinced that the fly is very badly done by. He urges mankind to suffer the fly gladly—to make a real pal of the beastly thing, in fact. (There are still many lunatics outside asylums.) Sprinkled throughout this volume are pathetic little verses, of which the following is an example:

"Oh, little fly that homeward wends its way,
Weary and worn at close of summer's day;
We wonder what the morrow holds in store.
Will you escape the fate you did before,
Or will some brutal mortal lift his knife
And ruthlessly destroy your simple life?"

'Sawful, isn't it? Space dose not permit of our dwelling any longer on the merits—if any—of this charming work, but we honestly think it should share the same fate as the fly that got "swatted."

The MUMMY Mystery!



A PLAY IN VERSE for AMATEUR ACTORS

CHARACTERS

Billy Bunter — The Fat Boy of Greyfriars.

Harry Wharton
Bob Cherry
Frank Nugent
Johnny Bull
Hurree Singh
— The Famous Five of Greyfriars.

Dame Mimble ..... The Proprietress of the Tuckshop.

Doctor Pinner..... Who is taking the place of Doctor Locke. He is a keen Egyptologist.



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 HOLIDAY ANNUAL" appear on each programme.

ACT I.

SCENE.—*The Greyfriars Tuck-shop.*
(HURREE SINGH, JOHNNY BULL, FRANK NUGENT, HARRY WHARTON, *and* BILLY BUNTER *are sitting round the counter*).

BUNTER :
Since Doctor Locke was taken ill
And had to go away,
At eating I have lost my skill.
(*Turning to counter sharply.*)
Dame Mimble, hurry, pray.
Six large-sized doughnuts,
if you please;
For goodness' sake now,
hurry!
And then some tarts with
lemon cheese,
Just put it down to
Hurree.

HURREE :
I thought your pigfulness
was spent,
Since sickfully the Doctor
went.

NUGENT :
Nothing will make that
oyster stop.

BULL :
Until at last he goes off
pop!

BUNTER :
Oh, really, chaps, you're
most unkind,
As well as being rather
blind.
'Twould only take a bat to see
There's nothing hardly left of me.
I've only had a dozen buns,
Such silly little measly ones——

NUGENT :
And almond slices quite a score,
With pies a dozen quite—or more.
(BOB CHERRY *appears in the doorway, unnoticed at first.*)

CHERRY :
Now cease this greedy tale of tuck,
For listen, you chaps, we're in luck.

HURREE :
Cough up, my lad, your newsfulness,
And we will give our viewsfulness.
What's all this gayfulness about?

WHARTON :
Yes, what has happened now, old scout?

CHERRY :
You know this chap who's come to stay
As Head, while Doctor Locke's away?
Well, he's as keen as mustard on
Old things that long have passed and
gone.

NUGENT :
On Sphinxes he's a perfect nut,
And knows a heap about King Tut.



BUNTER : Six large-sized doughnuts, if you please ; For goodness' sake now, hurry !

WHARTON :
He even tries to teach the kids
To hanker after pyramids.

BUNTER :
But why make all this silly fuss?
What's all this got to do with us?

BULL (*grinning*) :
Now, Bunter, you can just keep quiet.
Remember, you are on strict diet
To make you grow a trifle thinner.
(*Turns to Cherry.*)
But tell us now of Doctor Pinner.

CHERRY :
Well, listen now to what I say,
His blessed mummy's come to-day!

WHARTON :
Most riddles I can quickly guess,
But this has got me, I'll confess.

So come, my lad, and tell us, do.
Who has arrived.

ALL :

Yes, tell us who.

CHERRY :

I've told you once: the Doctor's mummy!

BULL :

The doctor's what? Oh, don't be funny!

NUGENT :

She must be pretty old, I guess.
The Doc. is ninety—nothing less!
A century plus quite a score—
At least. Though p'r'aps she's rather more!

CHERRY :

A little more she is, old dears,
For she has seen four thousand years.

HURREE :

You've had the sun's most hotful touch.
How can his mother be as much?

CHERRY :

To save you lots of mental bother,
I said his MUMMY, not his MOTHER!
A thing from Egypt, don't you know,
Where pyramids and sphinxes grow.

WHARTON :

But why's he brought his mummy here?
Your explanation is not clear.

CHERRY :

For goodness' sake just stop complaining.
I haven't started yet explaining.

HURREE :

Then break your newsfulness, dear Cherry.
You make us curious.

NUGENT :

Yes, very.

CHERRY (*smiling*) :

Well, listen, chaps, and pay great heed.
Some bright suggestions I will need.
Now, Doctor Pinner, very brightly——

BUNTER (*interrupting*) :

He gets a great idea twice nightly!

CHERRY (*withering* BUNTER *with a look, so that the fat junior turns once more to the tuck before him*) :

Has thought to gain himself a name,
And on Greyfriars bring great fame,



BOB CHERRY (appearing in the doorway of the tuck-shop). Now cease this greedy tale of tuck,
For listen, you chaps, we're in luck.

By making this old mummy walk,
And—what is more—sit up and talk!

BULL :

Ease up! Go slowly! Careful, lad!
I fear you are a little mad.
You're talking such a lot of rot——

CHERRY :

Believe me, Johnny, I am not!
But listen, what I'm telling you
Is absolutely, really true!
Old Doctor Pinner, as you've found,
For great ideas is quite renowned,
And now it is his firm intent
To make a great experiment.
With coils and wire, and things electric,
He's going to do a deed most hectic.
A lease of life he's going to give
To Mummy dear, and make it live!

NUGENT :

I've heard that such things have been done,
But not at Greyfriars, my son.

CHERRY :

But Pinner says he has a plan
To bring to life this long-dead man.



DAME MIMBLE (shaking her finger): I'd like to hear just what you say.
I fear a trick you're going to play.

And, what is more, he asks that we
This great experiment shall see.

BUNTER (*fearfully*):
Then let us stop him! This is bad.
We don't know what that mummy had!
He might have had come dread disease
Like mumps, or fever.

WHARTON (*grinning*):
Housemaid's knees!

BUNTER (*reprovingly*):
This is no time for joke or jest,
And really, chaps, I think it best
To stop this ere it goes too far.
You know what Eastern fevers are.
And yet old Pinner calmly brings
A mummy, full of germs and things;
And, what is more, decides that he
Shall come to life and stay to tea!
This is a really filthy trick,
And one which is a bit too thick.

WHARTON:
There's something in what Bunter's said.

CHERRY:
But all the germs would be stone dead.
You surely don't suppose that they
Have lived right to the present day?

HURREE:
The rightfulness of that idea
Just proves that there is naught to fear.

BUNTER (*still looking decidedly worried*):
I'm sure your parents will agree
In this big matter quite with me;
And I maintain I won't be there
While germs are filling up the air.
If you chaps feel there's naught to fear,
Then off you go! But leave me here!

CHERRY:
Oh, no, my Billy; no such luck.
You'll not get left with all the tuck.
The bright idea I have in mind
Includes a chap like you, I find.

BUNTER (*protesting*):
But, Cherry, you have heard me mention
Of joining in I've no intention.

CHERRY:
But let me point this out to you:
I've quite arranged what you shall do!

WHARTON:
Oh, leave him out of it a mo.
We haven't heard your plan, you know.

NUGENT:
And we are quite agog to see
What great amusement there can be
In doing things to some old mummy.

BULL:
The whole thing seems a trifle rummy.

CHERRY:
Well, just to show there's naught to fear,
At once I'll make it really clear,
You needn't fear disease and things
From hidden germs with little wings,
Because—now listen, one and all—
That mummy won't be dead at all!
(*This is to be said triumphantly.*)

WHARTON:
You mean to say it's still alive?

CHERRY (*laughing heartily*):

I thought that in that pit you'd dive!
But no, you're wrong again, old son.
That mummy is a dummy one!

NUGENT:

Oh, that's a rather beastly blow!
But tell us, Cherry, how'd you know?

CHERRY:

As I helped Pinner cart the case
Upstairs to some convenient place,
A printed mark I chanced to see,
Which means 'twas made in Germany.
The poor old Doc. was so much smitten
That he has been quite badly bitten.
He's certain that the thing is real,
And soon will walk, and talk, and feel.

HURREE:

A lightfulness has pierced my skull,
And lightened things which once were dull.
A jokefulness we're going to play
On Dr. Pinner's mummy, eh?

CHERRY:

Yes, Inky, you've the right idea.
I'll now proceed to make it clear.
We'll open the sarcophagus——

BULL:

I say, explain that word to us!

CHERRY:

Don't you know, you foolish mutt,
That that's the case in which it's shut?
And now that I've explained, perhaps
I can continue—can't I, chaps?

(*He looks round, and they all nod, while* DAME MIMBLE, *in the background with her knitting, shakes a finger at him.*)

DAME:

I'd like to hear just what you say.
I fear a trick you're going to play.
But please don't upset anyone.

BULL:

Oh, no, dear Dame, 'tis all in fun.

CHERRY:

Then we'll see the mummy, bound
In yards of bandages all round.
When these are taken off, I lay
We'll find the mummy stuffed with hay.
But one of us shall take its place,
With lovely, cocoa-tinted face,
And then old Doctor Pinner will
Get such a thrilling, first-class thrill
When he comes in at half-past five
And starts to make the thing alive.
We'll all be there to see the deed,
For he's convinced that he'll succeed
With all the batteries he's bought——

NUGENT:

My word, I'll laugh to see him caught!

BULL:

A lesson then he'll learn, you see,
To look things over carefully.

WHARTON:

It's quite this term's most brilliant plan.

DAME:

But please don't harm the gentleman.

BULL:

Let's go at once. Why, this is funny!

BUNTER:

But who is going to be the mummy?

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE.—*The Laboratory.*

(*On a bench in the middle of the room lies the sarcophagus, a huge, coffin-like thing, painted in a dull grey, with faint markings of red and blue, as if it had at one time*



BUNTER (struggling and protesting): Cherry, when I get a chance,
I'll lead you such an awful dance!

been painted, but that the colour had worn off with years. The boys are all standing eagerly round it, except BUNTER, *who is just inside the door, looking very scared, and seeming as if every moment he will depart hurriedly.*)

CHERRY :

Now come in, Bunter. Shut the door.

BULL :

Hurry, chaps; it's half-past four.

NUGENT :

Good gracious, Bunter! What's the matter?



Looking slightly bewildered Bunter was led by Wharton from the laboratory, while the others commenced work on the mummy.

You look just like a half-cooked batter.

BUNTER :

I—er—think perhaps I'd better go.

(*Looks round for an excuse, then adds brightly*) :

I've got some work to do, you know!

WHARTON :

Just hark at that! Upon my word,
That's just the richest joke I've heard!

CHERRY :

You needn't make that wild excuse.
Because it's not the slightest use!
We've picked on you to be the mummy
(*Hisses this at* BUNTER) :
Because you've got the fattest tummy!

BUNTER (*shrieking out in alarm*) :

Oh, no, Bob Cherry; no, you don't!
I simply can't! I really won't!
My hat, if mother only knew
This dreadful thing you're going to do,
She'd have the police upon you!
There!
You'd get locked up, I do declare!

(*As* WHARTON *grabs hold of his arm, and laughingly beckons the others to come and help*) :

Harry Wharton, do get away!
I want to leave this place, I say!
Cherry, when I get a chance,
I'll lead you such an awful dance.
You'll wish—— Oh, Bull, just drop my arm!

(*They hold him more tightly than ever, and drag him away from the door, shrieking and fighting, though quite powerless in their grip.*)

You're doing me some frightful harm!

CHERRY :

Now, listen what I've got to say;
Some luck's about to come your way.
We're going to open up this mummy.
And you are going to act the dummy!

BUNTER :

I really can't! Yaroop! Ow-wow!
I must be going—honest, now!

CHERRY :

Now don't talk rot, Young Skeleton!
Let's set to work, and get it done.
And if you do, we've all agreed

To stand you such a topping feed
You'll really wish that every day

NUGENT :

This little part you'd have to play.

BULL :

This is quite a stroke of luck.

BUNTER (*slightly mollified and ready to listen*) :

And will I really get the tuck?

CHERRY :

On that I'll stake my Sunday hat.

BUNTER :

Oh, good! I'll shake your fist on that!

(*They shake hands to seal the bargain.*)

CHERRY (*eagerly*) :

The wisest words I've heard you utter.

(*Turning to* BULL.) :

Now run and get some nice fresh butter,
And cocoa, too. Here's half-a-crown.
We'll need a lot to make him brown.

WHARTON (*as* BULL *goes off*) :

Now, Bunter, come along with me.
Your clothes must all come off, you see,
Or else you won't look like a mummy.

(*To the others*) :

You others, just undress the dummy.

(WHARTON *goes off, leading* BUNTER, *looking slightly bewildered, by the hand. At once the others start to undo the sarcophagus, then they lift out the mummy, which is made of hay-bags, wrapped in many yards of dirty linen bandages. They lay the mummy on the floor, and start pulling off the wrappings, rolling them as they do so. There is a great deal of laughter and talking among themselves.*)

CHERRY :

The poor old Doc. was properly done!
Say, chaps, this is the ace of fun!

(BULL *returns with a great slab of butter and a bag of cocoa. Then* WHARTON *enters with* BUNTER, *the latter in a pair of shorts and white singlet*).

WHARTON :

I've brought what soon will prove to be
The liveliest corpse you e'er did see.
(*Laughter.*)

CHERRY :

And now to make him nice and brown!
Come on, Bunter, just lie down.

(BUNTER *lies down, and amid great laughter they cover his face, hands, and feet with the butter and cocoa.*)

BUNTER (*spluttering*) :

Oh, stop! I say, 'tis really awful!

BULL :

If you *will* talk, you'll get a jawful!

NUGENT :

And now to wrap him round and round!

HURREE :

He'll look so realful, I'll be bound.

(*They start wrapping* BUNTER *in the bandages, the fat boy kicking and struggling, while they administer taps and digs to keep him quiet*).



BUNTER (kicking and struggling in the bandages) : Oh, please don't put me underneath! I really cannot see to breathe!

BUNTER :

Oh, please don't put me underneath!
I really cannot see to breathe.

CHERRY :

Shurrup! At last the job is done,
And we're prepared to see the fun.

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE.—*The Laboratory.*

(BUNTER *has been put in the sarcophagus,*

and the boys have arranged all sorts of batteries and electric apparatus made from cardboard all round. They are now standing about, waiting for the arrival of DOCTOR PINNER.)

CHERRY :

Oh, hush, and cease that awful row!

(*Leaning over the sarcophagus and hissing at* BUNTER) :

Here comes the giddy doctor now!

(*The door opens, and a shuffling, blue-spectacled figure enters. He has piles of heavy books under one arm, and carries yards of wire and other electrical apparatus with him.*)



DR. PINNER : Ah, boys, I'm glad to see you waiting.
This mighty moment contemplating.

DR. PINNER :

Ah, boys, I'm glad to see you waiting,
This mighty moment contemplating.

NUGENT :

Our eyes are eager and intent
To see your great experiment.

DR. PINNER (*who has set down the books, and is now fumbling with a huge battery in the vicinity of the open sarcophagus*) :

This battery of power terrific
And gravity that's past specific,
With such a current is endowed
That it could spifflicate a crowd,
Will give new life to that still mummy!

(*He points to the sarcophagus, then turns away, and* BUNTER *tries to get up, but the others hold him down.*)

BUNTER :

He's going to do me in! Oh, lummy!

CHERRY :

For goodness' sake just hold your noise!
'Twas disconnected by the boys.

DR. PINNER :

Ten thousand volts is rather strong.
But then it won't take half so long
As using power that's rather less.

BULL (*whispering to* NUGENT) :

Old Bunter's in a frightful mess!
I tried and tried, and can't detect
Just where you have to disconnect.

HURREE :

The matter seems extremely brightful!

BUNTER (*as* CHERRY *gives him a sly dig to push him down*) :

I say, don't be so beastly spiteful!

DR. PINNER (*rubbing his hands and jigging about excitedly as a strange, whirring sound is heard*) :

Oh, boys, our mighty moment's come!
The apparatus starts to hum!

BUNTER :

Gerrough! Gug-gug! I'm feeling sick!
Wow! Take these wrappings off me quick!

CHERRY :

For heaven's sake just keep quite still!

BUNTER :

Mum-mum! I'm feeling very ill!

(*Every time the* DOCTOR *turns to his electrical apparatus* BUNTER *rises up in the middle, and the others keep shoving him down again.*)

WHARTON :

But, Doctor Pinner, can you prove
That this dead thing will speak or move?

BUNTER (*in a gasping whisper*) :

A minute more and I'll be dead!

CHERRY (*poking him again*) :

Shurrup, you ass, and keep your head!

DR. PINNER (*pulling the boys round the mummy*) :

I'm sure the thing is moving, boys!

(*There is a terrible banging and clattering of machinery and whirring and rattling.*)

NUGENT :

Good gracious! What's that awful noise?

DR. PINNER :

The voltage has just moved along
To something like ten thousand strong!
And soon we'll hear this body talk,
And then, perchance, 'twill rise and walk.

CHERRY (*aside*) :

Just hold old Bunter down, someone,
Or else he'll bunk and spoil the fun.

(WHARTON *places his hand over* BUNTER'S *face, smearing the cocoa up his nose as he does so.*)



BUNTER (in a gasping whisper) : A minute more and I'll be dead!
CHERRY (pushing him down) : Shurrup, you ass, and keep your head!

DR. PINNER :

Silence! Hark! Life is coming through!

BUNTER (*loudly*) :

Yaroop! TISHOO! TISHOO! TISSHOO!

DR. PINNER (*tearing at the wrappings round the "mummy," and almost weeping with rage and fury at being taken in*) :

I've been bamboozled, made a fool!
Alas, how could you be so cruel!



WHARTON : We played no greater trick than they
Who made you buy this load of hay!

(BUNTER *sits up, rubbing his eyes free from the cocoa.*)

This is a wicked, sinful hoax!
How can you play such unkind jokes?
I'll have you all expelled! I'll see
You play no more such japes on me!
I'll have you thrashed, severely caned,
And then you'll see what fun you've gained
By playing such an awful jest.

(*The doctor is dancing round and round, raging with anger, flinging his fists about, tearing his hair, shaking the boys as he comes near each one, and lunging out at* BUNTER, *who has crawled from the sarcophagus and is trying to disentangle himself from the wrappings, which are causing him to fall over at every step.*)

CHERRY (*taking the doctor's arm gently*) :

Excuse me, sir, I think it best
If you will just pay heed to me;
I'll make the whole thing clear, you see.

DR. PINNER :

Your explanation I won't hear!

BULL :

But, sir, 'twill make the matter clear.

(WHARTON *goes to the cupboard and drags out the hay-stuffed mummy, taking it over*

to the doctor, who gazes at it sadly.)

WHARTON :

We played no greater trick than they
Who made you buy this load of hay !
You've certainly been duped. But we
Are not the only culprits, see !

CHERRY :

A much worse trick on you was played ;
In Germany this thing was made.



The Doctor shook his fists in anger, while Bunter tried to disentangle himself from the wrappings.

DR. PINNER (*sadly*) :

Alas, my plan has gone awry !
A sadder, wiser man am I.
But, boys, a favour now I beg,
And promise you'll not pull my leg.
If to *your* mummies you are writing.

BULL :

To tell them all the news exciting.

DR. PINNER :

Please do not make me look a dummy
By mentioning the " Doctor's Mummy."

CHERRY :

In us, dear Doctor, you can trust.

BUNTER :

We'll keep quite mum, or else go bust !
But now I've done my skilful deed,
Come, let us buy that promised feed.
Jam-tarts, and buns, and sweetmeats, too.

CHERRY :

Let's hasten to the tuck-shop, do !

(*All exeunt, helping* BUNTER, *who is still swathed in the mummy wrappings.* DOCTOR *goes last, shaking his head sadly.*)

CURTAIN

Make-Up Hints For Amateur Actors

FIRST smear the face with a little coconut butter and rub it into the skin. This will facilitate the even " spreading " of the grease paint, which should be worked freely over the face with the tips of the fingers. Then pencil in the eyebrows with a black or brown " liner." Finally, " powder off " with a pad or powder-puff, taking care to use plenty of powder to avoid smudging.

TO remove grease paint, rub a little coconut butter over the skin, and then wipe off vigorously with a towel. When the grease paint has been removed, wash in warm water and dry off with a towel.



Have you ever sat back in your chair, dozed off, and lived again the happy moments of your last summer holiday? Here the Holiday Annual artist has caught the usually energetic Johnny Bull taking "forty winks" and dreaming vividly of the holidays of the past.

ABSURD!

By MONTY LOWTHER.

(The humorist of the Shell Form at St. Jim's.)

I RECENTLY attended the Impromptu Evening of the St. Jim's Senior Debating Society, and I must say it was good fun. Mind you, as a rule, I'm not at all keen on debating.

You all know the usual musty old public school debating club, arguing solemnly and at great length on such piffling propositions as: "That the popularity of vegetarianism is in direct ratio to the inability of the nation to appreciate the spirit of pragmatism," and so on.

Nobody understands what is being talked about, least of all the speakers themselves; but everybody feels very chirpy about being so clever, and they all admire one another fearfully.

Well, anyway, the impromptu evening I attended was as different from that as french chalk is from gorgonzola. The idea was for each speaker to draw his subject out of a hat, and speak on it immediately. I can assure you, it *was* funny. Kildare's face, when he found he had to move the proposition: "That I am a silly ass," was a sight for gods, men, and little fishes. And Knox, who likes a little puff now and again, speaking on the subject: "That the manufacture of cigarettes should be forbidden," fairly brought the house down.

Personally, I think it would be very instructive for some of us to trot round now and again and address societies whose aims we weren't a bit interested in. It would be not only instructive, but amusing as well. I've just been imagining one or two possibilities. No need to tell me they're absurd. I know they're absurd. But, taken in small doses, you may think they're entertaining.



"Regarded from the viewpoint of a determinist, cricket is the inevitable outcome of a civilisation based on the rapacity of the idle rich."—Herbert Skimpole.

The Head Addresses the Annual Meeting of a Hopscotch Club.

"Fellow-members, nothing could give me greater pleasure than to preside at this unique function. As Cicero observed some little time ago: 'Dulce est presidere at Hops Cots Cluborum.' To hop is the noblest and most ancient form of exercise. Cæsar hopped into Gaul; Hannibal hopped over the Alps; Alexander sighed for fresh worlds to hop over. The classics teem with references to hops. Pray do not misunderstand me!

"And the latter syllable of the word—Scotch. A wonderful race, the Scotch. At least, when the words first went round that the streets of London were paved with gold, they all began to run a wonderful race. The main roads from the North have echoed with the sound of Scotch hops ever since!"

Baggy Trimble Gives a Sermon on Moderation.

"Be moderate in all things. That's always been my motto. Eat, sleep, work, play, spend money, do what you like—but always in moderation!

" Start the day with a moderate breakfast—not more than a pound of bacon, a dozen eggs, and a couple of loaves, say! And don't go and make a beast of yourself by starting on chocolates immediately after. Give your tummy five minutes' rest, at least. I always do.

" Be moderate in spending money—that is, of course, provided it's your own! If it's somebody else's, that's a different matter. It's up to the other fellow to see how you help spend his!

" Naturally, I'm not urging anyone to be mean—far from it! In fact, this is where I come to the crux of the matter. When you see a pal (particularly one with a fine, open, honest face) down on his luck, always grant him a loan—in moderation, of course! Not fifty pounds, nor fifty shillings—nothing so hefty as that! But a small sum that no one could miss; lend it with a good heart!

" Now, is there anyone here who can lend me five bob till the end of the term?"

(Cries of " Sit down!" and " Slaughter him!" and sudden disappearance of Baggy Trimble!)

Gerald Cutts Speaks to the Society for Knitting Socks for Savages.

" Ladies and Gentlemen,—I'm with you, sole and heel—I mean, heart and soul. I have always been in favour of socks; in fact, I make it a rule never to go out without a pair! If it comes to that, I've often been given socks—by the Head, after sundry midnight excursions!

" As to savages, they interest me frightfully. If you'd seen my pater after he'd received last term's report about me, you'd agree with me that English savages in particular are well worth studyin'!

" Now that I've met your frightfully interesting society, you can count on me to spend all my spare time for the rest of the term knitting socks like a hero—perhaps!"

Skimpole Gives a Talk on Cricket.

" So far as I am able to comprehend from Professor Balmycrumpet's work on the com-" bat "-ive instinct in civilised communities, cricket is an outdoor pastime, conducted with the assistance of six vertical elongated cylinders known as stumps, four horizontal pieces designated bails, and two specially-shaped articles called bats, used to induce trajectory motion in a spherical object of stuffed leather, commonly called a ball.

" Regarded from the viewpoint of a determinist, cricket—a last resort of the degenerate and brainless—is the inevitable outcome of a civilisation based on the rapacity of the idle rich. As Professor Balmycrumpet observes, in his eighteenth volume on ' Social Habits of the Ignorant Masses '—— Ow-wow! Yaroooooop!"

(Skimmy sits down suddenly as some genius throws Professor Balmycrumpet's celebrated volume at his head.)

Arthur Augustus Addresses a Meeting on Sartorial Perfection.

" Gentlemen—or, wathah, I suppose, fellahs—as your guest this evenin', I pwopose to give you some helpful hints—hints gained from my expewience—on sartowial perfection; or, clothes and how to weah them.

" For a long time I've noticed that a numbah of you youngstahs have been twansgwessing the laws of wespectability (loud jeers and cat-calls), and I feel it my dutay to put you wise—to use a twite and slang expwession—in this mattah.

" Furthermoah, even at this moment, I notice, with wegwet, that some of you are in sad need of wepaiah, and I sincerely hope that aftah my talk (" You'll be in need of repair!"—Grundy) you will all take heed and look to your clobbah in the futuah.

" Howevah, as I say, I am your guest this evenin', and in the circs I cannot possiblay say anythin' that would be likely to hurt your feelin's. As the Fwench say: ' Toujouah la polites!' "

(Meeting breaks up in violent disorder, and Arthur Augustus gets a bumping, and after this, as Grundy had forecast, he was in need of repair!)

THE END

MY FAVOURITE SEASON.

SOME GREYFRIARS OPINIONS.



Dr. Locke.

TO ME the season of spring is undoubtedly the most preferable. The genial warmth of those months which herald the coming of summer is indeed pleasant. One feels that one has passed the rigours of winter, which take heavy toll of those who, like myself, have long since crossed the half-way line of life.

In addition, the great awakening of Nature in spring-time is especially gladdening to me, symbolic, as it is, of hope and promise. My life-work has been given to youth, and as I regard spring as the season of youth, it naturally finds a warm place in my heart.



Mr. Quelch.

I undoubtedly give the preference to summer, though I am afraid the long, hot days of this season are not conducive to hard work on the part of my pupils.

Nevertheless, I appreciate the beauty of summer, and also the comfort its warmth brings to limbs which are painfully subject to rheumatism in winter.



Billy Bunter.

I have no faveritt seezon. I say this bekaws so long as a fellow has plenty of seezonable grub, why should he preffer one seezon to another?

But, on sekond thorts, I like summer best, for we get the long summer vakation then. A fellow can eat what he likes and get up when he likes without being interfeared with.

Yes, I certainly like summer best!



Hurree Singh.

My detestfulness of all your English seasons is terrific. I like my native India heatfully, but your luke-warm summers in England drive me batch-fully potty.

The esteemed Bob Cherry, who is looking glaring over my shoulder, says my English is full of rotfulness, but as I was learnfully taught by the finest moonshee in Bhanipur, this is absurdfully ridiculous.



Bob Cherry.

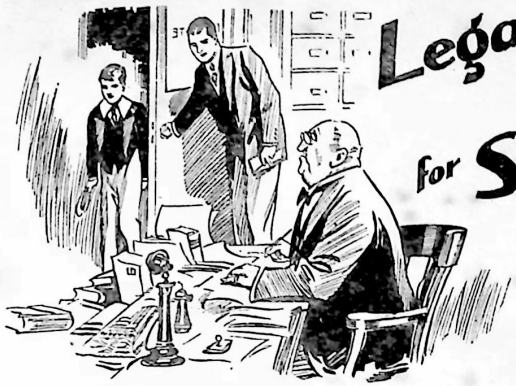
My favourite season? Winter, every time! Cricket, tennis, boating, etc., are topping pastimes, but give me the snow-fights, footer, skating, and sledging of winter. A chap never feels so lively and fit as on a keen, frosty winter's day.



Mr. Prout.

To this problem there can be but one answer given by any red-blooded sportsman. It is that of "late summer." For on August 12th shooting is once again permissible. What a glorious thrill comes to the hunter's heart on that date!

I remember once in the Rockies, I——" ('Snuff!—ED.)



Legal Notes for Schoolboys!

BY PETER TODD.

Several suggestions are made by Peter Todd, of the Greyfriars Remove, for the settling of schoolboy disputes but it is more than doubtful whether they would find GENERAL favour.

MOST of my readers are already aware that I am the amateur lawyer of Greyfriars, and the title of my contribution to the HOLIDAY ANNUAL will not, therefore, create any surprise. In these enlightened days the practice of settling disputes in the Courts, instead of by the good old-fashioned method of bashing one another on the napper with clubs, is spreading all over the world.

Why shouldn't it spread to public schools? Of course, I admit that, if peaceful methods fail, a punch on the nose is an excellent solution to any argument. But let's try the legal way first, fellow-schoolboys! The Editor hasn't allowed me much space for my hints on Law, but here they are so far as they go:

Assault and Battery.—Any junior who has been caned by his Form-master should immediately place the matter in the hands of a competent lawyer, and bring an action for assault and battery in the Junior Civil Court.

As the presence of the defendant is extremely unlikely in cases of this kind, the plaintiff usually wins the day, and can demand adequate compensation in the form of booby-traps fitted up for the benefit of his unsuspecting Form-master, at the discretion or otherwise of the jury.

Breach of Promise.—A senior whose fag fails to perform his allotted duties can bring an action against him for breach of promise. The fag-master has to produce evidence of the engagement, and of desertion. If his suit is successful, he is entitled to heavy damages, which are usually administered to the fag's anatomy with the aid of a cricket stump!

Libel.—You cannot bring a libel action against a master. A master is entitled to call you a "footling idiot" or "fish-faced sap," and insinuate that your head contains sawdust instead of brains, and you must put up with it. Between ourselves, however, it's a different matter. Immediately another fellow tells you you're brainless, you have a clear case for libel; that is, of course, provided you can prove that you possess brains, which is frequently found to be an impossible task!

Bankruptcy.—When you have run up a big bill at the tuck-shop, and you've borrowed money from most of the fellows in your Form, and there is no prospect of a whacking remittance from home, the best way to solve your financial difficulties is to file your petition in bankruptcy.

To do this, you must apply to the Official Receiver of your Form, who will take charge of your affairs, and call a creditors' meet

ing. The whole of your property will then be distributed among your creditors, and you can make a fresh start in life, free of debt. Don't forget that you are entitled to claim from the wreck such sacred personal belongings as partly-used chewing-gum and champion conkers.

Fags may retain up to, but not exceeding, three cooked or uncooked herrings, also a bar of soap, in the unlikely event of such an article figuring among their property.

Forgery.—Professional "impot" writers are, of course, always liable to be accused of forgery by a shrewd Form-master. When such an emergency arises, the "beak" rarely gives the accused a chance to obtain legal advice, and the forger is therefore forced back on his own resources.

He must be brief and careful in his defence. He could remark that right is right, and if what he has written is wrong, then he can only promise to right the wrong, and write right for the future. The defence should conclude with the observation that, as the crime was committed from a love of writing "impots," a stiff sentence would seem rather hard "lines."

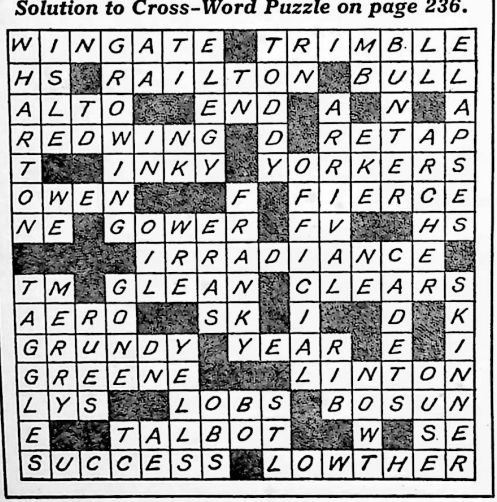
Such a defence might easily turn away the wrath of an irate Form-master. On the other hand, it might not!

WERE YOU RIGHT?

Solutions to Anagrams on page 108.

1.—George Wingate. 2.—Horace Coker. 3.—William Gosling. 4.—Micky Desmond. 5.—Sammy Bunter. 6.—Fisher Tarleton Fish. 7.—George Bulstrode. 8.—Donald Ogilvy. 9.—Harold Skinner.

Solution to Cross-Word Puzzle on page 236.



Solutions to Anagrams on page 180.

1.—William George Bunter.

2.—"THE GEM" Library.

3.—William Shakespeare.

4.—"Much Ado About Nothing."

5.—Reginald Muffin.

6.—Sherlock Holmes.

7.—Greyfriars School.

8.—"THE GREYFRIARS HOLIDAY ANNUAL."

Solution to Rhyming Conundrum on page 108.

R-I-C-H-A-R-D-S.

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