

# THEY WANTED AN ACTOR!

By FRANK RICHARDS



*With Wingate out of the Sixth Form's production of "Hamlet," Wibley, the actor of the Remove, seemed just the man to fill the part. So thought the Remove—but the lordly Sixth thought otherwise!*

## THE FIRST CHAPTER

TURNED DOWN!

"YOU'RE going!"

"Rats!"

Harry Wharton, of the Remove at Greyfriars, glared.

"Say 'rats' again, Wibley, and I'll punch your silly head!" he said.

"I tell you you're going!"

"And I tell you I'm not!"

"Look here, Wibley——"

"Listen, Wib, old scout——"

"If you'll only see reason, Wibley——"

A chorus of protest and argument burst forth from the little crowd of Removeites that had followed Wharton into Study No. 6. Wharton held up his hand for silence.

"Half a mo, you fatheads! No need for us all to speak at once! I'll

give you one more chance, Wib."

"Thanks, old bean, but I don't want it!"

"Let the facts speak for themselves," said Wharton, keeping his temper under control with a noble effort. "Wingate, who was due to play the lead in the Sixth Form production of 'Hamlet' to-night, has been taken ill with 'flu. You know the part from A to Z, Wibley. Now, I ask you, isn't the next move obvious?"

"Perhaps it is to you, but——"

"Cut out the 'buts'!" snapped the captain of the Remove. "You're going along to the Sixth to offer to play Hamlet for them to-night, and that's all there is to it!"

"Hear, hear!" endorsed the Removeites.

Wibley shook his head.

"Sorry, nothing doing!" he said. "What you chaps don't seem to realise is that the very thing the Sixth won't stand at any price is Wibley of the Remove playing Hamlet in place of Wingate of the Sixth."

"Why on earth not?"

"Because my acting would put the rest of 'em right in the shade," answered Wib calmly. "The Sixth know jolly well that I'd walk off with all the honours, and rather than have that they'd postpone the show till Wingate gets better. See?"

"Well, of all the swanking idiots!" gasped Wharton.

"Bump the fathead!" snorted Johnny Bull.

"It's only an excuse!" yelled Squiff. "Scrag him!"

"Better still," grinned Bob Cherry, "take him along to the Sixth and offer him to them, whether he likes it or not!"

"Good egg!"

"Look here——" roared Wibley.

But the Removites were in no mood to listen to argument. The idea of a Remove man playing lead in a Sixth Form production had taken a firm hold on their imaginations, and Wibley's refusal to offer his services exasperated them in the extreme. They made a rush; and Wibley's protests changed into furious yells as he felt himself whirled off his feet.

"Lemme go! I'll smash you! I'll——"

"Don't struggle, old bean," grinned Bob Cherry. "You'll only make it uncomfortable for yourself."

"You howling ass!"

"We'll run him along to North's study; he's the producer," said Wharton. "Get a move on, chaps; there's no time to waste!"

"I tell you I'm not going!" hooted Wibley.

But he did go, all the same. He had no option about it! His enthusiastic colleagues rushed him out of Study No. 6 and along the Remove passage and down the stairs at the end at breakneck speed. At the foot of the stairs they almost met with disaster when Dick Rake, who was Wibley's study-mate in No. 6, ran right into them. Fortunately, Rake was able to perform an acrobatic leap backwards that just saved the situation.

"What the merry dickens——" gasped Rake.

"Excuse us!" grinned Bob Cherry. "We're in a hurry!"

"The hurryfulness is terrific!" added Hurree Singh.

"What are you doing with Wib?" demanded Rake.

"Follow us, and you'll see!"

And they were off again. Rake, after scratching his head for a few seconds, decided to follow.

By the time the Removites reached North's study in the Sixth passage, Wibley's struggles had reduced him to a state of breathlessness that made further protests impossible for the time being, and Wharton was able to explain matters without interruption.

Quite a crowd of seniors were already gathered in North's study evidently to discuss the fate of the show; but Wharton, unabashed by the frowns of the mighty men of the Sixth, went right to the point.

"We've heard Wingate's out of to-night's play, North," he said, "so we've brought along a substitute for you. It's a jolly lucky break for you. He's word-perfect in the part, and he's a tip-top actor. Here's your man—Wibley!"

Wharton paused, to give the Sixth Formers a chance to say a few words of pleasure and gratitude.

But Wharton and the Removites with him were disappointed. The expected words of pleasure and gratitude did not materialise. All that the seniors did was to give Wibley a perfunctory glance, then stare back at Wharton.

"H'm! Very kind of you, Wharton, I'm sure," remarked North, with a frown. "You realise, of course, that this is a Sixth Stage Society production—not a fag show?"

It was Wharton's turn to frown now.

"Yes, of course, North," he said. "But Wib's rather out of the ordinary, you know, and to help you out of your fix——"

"Quite. So long as it's understood

that it's a serious production and not a fag pantomime, that's all right," said North. "Shall we give the kid a hearing, you men?"

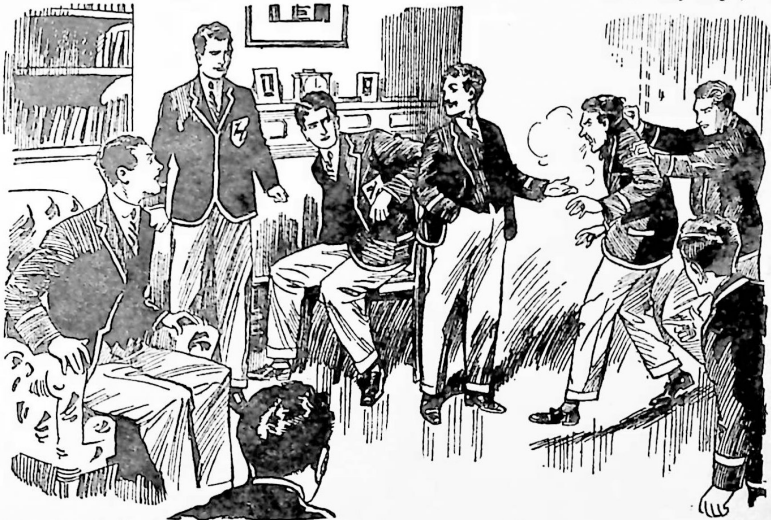
"No harm in it, I suppose," said Tremayne, with a yawn. "Do your stuff, kid. Let's hear Hamlet saying that bit about angels defending us."

Wibley drew a deep breath. He had entered North's study, determined to refuse any such request. But now that the request had come, his Thespian pride could not ignore the challenge.

"Right!" he said. "Here goes! 'Angels and ministers of grace defend us——'"

And the actor of the Remove plunged into Hamlet's celebrated greeting to the Ghost.

He did it well. The Removites had known he would, anyway; it



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was impossible for Wibley to act badly. Despite the inappropriate surroundings, his listeners found themselves hanging on his words as they did in his big moments before the footlights, and when he finished there was a burst of applause.

But the applause came only from the Removites. The Sixth Formers were apparently not so deeply moved.

They looked at each other, and then they looked at North.

"Well?" ventured Tremayne.

"Not bad—not at all bad for a kid," said North. "You've got the makings of an actor in you, young Wibley!"

"Thanks!" There was a world of sarcasm in Wibley's voice.

"But it's not quite up to the standard of a Sixth Form production, I'm afraid," continued North. "So, while thanking you for your well-intended offer, young Wibley, I shall have to decline it! It wouldn't be fair to the other players to ask them to act in the piece with a raw hand taking the leading part."

"My hat!" ejaculated Wibley, almost overcome by that statement.

"Does that mean you're turning Wib down?" asked Wharton, half incredulously.

"Just that!" nodded North. "He's not quite good enough—that's all!"

"Didn't I tell you?" grinned Wibley, triumphantly. "Perhaps you idiots will allow me to have my own way next time!"

"Well, you kids can scat now," said North, coolly. "Show's off, chaps Pity, after all the preparations we've made, but it can't be helped."

"Come on, you men," muttered Wharton; and the Removites, with feelings that were too deep for words, tramped off.

Only one thing was needed to complete their chagrin; and, of all people, Dick Rake was the one to supply it. From the place he had occupied in the doorway, he called out:

"I say, North, if you want someone reliable to take the part, I think I can get a man for you."

North registered a sudden interest.

"You can? Who is he?"

"An old Greyfriars man—my pater knows him. I know for a fact he's got the part off pat; and he's living not far from here."

The seniors sat up and took notice. North's eyes were gleaming, as he consulted his wrist-watch.

"My hat!" he exclaimed. "It's jolly short notice, but if you can only get him——"

"I think I can, if I put it to him in the right way."

"Then for goodness' sake get on the 'phone to him at once," urged North. "Ask him if he'll do it for the sake of the old school. Ask him——"

"All serene, North. I'll know what to ask him!" said Rake. "Let you know as soon as I get the answer!"

And he quitted North's study and hurried off—to be met at the end of the passage by the concentrated glares of eight or nine angry Removites!

## THE SECOND CHAPTER

AFTER THE SHOW!

"YOU dummy!"

"You footling freak!"

"You impossible imbecile!"

"What the thump made you do that, Rake?"

The Removites were indignant. Even Wibley, despite his opposition to acting for the Sixth, appeared a little hurt.

"You're giving 'em just what they

want, old chap," he said, more in sorrow than in anger. "If they get hold of this chap, and he does well, they'll always be able to keep up the story that I wasn't good enough."

Rake grinned.

"Don't worry; if it works as I'm hoping it'll work, that's exactly what they won't be able to do!"

"Dashed if I see how you can manage that!"

Wharton & Co. were annoyed with Rake. The rest of the Remove were annoyed too, when they heard about it. The general opinion was that if Wibley wasn't good enough for the Sixth show, then the Sixth should have been left to solve their problem themselves. Certainly no Remove man should have offered to get an outsider to take the part that Wibley could have played to perfection.



"Do your stuff, kid," said Tremayne, with a yawn. "Let's hear Hamlet saying that bit about angels defending us." Wibley could not ignore the challenge, and dramatically the actor of the Remove plunged into Hamlet's celebrated greeting to the Ghost.

"Perhaps you'll see later on," said Rake, cheerfully. "In the meantime, I'm instructed to get on the 'phone. Coming, Wib?"

"Anything for a quiet life!" said Wibley, with a shrug, and the two went off together, leaving the rest to discuss what fate was most suitable for a man who let his Form down as Rake seemed to have let down the Remove.

The Remove's annoyance, however, made no difference to Rake. He was grinning more cheerfully than ever when he passed through Big Hall on his way back to the Sixth passage, ten minutes later.

"Fixed it, you fathead?" asked Frank Nugent.

"What-ho!" Rake replied. "Jay Paul—that's the chap's name, you know—said he'd do it at once, as soon

as I explained the position. Bit of luck, eh?"

"You—you——"

Several exasperated Removites made a rush; and Rake had to finish his journey to North's study at express speed to avoid suffering assault and battery.

Rake discreetly kept out of the way, after that. But the Remove, watching events sulphurously from a distance, did not need telling that Mr. Jay Paul's intervention had put the show on its feet again.

There was a hurrying and a bustling in the Sixth. Fags were sent scurrying forth on many missions; a small army of sceneshifters from the Third descended on the gym, which had already been prepared for the performance; North went along to the Head's study to tell Dr. Locke that a substitute for Wingate had been found.

Finally, Mr. Jay Paul arrived. The Remove, eyeing him with hostile eyes, as he came into the School House, were not impressed. They had pictured somebody tall and distinguished; but Mr. Paul was neither. He looked undersized and eccentric, and, as Bob Cherry said, the last man on earth you could imagine playing the part of Hamlet.

Later, however, when the play started before a packed "house" in the transformed gym, Bob soon found that he was wrong. From the moment when Mr. Jay Paul stepped on to the stage, the audience realised that they were in the presence of an actor of considerable ability. Even the Remove, who were prejudiced, had to admit it after a time.

As the play went on, the applause at the end of each scene became more and more enthusiastic. Wingate's substitute was making a "hit"; there was no doubt about that.

The Sixth rejoiced to see it, and felt devoutly thankful that North had turned Wibley down.

The curtain dropped for the last time to the tune of a torrent of applause. The Head and the other masters were as enthusiastic as the youngest, and the Remove, forgetful of their early resentment, shouted their approval.

It was a triumph for the Sixth—and a triumph for the man who had taken on the difficult part at a minute's notice. North was fairly beaming as he appeared before the curtain.

"Gentlemen!" he said, when the cheering had stopped. "The Sixth Form Stage Society thank you for your wonderful reception. In doing so, we would like to add we all realise that the success of the evening is mostly due to Mr. Jay Paul, who was good enough to take the part left vacant by Wingate's indisposition."

The audience cheered again.

"Wingate would have played the part well," went on North. "But I shall be doing him no injustice when I say that Mr. Paul, who is obviously an actor of genius, has given a performance which could not have been bettered. Gentlemen, on your behalf, I will call Mr. Paul to address you."

The audience stood on their feet and fairly yelled, as the hero of the evening, still in his make-up, stepped out from behind the curtain.

Mr. Jay Paul bowed and removed his wig. Then he removed the thin wisp of a moustache he had worn through the play. And then——

Suddenly, the crowd stopped cheering—a gasp went up.

"WIBLEY OF THE REMOVE!"

"Gentlemen, I am grateful to North for all the kind things he said about me," said Wibley, in his ordinary,

everyday voice—quite a different voice from that of Hamlet. "I hope you'll forgive my little deception in adopting the name of Mr. Jape All—pardon, I mean, Mr. Jay Paul!"

The audience gasped again.

"That was Rake's idea," Wib explained modestly. "He seemed to think the Sixth would prefer a stranger to someone they knew. So he told North his pater knew an old Greyfriars man living near who could take the part."

"Great pip!"

"That was all true, of course," grinned Wibley. "I've been here several years, so I'm an old Greyfriars man. I live quite near—in the Remove passage! And Rake's pater knows me and I could take the part all right. It was a perfectly fair description, you see!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Wib, you spoofer!"

Uproar broke out. Then, as the audience took note of the extraordinary expression on North's face, the uproar changed to laughter, till the gym fairly rang with it. Even Dr. Locke saw the humour of the situation and joined in.

The Remove were in raptures. This was a score over the Sixth with a vengeance! They could understand Rake's queer behaviour now, and those who were near him almost hugged him with joy!

North managed to get silence at last. His face was red, but a smile was lurking round his lips.

"Wibley wins, I fancy!" he said.

"I congratulate him—and I congratulate the Remove, too! That's all I can say about it!"

And the Remove were so pleased at that handsome tribute from the vanquished that they gave North a special cheer all to himself!

## The Rookwood Jester!



By TOMMY DODD

THERE'S a Classical fellow called Grace,

With a fatheaded grin on his face,

A chap to take care of,

A chap to beware of,

The worst silly ass in the place;

His head's full of practical jokes,

He plays them on dozens of blokes:

On Classics and Modems,

On good 'uns and odd 'uns,

And frequently laughs till he chokes.

When Carthew trips over a chair,

Or wrestles with gum in his hair,

His white shoes have brown on,

Or books that fall down on

His head—you know Grace has been there!

When Hansom finds ink in his clock,

Or booby-traps give him a shock,

For vengeance he's seeking,

And, gen'rally speaking,

He knows at which study to knock!

When prefects discover these tricks,

They find it no trouble to fix

A name to the jester,

They simply request a

Young fathead named Grace to take "six."

When somebody neighs like a horse

In literature class, the resource

Of Dalton takes place as

He picks upon Grace as

An obvious matter of course!

We bump him and rag him all day,

But that doesn't stop Putty's way,

Although he goes through it,

He simply will do it,

He fancies it makes us all gay!

But though Putty's anger is slim,

There's one sort of joke makes him grim.

Whatever may be it,

He never can see it—

A joke that is played upon HIM.

# THE STORY OF ST. JIM'S

By the ST. JIM'S RHYMESTER



A SCHOOL that always was a school !  
Its story soon is told !  
No castle keep or dungeon cool,  
It isn't even old—  
At least, compared with Rookwood or  
With Greyfriars, both antique !  
They'd say it's only stood there for  
A week !

Three hundred years, or thereabouts,  
St. Jim's can fairly own ;  
If any fellow has his doubts,  
The date is clearly shown  
Upon the records, which declare  
'Twas sixteen twenty-one !  
Unless, of course, it's written there  
For fun !

A single School House was enough  
In those days for the Saints,  
Which Figgins thinks was rather rough,  
But there were no complaints !  
For fifty years one house was kept,  
And then the New House came,  
In which there's nothing new, except  
The name !

But new or old, the school has won  
Its measure of renown,  
And on its victories the sun  
Will nevermore go down,  
For Britain's heroes battle on,  
Far-flung from Pole to Pole,  
And there are many Saints upon  
The Roll !

And worthy followers are those  
Who tread its precincts now,  
True blue, as everybody knows  
And willingly avow !  
Tom Merry, Figgins and the rest,  
Who, at their country's call,  
Will prove themselves among the best  
Of all !