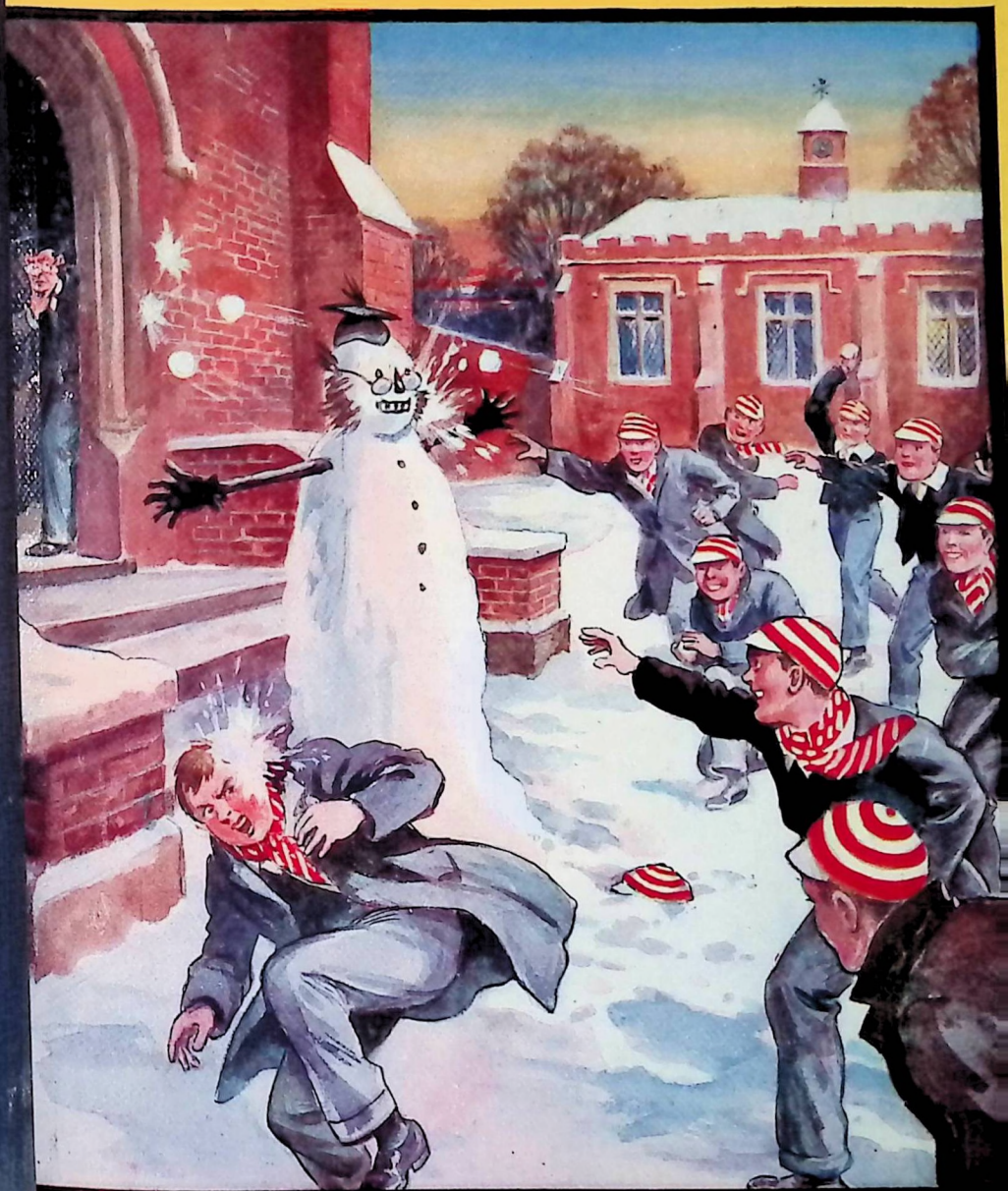
THE GREYFRIARS

HOLIDAY ANNUAL

1937 1937

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS





Frontispiece

Specially painted by Savile Lumley

"WHAT'S THE NEXT MOVE?"

THE *Greyfriars* HOLIDAY ANNUAL

1937



The Editor To His Friends.

IN setting myself each year to the task of compiling the GREYFRIARS HOLIDAY ANNUAL, the ideal I have in mind is always the same—namely, to produce a volume which shall be the ace of all story annuals.

To attain this ideal, many laborious hours are devoted to the selection and preparation of stories and pictures of the highest standard, and that famous trio of authors, Messrs. Frank Richards, Martin Clifford and Owen Conquest, especially, are kept busy burning the midnight oil by the gallon!

At last comes the moment when the final proof page is returned to the printers, and we of the HOLIDAY ANNUAL staff, with our contributors and artists alike, can sit back—and leave the rest to you!

Supported by many other attractive characters, you will find Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars, Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's, and Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood—those famous schoolboys whose names are known and loved throughout the whole English-speaking world—all lined up and on their toes, ready to entertain and amuse you in the pages that follow.

In the capable hands of these irresistibly cheery youths I will leave you to come by your own road to the inevitable conclusion that the HOLIDAY ANNUAL is, beyond doubt, the ace of all story annuals!

Your sincere friend,
THE EDITOR.

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

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DOUBTING THOMAS DISCOVERS GREYFRIARS!



The Editor of the Greyfriars Holiday Annual was surprised to receive this extraordinary letter. You, too, will be surprised—and amused—when you read it!

DEAR EDITOR,—My name is Thomas Doughty—better known as Doubting Thomas. My appearance is that of a bespectacled student of about eighteen—which is just what I happen to be. My chief claim to fame is that I never believe a thing till I see it. And my reason for writing you is that I have had an experience which will interest you as much as it astonished me!

In a word, dear Editor, I have just discovered a place which I always thought existed only in imagination—namely, Greyfriars School!

It was quite an accidental discovery. I had lost my way during my first solo flight in an aeroplane. My petrol had run low and I couldn't spot a suitable place for a forced landing. Sheer panic began to grip me. I felt I had to get out of that aeroplane in double-quick time. As it happened the means was at hand—I had a parachute with me!

Off I jumped, with lips tight-set and eyes closed! It was a jump into the Unknown! But, strangely enough, when I opened my eyes again, it was to find that I was descending on a place I seemed to know quite well! It was a group of noble-looking buildings set in the centre of tree-studded lawns and flower-beds beyond which were playing-fields dotted with white-clad figures at cricket.

Where had I seen it before? I felt sure I had never been to this spot in my life, yet it was almost as familiar as my own home!

Before I could solve the puzzle I reached terra firma—or, rather, something that was happily much softer than terra firma. It was a fat human body—and I can assure you it made a very agreeable landing-place, though

its owner didn't seem to find the experience at all agreeable!

"Yaroooooh! Beast!" was his greeting, as he collapsed beneath me. "Why can't you look where you're going, you clumsy idiot? Ow-wow!"

"Sorry!" I gasped, as I disentangled myself from the cords. "I couldn't help it. You see, I've just jumped out of an aeroplane in a parachute."

"Pip-pip-parachute?" stuttered the fat youth. Then he found his glasses and jammed them on his little snub nose and took a look around him. And when he saw that I was speaking the truth the glare he gave me almost cracked the specs. which had survived the crash!

"Well, of all the nerve!" he gasped. "Fancy jumping out of a blessed aeroplane when I was underneath! Couldn't you have waited till you got over the sea or something? Can't a man walk across the quad without a silly fathead from an aeroplane dropping out on him? You'll jolly well have to pay me compensation!"

"Look here——" I protested.

"Rats!" retorted the fat youth impolitely. "You'll have to pay up, so it's no good trying to get out of it! Look at what you've done to me—you've broken my legs and busted my spinal column and dislocated my neck and——"

"*Bunter!*" I yelled involuntarily.

"Eh? How did you come to know my name?"

"You're Bunter, aren't you?" I gasped. "Tell me I'm not dreaming! Then this must be Greyfriars!"

"Of course it's Greyfriars!" snorted the fat youth. "Blessed if I can tell how you know my name, though; I don't know you!"

"Just think of it!" I exclaimed joyously, as I got clear of the parachute at last. "I've landed at Greyfriars and met Billy Bunter—and I used to think neither of them existed at all!"

Bunter looked rather alarmed.

"I say, are you all right in the top-knot?" he asked anxiously. "If you've escaped from a mental home or something, I'm off!"

"Stay!" I commanded. "Come with me to the tuckshop instead, Bunter, and we'll see if Mrs. Mimble's jam-tarts and pastries are as nice in reality as they are in fiction!"

Bunter's alarm vanished.

"Well, now you come to mention it, I do feel a little peckish," he said, jumping to his feet with surprising alacrity for one suffering from broken legs, busted spinal column and dislocated neck. "This way, old chap!"

And that, dear Editor, was the beginning of the surprising and exciting adventure that makes me write you this



I landed on a fat human body, and the owner didn't seem to find the experience at all agreeable. "Yaroooh! Beast!" was his greeting.

letter. Believe me, the thrill of the star-gazer when some new planet swam into his ken was as nothing compared with the thrill I got! I pinched myself to make sure I was awake, as I walked beside the real, genuine, original Billy Bunter to the tuckshop I had always thought existed only in Frank Richards' fertile brain!



"I want you all to do me the honour of helping yourselves to what you fancy—at my expense!" I said. "Hurrah!" roared Mrs. Mimble's customers.

Here we were at the tuckshop! I knew it in a moment—nestling, as it was in the shade of the big elms, just as I'd seen it shown by the artist a thousand times in Greyfriars yarns. Now to meet some of the characters I'd so often longed to meet in the past!

My highest hopes were realised when I walked in. The little shop was simply packed with customers, and voices were ringing in my ears which I had certainly never hoped to have the luck to hear!

"Jam tarts, here, Mrs. Mimble, please."

"Shure, an' ut's a mixed oice Oi'd be afther havin' whin ye're ready!"

"Let's have that ginger-pop soon, ma'am—we're in a hurry!"

"The hurryfulness is terrific, my esteemed and ludicrous Mrs. Mimble!"

"I say, you fellows, where are your blessed manners?" roared Bunter above the din. "I've got a guest here. He's just arrived by air and he's famished. Lemme get through, you beasts!"

It wasn't exactly a polite way of putting it, but the crowd promptly paid me the compliment of parting to let us through.

"This way, sir!" sang out a bright-eyed, curly-haired youngster. "Visitors first always—even though they suffer the handicap of knowing Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!"

"You're Bob Cherry, aren't you?" I asked, as I walked through the gangway to the counter. "That's right enough," replied the youngster, with a rather puzzled look. "How do you know me?"

"I think I'd know that smile and voice anywhere, though it's true I've never met you before!" I said. "I'm known as Doubting Thomas myself, and I want you and all your friends to do me the honour of helping yourselves to whatever you fancy—at my expense!"

"Hurrah!" roared Mrs. Mimble's customers.

There was such a rush as surely can never have been seen before at the tuckshop counter. I need hardly tell you that Bunter was well to the fore. The speed with which he waded into everything within reach of him was such that I couldn't help thinking even Mr. Richards had failed to do justice to his powers in the eating line!

Leaving Bunter to break as many records as he wished, I mingled with the rest of the throng. I was soon chatting cheerily with Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, Hurree Singh, Johnny Bull, Mickey Desmond, Squiff, Tom Brown and a host of other old friends of fiction. Most of them were playing cricket against the Upper Fourth on Little Side that afternoon and couldn't stop, so our confab was all too brief. But what a treat it was while it lasted, to hear them talking in such familiar, matter-of-fact tones about the people and places I'd thought lived only in cold print.

I left the tuckshop at last, considerably lighter in pocket. Bunter rolled along with me—having, for the time being, satisfied his gargantuan appetite.

" You want me to show you over the place ? " he grinned, in reply to the request I made of him. " Right-ho, then ! I'm an obliging sort of chap and you couldn't have chosen a more useful guide, either—I'm the most popular chap in the school, you know ! "

" Really ? "

" Fact," said Bunter, with a fat smirk. " Everybody admires and respects me—even chaps in the Sixth ! "

" Bunter, you fat worm ! " rapped out a sharp, unpleasant voice just then. " I've been looking for you everywhere. You took a plum cake from my study ! "

The thin-lipped, sallow-faced senior who had spoken bore down on us like a kind of avenging spirit. Bunter gave a squeak of alarm.

" I say, Loder, I never touched it —and anyway, it was a rotten cake, hardly worth eating—ow-wow ! Yoooooop ! "

Bunter's remarks tailed off into a series of wild howls, as the newcomer's ashplant started lashing him.

" Excuse me, won't you ? " Loder said to me, with a sneering smile, when he had finished. Then he departed, looking much happier than when he had arrived.

It took another snack in the tuckshop to bring Bunter back to his normal self again. After that, we set off once more ; and, to give Bunter his due, he did prove himself to be a most efficient guide.

He showed me the Close, the old Cloisters, Big Hall, the Gym and all the Form-rooms. Then he took me upstairs to the spot dear to all Frank Richards' readers the world over—the Remove passage !

There were not many fellows left in it, this sunny summer's afternoon, but we did meet a few. Kipps was in No. 5, trying out a new and very difficult conjuring trick ; and a lean and bony youth whom I recognised at once as Alonzo Todd was at home in No. 7, intently studying a massive tome entitled "The Story of a Potato." In No. 9, again, we struck Dick Penfold, busy on a poem for the " Greyfriars Herald." In No. 11—whisper it !—we saw three rather furtive-looking youngsters smoking cigarettes and playing a game of banker for penny points.

Leaving Messrs. Skinner and Snoop and Stott to their dubious pleasures, we looked in at No. 12, to find an elegant youth dozing on a luxurious divan. At the sound of Bunter's voice, he ejaculated " Oh, gad ! " and made a move to hurl a cushion ; but he dropped it and welcomed us most graciously, begad, on seeing that Bunter had brought a guest with him !

Nice lad, Lord Mauleverer. That was the impression I carried away, as I followed Bunter to Masters' Passage.

In Masters' Passage, the first person

we met made us both jump for cover. It was a podgy and ponderous gentleman who carried a double-barrelled sporting gun at a most menacing angle. "Prout!" I guessed—and so it was! We let him pass before venturing forth to the study I really wanted to see—a study from whence the clicking of a typewriter could be clearly heard now.

"That's Quelch!" Bunter informed me. "He's a beast! He's working on his fatheaded 'History of Greyfriars' now. You don't want to see him, do you?"

That was just where Bunter was wrong! I did want to see him—and see him I did, leaving Bunter to prowl about outside in a very uneasy state!

"Mr. Quelch!" I cried, walking in and grasping him warmly by the hand. "You don't know me—but how well I know you, to be sure!"



In Masters' Passage we met a podgy and ponderous gentleman who carried a double-barrelled sporting gun at a most menacing angle. "Prout!" I guessed.

A pair of gimlet eyes fixed on me—eyes that seemed to pierce me through and through.

"What—what! Who are you, sir?"

"I am known as Doubting Thomas, Mr. Quelch, and it's a real pleasure to meet you and to know that you really exist!"

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, blankly.

"I always thought you were a dream, sir, but now——"

"How dare you, sir? Really, this is positively extraordinary!"

Mr. Quelch reached out for a bell-push. I thought it advisable to beat a hurried retreat!

"I told you he was a beast!" snorted Bunter, as he led me away.

And so the afternoon wore on in a dizzy round of meetings and partings. I saw Hoskins of the Shell pounding away at the piano, Fisher T. Fish searching the Remove dormitory for sixpence he had lost a week before, Coker of the Fifth trying to convince Wingate he was the one man the First Eleven needed—and others too numerous to recall in the space of one letter.

Then came the final thrill—a visit to the Crypt and a tour of exploration through the secret underground passage leading to the old ruined Priory in Friardale Woods! Here Bunter left me. He said he wasn't going to walk in a blessed underground passage to please anybody. Here also my adventures came to a disastrous end, for, just as I was coming out into the daylight, a piece of roof fell in and I remembered no more.

The next experience I had was the most surprising of the lot. I woke up in bed in hospital, to learn that I had been found in a dazed condition, not far from the aerodrome from which I had started—with my parachute still trailing about me!

It was a perplexing end to a delightful adventure. But I shall never again deserve the name of

DOUBTING THOMAS.

THE END

BUNTERS DOWN THE AGES!





Five pounds to anyone who can make Horace James Coker laugh! Read how three wily Greyfriars wanglers made the attempt, and enjoy a fortune in laughs!

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

NO HELP FOR COKER.

"You're a silly ass, Potter! You're as big an ass, Greene! I tell you it's up to us—I've already told you that! I'm doing it, and you chaps are going to help."

"But, look here, Coker——"

"Shut up, Potter——"

"Coker, old man——"

"Dry up, Greene! You talk too much, old chap! I've already said you're helping me, and that's enough, isn't it? As important members of the Fifth it's up to us to help. It's in a good cause, and I'm just the man for the job."

Horace Coker was laying the law down in his study. Harry Wharton and Co., happening to be passing the open door, paused to listen, smiling as they did so. They did not consider it eavesdropping to listen to Coker talking. Coker, they knew, loved to have fellows listening to his words of wisdom, and so they often obliged the "great man" by listening,

whether he knew they were listening or not. Coker was always entertaining.

"The position's this," went on Coker's booming voice. "The Vicar's getting up a church fête, and he's asked Greyfriars to help. Quite right, too! He's asking for suggestions for side-shows, and that sort of thing. Well, as you know, I put up a suggestion to the Head. He turned it down. The Head's a good sort in some ways, but he's rather a thick-headed old idiot!"

"You—you ass, Coker! You can't expect——"

"Shut up, George Potter! Now, as you know, I suggested a boxing show with myself as the chief attraction. I was going to offer a fiver to the fellow—villager or Greyfriars man—who could knock me out in twelve rounds. The Head," ended Coker, more in sorrow than anger, "turned it down—got quite ratty when I started to argue with him—goodness knows why. Anyway——"

"You idiot, Coker!" snorted Greene. "Can't you see this isn't going to be a fairground show? The Vicar would have a dozen fits at the very idea——"

"Will you shut up?" roared Coker. "Think I don't know better than the Head or the Vicar what the folks want? Rot! Piffle! Still, I'm willing to let the Beak have his way. We've got to let him have his head at times, I suppose, whether we approve or not. Still, it doesn't matter now. I've hit on a better idea."

"Coker, old man," said Potter pleadingly, "drop that silly idea for goodness' sake! It's a mad idea. It——"

"If you call my ideas silly, Potter——"

"Well, you must be——"

"Shut up! You've too much to say, George Potter!"

"But it's a mad idea, I tell you, Coker," said Potter desperately. "We'll be the laughing stock of the village as well as Greyfriars. People laugh at you quite enough, Coker——"

"What?" yelled Coker.

"You're funny enough as it is, Coker!" It was Greene speaking now, and, for once, Greene was speaking frankly to Coker. "But you're not thumping well going to make us as funny. You're not making fools of us!"

"Look here—— Why, I'll—I'll——" Coker spluttered with wrath. "Does this mean you're not backing me up?"

"No fear! We'd look nice, wouldn't we?" demanded Potter heatedly. "Fifth-formers playing a silly kids' game like that! Where's your dignity, Coker?"

But evidently Coker had lost or mislaid his dignity.

"Why, you—you cheeky rotter, Potter!" Coker exploded. "Won't back me up, eh? We'll see about that! Why, I—I'll——"

"Look out!" murmured Harry Wharton. "Now for fireworks!"

The warning was necessary. From Coker's study came a sudden howl, followed by the tramp of feet, and sundry heavy thumps and crashes. Obviously Coker was quelling the mutiny in his study—or trying to. Next moment a figure came flying out through the doorway. It crashed against the passage wall and slid down on the linoleum with a bump.

"Greene or Potter?" chuckled Bob Cherry. "It's—— My hat! It's Coker!"

It was Coker! Usually Horace Coker had his own way in that study—usually it was Coker who did the throwing out when throwing out was, in his lofty view, necessary. But this time Potter and Greene,



"Listen, fat clam!" said Fish. "We're going to lift that fiver—you, Sammy and me. I'll tell the world it's the cutest idea I've ever struck! We're going to make Coker laugh. Now, get an earful of this, Bunter!"

obviously, had asserted themselves; the worms had turned, and it was their study-leader who was thrown out now.

"There, you burbling idiot! That's what we think of you and your potty ideas!" gasped Potter.

He and Greene, looking heated and somewhat battered, emerged from the study and departed—rather hurriedly.

Coker, looking equally heated and battered, but far more angry, staggered dizzily to his feet. His rugged features were red with rage and amazement.

"They—they pitched me out—me!" he choked. "Pitched me—chucked me out of my own study, the rotters! Why, I—I——"

He looked about him for a sight of Potter and Greene, who by this time had vanished. Like a raging tiger he stared this way and that way in frantic indecision, and then he seemed to see the grinning faces of the Famous Five for the first time.

"Oh, it's you!" gasped Coker. "What the thump are you kids grinning at? Why, I'll——" The Fifth-former broke off and his rage seemed to vanish. He eyed Harry Wharton & Co. thoughtfully for a moment, and then he nodded. "Yes, you'll do," he added. "Come inside, kids."

Coker marched back into his study. Apparently he had quite forgotten Potter and Greene now. Harry Wharton winked at his chums, and they marched in after Coker. They all wanted to know what Coker's idea actually was.

"It's like this, you kids," began Coker. "You've heard all about the fête, of course. Well, I've decided to hold a side-show—to help the cause, you know. I told Potter and Greene I'd want——"

"Yes, we heard——"

"Don't interrupt, Wharton," said Coker. "Well, Potter and Greene can go and eat coke, anyway. They'd only muck the thing up. You kids will do, as it isn't a case where brains or common sense is required. All you'll have to do is just to obey my orders, see?"

"Oh, quite!" smiled Harry Wharton.

"The seefulness is terrific," grinned Hurree Singh, in his wonderful English. "Also the Cokerfulness——"

"Shut up, Singh! Dry up, Wharton! Now, my idea's this," said Coker, coming to the point. "I'm going to offer a prize—say a fiver—to the spectator who can make me laugh! How's that?"

"Wha-what?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Be quiet, Nugent! Well, that's the wheeze. It's quite original. I saw a side-show like it at a fairground not long ago—in the hols. I——"

"But you said it was original——" began the startled Wharton.

"Eh? So it is, ass! You see, all that's necessary is for a chap to be of iron self-control—like me. I defy anyone to make me laugh if I don't wish to," explained Coker. "I've mastered the art of self-control long ago. As I say, I shall offer a fiver, and the crowd'll be charged a bob a time to try to make me laugh. Well, what do you think of the idea, young Wharton?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The yell of laughter from the Famous Five should have told Coker that.

"Not so dusty, eh?" smiled Coker, evidently accepting their hilarity as approval of his idea. "It'll cause no end of amusement—what? Well, I shall dress up as an Indian, just to make it more mysterious and fetching—there's some suitable clobber in the Dramatic Society's property box. And I'll want a chair and a platform, but I'll make the platform myself; you know I'm a bit of a dab at carpentry work. And I shall want a 'ballyhoo' man—you know, the chap who bawls out 'Walk up!' and all that sort of stuff—and a chap to take the cash, too. That's where you kids come in."

"Do we? Oh, crumbs!"

"Yes, just to make yourselves useful—to do the donkey-work, in fact," said Coker candidly. "You'll make a good 'ballyhoo' man, Cherry—you've got plenty of gab and a voice like a foghorn. You, Wharton——"

"Hold on, Coker," grinned Wharton. "You're taking too much for granted, old bean! If it's donkey-work, then it's your job, old chap!"

"Eh? Look here," exclaimed Coker, staring, "does that mean you kids actually refuse——"

"Exactly," grinned Harry Wharton. "We refuse to help an awful ass to make a bigger ass still of himself—see?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Laughing, the Famous Five turned to leave the study. But Coker, having been turned down by his own study-mates, wasn't going to be turned down also by cheeky Removites.

" Here, hold on ! " he roared. " So you kids think you can treat me like that, eh ? We'll see about that ! "

He rushed at the Famous Five, evidently intending to mop them up collectively. But the Famous Five paper basket jammed over his head.

Leaving him thus, Harry Wharton & Co. streamed cheerily from the study. It must have dawned on even Horace Coker, then, that he need expect no aid from the Famous



Fish started to dance in front of Coker, his thin face twisting into weird expressions. The crowd roared at his antics, but not Coker. He just glared at Fishy, his rugged jaw set and grim.

knew Coker, and had anticipated his move.

What happened next Horace Coker himself never quite knew. Something like an earthquake seemed to envelop him, and when it was all over and the dust had settled somewhat, Coker found himself seated in the study coal-scuttle with the study waste-

Five any more than from Potter and Greene.

Coker, however, was a sticker !

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

TOO SMART OF FISHY !

" WHERE on earth is Bob ? " asked Frank Nugent.

" Here's Bunter," said Harry

Wharton. "Bunter knows everything. Seen Cherry, Bunter?" It was the following afternoon, and the Famous Five—minus Bob Cherry—had just arrived at the Vicarage grounds where the fête was being held. The chums had arrived rather late as they had been busy selling tickets until the last moment. Now, as they mingled with the colourful crowd, they looked about them for their missing chum, Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter, the fat member of the Remove at Greyfriars, chuckled explosively as he rolled up to the chums, a smear of chocolate on his plump face.

"He, he, he! Yes, old chap, I've seen Cherry," he said, "and heard him, too! He's going it strong. If Coker doesn't smash him——"

"Eh—Coker?" said Harry. "You mean——"

"He's helping Coker," grinned Bunter. "Spilling the spiel——"

"What?"

"That's what Fishy calls it, anyway," grinned Bunter. "You can hear him from here. That awful ass, Coker—— Here, hold on, Wharton—I say, lend me a bob——"

But Harry Wharton didn't wait to lend Billy Bunter a bob. He had already caught sight of a big crowd across the grounds, and now he easily recognised Bob Cherry's powerful voice sounding above the hubbub of laughter and voices.

"The—the silly chump!" said Harry, laughing. "He's 'ballyhooing' for Coker, after all! Come on!"

Diving through the laughing crowd they soon came in sight of Coker's side-show. There it was, and there was Coker. He was dressed in flowing white robes and a turban, and his face and hands were stained brown. Even so, there was no possibility of anyone mistaking Coker's identity; of not recognising that brown, rugged face as that of Coker's.

Behind Coker was a high screen on which was painted in large letters—and Cokerish spelling!—the following:

"RAM DAS COKER!
INDIAN SEAR
MASTER OF SELF-CONTROLL!
Five pounds oferred
to anyone who can
MAKE
RAM DAS COKER
LARF."

Obviously Horace Coker had written that inscription; it was just as obvious as the fact that Coker had, undoubtedly, built the platform upon which he was now seated in state. It was built of matchboarding and nails—especially nails! How Coker had managed to get in so many nails to the square inch was a mystery to all but Coker. The platform rather resembled a switchback—and a rickety one!

Two steps led up to the platform, and at the bottom of these stood Alonzo Todd, looking very self-conscious and rattling a collecting box. At the top stood Bob Cherry, his face as robust as his voice.

"Roll up, roll up!" Bob Cherry was bawling. "Roll up and see Horrid Horace, otherwise the Indian missing-link, Ram Das Coker, the famous unconscious comedian. Horrid Horace is guaranteed to make a cat laugh, but defies the world to make him crack even a grin."

"He, he, he!" cackled Billy Bunter. "Isn't Bob Cherry going it?"

Bob undoubtedly was enjoying himself. Coker undoubtedly wasn't. To judge from his ferocious glares at Bob Cherry it was taking all his famous

supply of self-control to prevent him committing assault and battery upon his "bally-hoo" man.

"It's fairly drawing the crowd, anyway," laughed Harry Wharton.

"And the cash, too," grinned Nugent. "Alonzo's box sounds pretty full already. Nobody's made Coker laugh yet evidently, though."

"Heaps have tried," grinned Bunter. "But Coker couldn't see a joke if it was as big as a house. I say, Harry, old man, lend me a bob——"

"Going to try to make Coker laugh, Bunter?" demanded Wharton.

"No fear! He'd jolly soon boot me off if I tried," said Bunter. "I'm hungry, old chap. Lend me a bob just to try some of those gingerbreads on that stall. I'll let you have it back out of my next postal order——"

"Never mind the postal order," grinned Harry Wharton.

He handed over a shilling to Bunter. It was always worth a shilling to get rid of Billy Bunter! Bunter grabbed it and vanished through the crowd.



Beside himself with fury, Coker started to dance and gesture in helpless fury. That did it! Coker's home-made platform refused to stand the strain, and it collapsed under his heavy prancing. Just in time, Bob Cherry jumped to safety with the five-pound note.

But he never reached the gingerbread stall. A bony hand clutched the fat junior, and he found himself facing Fisher T. Fish, the Yankee member of the Remove. Behind Fish was the little fat figure of Sammy Bunter, Billy's younger brother.

Fishy's cute face wore an eager, excited expression.

"You're just the guy I guess we're looking for, Bunter," said Fish briskly. "I kinder guess you're the

guy who's going to make that boob Coker laugh. Yep!"

"Eh? Look here, Fishy——"

"Listen, fat clam!" said Fish, lowering his voice mysteriously. "We're going to lift that fiver, Bunter—you, Sammy and me! It's a cinch—I'll tell the world it's the cutest idea I've ever struck. You're going to make Coker laugh——"

"I'm jolly well not," snorted Bunter. "I'm going——"

"Aw, listen," snapped Fishy, and he whispered in Bunter's fat ear. "Get this earful, Bunter: I go on the stand and start prancing before Coker. Sammy, hyer, gets under the stand and rams a pin into Coker. When Coker jumps up you make him laugh. I guess——"

"You ass, Fishy! How the thump——"

"Ventriloquism, Bunter!" whispered Fishy. "Ain't you a good ventriloquist? I'll tell the world you are! Well——"

"M-mum-my hat!" Slowly a fat grin spread over Bunter's face. "I say, that's a jolly good wheeze, Fishy. But what about the fiver? We know what a mean swindler you are——"

"Aw, I guess it was my idea, but I'm a generous guy, Bunter. Two-ten for you and one-ten for Sammy," said Fish in a businesslike way. "Is it a go? Good! Then I guess we'd better get going before some other guy earns the dough."

It was a go. Bunter felt he could make good use of two pounds ten! His fat face beamed as Fish whispered a few brief instructions, and then the three conspirators hastened for Coker's side-show.

Armed with a pin stuck on the end of a stick, the grinning Sammy Bunter disappeared among the crowd at the back of the side-show. The cute Yankee business-man climbed up on to the platform and faced Coker.

There was a yell from the Greyfriars fellows:

"Go it, Fishy! Tell him one of your tall Yankee yarns!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Fish didn't try to make Coker laugh with a tall story. He started to dance and prance in front of Coker, his thin face twisting into weird expressions.

Fishy was bony, and his face wasn't handsome at the best of times. His antics and contortions now made the crowd laugh—but not Coker. He just glared at Fishy, his rugged jaw set and grim. And then——

Suddenly Coker jumped up with a wild howl, and following that howl came a yell:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter was undoubtedly a good ventriloquist. It was Coker's bellowing laugh without a doubt—or seemed to be. The crowd stared blankly, and then roared with applause!

"He's done it—the skinny kid's done it!"

"Good old Fishy! Cough up that fiver, Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But above the bedlam of laughter and cheering could be heard Coker's voice raised in wild protest.

"I didn't—I didn't laugh, I tell you! Oh, crumbs! I tell you——"

"Yes you did! Play the game, Coker!"

Yells of protest and catcalls drowned Coker's furious protests, and Coker, almost beside himself with wrath and dismay, started to dance and gesture in helpless fury.

That did it. Coker prided himself on being a carpenter, but that home-made platform simply refused to stand

Coker's heavy prancing. It collapsed, and Coker, still roaring, vanished from view amidst a medley of planks of wood.

Just in time Bob Cherry, still waving aloft Coker's five-pound note, jumped to safety. He was instantly surrounded by the yelling and hilarious crowd.

"Pay up—the kid's earned it!"

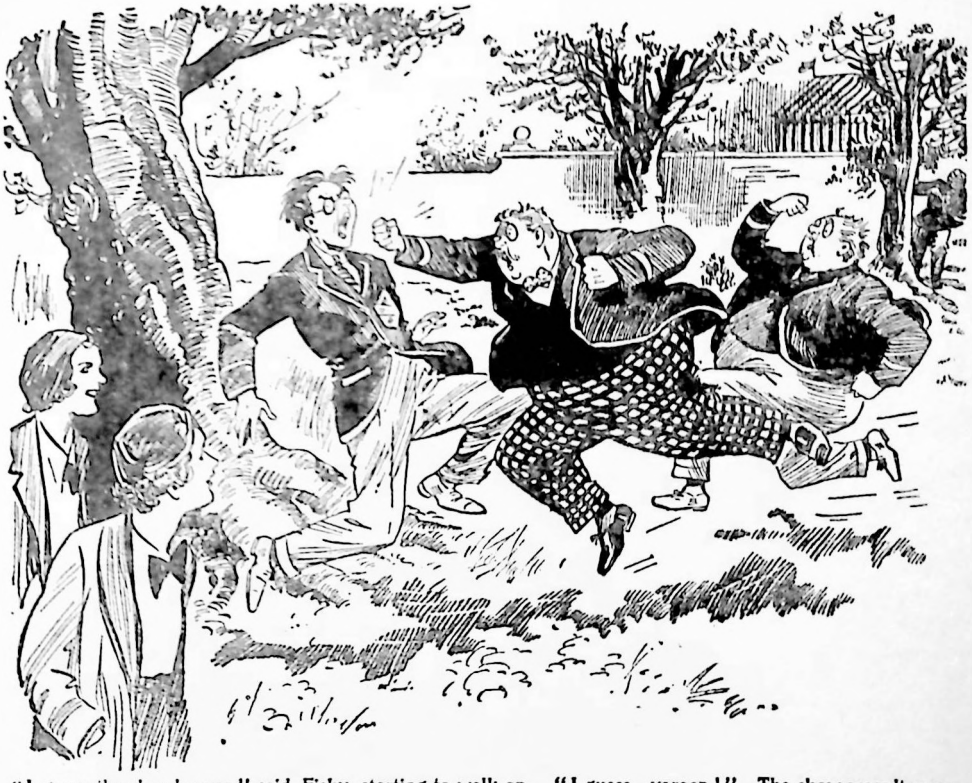
"Yep! I guess that fiver's mine, Bob Cherry," yelled Fisher T. Fish. The American junior was gleeful and triumphant, knowing he had the good-humoured crowd behind him. "I guess you'll hand over the greenback pronto, Cherry!"

"Yes, Coker laughed right enough," said Harry Wharton. "Better stump up to Fishy, Bob."

"Hear, hear! Hurrah!"

Coker was forgotten now. The crowd had heard Coker laugh—or believed they had—and they clamoured for fair play. Bob Cherry was puzzled, but he was only too ready to pay out if Fish had earned the fiver. But—Coker had denied laughing, and Coker wasn't a fellow to tell whoppers, even to save a fiver!

Yet Bob himself had heard that howl of laughter, and so he grinned and handed the five-pound note into Fish's bony fist. Fisher T. Fish



"I guess the show's over," said Fishy, starting to walk on. "I guess—yaroop!" The show wasn't over—not so far as the Bunter Brothers were concerned! They wanted their fair share of the fiver, and a fat fist, with all Billy Bunter's fury and weight behind it, smote Fish on the nose!

promptly departed. But the going was not quite so good as he had hoped for!

A fat hand suddenly clutched Fishy's bony arm, and Bunter's grinning, gleeful features spoiled Fishy's view. Behind Billy was his hopeful minor, Sammy.

"He, he, he! It worked like a giddy charm, Fishy," chortled Billy Bunter. "Now what about my two-ten, old chap?"

"And my giddy one-ten," giggled Sammy Bunter happily, also hoving unexpectedly into Fish's disgusted view. "Cough it up, Fishy!"

"Shurrup, you fat clams!" hissed Fishy. "Waal, I swow! I—I'll pay you galoots at Greyfriars——"

"You jolly well won't," sniffed Billy Bunter. "I want mine now, old chap. We know you, Fishy! I say, old Lambe or the Head will change the fiver, Fishy."

"Cough it up," grinned Sammy.

Fish scowled and glanced about him anxiously. But they were fairly clear of the crowd now, and Fish nodded disgustedly at last.

"Aw, well, I guess you fat clams will spill things if I don't," he grumbled. "Look hyer, I guess there's no need to change the fiver, Bunter. Hyer you are!"

He fished into his pocket and produced some silver and coppers. Slowly he counted out into Bunter's fat palm a florin, a sixpence, and fourpence in coppers. He was turning to deal with Sammy when Billy Bunter, after staring blankly at the coins in his fat palm, gave a roar:

"Here—hold on, Fish!" he yelled. "What's this?"

"I guess and calculate that's your two-and-tenpence," said Fishy.

"Wha-what? B-b-but you said two-ten——" howled Bunter.

Fisher T. Fish shook his head.

"I guess you got me wrong, Bunter! I said two-and-ten—and I guess that means two-and-tenpence Yep! Hyer, Sammy, hyer's your one-and-tenpence!"

"Why, you—you——" Bunter nearly burst with amazed wrath and indignation. "Why, you—you Yankee swindler! You sus-said——"

"I guess it was my idea, and I take the big share—yep!" said the cute business-man of the Remove irritably. "I guess you ain't getting a cent more, you fat clams!"

"Why, you—— Look here——"

"Nope! I guess the show's over," said Fishy, starting to walk on. "I guess—— Yarooop! Ow! Oh, Jerusalem!"

The show wasn't over—not so far as the Bunter Bros. were concerned. And Fishy roared with anguish as a fat fist, with all Billy Bunter's fury and weight behind it, smote the cute junior on the nose. He roared again as Sammy Bunter, as furious and disappointed as his major, joined in the sudden assault upon Fishy.

With Bunter minor and major smiting him hip and thigh, Fisher T. Fish floundered backwards, yelling in anguish.

"Ow! Yarrooop! Jerusalem crickets! Let up, you boneheaded guys! Ow-ow! Yaroop!" he shrieked. "I tell you——Oh, crikey!"

"Pay up, you rotten swindler!" roared the valiant Bunter. "Smash him, Sammy! We'll make him pay up our share! He wouldn't have got the fiver but for us. It was you stuck the pin in Coker, and it was me——"

"Eh? What's that?"

It was a new voice—Horace Coker's!

Naturally the commotion had attracted a crowd at once—and it attracted Coker, who, as it happened,

was just in search of Fisher T. Fish. It also attracted Harry Wharton & Co.

"Here, hold on, you asses!" shouted Harry Wharton in alarm. "You can't scrap here. What on earth——"

"Leave 'em to me," bawled Coker in sudden excitement. "I heard the fat rotter say something about sticking a pin in me. Someone did——"

"What?"

"Someone stuck a pin in me on the platform," roared Coker excitedly. "I knew there was something fishy about this. Bunter was just shouting——"

"I heard him, too," said Bob Cherry, startled. "Bunter——"

He grabbed Bunter and hauled him off Fishy. Bunter blinked round, suddenly aware of the crowd.

"I—I say, you fellows," he gasped.

"Bunter, what does this mean?" said Bob Cherry. "You said Fishy wouldn't have got that fiver but for you, and that Sammy shoved a pin in Coker. What——"

"Eh? Oh, no—nun-nothing of the kind," gasped Bunter in alarm. "Sammy and I had nothing to do with it—nothing. It was all Fishy's idea, and the beast promised me two-ten out of it, the rotten swindler. Now he only wants to pay me two-and-tenpence, the beast! You—you see——"

"Bunter——"

"It was Fishy, I tell you," howled Bunter. "I'm not a ventriloquist at all, and——"

"What? So that explains——" began Harry Wharton.

"Nunno! I meant to say," said the flustered Bunter, "that it wasn't I who made Coker laugh by ventriloquising. It—it must have been someone else, you know. And Sammy——"

"So that's it," grinned Bob Cherry. "Sammy sticks a pin into Coker; then when Coker opens his mouth to howl, Bunter ventriloquises and makes him seem to laugh. Just one of Fishy's cute ideas."

"I—I guess you guys have got me wrong," the alarmed trickster was saying, when Coker, whose brain functioned slowly, seemed suddenly to grasp the plot in all its baseness.

"So that was it?" he bawled furiously. "Stuck a pin in me and then——Why, I'll—I'll——"

Coker didn't stop to finish saying what he would do; he just did it!

He went into action right away, and for several whirling minutes Coker, Fishy, Billy Bunter and Sammy Bunter were mixed up in a wild sort of whirlwind. Sammy broke free first, and charged desperately through the laughing crowd, followed an instant later by Billy Bunter. When things cleared a little Fisher T. Fish looked like a bundle of rags—and Coker had the five-pound note in his fist!

"Here it is, Cherry!" he bawled. "Shove that in Toddy's collecting box. Now, you Yankee swindler——"

"Yaroooooop!"

Fisher T. Fish bolted for his life, with Coker's heavy boot following him up at every step. Both disappeared across the Vicarage grounds, and Fishy's wails of anguish died away.

That ended Coker's side-show. But it wasn't quite the end for Fish, Billy Bunter and Sammy Bunter. Coker seemed to think that their punishment should be continuous, and he made a point of kicking the three conspirators every time he saw them after that, and, for many days after the fête, life was scarcely worth living for the Bunter Bros. and Fisher T. Fish.

"PLAYING THE GAME!"

Author unknown, but probably NOT by

CYRIL PEELE,

The Black Sheep of Rookwood.

You fellows who aspire to fun
Will always find in me
A model (not a working one)
Of what you shouldn't be.

I'm very generous, you know;
A kindly-hearted sort;
My bookmaker will tell you so,
For I'm his chief support.

I'm fond of animals, of course,
And these I study hard;
I know the life of every horse
On every racing-card.

And chemical experiments
Are greatly in my line;
I study the constituents
Of nicotine and wine.

For exercise I'm always ripe;
My ardour is so bright.
I often climb a water-pipe
At twelve o'clock at night.

I'm energetic, and I'm fond
Of any kind of trade;
For I can judge a Diamond,
Or wield a Club or Spade.

I once addressed the School in Hall,
Upon the platform, too;
The only words I now recall
Were, "Ow-wow-wow! Yaroooh!"

I've often been admired, I know,
In classes by my Beak;
He told me several days ago
That I am quite unique.

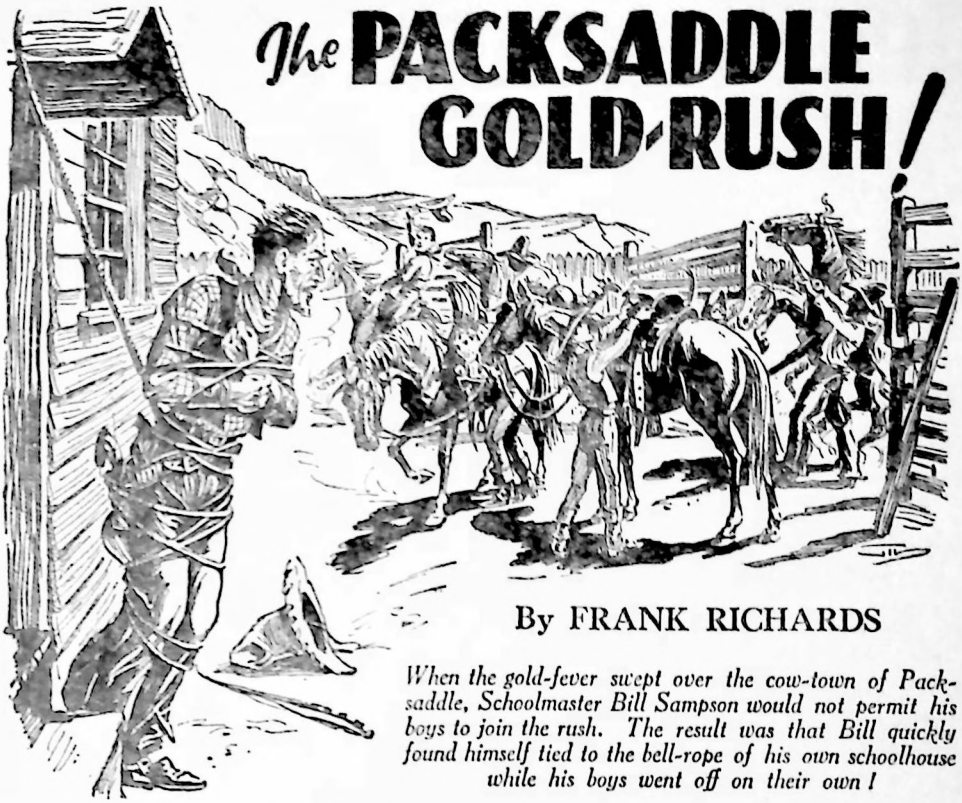
He said, "All kinds of boys I get,
Some dull, and others clever:
But you're the only one I've met
Who has no brains whatever."

I play the game; it is my pride;
I hate those who deceive.
I play it best when I can slide
Two aces up my sleeve.

And I shall play the game to win,
And play it fair, until
At last I'm called to enter in
My cell at Pentonville.



The PACKSADDLE GOLD-RUSH!



By FRANK RICHARDS

When the gold-fever swept over the cow-town of Packsaddle, Schoolmaster Bill Sampson would not permit his boys to join the rush. The result was that Bill quickly found himself tied to the bell-rope of his own schoolhouse while his boys went off on their own!

THE FIRST CHAPTER
LOCO?

BANG!

The sudden report of a shotgun made Dick, Slick and Mick jump.

They pulled in their ponies and stared round in surprise over the sea of grass.

Nobody was in sight.

Classes were over at Packsaddle, and the three comrades of the cow-town school were enjoying a gallop over the prairie, up the bank of the Rio Frio.

Packsaddle School and the cow-town were three miles behind them, out of sight under the waving grass. Far away ahead rose the high table-land of the Staked Plain, barring the blue sky.

"Say, that's some guy burning powder!" said Slick Poindexter. "But where the great horned toad is he located?"

"Down by the river," said Dick Carr.

"Aw, what'll a guy be doing, loosing off a gat on the Frio?" asked Mick Kavanagh.

The three schoolboys turned their horses in the direction of the river.

The Rio Frio, which foamed and flooded down from the Staked Plain in the fall, flowed thin and shallow in the hot summer of Texas. The main stream shrank to a mere rivulet, with smaller streams trickling into it

sluggishly through beds of mud and sand.

The high, grassy bluffs on the bank were twenty feet above the shrunken stream. Dick, Slick and Mick rode to the edge of the bluffs and looked down into the wide, deep space of the river course.

Far out from the bluffs trickled the stream, gleaming in the blazing sunshine. Here and there sandy bars showed through the water.

Dick Carr pointed with his riding-whip.

"There he is!"

Out on the sandbanks, toylike in the distance, was a figure of a man in a Stetson hat, with a shotgun in his hands.

Nearer the bank, in the shadow of the bluffs, stood a tent, and tethered near it were a couple of pack-mules.

Slick Poindexter chuckled.

"I guess I'm wise to that guy," he remarked. "That's Pedlar Perkins, and I'll say he's plumb loco."

"What the dickens is he camped there for?" asked Dick Carr.

Slick chuckled again.

"Fossicking," he answered.

"Fossicking!" repeated Dick blankly.

The tenderfoot of Packsaddle School knew what fossicking was—gold-seeking. But there was no gold that he had ever heard of in the cow-country. Hopeful guys sometimes went fossicking in the rocky uplands of the Staked Plain, but on the grassy prairies of Santanta County they might as well have looked for platinum or diamonds.

"Is he potty?" asked Dick.

"You said it," chortled Mick, "if you mean loco, old-timer! I'll say he's plumb loco, and then some."

Dick Carr stared down at the man. Distant as he was, Dick had a fairly clear view of his face—bony, hard-bitten, keen. If he was "loco," he did not look it, but he looked like a guy that needed watching.

"I've sure heard a heap about that hombre," grinned Slick. "He's a pedlar by trade, and he came this way from Arizona and New Mexico. He told the boys in the Red Dog at Packsaddle that he had picked up colour in the Rio Frio."

"Colour?" repeated Dick.

"Signs of gold, you gink! He allowed that there was pay-dirt in the Frio, like he had found in creeks way out in Arizona. I'll say they sniggered a few, and then a few more! But he was sure fixed on it, and he bought a heap of stores at old Wash's store and camped there. He's sure given up peddling for fossicking. I'll tell a man, I'll eat all the gold he washes out of the sand in the Frio."

The man in the river-bed had not observed the three schoolboys sitting in their saddles high up on the bluff. They watched him curiously.

Unless he was "loco," it was difficult to account for his extraordinary actions.

He was re-loading the shotgun, which they had heard him discharge once. What he had fired at was a mystery.

There was no living thing to be seen in the river-bed, except Pedlar Perkins himself. Apparently he was burning powder for his own amusement. If that was his only reason for wasting powder and shot, there could be little doubt that he was "plumb loco."

"There he goes agin!" grinned Mick Kavanagh.

They saw the pedlar lift the shotgun and take aim. He was aiming at a bar of sand that ran out from the muddy bank into the stream.

Bang!

In the silence the report floated up, almost like thunder, echoing far along the Rio Frio.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Dick Carr. "Mad as a hatter, I should say."

"You said it!" agreed Slick.

Pedlar Perkins did not look up. With the shotgun under his arm, he walked across to the sandy bar he had fired at, bent down and inspected it carefully with his keen eyes.

Then he started re-loading the gun again.

Dick, Slick and Mick wheeled their horses and rode away from the bluffs, leaving Pedlar Perkins to his peculiar occupation of blazing away at the sandbanks of the Frio.

As they rode, another report floated up from the sunken river-bed.

Bang!

And as they galloped on, another bang came faintly to their ears. Then they were out of hearing of the mysterious fossicker.

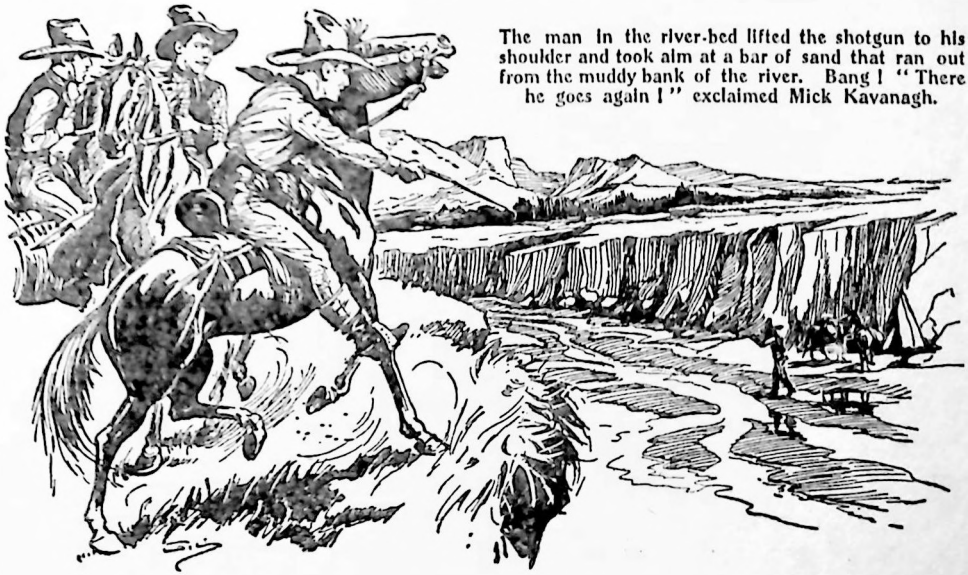
By the time they had finished their gallop and ridden back to Packsaddle School, the three chums had forgotten Pedlar Perkins. But they were destined to be reminded of him.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

GOLD!

PIE SANDERS rode up the school trail, in the sunny morning, at a wild burst of speed. He came clattering in at the school gate, his face ablaze with excitement; and the Packsaddle bunch, waiting in the playground for the school bell to ring, gathered round Pie, wondering what was up.

Pie was a day-boy, and lived with his folks at Squaw Mountain. His way to school lay by the cow-town, and he sometimes rode into the town on his way to school to leave an order at Job Wash's store. If there was any news in the cow-town, Pie picked it up and brought it to school with him, and this morning it was clear he had



The man in the river-bed lifted the shotgun to his shoulder and took aim at a bar of sand that ran out from the muddy bank of the river. Bang! "There he goes again!" exclaimed Mick Kavanagh.

picked up some startling news. He was gasping with excitement as he dragged in his foaming bronc.

"Say, what's got you, Pie?" yelled Slick Poindexter.

"Spill it!" said Steve Carson.

Pie gasped.

"Gold!"

"Gold!" repeated every fellow in the bunch blankly.

"Gold!" yelled Pie. "I'll say all the burg's humming with it! I'll tell a man, that guy Perkins has struck pay-dirt on the Frio!"

"Can it!" jeered Carson.

"You want to tell that yarn to a rube from Rubesville!" grinned Poker Parker.

Pie gasped with breathlessness and excitement.

"I'm telling you! It's the goods! I'll say that guy Perkins walked into Packsaddle last night with a bag of dust he had washed out of the Frio. I'll tell all Texas!"

"Great gophers!" exclaimed Slick Poindexter. "Mean to say he's struck gold in the Frio?"

"Yep!" gasped Pie.

The school bell began to ring, but nobody in the bunch heeded it. The startling news had got every guy gasping.

"Gold in the Frio!" said Dick Carr. "That man Perkins isn't potty, after all."

"I'll say every guy in Packsaddle allowed he was loco!" exclaimed Slick. "But he's got the laugh on his side if he's struck pay-dirt."

Clang, clang, clang! rang the school bell. But the iron clang fell on unheeding ears.

Gold!

It was a magic word!

The Packsaddle bunch hummed and buzzed with excitement.

"By gum!" gasped Slim Dixon. "If there's gold in the Frio, I guess that guy Perkins ain't the only galoot that's going to wash it out."

"You said it!" exclaimed Hunky Tutt.

"I'm telling you," gasped Pie, "half Packsaddle's started already! Old Wash is tearing his hair—what he's got left—because his assistants have moseyed off and left him to carry on the store on his lonesome. There ain't a hombre in the Red Dog—even the bar-keeper's gone! When the noos gets round to the ranches there won't be a puncher left to ride herd! I'm telling you!"

The bell ceased to ring. Small Brown, the teacher, came hurrying across the playground to the buzzing bunch.

"Boys!" squealed Small Brown. "Go into the schoolroom at once! What does this mean? I shall call Mr. Sampson——"

"Aw, pack it up, you Brown!" shouted Steve Carson. "Say, you guys, who's for the Frio?"

"You said it, Steve!" shouted Poker Parker.

"School——" squeaked Small Brown.

"School nothing!" snapped Big Steve. "I guess we ain't fooling around no doggoned school with half the county washing out gold on the Frio!"

"Surest thing you know!" gasped Slick.

Bill Sampson, schoolmaster of Packsaddle School, came striding out of the porch of the schoolhouse. Bill's rugged, bearded face was wrathy under his ten-gallon hat. He cracked the quirt with which he had once ridden herd on the Kicking Mule ranges, and with which he now kept order at the cow-town school.

"Say!" roared Bill. "What's

this game? Say, you young ginks gone deaf? Ain't you heered that doggoned bell none?"

"Gold!" yelled Pie Sanders. "You lissen, Bill! That galoot Perkins has sure struck gold on the Frio."

Bill gave a snort.

"Gold nothing! If that guy Perkins allows he's struck gold on the Frio, he's sure stringing the boys! Forget it!"

"He's showed up pay-dirt in the burg!" yelled Pie. "He's traded a bag of gold dust with old Wash for canned stores! He went back last night with his two mules loaded so they could hardly make the grade. Any guy in Packsaddle will tell you, Bill!"

"What guff you giving me, you Pie?" growled Bill. "I'll tell a man I've fossicked for gold along to Arizona, and I sure know sign when I see it. And there ain't no more gold in Santanta County than there is brains in that bone head of yourn, you young gink!"

"I'm telling you, half Packsaddle's gone already!" yelled Pie. "And I guess the other half is starting."

"Make it a holiday to-day, Bill," said Dick Carr eagerly. "Give us a chance with the rest."

Bill glared at him.

"You young geck!" he roared. "Holiday nothing! Ain't you young guys sent hyer to l'arn from Mister Brown, what is paid a salary by the school committee to teach you reading and writing and jografy and such? And ain't I hyer to see that you do it?"

"Look here, Bill——" exclaimed Slick.

"Can it!" roared Bill. "If that guy Perkins struck gold in a heap as big as Pike's Peak, I reckon this hyer school would go on jest the same. If there's a gold rush on the Frio, I guess it ain't no place for schoolboys, nohow. Git into school!"

"You pesky old geck!" roared Steve Carson.

"Pack it up, Bill!"

"We're sure hitting the Frio!"

"I'll tell a man——"

"Can it, Bill!"

Bill Sampson surveyed the excited bunch with a grim brow.

"You young guys are sure shooting off your mouths a whole lot!" he roared. "Now, you get me? Mosey into that schoolroom, smart and pronto, or I'll sure herd you in like you was a bunch of ornery steers! Pronto!"

But the amazing news of a gold-rush on the Frio had wildly excited the school. Instead of obeying Bill, they roared protest.

"Pack it up, Bill!"

"Make it a holiday!"

"Nix on school!"

"Who's for the Frio?"

"You said it!"

"Doggone that old piecan Bill!"

Some of the bunch were already starting for the corral to get out their horses. Pie Sanders wheeled his bronco to ride out at the gate.

The six-gun schoolmaster made a stride at him. He gripped Pie, and jerked him out of the saddle.

There was a bump and a roar as Pie landed on the ground. There was another roar as Bill's quirt rang round his sprawling legs.

"School!" roared Bill.

Crack, crack, crack, crack! rang the quirt in his powerful hand. It landed on shoulders and backs and legs impartially, every fellow in the bunch getting it hot and strong.

Towering over the mob of schoolboys, the gigantic Bill laid it on, and there was a bite in every whack.

"School!" roared Bill. "You hear me whisper? You want to herd into school, I'm telling you!"

With howls and yells the bunch scattered before the whacking quirt.

Fellows who were heading for the corral changed their minds and headed for the schoolhouse instead. The six-gun schoolmaster drove them in like a bunch of steers and then tramped round the playground for stragglers, and herded them in after the rest.

In five minutes Bill had the bunch in school. Bill was the man to handle that bunch, there was no doubt of that!

With the quirt under his arm, Bill sat at his desk, glaring at the wriggling, excited bunch.

"Now you l'arn from Mister Brown!" roared Bill. "You get a cinch on the lesson, you Brown! And if there's so much as a whisper in this hyer school, I'll sure wade in and quirt you a few, you pesky young piecans!"

And under Bill's grim eye there was not a whisper during morning school at Packsaddle. Small Brown taught a quiet, if not attentive, class!

THE THIRD CHAPTER

THE FIRST TO GO!

THE Packsaddle bunch were quiet. But if they were calm, it was the calm before the storm.

They sat in class—they listened to Small Brown—but their thoughts were elsewhere. That magic word, gold, was in every mind.

It was almost unbelievable that gold had been struck on the Frio. No outcrop of the precious metal was known within a hundred miles and more. But if it had been struck, it was the most exciting news since the old days when the Apaches had come swooping down from the Staked Plain to raid the ranches. And if it had been struck, every guy in Packsaddle wanted to be in on the strike!

No fellow in the bunch knew from experience what a gold-rush was like. But they had heard about gold-rushes, in Arizona and Colorado and California. Every fellow knew how a town would sometimes empty itself in a day, the inhabitants rushing off to the scene of a new rich strike. And while the bunch sat in class that morning they knew from what Pie had told them, that Packsaddle town was already in the rush.

If Pedlar Perkins really had shown up genuine gold-dust in the cow-town, and it seemed that he had, that was enough—more than enough! There would be a general exodus of every man who could get away.

Ranchers in the vicinity were likely to hit worry when the news got round the ranges. For it was certain that the punchers would saddle up and ride for the Frio as soon as they heard that gold was to be had for the picking up. There would be a crowd from other cow-towns up and down the Frio—from all parts of the country.

First come would be first served! And here sat the school bunch—at lessons, letting the rush get ahead! Strong as was Bill's authority in the cow-town school, it trembled in the balance now.

Even Dick, Slick and Mick, who were all for Bill, were deeply restive now. Steve Carson, Poker and Slim were savagely impatient. The whole bunch thrilled with excitement and seemed to strain like buck-jumpers at a rope.

Fellows who had watches peered at them every now and then. They were wildly anxious to get out. Small Brown certainly could not have kept them in. But for the presence of Bill

Sampson, there would have been a general stampede from school. And is was rather doubtful whether even Bill would be able to hold them for keeps.

A deep murmur rose from the class at twelve o'clock, which was the hour of dismissal. For the bell did not ring.

Bill glared.

" You young ginks beginning ballyhoo agin ? " he demanded.

The bunch did not need telling twice ! They scampered out of the schoolroom like fresh ponies released from a corral.

Bill strode after them with a frowning brow. It was the duty of Hank, the hired man, to ring the school bell at stated intervals. On this occasion he seemed to have forgotten ! Bill was the man to remind him not to forget.

But Hank was not to be seen.



The Six-gun Schoolmaster made a rush at Pie Sanders and jerked him out of the saddle. Pie gave a roar as Bill's quirt sang round his legs. "School ! " roared Bill.

" It's twelve ! " howled Slick.

" I guess the bell ain't gone ! " said Bill.

" It really is twelve o'clock, Mr. Sampson ! " squealed Small Brown. Probably he had had enough of such a restive class.

Bill rose from his desk.

" Then why ain't that galoot Hank rung the bell ? " he snorted. " I'll say I'll talk to that hombre a few ! Beat it, you 'uns ! "

Bill strode across to the cookhouse where Tin Tung, the Chinee, was preparing the school dinner.

" Say, Chink ! " roared Bill. " Where's that guy Hank ? "

" He lun off ! " answered Tin Tung.

" He's beat it ! " exclaimed Bill in amazement.

" He lun along findee gold along Lio Flio ! " explained Tin Tung.

Bill snorted with wrath. The gold craze had caught at least one guy at

the school ; Hank had gone to join in the rush. That was why the school bell had not rung.

" Carry me home to die ! " growled Bill. " I'll sure lambaste that scallywag a few when he hits home agin ! "

He strode across to the school gate, slammed it and barred it. Then he gave the bunch in the playground a glare. Bill did not need telling that some of them, or all of them, would have cleared off if they had had half a chance.

" You lissen, you guys ! " roared Bill. " You ain't going out of that gate none. You keep corralled inside them fences ! You hear me yaup ? I'll say that I'll quirt any guy going out."

" But, look here, Bill ! " exclaimed Dick Carr warmly. The bunch were, as a rule, allowed to ride out between classes, and this restriction of their liberty was exasperating—in the circumstances.

But Bill was well aware that any fellow who got out of his sight would hit Pedlar Perkins' camp up the Frio. He was keeping the bunch herded in till the excitement was over.

" You argufying, you Carr ? " roared Bill, cracking his quirt. " I guess I'm riding herd here, big boy ! And I'll tell you young ginks this—that galoot Perkins is either a liar or a fool—there ain't no gold in the Frio, nor never was. Chew on that ! "

" He sure traded a bag of gold-dust at Wash's store, Bill ! " exclaimed Pie Sanders.

" Aw, can it ! " snorted Bill. " I'm telling you he never got any gold out of the Frio ; and if you wasn't a bunch of boneheads you'd sure know there wasn't no gold in the cow-country nohow."

The bunch gave a howl of derision. Generally, they respected Bill's judgment. Bill's was the last word on the subject of horses or cows, or harness. But though he had fossicked in Arizona in his time, the bunch did not figure that he knew a whole heap about gold-mining. And it was an absolute certainty that Pedlar Perkins had shown up gold-dust in Packsaddle town, and allowed that he had washed it out of the Frio sand-bars. And it was a sure cinch that old Job Wash would not have traded him stores for anything but the genuine article.

" Aw, talk hoss-sense, Bill ! " exclaimed Slick Poindexter. " It was a cow-country in California afore they struck gold there. Now gold's been struck in Texas——"

" Pack it up ! " yapped Bill. "I'm telling you that guy Perkins is loco. More like he's a doggoned liar—he sure looks it ! Anyhow, nobody ain't breaking herd out of this hyer bunch."

Bill's word was law ! But it looked as if the law would be broken. The bunch, excited and rebellious and angry, went into the chuckhouse to dinner. Over dinner there was only one topic—the gold strike on the Frio.

To the eager minds of the schoolboys, the barren sands of the sunken river were thick with gleaming gold-dust and sparkling nuggets.

True, nobody had ever seen anything of the kind, hitherto. All the bunch knew the Frio, for miles either way. Not a galoot had ever dreamed that there was gold in its muddy, sandy bed.

But, as Slick pointed out, most gold discoveries were made unexpectedly, in unexpected places. California had been a land of cattle-grazing till the great gold rush of '49. The bare idea that a little California lay within an

hour's ride of the cow-town school was dazzling.

Bill Sampson came along while the bunch were at chuck, and glared in at the door. With a quick eye, he counted heads. Then he roared :

" Say, where's that guy Carson ? "

Nobody answered, but some of the bunch grinned. Most of them knew that Steve Carson had crept quietly away to the corral for his horse, hoping to get away unnoticed during dinner.

Bill breathed wrath.

He rushed out of the chuckhouse and tore along to the corral. With a clatter of hoofs, Big Steve came riding out of the corral gate into the playground.

Unheeding Bill's angry roar, he spurred his horse, and dashed across to the school gate on the trail.

" Pull in, you young geck ! " roared Bill, prancing after him in fury.

" I'll say nope ! " snapped Steve, over his shoulder.

" I'll sure quirt you a few ! "

" Aw, go and chop chips ! "

The school gate was closed and barred. With Bill raging on his track, Carson had no time to dismount and open it.

He put his horse to the leap.

The bunch crowding out of the chuckhouse watched him breathlessly.

" Good luck, Steve ! " yelled Poker Parker.

" Put it on, Steve ! " howled Slim Dixon.

Up went Steve on his bronco in a wild leap. The hoofs just cleared the gate, and Carson came thundering down in the trail outside.

" Bravo ! " roared Dick Carr. For the first time since he had been at Packsaddle, Dick was in sympathy with Big Steve.

Bill glared over the gate in wild wrath, brandishing his quirt. But Steve Carson was out of reach. Plying whip and spur, he went galloping down the trail, and disappeared from sight.

" Carry me home to die ! " gasped Bill.

The first of the bunch to join the gold-rush was gone. And Bill, determined as he was to keep the bunch in hand, perhaps wondered how long he would be able to do it.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

ROPED IN !

Pie Sanders and the other day-boys, rode away from Packsaddle School, after class that day, with cheery grins on their faces. Bill watched them go, with a frowning brow. Day-boys had to be allowed to go home, but Bill had a strong suspicion that they would not turn up at school the following morning.

It was more than a suspicion with the rest of the bunch ; they knew that Pie and Co. would not turn up on the morrow. And nearly a score of fellows, who boarded at the school and were under Bill's authority at all times, chafed with angry impatience. Of all the bunch, Dick Carr was perhaps the least disposed to kick against Bill's rule. But now he was as keen and eager as the rest.

No doubt Bill was right. In the first place, he did not believe that a gold strike had been made on the Frio, in spite of evidence that convinced everybody else. In the second place, a gold rush was not an affair suitable for schoolboys to take part in.

It was certain that the roughest and toughest guys for twenty miles round would be gathered at Pedlar Perkins' camp—guys who packed guns, and were not slow to pull them. Gold or no gold, Bill figured that

Packsaddle School was the right place for the Packsaddle bunch.

He was right, no doubt, but the bunch did not see it.

Ordered to stay within the school fences after school, when they had always been free to ride where they liked, they raged. They pictured Steve Carson and the lucky day-boys, picking up lumps of the yellow metal from the sands of the Frio.

Already the cradles would be rocking, washing the precious grains out of muddy sands. And even a rich "placer" would not last long with so many hands at work! In a day or two, every precious grain might be washed out, and Packsaddle left out in the cold! The bunch were not standing for that!

"I'll tell all Texas!" said Slick Poindexter. "I like Bill, but I ain't standing for this, and don't you forget it. I'm hitting the Frio, to fossick for gold."

"Same here!" said Dick Carr determinedly.

"You said it!" agreed Mick.

"I guess Bill's keeping tabs on us," remarked Hunky Tutt dubiously. "And he sure has got a heavy hand with a quirt, doggone him."

"I reckon if there ain't any other way, we'll sure cinch that pesky old piecan, and hog-tie him!" declared Slick. "But I guess he can't keep tabs on us all the time."

Bill, it was certain, was on the watch, and very wary. Still, as Slick said, he could not keep tabs on all the bunch all the time. And a little later, Dick, Slick and Mick slipped into the corral, unseen by Bill.

There they saddled and bridled their horses. But the corral gate opened into the playground, and there was no other way out. To get out at the school gate, they had to get across the playground uncaught. Bridle in hand, just within the corral, they watched for an opportunity.

"Look!" breathed Slick suddenly.

Right across the playground, on the back fence, a clambering figure was seen. It was Bud Dunn, climbing the fence. And Bill, who had spotted him, was rushing after him to grab him before he got over.

His back was to the corral, and his attention was fixed on the clambering Bud. It was a chance for Dick, Slick and Mick.

"Come on!" muttered Dick Carr.

They led their horses out of the corral and ran them across to the school gate. Swiftly they dragged down the bars and swung the gate open.

By that time Bill had reached Bud on the back fence. He had Bud by one ankle and was dragging.

Bump!

Bud Dunn landed on the ground, winded. Bill's quirt sang in the air, but it did not fall on Bud. At that moment Bill spotted Dick, Slick and Mick mounting their horses in the open gateway.

He gave a roar.

"Stop! I'm telling you to stop, you'uns!"

"Beat it!" gasped Mick Kavanagh.

The three rode out of the gate, heedless of Bill's infuriated roar. They dashed down the school trail.

"I guess we done beaten Bill!"

"You said it!" chuckled Mick.

From the school trail they turned into the open prairie, northward towards the upper Frio, where the day before they had seen Pedlar Perkins at his lone camp, loosing off his shotgun.

"Gum!" exclaimed Slick, as a crash of galloping hoofs sounded behind them, and he glanced over his shoulder. "Bill's after us."



There was a wild yell from Mick Kavanagh as the loop of Bill's lasso dropped over his shoulders and jerked him from the saddle. "Beat it!" yelled Mick to his chums. "Beat it and get away, I'm telling you!"

Dick and Mick looked back.

Bill Sampson, his rugged face red with rage, was riding like the wind on their track, swinging his coiled lasso as he galloped.

"Oh, great gophers!" gasped Mick. "Put it on!"

"Attaboy!" panted Slick.

They spurred on hard and fast over the rugged, rolling prairie. Hard and fast on their trail came the six-gun schoolmaster.

It was a wild race! The schoolboys were well mounted, and they could ride! But Bill was well mounted, too, and the old puncher of the Kicking Mule knew how to get every ounce out of a cayuse.

Dick Carr, whose pony was the fastest at Packsaddle, drew ahead, but he checked his mount as he saw that Slick and Mick were dropping behind.

Mick, last of the three, urged on his pony frantically, in terror every minute of hearing the whir of a tossing rope. But Bill, behind, came on, gaining foot by foot, and suddenly the lasso flew.

There was a wild yell from Mick Kavanagh, as the loop dropped over his shoulders.

He dragged in his pony to lessen the force of the pull that was coming. But it jerked him from the saddle, and he bumped down on the prairie like a sack of alfalfa.

Dick and Slick reined in, panting. Mick, rolling at the end of the forty-foot rope, yelled to them.

"Beat it, you'uns! Beat it, and get away, I'm telling you!"

But Dick and Slick were not going to desert their comrade. Bill dashed up, pulled in his bronc, and leaped down. His powerful grasp was on Mick.

"We're standing by Mick, old man!" panted Dick Carr.

"Surest thing you know!" said Slick.

They rode back to the spot where Mick was wriggling in Bill Sampson's hefty grasp. The six-gun schoolmaster eyed them grimly.

He whipped a knot into the rope to secure his prisoner. Then, as Dick and Slick leaped from the saddle and rushed to the rescue, Bill jumped to meet them.

"Say, you young piecans!" roared Bill. "You figure you can break herd that-a-way, and get by with it! I guess you're going to forget it!"

Dick and Slick were husky fellows. But if they hoped that they had a chance of handling Bill, they quickly found out their mistake. Only to rescue their comrade would they have thought of attempting it. Mick, struggling in the knotted lasso, strove to come to their aid, but he strove in vain. Even the three of them would hardly have downed Bill! Two of them had no chance of downing him.

"Oh, gum!" gasped Slick, as he crumpled up in a sinewy hand.

"Oh, scissors!" panted Dick Carr.

Bill Sampson grasped them in either hand, and swung them off their feet. There was a loud crack as their heads came together. Two fearful yells blended into one floated over the prairie.

"I'll say I got you, sure!" grinned Bill.

He had! It was a cinch!

Struggling and wriggling in Bill's mighty grasp, Dick and Slick were knotted in the lasso. The three trailed at the end of the rope.

"You hitting Packsaddle, along of this baby?" grinned Bill.

They could only gasp.

Bill remounted his bronc. Guiding the bronc with his knees, he led three riderless horses with one hand, and held in the other the lasso, at the end of which trampled and stumbled three hapless schoolboys.

Dick, Slick and Mick hit Packsaddle! They could not help it. Bill had roped them in and they had to go back. Slipping and stumbling, panting and gasping, they trailed along at the tail of Bill's bronc; and they were glad enough to hit Packsaddle and get it over.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER
RIDING HERD!

"FORGET it!" roared Bill Sampson. The six-gun schoolmaster had got back to Packsaddle only in time. The chase on the prairie had been brief, but it had been long enough to give the rest of the bunch time to make up their minds to break herd, to get their horses out of the corral, and to saddle up.

A crowd of riders were about to come out at the school gate when Bill arrived there with his prisoners in tow.

"Aw, wake snakes!" gasped Bud Dunn. "Here's that piecan Bill agin, and he's sure cinched them galoots!"

Bill Sampson blocked the gateway. He sent the riderless horses scampering in, and grasped his quirt in his right hand. And the bunch backed their horses as the quirt sang in the air. In a few more minutes they would have been clear. But Bill had got back in time—and that was that!

"Forget it, you young gecks!" roared Bill. "Git off'n them cayuses, pronto! You hear me whisper!"

Slick Poindexter, struggling madly in the knotted lasso, gave a yell:

"Say, you boneheads, rush him and cinch him! I'll say there's more'n enough of you to handle that doggoned old piecan! Get a holt on him."

Slick broke off with a frantic yell as the quirt curled round him.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Any more from you, Poindexter?" roared Bill.

"Ow! Oh! Yow! You pesky old scallywag! Wow!" howled Slick.

Whack, whack!

"Any more?" roared Bill.

But there was no more from Slick!

Bill Sampson dismounted, slammed the gate and barred it.

Slowly, unwillingly, with grim looks, the bunch got off their horses and turned the animals back into the corral. Bill cast off the lasso from Dick, Slick and Mick.

He pointed with his quirt to the bunkhouse.

"Git!" he rapped.

"Look here, Bill!" gasped Dick Carr. "I—yarooooh! Whoooop!" He jumped clear of the ground as the quirt sang round his legs.

"Any more?" asked Bill.

"Yow-ow!"

"I guess I ain't asking you to spill anything!" said Bill. "I guess I'm telling you to hit that bunkhouse, and hit it quick!"

"I guess——" panted Mick.

Whack! Whack!

"Aw, let up!" yelled Mick, hopping frantically. "You pesky old piecan, I'm telling you to let up!"

Whack! Whack!

"Whoo-hooop!"

"Now," said Bill, "you're going to your bunks, and you're sure staying there. Don't you worry about no supper—I guess you ain't having no eats! Not till brekfuss in the morning, nohow! You get me? I guess I'm riding herd at this here school, and I'll tell a man I'm a galoot to do it! You hitting that bunkhouse?"

The quirt cracked, and Dick, Slick and Mick hit the bunkhouse in record time. They were in their bunks while the rest of the bunch had supper in the chuckhouse.

After supper Bill herded the bunch into the bunkhouse to bed. He stood in the doorway, quirt in hand, his face grim under his Stetson hat. The Packsaddle bunch turned into the bunks—but without any intention of staying there. Packsaddle was not going to be left out of the gold-rush—not if Packsaddle knew it.

"Now, you lissen, you'uns!" said Bill grimly. "I guess I'm wise to what you're figuring, but you sure ain't breaking herd in the dark, nohow! I'll mention that I'm camping in my blankets to-night, outside this hyer door—and if I'm woke up by any guy trying to squeeze out, I'll mention that I'm powerful sorry for that guy! Chew on that, you young ginks!"

Bill slammed the door.

Dick Carr breathed hard.

"We're not standing for this!" he said.

"Surest thing you know!" declared Slick.

Hardly an eye closed in the Packsaddle bunkhouse that night. Bill was still riding herd, but the herd was resolved to break loose. Bill or no Bill, the bunch were going to join in the Packsaddle gold-rush.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

PUTTING IT ACROSS BILL!

CLANG! rang the school bell at Packsaddle School in the bright sunshine of the Texas morning.

Bill Sampson was pulling at the rope.

The Packsaddle bunch were in the playground, but only the fellows who boarded at the cow-town school were there. Though it was time for class, not a single one of the day-boys had arrived; and of the boarders, not one

made a step towards the schoolhouse as Bill clanged the bell.

Instead of heading for the schoolroom, the bunch stood in an excited crowd in the middle of the playground, heedless of the bell.

Small Brown, the teacher, blinked at them through his horn-rimmed glasses, but did not venture to horn in; the bunch were in a mood to stick him under the school pump, and Bill after him.

Bill, as he clanged the bell, eyed them also—grimly. Bill knew that his authority trembled in the balance, but he figured that his quirt was going to enforce obedience, as it had never failed to do.

Clang, clang! With a final jarring clang, the bell ceased to ring, and not a fellow had taken a step towards the schoolroom.

Dick Carr looked round over a crowd of excited faces. Dick, who liked Bill immensely, was up against the six-gun schoolmaster now, and the whole bunch backed him.

"Anybody going in to school?" demanded Dick.

"Not a guy!" declared Mick Kavanagh.

"Nix on school!" said Bud Dunn.

"Surest thing you know!" declared Slick Poindexter.

"Let's tell Bill and have it out," said the tenderfoot of Packsaddle. "If Bill will give the school a day's holiday, all right. If he won't——"

"I guess we'll take it!" roared Slick.

"You said it!"

"Come on!" said Dick Carr.

The whole bunch started towards the porch of the schoolhouse, and Bill, who was coming out with his quirt in hand, was relieved. Bill was ready to herd the bunch into school like a drove of steers, but he was glad to see them herding in of their own accord. That, for the moment, was what he figured they were doing.

But he soon saw his mistake. The bunch of schoolboys halted at the porch, and evidently had no intention of going in.

"Now, Bill——" began Dick Carr.

Bill pointed to the schoolroom with his quirt.

"Mosey in!" he rapped. "I guess you're late! Mosey in afore I start in with this hyer quirt! You hear me toot?"

"Yes, and now you hear me," said Dick Carr determinedly. "We want to take a hand in the gold-rush, Bill."

"Forget it!" yapped Bill.

"The rush started as soon as the news got out, and everybody's going that can get away," said Dick Carr. "All the day-boys have gone; not one of them has turned up this morning for school, Bill."

"I'll sure quirt 'em a few!" said Bill.

"Hank, your hired man has gone—you had to ring the bell yourself this morning," went on Dick. "Tin Tung, the cook, cleared last night—we had to scrounge for our own breakfast. Now, look here, Bill, you've had some experience of gold-digging in Arizona. Why don't you join up, too, and let us all go? You can't keep the day-boys back, they've gone already! Fair play all round, Bill!"

"I guess the tenderfoot has spilled a hatful!" said Slick. "What you got to say to that, Bill?"

Slick Poindexter was standing with his hand behind him. In that hand, was grasped a lasso—hidden from Bill's sight.

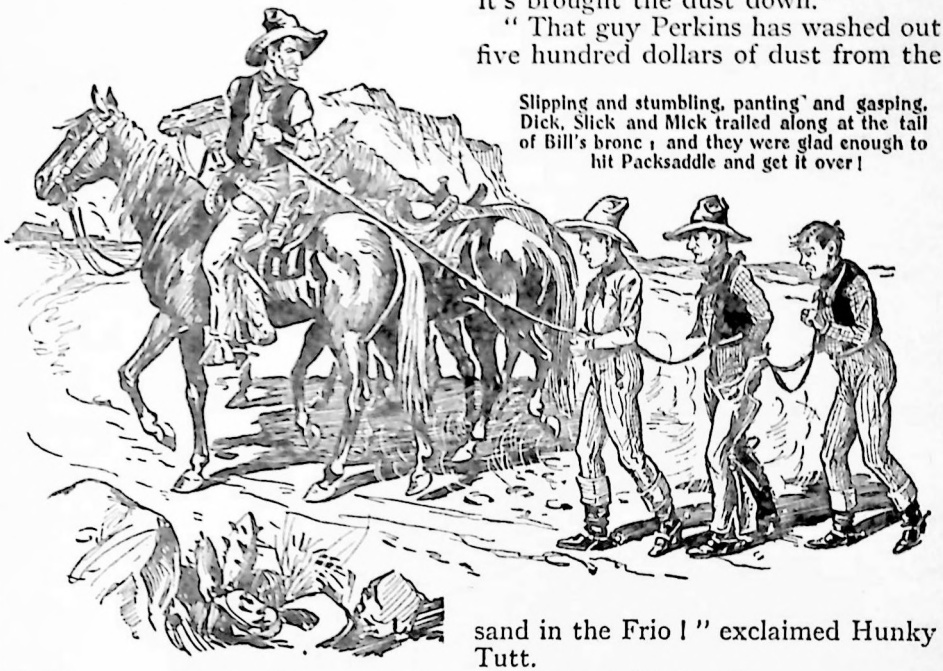
The bunch hated trouble with Bill. But if he stood in the way of their

joining in the gold rush there was going to be trouble.

Bill eyed the bunch, gripping the quirt. They rather expected him to wade in without wasting breath—that was Bill Sampson's way.

But Bill was unusually patient that morning. He had known what a gold-rush was like in his fossicking days in Arizona, and he could understand the feelings of the bunch.

" Now, you lissen, you 'uns," said



Slipping and stumbling, panting and gasping, Dick, Slick and Mick trailed along at the tail of Bill's bronc ; and they were glad enough to hit Packsaddle and get it over !

Bill with unexpected quietness. " I'm telling you ! I guess there ain't no gold in the cow-country—there ain't a s'picion of it within a hundred miles of Packsaddle, and that galoot Perkins is jest stringing the boys along."

There was a howl from the bunch.

" Aw, can it ! " roared Slick Poindexter. " You figure that Old Wash along to the burg would let Perkins have two mule loads of stores for anything but real gold-dust ? "

Bill paused, Slick had him there ! Undoubtedly, it must have been genuine gold that Pedlar Perkins traded at Job Wash's shebang for stores. Old Job Wash was not a guy to be deceived in such a matter.

" And look here, Bill," urged Mick Kavanagh. " There's gold on the Staked Plain, and the Frio sure comes down from the Staked Plain. I guess it's brought the dust down."

" That guy Perkins has washed out five hundred dollars of dust from the sand in the Frio ! " exclaimed Hunky Tutt.

Bill shook his head.

" I'm telling you ! " he said. " That guy Perkins is a pedlar, and he hit Packsaddle with his two burros loaded with notions and sold them in the burg. Then he allowed that he raised colour in the Frio sand-bars—and I guess all the burg figured that he was loco. But I'm telling you—he ain't loco—he's jest a doggoned liar, and he's stringing the boys. I'll sure eat

all the gold he's washed out of the Frio! I'm telling you, this hyer is cow-country, and there ain't no yeller metal in Santanta County."

"Ain't he a doggoned obstinate old geck!" exclaimed Mick. "A Mexican burro sure has nothing on you, Bill."

"Look here, Bill!" exclaimed Dick Carr.

"Can it!" interrupted Bill. "I've talked to you good and patient, 'cause I know how you feel, figuring that there's gold dust to be picked up and other guys picking it up. But I guess I've spilled enough! Even if there was gold on the Frio, which there ain't, this hyer school ain't going to break herd, nohow! You're here to l'arn from Mister Brown, and I guess I'm going to see you l'arn, if quirting you will do it."

"Can it, Bill!" roared the bunch.

"I'm telling you, there'll be a herd of the toughest guys in Texas along to Pedlar Perkins' camp, and it sure ain't no place for schoolboys!" said Bill. "I'd sure like to make the trip, and give it the once-over myself—but I ain't going—I got to ride herd here! And you young gecks have got to get into school."

"Forget it, Bill!"

Bill's eyes gleamed under his ten-gallon hat. He had talked to the bunch good and patient. But his patience was exhausted now.

He cracked the quirt.

"'Nuff said!" roared Bill. "Don't spill any more! Git into that schoolroom, pronto!"

"Nix on school!"

"Not by a jugful!"

It was a roar of defiance from the Packsaddle bunch.

That was enough for Bill!

He strode out of the porch with upraised quirt. There was a yell from Dick Carr as he got the first lick.

But Bill landed only that one lick.

Slick Poindexter was ready with his rope! His hand came out suddenly from behind him and the lasso flew.

Bill was not looking for that!

Before he knew what was happening the loop was tightening round his brawny shoulders, and Slick's drag on the rope toppled him over. Bill Sampson hit Texas hard!

"Aw! Wake snakes!" roared Bill, as he crashed. "Carry me home to die! I'll sure quirt you good and hard——"

"Get him!" yelled Slick.

Five or six pairs of hands grasped the rope and dragged. With that powerful pull on the lasso Bill had no chance of wrenching himself loose.

He went rolling and bumping across the playground at the end of the rope—helpless, enraged and roaring. The quirt fell from his hand. The big Stetson dropped from his head. He rolled and crashed and roared. Never before had Bill Sampson failed in riding herd at Packsaddle School. But this time the bunch had put it across Bill!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

THE SCHOOLBOY GOLD-HUNTERS!

"Aw—ooogh—I guess—wake snakes—whoooop!" roared Bill.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess we cinched him!"

"Get him, you ginks!" yelled Slick.

Bill's sinewy arms were pinned by the lasso, tight as a steel band round him. That was fortunate for the bunch. If Bill had had a chance of hitting, even a score of fellows would not have found him easy to handle, and there would have been some damage.

But the headmaster of Packsaddle School was nearly helpless. He struggled as the bunch closed on him and grasped him. But they had him where they wanted him.

Knot after knot was tied in the rope. Then Bill was allowed to scramble to his feet.

He stood swaying and stumbling, spluttering with breathless rage. The grinning bunch surrounded him.

" Sorry, Bill ! " gasped Dick Carr.

" You pesky young gink ! " panted Bill.

" I guess we hate to handle you like this, old-timer," said Slick Poindexter. " But we sure ain't sticking in school while there's a crowd of guys washing a fortune out of the Frio ! "

" Not so's you'd notice it ! " chuckled Mick.

" Boys ! " Small Brown came up squealing. " Boys ! What——"

" You horning in, you Brown ! " roared Slick, and Small Brown jumped back like a startled prairie rabbit. " Say, you beat it, pronto ! "

" Corral him in his cabin ! " said Hunky Tutt.

" You said it ! " agreed Slick.

Five or six of the bunch hustled Small Brown away to his cabin.

Mister Brown did not resist. If Bill could not handle the bunch in their present wildly-excited mood, it was a sure thing that Small Brown couldn't, and he had no hunch to try it on.

He skipped away to his cabin in dire alarm, his Derby hat falling off, his coat-tails flying, his horn-rimmed spectacles slipping down his nose.

He darted into the cabin like a gopher into a hole, and slammed the door and bolted it. Hunky and Bud ran for hammer and nails, and nailed door and window to keep him safe there. Not that they cared a boiled bean about Mister Brown, but they did not want him to let Bill loose too soon after they were gone.

Bill was the man to saddle up and pursue the bunch, quirt in hand. The bunch did not want that.

While Bud and Hunky secured Small Brown in his cabin, Dick, Slick and Mick and a crowd of others marched Bill to the porch of the schoolhouse, over which hung the bell-rope.

Slick tied the end of the bell-rope round him to keep him from wandering !

Bill's rugged, bearded face was crimson with rage.

In all his career as a schoolmaster at Packsaddle, Bill had never known anything like this before. But there had never been a gold-rush before at Packsaddle !

" Say, you young gecks ! " gasped Bill. " You figure that you're getting by with this ? "

" Just a few ! " grinned Mick.

" Surest thing you know ! " chuckled Poindexter. " Say, I'll bring you back some gold-dust from the diggings, Bill."

" Aw, won't I quirt you ! " gasped Bill.

" Mebbe you will, old-timer, but not jest now ! " chuckled Slick. " Say, you guys. I guess it's time we hit the trail."

" Come on ! " shouted Dick Carr.

There was a rush across the playground to the corral. Slick flung the corral bar aside, and the bunch led out their horses.

Bill watched them in speechless rage, from the porch of the schoolhouse ! Small Brown watched them, in twittering terror, from the window of his cabin.

With a roar of excitement the

bunch led their horses out of the corral, and saddled and bridled them. Some of the more thoughtful fellows rooted out spades and trowels and such implements from Hank's shack. Of gold-mining, even of the simple processes of " placer " mining, the Packsaddle bunch knew nothing—there were no " diggings " in the cow country. But all were wildly eager to get on the spot.

Most of them had heard about " placers " in the gold country. A guy had to select a spot where the gold grains, brought down ages ago in the flowing waters of a river, had been embedded in the sands. The precious grains had to be washed out of the sand and mud.

It was not like quartz mining, which required machinery and the sinking of shafts and cutting of adits.

It was simple enough—if a lucky hombre found the right spot ! In the old days of the Californian gold-rush, lucky prospectors had sometimes washed a fortune out of a creek in a few days.

For all the bunch knew, fortunes might already have been washed out of the Frio by the lucky ones who had started first !

They were wild to get there.

And why, after all, should there not be gold in the Frio ? It flowed down from the high tableland of the Staked Plain—and it was said, at least, that there were gold deposits in the old " Llano Estacado." Nobody had ever found any, yet—but every discovery had to be made for the first time !

" Say, you young ginks ! " came a roar from Bill.

" Good-bye, Bill ! "

" S'long, old-timer ! "

Some of the bunch were already riding out at the gate. But Dick, Slick and Mick rode across to the schoolhouse for a last word with the six-gun schoolmaster wriggling wildly on the end of the bell-rope.

" Bill, old-timer, won't you come, too ? " urged Slick Poindexter. " We sure will be powerful glad if you'll quit fooling and hump along."

" Say yes, Bill ! " urged Dick Carr.

" We sure do want you, Bill ! " said Mick.

" Aw, won't I quirt you a few, and then a few more ! " gasped Bill. " If I don't take the hide off'n you, you can call me a Digger Injun ! "

" If that's the lot we'll beat it ! " grinned Slick.

" Say, you lissen ! " roared Bill. " I allow there ain't no gold on the Frio, and that pesky scallywag Perkins, is jest stringing the boys. You doggoned young ginks, if that galoot had washed out five hundred dollars from the Frio, you figure he would shout it out to all Santanta County ? Wouldn't he jest keep it dark, and wash it all out for his pesky self ? "

" But he has ! " roared Slick. " I'm telling you, he's showed up a bag of gold-dust at Packsaddle."

" I guess he had it in his rags ! " snorted Bill. " I'm telling you, it's all a gum-game. Jest gum ! "

" But why ? " demanded Dick Carr.

" How'd I know why ? " snorted Bill. " I'll say that guy Perkins is a sharp from Sharpsville, and he's got a gum-game on. I ain't wise to it, but that's the how of it. It's all gum. You figure he'd put the whole section wise if he had struck gold ? Forget it ! "

Dick was silent for a moment.

He could not help being struck by that argument.

" But he couldn't have kept it

dark," said Dick at last. "Anybody might have seen him at work there; it's open country. Anybody who saw him washing out gold would have spread the news. Why, we saw him there only the other day, when we were out on a ride."

"Washing gold?" sneered Bill savagely.

"N-n-no, he wasn't washing gold when we saw him. He was loosing off a shot-gun. Still, we did see him——"

"I guess he'd have kept it dark as long as he could!" snorted Bill. "He had no call to horn into Packsaddle and shout it out. I'm telling you it's all gum!"

"Pack it up!" retorted Slick. "If there ain't no gold on the Frio, I guess we'll come back, Bill. But we're going to see."

And the three rode after the rest of the bunch, already out of the gate.

Bill gave a roar of wrath. He struggled frantically in the rope.

Clang! clang! clang!

Bill's frantic struggles rang the school bell, loud and long. Clang! clang! clang! rang far and wide over the Packsaddle playground and the banks of the Rio Frio.

Dick, Slick and Mick chuckled as the clanging of the bell followed them across the prairie.

It died away behind them. But at Packsaddle School it was still ringing and clanging as Bill Sampson wriggled and struggled in the rope, and wriggled and struggled in vain!



Slick gave a sudden yell, and jammed his shovel into a sandy bar. "Look!" he roared. A stream of glittering particles flashed in the blazing sun. "Gold!" yelled Dick and Mick together.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

STRIKING IT RICH !

"GOLD ?"

"Yep !"

"You seen it ?"

"Sure thing !"

Pie Sanders reined in his horse.

Dick, Slick and Mick, galloping over the prairie towards Pedlar Perkins' camp up the Frio, sighted Pie and waved to him, and joined him. Pie was riding for Packsaddle town, so they intercepted him.

The three of them shouted the same question, and Pie's answer made their eyes dance.

Pie, a day-boy, had not turned up at school that morning. The chums of Packsaddle knew where he had gone, without being told—to the new discovery up the river. But they were surprised to see him riding back.

"You've really seen the gold ?" asked Dick Carr eagerly.

Bill's last words at the school had given him a chill of doubt.

"With my own lookin' eyes I seen it," said Pie. "I'm telling you, the bed of the Frio is thick with it."

"But it's jolly queer it's never been seen before, if that's how it is," said Dick in wonder. "Why, only the other day we were riding up the Frio, and we saw nothing of the kind."

"We wasn't looking for anything of the kind," said Slick.

"Yes, that's true. But——"

"I guess it's the water being so low this summer," explained Pie. "The Frio's always low in the heats, but it's lower than I've ever seen it. Miles of sandbanks and bars uncovered. Pedlar Perkins allowed it looked jest like sandbeds he'd seen in Arizona rivers, and he prospected for colour and found it, sure he did. It's there O.K. !"

"What you riding back for, then ?" asked Mick.

Pie grinned ruefully.

"There ain't bite nor chew at the place, 'cept what the pedlar is selling from his pack-mules," he answered. "And I guess Pedlar Perkins' prices is too steep for this baby. I got to hit town for some eats."

And, with a wave of the hand, Pie Sanders rode on to the cow-town. He was eager to make purchases at the store there, and get back to the gold-washing on the Frio.

Greatly encouraged by Pie's news, Dick, Slick and Mick galloped on. They were ahead of most of the bunch, strung out on the prairie trails.

"I guess it's O.K. !" said Mick joyfully. "Pie's seen it, and that's a cinch. That old piecan Bill don't know everything."

"He sure does not," said Slick. "And if we strike it rich, we'll sure buy him suthin' good, to make up for hog-tying him at the school."

"What-ho !" agreed Dick Carr.

They rode on cheerfully at a rapid gallop. Slick had a shovel tied on his bronco ; Mick had a tin bucket, all the implements the comrades had been able to get hold of at the school. But it would be easy to buy a new outfit out of their first bag of gold-dust ! What they did not know about placer-mining, they would soon learn. Hope reigned supreme. The gold-fever was in their veins. They were sorry that they had had to handle Bill and leave him hog-tied at Packsaddle. But they simply laughed at the idea of Bill, or anyone else, keeping them from joining in the race for a fortune.

As the grass glided fast under the galloping hoofs, they soon had proof that plenty of others were heading for the new field. Men on horses,

men on mules and donkeys, men on foot, were heading in the same direction.

Very few were met returning. And those few, they learned by hailing them, were going back for " eats."

The " placer " was three or four miles from Packsaddle town, fifteen or twenty from any other town. Water was to be found on the spot, but nothing in the way of food.

Pedlar Perkins, they learned, was selling stores, but he was the only man on the spot with supplies. And—as was natural in the circumstances—he was charging high prices.

That was quite in keeping with what they had heard of gold-rushes. In the early days of California and Colorado, food at the diggings was at famine prices.

Eager gold-hunters thought only of unearthing gold treasure, and the few more level-headed who dealt in food and clothes and other necessaries made more money than most of the diggers.

From a dozen or more guys they met and called to, the comrades learned that there was no doubt about the " strike."

Gold gleamed and sparkled from the sandy bed of the Frio, where the sunken waters left the bars uncovered. Scores of eager seekers were already at work, washing out the sand and mud in roughly-made cradles, the material cut with their bowie-knives from the chaparral on the river-banks.

Dick, Slick and Mick drew rein at last on the grassy bluffs over the river, where, a few days ago, they had seen Pedlar Perkins in his camp.

The change in the scene since then was amazing.

Two or three days ago the region had been utterly deserted and solitary.

But now the deep basin of the Frio, sunk between opposite lines of grassy bluffs, was swarming.

Under the bluffs was a collection of tents and rough shacks, but these were far from sufficient to accommodate the crowd. Most of the fossickers, it was clear, had to sleep in their blankets in the open air. That, however, was little hardship to the rough and tough guys of the cow-country.

There was a good quarter of a mile between the bluffs of the banks. That space was mostly occupied by sand and muddy flats—dry in the sun, or trickling with little rivulets of the sunken river.

All over the sandbanks were scattered eager gold-seekers.

Punchers from the ranches, store assistants from Packsaddle, all sorts and conditions of guys were there, all on the same quest.

Some of them were sluicing sand in rough cradles—some were washing it in tin buckets and pails—some, even less well-provided, were washing sand in Stetson hats !

Others were hunting for likely spots, roaming up and down the river-course with eager searching eyes.

" Gum ! " said Slick, with a deep breath. " They're sure going it ! "

" I'll say so ! " said Mick breathlessly. " That old piecan Bill figured that he was keeping us out of it."

They dismounted on the grassy bluffs. Dozens of horses and mules were staked out there to feed, while their owners hunted gold in the lower levels. The schoolboys staked out their ponies with the rest, and then descended the rugged bluffs to the river-bank.

" Say, there's Hank ! " exclaimed Mick.

They spotted Hank, the hired man, who had vamoosed from the school

the day before without stopping to tell Bill that he was going. Hank had marked out a section of a sand-bar and was labouring with spade and pail. They ran across to him, eager for news.

" What luck, Hank ? " asked Dick.

The hired man stared round at them, grinned and wiped a stream of perspiration from his face with the back of a horny hand. It was hot down on the sunken river.

" I guess I struck it," said Hank jubilantly. " Look ! Give that bank the once-over ! "

He struck his spade into a slanting bank of sand, once covered by the waters of the Frio, now high and dry.

Gleams of yellow showed among the grains of sand that scattered under the crash of the spade.

" Gold ! " gasped Slick.

" You said it ! " grinned Hank.

" How much you got as yet ? " asked Mick breathlessly.

Hank's grin faded a little.

" I guess it ain't a heap so far," he admitted. " There's plenty of colour, and I guess I'll get it thick, but so far it's only colour. I ain't washed out five dollars' worth yet, but look at the sign ! "

There was plenty of " sign " ; it leaped to the eye. Sparkles of gold gleamed and flashed from the sand.

That it was thinly spread was clear, but it was there. And if so much showed on the surface, what might not be hoped for from deeper search ? So far, Hank had had his labour for his pains, but every moment he expected to turn up rich gold, in dust or nuggets. He told the boys that Pedlar Perkins had found a nugget weighing four ounces. That was a proof that nuggets were there, as well as dust—if they could be found.

" Gum ! " said Slick. " I guess we might, if we're lucky, hit a fortune that would make Rockefeller look like a piece left on the counter. Get to it, you guys ! "

Breathless with eagerness, the comrades of Packsaddle got to it. They forgot all about school, and all about Bill, tied to the bell-rope. Other fellows of the Packsaddle bunch were to be seen scattered about on the same game. They saw Steve Carson at work, and called to him.

" Any luck, Steve ? "

" I guess I've struck colour ! " called back Steve. " I'll say I've got as good a spot as any on the river. You galoots keep clear."

Numerous as the gold-seekers were, there was plenty of room for newcomers. Dick, Slick and Mick searched with eager eyes for a likely spot.

Slick gave a sudden yell, and jammed his shovel into a sandy bar that jutted into one of the rivulets.

" Look ! " he roared.

A stream of glistening particles was turned up, flashing in the blazing sun.

" Gold ! " panted Mick.

" Gold ! " yelled Dick Carr.

" We've struck it ! " chortled Slick. " We've struck it, young 'uns ! What'll that pesky old galoot, Bill, say when we ride back with our pockets full of gold ? Say, this is our claim ! "

Under the broiling sun they set to work. The labour was hard, hot and heavy, but what did that matter ? It seemed the easiest thing in the world to pick up a fortune lying at their feet.

THE NINTH CHAPTER

THE CLAIM-JUMPER !

DICK CARR paused in his labour, under the blaze of the noonday sun, and wiped the sweat and dust from his brow. He was hot, tired and



Hair-Trigger staggered to his feet, a six-gun gripped in his brawny fist. "Git!" he roared. "Beat it, pronto, you'uns!"

fearfully hungry—feelings that were fully shared by his comrades. Long hours of heavy labour had resulted in rich promise of good things to come, but as yet only promise. Sand shovelled out of the bar was washed in the tin bucket, and there was a residue of gold—mere flecks, but the real thing.

With a proper washing outfit, they flattered themselves, they would have secured more of the golden grains. What they had secured was worth, perhaps, a dollar—not high pay for a morning's heavy labour for three! But it was proof to their minds that they were on a right spot, and at any moment golden deposits might turn up at their feet. Every stroke of the shovel might unearth dazzling wealth.

"What about dinner?" gasped Dick.

"You said it!" agreed Mick. "I guess I could chew some. We want to hit Perkins' camp for eats."

And the weary three desisted from their labours unwillingly, but from necessity. They had pegged out and marked the claim; all that could be done to secure it. Later on, it could be registered in the marshal's office at Packsaddle, and would become their legal and undisputed property; but that had to wait. It was plainly pegged and marked, and a paper was pinned on a stake giving the names of the owners of the claim.

They tramped down the muddy flats beside the river towards Pedlar Perkins' camp.

Pedlar Perkins was working as hard as any guy on the Frio, but in a different way. He was selling the stores he had brought on his pack mules and the gold-seekers kept him busy.

In his tent were stacks of canned goods. But large as the supply was, it was not likely to last very long in face of a general and eager demand.

Dick, Slick and Mick had to push their way through a crowd of eager buyers. They had to wait their turn at the pinewood bench Perkins had rigged up in front of his tent for a counter.

On Perkins' side of that bench lay a shotgun—a plain and visible hint to lawless characters that there would be trouble if any guy got too fresh. And it was needed, too, for in the crowd were the roughest and toughest galoots of the section. Among them the schoolboys recognised Hair-Trigger Pete, the red-bearded bull-whacker of Packsaddle. He was slouching away with a can of beef under either arm as they arrived.

Dick watched Pedlar Perkins rather curiously. Bill had said that Mister Perkins was a sharp from Sharpsville, and there was no doubt that he looked it. His lean, bony face was keen and cunning, his eyes were like those of a rat.

So far, he was the only man who was making money at the new "strike." Plenty of " colour " had been turned out by eager seekers for gold ; there was promise of rich finds on all sides ; but no actual finds had yet been made. Nobody, so far, was any the richer for the gold-rush—except Pedlar Perkins !

But that he was doing remarkably well, the schoolboys could not doubt, when he asked them five dollars for a can of beef that could have been bought for a " quarter " in Job Wash's store at Packsaddle.

" Five dollars ! " roared Slick indignantly. " Forget it, you pesky lobo-wolf ! "

" Take it or leave it ! " snapped Pedlar Perkins. " I guess I ain't here for my health, big boy ! "

And even as the schoolboys hesitated, a puncher came up, grabbed the can of beef, threw down a five-dollar bill and walked off without a word ! Evidently Mister Perkins was not going to lack customers, even at prices that might have made a War-time profiteer blush.

" Look here ! " exclaimed Dick Carr.

" Beat it, you ! " said Pedlar Perkins tersely. " I guess my stock won't last over to-morrow, anyhow ! Git ! "

There was no help for it ! Food was a necessity ! After all, what was a few dollars when thousands might be turned up by the stroke of a shovel ! That was the way in a gold-rush !

The schoolboys went through their pockets and parted with nearly all they had—twenty dollars—in return for a supply of beef and beans and biscuit that could have been bought for one dollar at Packsaddle ! But no fellow who had money in his pockets was going to quit his claim and ride miles over the prairie for food, wasting precious hours.

Twenty dollars for " eats " would look small enough, if they turned up even a four-ounce nugget, as Perkins had done. One ounce of gold was worth more than that sum.

Carrying their supply of food, the comrades of Packsaddle started for their claim again. They were rather uneasy at leaving it so long a time.

When they reached it they found that they had cause for uneasiness. A burly red-headed roughneck was at work there with Slick's shovel ! It was Hair-Trigger Pete !

Dick, Slick and Mick stared at him. He paused in his shovelling and gave them a glare.

" You young guys want anything ? " he yapped.

" That's our claim ! " yelled Slick Poindexter.

" Yourn, is it ? " said Hair-Trigger, resting on the spade. " You figure that this hyer claim is yourn ? Forget it ! "

The schoolboys gazed at him, speechless with rage and indignation. It was " claim-jumping," sheer and unashamed. In the early days of a gold-rush, before law and order could be established, claim-jumping by unscrupulous gold-seekers was as common as profiteering by such guys as Pedlar Perkins. A man had to pack a gun and be ready to pull it to make his claim good.

" You pesky skunk ! " yelled Slick. " You figure that we're standing for this ! Get off our claim, you polecat ! "

" I'll say you want to light out afore you get hurt ! " suggested Hair-Trigger.

He laid down the shovel and brandished a set of brawny knuckles at the schoolboys.

" Git ! " he said.

Dick, Slick and Mick exchanged a desperate glance. Then, with one accord, they hurled themselves at the claim-jumper.

Hair-Trigger gave a roar of wrath as they grasped him. He grasped in return, and the brawny bullwhacker reeled to and fro, with the three schoolboys clinging to him like cats.

It was a wild and desperate struggle. With a combined effort the three got the ruffian down, with a crash, on the sand of the Frio. Not a dozen yards away, men were delving at another claim, but they did not even glance round. It was every man for himself, in a gold-rush !

Hair-Trigger, bellowing with rage, rolled in sand and mud, in the grasp of the Packsaddle comrades. He grabbed the six-gun from his belt as he rolled.

Bang !

The bullet sang away to the blue sky of Texas. But as the ruffian pulled trigger a second time, the schoolboys jumped clear. They had no means of dealing with gun-play.

Hair-Trigger staggered to his feet. His revolver was aimed at the dismayed Packsaddlers, as he panted with rage.

" Git ! " he roared. " Beat it, pronto, you'uns ! I guess I'm fanning you s'long as you rubber around my claim ! "

Bang, bang, bang ! roared the six-gun, and the bullets knocked up spouts of sand by the schoolboys' feet.

" Beat it ! " gasped Slick.

Almost frantic with rage, the comrades of Packsaddle beat it. Hair-Trigger brandished the smoking revolver after them.

" You show up agin, doggone you, and I guess I'm shooting at sight ! " he roared, and he threw another bullet after them to hasten their departure, and Mick yelled as the Stetson spun on his head.

At a distance, out of range of the claim-jumper, the comrades of Packsaddle came to a breathless halt. They looked at one another in grim silence.

Bill had told them that a gold-rush was no place for schoolboys ! It looked as if Bill was right !

THE TENTH CHAPTER

HUSTLE !

" You, Brown ! " roared Bill Sampson.

Bill's roar woke all the echoes of the playground at Packsaddle School.

Bill had been waking the echoes for hours—all through the long, sunny Texas morning.

Every now and then, as he wriggled in his bonds, the school bell gave a loud clang over the porch.

Bill's bearded face was red with rage.

Again and again he roared, but there were no ears to hear, save those of Small Brown, the teacher. And Mister Brown was a prisoner in his cabin across the playground.

The blaze of noon streamed down on the cow-town school. Bill had been growing redder and redder, madder and madder, all the morning.

His only hope of release was in Small Brown.

From the direction of the teacher's cabin there came a sound of knocking and banging.

Mister Brown was trying to get out.

But door and window were fast, secured by long nails driven deep. Mister Brown had no tools to handle —nothing but the leg of a stool with which he was trying to bang a way out.

It was a long and difficult task. It had kept Small Brown busy quite a long time. And he was not out yet.

He could hear Bill's infuriated roar, from time to time, across the playground. That roar, almost as hefty as the bellow of a buffalo bull, could have been heard far up the Rio Frio. Small Brown heard it, and it spurred him on. But he had a lot of hard work to do.

" You pesky Brown ! " came Bill's powerful voice. " You piefaced polecat, I'm telling you to hustle ! You slab-sided jay, you want to get a move on ! You hear me whisper, you piecan Brown ! "

" Please be patient, Mister Sampson ! " squealed Small Brown. " I assure you that I am losing no time ! Oh, dear ! "

But Small Brown's breathless squeal did not reach Bill. He could hear the knocking and the banging from the teacher's cabin, however. Small Brown was doing his best—a poor best !

In his place, Bill would have burst open the door with one mighty heave of his brawny shoulder. But Mister Brown, though he had great stores of book-knowledge parked behind his bumpy forehead, did not shine in the muscular line. There were husky fellows in the Packsaddle bunch who could have heaved Mister Brown across the schoolroom. A man could only do his best—and Mister Brown was a small thin man with no biceps to mention.

" Jumping painters ! " roared Bill. " I guess if you don't hump it a few, and get me ontied, you pesky Brown, I'll sure quirt you a few, like you was one of the bunch ! I'll tell a man ! "

It was past noon. The bunch had been gone a whole morning. Bill thought of the schoolboys mingling with a crowd of the roughest and toughest rough-necks and bull-whackers in Santanta County. He thought of Job Wash, the chairman of the school committee, and what Job would say if he heard of this. And he raged and roared.

With a final bang, the door of Small Brown's cabin flew open.

It had taken him a long time, but he had got out at last. Small Brown, gasping after his exertions, tottered out into the brilliant Texas sunshine, which was flashed back by his horn-rimmed glasses.

" Say, you, Brown ! " bellowed Bill, as the Packsaddle teacher blinked round him like an owl in sudden



Bang ! It was the roar of Bill's six-gun, and Hair-Trigger gave a fearful yell as his revolver spun from his hand. " Let up, old-timer ! " said Bill genially.

daylight. "Say, you getting a move on? You want to stand around, rubbering like a rube at a rodeo ? Hump it, you gink ! Hustle, you ornery geck ! You hear me toot ? "

" Certainly, Mister Sampson ! " gasped Small Brown. " I——"

" Pack it up ! You figure that I want to hear you chewing the rag ? " roared Bill. " I'll say I want you to ontie me, you pesky piecan, so that I can beat it after them young ginks."

Small Brown came skipping across the playground. He reached the headmaster of Packsaddle in the porch, and began to fumble with the knots on the rope. He fumbled and fumbled while Bill glared at him.

" Carry me home to die ! " howled Bill. " You big stiff, can't you ontie a rope ! You doggoned bonehead, git a knife ! Pronto ! "

" Yes, certainly," said Small Brown. " I will look for a knife——"

He went into the porch.

His movements seemed much too leisurely for the impatient Bill.

Bill's legs were free. He used one of them. The biggest cowman's boot in the valley of the Frio shot out and crashed on the tails of Small Brown's coat !

Small Brown shot into the house like a bullet from a rifle !

Crash !

" Yarooop ! "

Mister Brown landed on hands and knees with a bump and a howl.

" Now hustle ! " roared Bill. " I'm telling you—hustle ! You figure that I want to stay roped up this-a-way till the cows come home ! By the great horned toad, you pesky piecan, I'll sure lam you a few, if you don't hustle some ! "

" Goodness gracious ! " gasped Small Brown.

He picked himself up dizzily.

" Really, Mister Sampson ! " he spluttered.

" Hustle ! " roared Bill. " Get to it ! Jumping painters and howling coyotes will you hustle a few, you gink ? "

Mister Brown hustled. He fetched a bowie-knife from Bill's room, and approaching the infuriated head-master in rather a gingerly way, began to saw through the rope.

The strands parted quickly under the keen blade.

Bill Sampson was free at last.

He threw aside the fragments of the cut lasso. Without a word to Small Brown, or a look at him, he grabbed up his quirt and strode away towards the corral.

Three minutes more and Bill Sampson was mounted on his bronco and riding out of the school gate, Small Brown blinking after him dizzily through his horn-rimmed spectacles.

Bill, quirt in hand, rode at a gallop across the rolling prairie, heading for Pedlar Perkins' camp up the river, three or four miles from the school. The Packsaddle bunch were there among the crowd of eager seekers for gold, and judging by Bill's expression, they were hooked for a high old time when Bill arrived there with his quirt.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

BILL HORNS IN !

DICK, Slick and Mick sat in the shade of the high grassy bluffs over the Rio Frio and ate canned beef and biscuit. The bluffs rose twenty feet or more above the river-course, deeply sunken in the summer heats, and as the sun was slanting westward, the high bluffs cast a grateful shade on one bank of the Frio. The other bank was in full glare of the semi-tropical sun of Texas, as well as the river itself, thinned down to a mere streamlet, trickling through far-stretching beds and bars of mud and sand. The three comrades of Packsaddle were tired and hungry after a morning's hard work, and they fully enjoyed the provender they had bought from Pedlar Perkins—none the less because it had cost them nearly all their available cash !

From where they sat in the shade, chewing hard beef, they could see a crowd of fossickers at work.

In spite of the blaze of the sun, few were resting. It was a scene of eager activity, feverish excitement, and—to say the truth—greed !

But as yet, though ample " colour " had been located, the actual out-turn of gold had been woefully disappointing.

Dick Carr knitted his brow as he chewed beef, and Slick Poindexter and Mick Kavanagh had rather grim looks.

While they ate, they discussed ways and means of getting their claim back from the big rough-neck, Hair-Trigger Pete.

" I guess Marshal Lick will mosey along from Packsaddle with some of his deputies to stand for the law here ! " Slick remarked hopefully. " But I reckon that won't help us a lot just now."

" You said it ! " agreed Mick. " I'll say I wish I'd borrowed Bill's gun afore we lit out from the school."

" We're going to get our claim back somehow ! " said Dick Carr determinedly. " We've handled Bill to get a chance to join up in the gold-rush, and we've nothing to show for it so far."

" And I'll say we've got a big quirting in store when we hit Packsaddle

agin ! " grinned Mick. " Bill will sure be as mad as a hornet."

" Wake snakes ! " breathed Slick. " Sit quiet—there's Bill ! "

" Oh, great gophers ! "

The gigantic figure of the six-gun schoolmaster came in view. From the upper prairie Bill was tramping and clambering down the rugged bluffs to the level of the river.

The schoolboys had wondered whether Bill would follow on when he got loose. There really was not much doubt about it. Bill was not the man to let the school break herd and get by with it.

And here he was—with a red and wrathy bearded face under his ten-gallon hat ! Dick, Slick and Mick sat back, quiet in the shadow. They did not want to meet Bill's eyes just then. Still less did they want to have anything to do with the quirt he carried in his right hand.

Luckily, Bill did not spot them as he tramped past. He stood on the wide stretch of dried sand and mud beside the shrunken river and stared over the busy scene, with a glare of contempt on his rugged, bearded face.

" Jumping painters ! " the schoolboys heard him ejaculate. " I'll say them guys are a caboodle of dumb boneheads, and then some ! "

The three grinned at one another. They knew that Bill did not believe in the genuineness of Pedlar Perkin's " strike " on the Frio.

And, as he stood staring at the busy fossickers, it was plain that he did not believe it any more than before, and that he regarded the crowd of gold-rushers as boneheads.

There might be gold up in the rocky recesses of the Staked Plain, and it might have been washed down in the waters of the Frio, flowing down from the high table-land. But the possibility was too remote for Bill. He refused to believe a word of it. And Bill had had some experience, in earlier days, in placer-mining out in Arizona. Still, seeing was believing, and most of the gold-seekers had seen unmistakable " colour " — and believed !

Near the spot where Dick, Slick and Mick sat in the shade of the bluff was Pedlar Perkins' camp.

The pedlar, with his Stetson hat on the back of his greasy head, his thin, bony, cunning face beaded with perspiration, was selling all sorts of goods, at all sorts of prices, to innumerable customers.

Bill fixed his eyes on the pedlar's outfit.

He grunted. Whether any other guy was making money out of the " strike " on the Frio or not, Pedlar Perkins certainly was.

As the original discoverer, Mr. Perkins might have been expected to stake out a claim and fossick for more gold. But he seemed to prefer to stick to his own trade.

It was a paying and thriving trade of the " strike," for Mr. Perkins was the only man on the spot with food to sell.

In a few days, no doubt, other enterprising galoots would be joining in such a profitable trade—if the gold-rush lasted ! But Mr. Perkins was the first on the spot, and gathering the cream of it. Few of the eager gold-hunters had any supplies with them. They had to buy Perkins' stores, at Perkins' prices, or else leave their claims and ride miles across the prairie to Packsaddle.

Bill strode up to the counter at which Mr. Perkins presided. On Perkins' side of it lay a shotgun, ready for trouble.

At the look on Bill's face, Pedlar

Perkins' rat-eyes glinted, and he dropped a hand carelessly on the shotgun.

"Say, you polecat Perkins!" was Bill's polite greeting.

"Shoot!" said Perkins imperturbably. Apparently he did not mind being called a polecat. Probably harder names had been applied to him in the course of his nefarious career.

"You allow you raised gold-dust from the Frio?" demanded Bill.

"Sure!"

"That's a lie!" announced Bill.

"Buying anything hyer?" asked Perkins.

"Nope!" growled Bill.

"Then git, and make room for customers."

Bill did not "git." He glared at the cunning-eyed pedlar across the pine counter.

"You allow you picked up a nugget in this hyer river?" he demanded.

"Yep!"

"That's another lie!" said Bill.

Dick, Slick and Mick grinned at one another. They hoped that Bill's attention would continue to be concentrated on Mr. Perkins, and that he would not glance round and spot them.

Pedlar Perkins' rat-eyes gleamed. Bill's words were more than enough to cause the pulling of guns in Packsaddle. But Mr. Perkins, though he kept his shotgun ready for trouble with any guy who wanted stores without paying for them, was not honing for a rookus. He was there on business. So he merely shrugged his bony shoulders.

"Pack it up, old-timer," he drawled. "Say, you're in the way of customers. I'm asking you to git!"

"You never washed out no gold-dust, and you never picked up no nugget," said the Packsaddle schoolmaster. "I don't rightly get on to your game, but I'll tell all Texas it's a gum-game, Mister Perkins, and you're stringing the boys along."

"Search me!" drawled Mr. Perkins, and he turned away to serve an eager puncher who wanted canned beef. Large as Mr. Perkins' stock was, it was dwindling fast, and it looked as if he would be sold out by sundown. It had cost him five hundred dollars a few days ago, and already it had netted him more than four times that sum.

Bill, with a snort of contempt, turned away from him—and as he did so, his eyes fell on three schoolboys in the shade of the bluff.

"Jumping painters!" roared Bill, grasping his quirt and making a stride at Dick, Slick, and Mick.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

They leaped up, yelling, wildly dodging the whacks of the quirt.

"Beat it!" roared Bill. "Hit Packsaddle, and hit it quick! I guess I'm quirting you till you do!"

"Let up, you durned old geck!" yelled Slick, hopping frantically.

"Aw, wake snakes!" gasped Mick Kavanagh.

"Hook it!" panted Dick Carr.

Whack, whack, whack!

Bill laid it on hard and fast. The three schoolboys dodged round Pedlar Perkins' counter and bolted. Bill roared after them.

"You hear me whisper! I'm telling you to hit Packsaddle!"

They vanished—not in the direction of Packsaddle. Bill, snorting, tramped round, looking for more members of the bunch. Bill was there to herd them home like a drove of steers, and Bill was going to do it if his quirt had not lost its persuasive powers.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

BILL GETS WISE!

HAIR-TRIGGER PETE leaned on Slick Poindexter's shovel, kicked over Mick's tin pail, and mopped sweat from his unwashed brow with a red Mexican handkerchief. With a flow of lurid language, Hair-Trigger told space what he thought of the heat of the sun, the buzzing flies, the weary labour of washing sand for gold that was not there, and other things. Hair-Trigger, it was plain, was not in a good temper.

He had jumped the schoolboys' claim, taken possession of such implements as they had, and started in to lift the fortune they had hoped to lift. But he had not lifted it yet. Hair-Trigger did not like work. Hanging about saloons for stray drinks, occasionally "holding" up a guy for his wad on a dark night, was more in Hair-Trigger's line. On this hot and sultry day he had put in more real work than he had probably packed into the previous twelve months. The lure of gold urged him on. But he had nothing to show for it.

There was "colour"—the colour that had caused Dick, Slick and Mick to stake out the claim in the sand-bar jutting into the Frio. Here and there, among the sand and pebbles turned up by the shovel, glittered precious grains of gold—real gold! But they were merely flecks—promise of good things to come that did not come! And the deeper Hair-Trigger delved, the fewer and farther between were those tempting, enticing flecks of yellow. Hair-Trigger was tired and hot and savage, but he was determined not to give up hope. "Colour" meant the presence of gold, and he was going to wash out the gold and expend the same in



Bill Sampson ran the claim-jumper to the edge of the Frio and planted a terrific kick on his leather crackers. Hair-Trigger, with a wild yell, flew into the river!

countless drinks at the Red Dog in Packsaddle.

Three schoolboys came along to the claim as the burly roughneck rested on the shovel. Dick, Slick and Mick, having dodged Bill, were going to make an attempt to get their claim back from the claim-jumper. It was rather a desperate enterprise, to tackle an armed and reckless ruffian like Hair-Trigger, but they had made up their minds to it.

They had cut cudgels in the chaparral and they hoped to get a chance of rushing the ruffian while he was shovelling, and taking him by surprise. Rather unfortunately, Hair-Trigger was resting from his labours as they appeared, and his glinting eyes, under his shaggy brows, spotted them at once.

He pitched aside the shovel and pulled the six-gun from the holster at his belt.

His eyes glittered over it at the comrades of Packsaddle. Dick, Slick and Mick came to a sudden, dismayed, halt.

" Say, you young gecks honing for more trouble ? " roared Hair-Trigger. " I'll say you'll sure cinch it, and then some over ! Jump, you galoots, jump ! "

Bang, bang, bang !

He fired at their feet, fanning them with bullets, and they jumped ! They had to jump ! Only by quick jumping could they dodge hot lead.

Hair-Trigger grinned savagely. This was a relief to him in his savage and disappointed temper. He banged and banged away with the six-gun, keeping the schoolboys jumping.

Bang !

It was the roar of another six-gun.

Hair-Trigger gave a fearful yell as his revolver spun from his hand and a strip of skin from a finger along with it.

He spun round, with a bellow of rage.

Bill Sampson, with a smoking six-gun in his hand, nodded to him.

" Let up, old-timer ! " said Bill genially. " I guess them young ginks belong to my bunch, and I sure ain't standing for any galoot fanning them with a Colt ! Nope ! Not so's you'd notice it, big boy ! "

" Bill ! " gasped Dick.

" Bill, old-timer ! " panted Mick.

Hair-Trigger clutched up his fallen revolver with his left hand, spluttering with fury.

" Look out, Bill ! " shrieked Slick.

" Aw forget it ! " drawled the six-gun schoolmaster. His six-gun roared as he was speaking. Hair-Trigger, stooping, pitched over like a log.

He lay where he had fallen.

Bill lounged forward, picked up the ruffian's revolver, and threw it out into the middle of the Frio. It disappeared with a splash.

Dick Carr was gazing in horror at the fallen roughneck. But he was relieved as Hair-Trigger sat up, dazed and dizzy, and ran his hand through his thick mop of hair. His fingers came away red.

" Creased him, by the great horned toad ! " chuckled Mick.

" Surest thing you know ! " grinned Slick.

Bill gave the dazed bullwhacker a cheery nod. Bill could plant a bullet just where he wanted to plant it, and Hair-Trigger had been stunned by the ball grazing his skull. Bill had learned that trick in dealing with refractory steers that eluded the rope on the Kicking Mule ranges. Hair-Trigger was none the worse for it, save for a sore head !

" I guess that lets you out, old-timer ! " said Bill genially.

" Bill," exclaimed Dick Carr, " this is our claim, and that brute has jumped it. You'll make him hand it back."

Bill snorted.

" I reckon I'm here to herd you back to school, you pesky young gink ! But I sure don't stand for claim jumping, though I figure there ain't no more gold in it than in my Stetson."

" We've struck colour here——" said Slick eagerly.

" Aw, can it ! " snapped Bill. " You, Hair-Trigger, you beat it, pronto ! I'll sure help you get going, old-timer ! "

Holstering his gun, the Packsaddle schoolmaster grasped Hair-Trigger and ran him off the claim. Big and burly as he was, Hair-Trigger resisted vainly in Bill's mighty grasp.

The schoolmaster ran him to the edge of the Frio and planted a terrific kick on his leather crackers.

Hair-Trigger, with a wild yell, flew into the Frio. He splashed up water and sand with a mighty splash as he landed there. He sat up in the shallow stream, with the Frio flowing round his shoulders.

" Urrghh ! " gurgled Hair-Trigger. " I guess—urrggh——"

Bill dropped a hand on his gun.

" You hitting the other bank ? " he inquired.

Hair-Trigger decided quickly to hit the other bank ! He scrambled through water and mud and sand, crawled up the opposite bank and disappeared.

Bill walked back to the claim on the sand-bar. Dick, Slick and Mick, in possession of their claim again, and their shovel and pail, eyed him rather uncertainly. They were not going back to school till they had washed out gold ; that was a cinch. To their relief Bill Sampson did not handle his quirt.

" We're after gold, Bill ! " said Dick Carr persuasively. " Look here, Bill, you join up with us, and we'll make you a partner in the claim."

" That goes ! " exclaimed Slick eagerly. " And I'll tell a man, Bill, it's a good claim ! There's a heap of gold here, when we get it out."

" You said it ! " declared Mick.

Bill grinned.

" You doggoned young boneheads ! " he said. " There ain't no gold here, nor anywhere along the Frio, nor never was."

" Look ! " exclaimed Dick Carr.

He caught up a handful of the muddy sand, and held it up before Bill's eyes. Here and there, in the handful, was a yellow sparkle.

Bill eyed it attentively.

" Ain't that gold, you old pie-can ? " demanded Slick Poindexter.

Bill nodded.

" Sure thing ! " he assented.

" Well, then——" said Dick Carr.

" How much have you washed out, and how much has that galoot Hair-Trigger washed out ? " demanded Bill.

" Well, we've found lots of sign," said Slick cautiously. " But we sure ain't washed out much gold so far, Bill. But—it's there——"

" Colour means gold ! " said Mick.

" Sure ! " assented Bill—" if it ain't planted there by a pesky scally-wag jest to string you along."

" Planted ! " repeated Dick.

" Ain't you ever heard of salted claims ? " snorted Bill.

" Doggone you, Bill ! " hooted Slick. " You figure any of these guys would be fooled by a salted claim ? I'm telling you it's the real stuff—

there ain't more'n the colour of it, so far, but it's real gold, the same as Pedlar Perkins took in to Packsaddle, and traded with Job Wash for stores."

"There's more'n one way of salting a claim, you young goob!" growled Bill. "I'll say that that guy Perkins has salted these sand-bars with real gold-dust. I'll say it set him back a few hundred dollars for the dust. And, by the great horned toad, I guess he's getting it back, and then some, selling stores to the guys at big prices! Yep!"

"Wha-a-t——" gasped Dick Carr.

"Yep!" roared Bill. "I guess I got on to his game now! I'll say he's mebbe played the same game in a heap of places, afore he struck Packsaddle. Sure! He never washed no gold-dust nor nuggets out of the Frio, like I've allowed all along! He had it in his trousers when he came."

"But——" began Slick.

"You young goob! And he traded it for stores—and he's sure selling stores for four or five times what he paid for them to Job Wash in Packsaddle!" roared Bill. "That's why he started this gold-rush, doggone his hide!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Dick. "But—but how——"

Bill roared.

"Haw, haw, haw! Didn't you young ginks tell me you saw him here, the day afore the gold-rush started, loosing off his shotgun?"

"We sure did!" exclaimed Slick. "But——"

"What was he shooting at?" demanded Bill.

"Just loosing off the gun at nothing in particular," said Dick Carr. "But ——"

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared Bill. "And he had it loaded with gold-dust to salt the sand-bars! Haw, haw, haw!"

"Oh, great gophers!" stuttered Mick Kavanagh. "You figure——"

"I guess I'm going to talk to that guy, a few!" said Bill. "You ginks foller me! You got no call to go on washing that sand—there ain't no more gold in it than Pedlar Perkins loosed off from his shotgun—and I'll say that wasn't more'n 'ud buy a long drink! Haw, haw, haw!"

Bill swung round and tramped down the sandy bank towards Pedlar Perkins' camp. Dick, Slick and Mick looked at one another—with sickly looks.

They could not doubt that Bill had got it right. Their own experience of washing out the Frio sand bore it out—and all they had heard of the experiences of others.

"Colour" had been found, here and there—but only "colour." And that "colour" came from the merest whiff of gold-dust, packed into the charge of a shot-gun! And they had actually seen the rascal at his work, "salting" the sand-bars, and had never guessed what he was doing.

"Aw, I guess I want to kick myself!" groaned Slick Poindexter. "We've broke herd from school and hog-tied Bill, all and because a swindling pedlar was stringing us along——"

Dick threw down the shovel.

"Come on," he said dispiritedly, and they followed Bill.

There was one gleam of comfort. The six-gun schoolmaster had spotted the cunning rogue's game, and it was probable that Pedlar Perkins would not, after all, ride clear with the illicit profits he had made. No doubt he had played the same game, with success, in other quarters; but this time he had struck Bill Sampson,

and Bill was the man to make him sorry that he had ever tried it on at Packsaddle.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER

THE SHOW-DOWN!

PEDLAR PERKINS was grinning.

The red sunset, shining on his bony, cunning face, showed it full of sly satisfaction.

The remnant of the extensive stock of canned goods that he had bought at Job Wash's store in Packsaddle lay on his counter. It was a small remnant—Mister Perkins was nearly sold out! Canned beef and biscuit, and tobacco and cigars, all sorts of foods and drinks, had gone like hot cakes in the two days that the fossicking had lasted on the Rio Frio. And in Mister Perkins' pouch, under his red shirt, was a wad of notes of various denominations, representing not only his original outlay for the gold-dust he had bartered for stores, but five times as much in clear profit.

Grinning with satisfaction, Mister Perkins was considering whether to run the game any longer. But he decided not. Already rival traders were coming along, for one thing. That meant lower prices. For another, it was rather a dangerous game that Mister Perkins was playing. If he was spotted he was likely to be shot up, or strung on a tree. Mister Perkins decided to resist the temptation to linger for more money-making, and to go while the going was good.



"Lynch him!" A dozen hands grasped Pedlar Perkins and dragged him over his counter. "Let up!" roared Bill. "Nix on lynching! Lam him a few and let him run!"

The remnant of his stock was selling fast. Soon the lot would be cleared, and after dark, Mister Perkins was going to disappear quietly from his camp and hit the horizon.

How long it would take the gold-

rushers to realise that there was no gold in the Frio, Mister Perkins neither knew nor cared. They were welcome, so far as Mister Perkins was concerned, to go on hunting for it till the cows came home! All that Mister Perkins was particular about was to be a hundred miles away with his loot before the eager gold-hunters found out that they had been tricked.

In another section, at a safe distance from Packsaddle, Mister Perkins was going to play the same game again, as he had played it a dozen times before, up and down the West.

So, at least, Mister Perkins was reckoning! But he was reckoning without the six-gun schoolmaster of Packsaddle!

Bill Sampson came striding up to the pine counter, followed by Dick, Slick and Mick.

Perkins' rat-eyes gleamed round at the schoolmaster at once. He did not know what was coming, but he read danger in Bill's grim, bearded face.

"Say, Mister Perkins," drawled Bill, "I guess you done good trade here, and you sure must have packed away a good wad."

"I guess I ain't in business for my health!" snapped Perkins. "If you don't like my prices, you can sure ride to Packsaddle and buy from Job Wash! You figure that I'm packing goods on mules for nixes? Say, I guess I ain't got no time for chewing the rag!"

He turned away to serve a puncher.

"Hold on!" said Bill quietly, and he spoke over a levelled six-gun. "I got you covered, Mister Perkins, and you sure don't want to touch that shotgun any, onless you want to hit Jordan so sudden you won't be wise how you got there."

Pedlar Perkins, making a clutch at the shotgun, stopped in time.

He glared savagely at Bill.

"If this hyer is a hold-up, you got another guess coming!" he snarled. "You sure won't get by with it."

"Hold-up nothing!" said Bill. "I'll say all these guys hyer know I'm a schoolmaster, and as white as any guy in Santanta County. Stick 'em up!"

Pedlar Perkins hesitated a moment. But the six-gun was staring him full in his bony face, with Bill's finger on the trigger, and Bill's grim eye gleaming over the levelled barrel. He raised his hands above his Stetson.

There was a buzz from the crowd round the pedlar's counter.

"Say, what's this game, Bill Sampson?" shouted two or three punchers.

"I'm telling you!" answered Bill coolly. "There ain't no gold in Frio sand, any more'n that pesky guy scattered there with his shotgun! I guess some of my bunch saw him at the game and never knowed what it meant, the day afore the gold-rush started! I'll say that that pizen polecat salted the sand-bars with gold-dust, and then let on that he had washed out dust in the Frio—to get you boneheads stampeding for gold! And I'll say that he's sure clinched a big roll, selling you half-dollar cans of beef at five dollars a time, and ten-cent drinks at a dollar! Yep! I'll say he figured he had struck Boobsville when he hit Packsaddle, and I'll mention that he wasn't fur wrong."

There was a roar!

Pedlar Perkins face was white as chalk!

"It's a lie!" he yelled. "I'll tell a man——"

"Tell nothing!" rapped Bill. "I'll

say I've cinched you, you pizen thief, and I'll sure prove it up, too. What was you loosing off your shotgun at the sand-bars for, two days agone ? "

" I sure never did ! I guess——"

" Some of you cinch that popgun and unload it ! " drawled Bill. " I guess a guy can't shoot off charges of gold-dust without leaving sign in his shotgun ! I'll say you'll sure raise sign in that shooting-iron."

A buzzing, excited crowd was surging round Pedlar Perkins' camp now. A Kicking Mule puncher grabbed the shotgun and removed the charge. Then a dozen men examined the gun together, and there was a yell. As Bill said, " sign " was sure to be left by a charge of gold-dust fired from a shotgun. Tiny glimmering flecks of yellow remained to prove how the gun had been used.

The roar of rage that went up was deafening.

More and more fossickers crowded up from the sand flats. A howling mob surrounded Pedlar Perkins' camp !

The truth was clear enough now. There was no gold in the Frio, and never had been—till Pedlar Perkins " salted " the sand-bars ! The whole thing was a swindle—and the profits of the swindle were packed under Mister Perkins' red shirt !

" Lynch him ! "

Pedlar Perkins gibbered with terror as the roar went up. A dozen fierce hands grasped at him, and dragged him over his counter. But for Bill Sampson's presence the detected rascal would have been lynched. But the Packsaddle schoolmaster was not standing for that.

" Let up ! " roared Bill. " Nix on lynching ! I guess you can lam him all you want, but you sure ain't hanging that guy ! Lam him a few and let him run ! "

Pedlar Perkins was " lammed " more than a few ! Bill saved his bony neck for him, but that was all the rascal saved. His wad was grabbed and scattered—where it went Bill never knew, nor cared. Hustled and thumped and kicked, his shirt streaming in tatters, his hat gone, Pedlar Perkins fled for his life—leaving his tent, his fixings, his pack mules—everything he had—only glad to get away alive from the mob.

Late that night, a tattered and weary rascal was still tottering away on the rugged prairie, wishing from the bottom of his heart that he had never struck Packsaddle—or, at least, the Packsaddle schoolmaster !

BILL herded the bunch back to school without trouble now. At sunset he had herded them in at the school-gate. In the playground he eyed them grimly—quirt in hand ! They knew what to expect—and they knew that they deserved it ! But they hardly cared—so deep was the disappointment of the gold-rush ! Bill eyed them in grim silence.

" Aw, get through with it, Bill ! " said Slick. " We sure have played it low down on you, old-timer, and we was sure a bunch of boneheads. We ain't got no kick coming ! Wade in, Bill, and get through ! "

" I guess," said Bill slowly, " that I sure ought to quirt you a whole lot, and then some, and a few over ! I'll tell a man I sure ought to wear out this hyer quirt on you ! But I ain't going to ! Nope ! Beat it for the bunkhouse, you pesky young ginks, afore I change my mind and take the skin off'n you."

And the bunch promptly beat it for the bunkhouse.

THE END

ADVICE TO A NEW BOY

By BOB CHERRY



My advice to new boys is not to take the suggestions made by the irrepressible Bob Cherry too seriously!—Ed.

THIS is a guide for new kids just starting at Greyfriars. By studying it carefully, these tender fledglings can avoid making fat-headed mistakes. I should have been jolly grateful for a few tips when I first started here, I can tell you!

I was so innocent that I thought Big Hall was the name of a senior and Morning Break a funeral carriage, and it took me a long time to learn that fags could be anything but cigarettes. For weeks I was under the impression that the masters were always calling out to a chap named Ben Dover; it never occurred to me that it was actually an order to "Bend over!"

So, you see, there's nobody realises better than I do how much new kids need a few words of advice.

The first thing you have to remember, if you're arriving at Greyfriars for the first time, is not to call too much attention to yourself. Don't hire a couple of cabs at the station and ride up to the school with one foot on each roof, or you'll be committing a breach of etiquette straight away. That's the first important point.



Don't put your fingers to your nose when a prefect passes—poke out your tongue at him!

Your dress should be neat and not too gaudy.

A pair of white riding-breeches with lizard-skin shoes, and puttees, will make a suitable rig-out for the lower part of you, while the upper half can

be very effectively clothed in a footer jersey, Eton collar and tailed coat. A Redskin headdress, worn at a not too jaunty angle, will give you that neat finish so highly esteemed by the Head.

On arriving at the school gates, you'll meet Gosling, our one-and-only porter. For goodness' sake, don't tip him ten bob, or chaps will at once think you're putting on side. "Moderation in all things" should be your motto. Tip him nine-and-elevenpence.



Don't turn up in class in just a bathing costume, except by permission.

Your next experience will be meeting the Head. Most new kids seem to look on this as a terrifying ordeal, but there's no need for it to be anything of the kind. All you need do is to treat him as a human being that you're glad to meet. Don't, of course, go to extremes and start slapping him on the back and laughing heartily. Just stroke him under the chin and snigger. The result will surprise you.

The Head will introduce you to your Form-master, who should be treated with great respect. By this, I don't mean that you should give him a sweeping bow, or anything like that. Just drop him a curtsey and give three cheers, and he ought to be quite satisfied.

Now comes the problem of your behaviour to the other chaps in your Form. The best tip I can give you is to keep a cool head and not to say too much. If you find this difficult, just tie a block of ice to your napper and gag yourself. That will do the trick all right.

If you happen to be placed in a fag Form (i.e. Second or Third), study problems won't arise. But if they put you in a Form where studies are provided, you'll have to mind your P's and Q's with your co-tenants. Whatever you do, don't throw their belongings out of the window to make room for your own. Carrying them out through the door and depositing them neatly in the passage outside may be more troublesome, but it's worth it for the sake of peace and quietness.

Always be cheery and jocular with your study-mates. If you can't manage this by your own unaided efforts, buy a book of jokes and riddles, and read them out aloud, laughing heartily after each one. This will keep the atmosphere of the study bright and cheery—especially, of course, if you make a point of doing it while they're working on their prep.



Don't play footer with the Head's topper during morning break—wait till dinner-time!

Now for a few tips on etiquette and deportment in your ordinary everyday life at Greyfriars.

MEALS.—It is considered bad form to take two helpings of pudding. Help your-

self to your neighbour's while he is not looking, instead.

PREFECTS.—To put your fingers to your nose when a prefect passes is very bad manners. Poke out your tongue at him.

RISING BELL.—Never go to sleep again after rising bell. If you feel you haven't had enough rest, wait till you get into class and have another snooze then.

CLASSES.—Even if there's a heat wave on, don't turn up in class in just a bathing costume, except by permission.

JAPES.—It is not the thing to fix up a booby-trap for Mr. Quelch. If you want a victim, choose one of the other beaks.

RECREATION.—It is not advisable to play footer with the Head's topper during morning break. Wait till dinner-time.

BUNTER.—Don't slaughter Bunter. It makes the place untidy.

PERFORMANCES.—When the seniors perform Greek plays, you should not throw tomatoes at them. Use a pea-shooter.

COOKING.—The baking of chestnuts on the fire in the Common-room is frowned on, owing to the smell it makes. If you simply must have something warm to eat, fry a couple of herrings.

There! I haven't finished all I could say by a long chalk. But I'm jolly sure that the new chap who learns all I've said off by heart before he comes to Greyfriars will have a much more interesting life to look back on afterwards than the chap who arrives unprepared!

(That is, of course, if he lives to tell the tale!—Ed.)

Greyfriars Characters

Introducing you to well-known Greyfriars fellows

HE'S a fellow straight and true,
Honest and good-tempered, too,
Staunch and trusting, but no fool—
WINGATE, Captain of the School!

He's the biggest chump of all,
Brainless, beefy, loves to bawl,
Always being ragged, alas!
HORACE COKER, Champion Ass!

Tactful, cheerful, full of go,
"Kindest friend and noblest foe,"
He's the best of chaps alive—
WHARTON of the Famous Five!

Fat and famous, full of guile,
He is sure to raise a smile,
Tries to take our tuck by stealth—
BILLY BUNTER. Here's his health!

Bunter's keeper, so he says,
Tries to mend that rascal's ways.
Full of wit and brain and pluck—
PETER TODD. Let's wish him luck!

Fellows say he thinks in rhyme,
Writing poems all the time.
He's a sportsman, true and straight—
PENFOLD, Poet Laureate!

Sharp, and careful of his tin,
Always raking "dollars" in,
Lends his cash at fancy rates—
FISH from the Yewnited States!

He is hard and keen and cool,
Once the "Bounder" of the school,
Still inclined to play the goat—
VERNON-SMITH, a lad of note!



SQUIFF of the REMOVE!

By FRANK RICHARDS



A grand long story of Harry Wharton & Co., in which is related how the boy from New South Wales came to Greyfriars.

THE FIRST CHAPTER

NO ADMITTANCE!

"No room!"

Bob Cherry spoke politely but firmly.

"But——"

"No room!" chorused the rest of the Famous Five with equal politeness and with equal firmness.

Harry Wharton & Co. were returning to Greyfriars after having been to Lantham to witness the First Eleven's match at that place. Wingate was bringing his men home victorious, and the juniors were jubilant.

There were six seats in the carriage, and there were only five members in the Co., but the bags which had contained various supplies of "tuck" fully accounted for the other seat.

So when a youth with a freckled, sunburnt face, with a rug over his arm and a bag in his hand, presented himself at the door of the carriage, he was met with the unanimous assurance that there was no room.

"Lots of room farther down the train!" said Frank Nugent reassuringly, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur, hastened to assure the stranger that farther down the train the roomfulness was terrific.

But the sunburnt youth did not depart.

"Seems to me that there's an empty seat there," he remarked, "and all the other carriages seem to be pretty full up."

"That's all right," said Harry Wharton. "The train doesn't start for two or three minutes, and you've lots of time to find a place."

"Thanks! I've done enough walking up and down this train. I think I'll come in here, if you don't mind."

"There's the rub; we do mind," remarked Johnny Bull.

"Well, I'll come in whether you mind or not, then."

The Famous Five grinned.

The strange youth seemed very determined. But they were determined, too. And the chances were just five to one that he wouldn't come in.

The sunburnt youth put his foot into the carriage. Bob Cherry shoved

his boot forward, and the stranger's foot disappeared again.

"Haven't I told you that there's no room?" said Bob.

"There's a seat——"

"Engaged!"

"Why couldn't you say so before, then?" exclaimed the other. "If there's another of your party, that alters the case. But is that straight?"

"Quite straight, my cheerful infant," said Bob. "The seat's engaged with a bag, also a bat, also an umbrella. You can see that for yourself. Besides, we're expecting another chap to join us here."

"Oh, rats!"

"Eh?"

"If the other chap hasn't come, you've no right to keep a seat for him in a crowded train. So I'll come in."

"You won't!"

"I will!"

The Famous Five looked grimly at the stranger. His determination rather interested them. He was a fellow of about their own age, sturdily built, with a somewhat rugged but very healthy and pleasant face. He looked particularly fit; his step was springy, his eyes clear and steady. He wore a school-cap slouched over his forehead, looking a good deal more comfortable on that hot day than the headgear of the Greyfriars fellows. Upon his leather bag were inscribed the initials "S. Q. I. F." They were evidently only the initials of a surname and three Christian names, but Bob Cherry, who was given to being humorous, chose to make a single name of them.

"Now, look here, Master Squiff," he began.

The sunburnt lad looked surprised.

"My name isn't Squiff," he said.

"Isn't it? Then I can only conclude," said Bob severely, "that you have pinched that bag."

The other boy glanced at the bag and grinned.

"Oh, you are being funny!" he remarked. "Well, there isn't much time to be funny now; the train's going to start. I'm coming in."

"Your mistake!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "You're staying out."

"Look here——"

"The fact is, Squiff——"

"My name isn't Squiff."

"The fact is, Squiff, we're expecting a chap, and if he comes by this train we want him with us. We can't leave Peter Todd out because of a Squiff. It's not to be expected, Squiff."

"Certainly not, Squiff."

"Run away, Squiff!"

"Go and eat coke, Squiffey!"

There was a chuckle from a crowd of fellows on the platform. A good many Greyfriars fellows were returning from the match by that train. Most of them were in high spirits and willing to improve the shining hour by gently ragging the stranger. The sunburnt lad looked round at them, and then laid down his bag and his rug.

"I'm coming into this carriage!" he said. "I'm coming in, if only for your confounded cheek!"

"Now, Squiff——"

"Keep off the grass, Squiff!"

"Buzz off, Squiffey!"

Squiff—to give him the name the Removites had bestowed upon him—did not buzz off. He made a charge at the carriage.

Squiff was evidently determined. But something more than determination was required to effect an entrance into a carriage where five juniors were holding the fort. Before he knew

what was happening, Squiff was sitting on the platform, gasping for breath, and five good-humoured faces grinned at him from the door.

"Try again, Squiff!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Squiff.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here, make room, you fags!"

Coker of the Fifth came along the

"We want three places," he said.

"No room!"

"Some of you fags can clear out!" said Coker. "Come on, Potter! Come on, Greene! We'll soon shift these fags."

"What-ho!" said Potter and Greene.

"All hands repel boarders!" sang out Bob Cherry.



Squiff made a charge at the carriage, but before he knew what was happening he was sitting on the platform, gasping for breath, and five good-humoured faces grinned at him from the door. "Try again, Squiff! Ha, ha, ha!"

train, with Potter and Greene of the same Form. The three Fifth-Formers, after a glance at Squiff, looked into Wharton's carriage.

"No room!" said Bob.

Coker frowned. As a Fifth-Former and a senior, Horace Coker regarded himself as monarch of all he surveyed where mere juniors were concerned. He waved a lordly hand at the Famous Five.

Now, the Famous Five had certainly been a little in the wrong in refusing admission to Squiff. But they were quite in the right in declining to turn out to make room for the three seniors. And the chums of the Remove were famous for standing up in defence of their rights.

Coker and Potter and Greene scrambled in at the door. Coker was immediately grasped by three or four

pairs of hands, and he collapsed on the floor of the carriage, and Johnny Bull sat on his back and kept him there, face downwards. Potter and Greene were sent whirling back. Potter sat down, and Greene brought up against an automatic sweet machine with a bump.

Squiff was on his feet by this time. But he did not try to get into the carriage. Horace Coker's legs were protruding from the doorway, and his boots were lashing about wildly. Squiff grinned and went down the train.

"Lemme gerrup!" gasped Coker of the Fifth. "You cheeky fags! Groogh! Gerroff my back! Gerroff my beastly back! Yarooh! I'll skin you! Ow!"

"Stand on his neck!" said Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow! Ow! Gerroff! Yoop!"

"Coker, old man, you're superfluous," said Frank Nugent. "We told you there was no room. We told you quite plainly."

"The plainfulness was terrific."

"Yaroogh! Gerroff! Potter! Greene!"

"Look out, the train's just going!" said Harry Wharton. "Now then, all together!"

Five pairs of hands closed on Horace Coker. He shot out of the carriage like a stone from a catapult.

"Ow!"

Coker sat on the platform, gasping. The guard slammed the door of the carriage. A few moments later the train began to move. Coker staggered to his feet and shook a huge fist at the grinning faces in the carriage. The Famous Five kissed their hands pleasantly to Horace Coker, and the train glided out of the station, leaving Coker standing there, still shaking his fist.

"Poor old Coker!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Always biting off more than he can chew, and always getting it in the neck!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Peter Todd didn't turn up, after all," said Harry Wharton. "I hope that chap Squiff has got a seat in the train. He looked a decent chap. Now I come to think of it, I don't think we had any right to keep him out."

"Go hon!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Rather late in the day to think of that!"

"Well, he was a cheeky beast!" said Johnny Bull. "And he's got left, as Fishy would say. Still, it was rather thick to keep him out."

"Yes; I hope he hasn't lost the train," said Wharton, rather repentantly. "As for Coker, it serves Coker right! I rather liked the look of that chap Squiff."

But the juniors soon forgot all about Squiff as they settled down for the run to Courtfield, and discussed the match they had just seen and all the things they intended to do during that term at Greyfriars. As for Squiff—or whatever his name was—they never expected to see him again. But they were destined to have a great deal to do with the sunburnt lad upon whom they had bestowed that peculiar name.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

A COOL CARD!

"COURTFIELD!" said Bob Cherry. The train stopped.

It was the last change for Greyfriars. From Courtfield Junction the local train was to take the fellows to Friardale, the village near the school. The Famous Five turned out of their carriage, laden with bags.

Billy Bunter, the fattest junior in the Remove Form at Greyfriars,

rolled up, and blinked at them through his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows, have you seen Toddy?" he asked.

"No. He was to have rejoined us at Lantham, but the silly ass must have got lost or something!" said Harry Wharton.

"Oh, rotten! The fact is, Todd owes me half-a-quid that I lent him," said Billy Bunter, "and I'm a bit short of money, as it happens. I suppose one of you fellows couldn't lend me a few bob to get a snack at the buffet here——"

"Quite right; we couldn't!" agreed Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I'm expecting a postal-order when I get to the school, and—"

"Same old postal-order!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Same old Bunter! Same old Ananias! The same old whoppers! Hallo, hallo, hallo, here's our train!"

And the chums of the Remove rushed to secure a carriage. The "local" was much longer than usual, extra carriages having been put on to accommodate the rush of Greyfriars fellows returning from Lantham.

The Famous Five crowded into a carriage, and as they took their seats a sunburnt lad followed them in. And the juniors all exclaimed at once:

"Squiff, by Jove!"

It was Squiff!

He grinned serenely, and planted



The Australian junior took a book from his pocket and began to read. Bob Cherry happened to notice the title on the cover and he grinned as he saw it: "Cricket for Beginners." "Learning the game, Squiff?" asked Bob.

himself in a corner seat; he was evidently a cool card.

"Glad you didn't lose the train, Squiff," said Bob Cherry. "So you're coming on to Friardale—what?"

The sunburnt stranger nodded.

"That's my station—Friardale!" he said.

"Well, you can stay in this carriage, if you like."

"I mean to."

"Now, don't put it like that!" remonstrated Bob. "If you put it like that, I shall feel bound to pitch you out on your neck!"

"Oh, rats!"

"By Jove," said Bob Cherry, "I've a jolly good mind——"

Bob was interrupted. A thin-faced, keen-eyed junior came up to the door of the carriage and looked in.

"I guess I'll come in here!" said Fisher T. Fish, the American junior in the Greyfriars Remove.

"I guess and calculate we're full up!" said Bob Cherry. "I reckon you'd better kinder hop along the train, Fishy!"

"I say, you fellows, I'm coming with you!" said Billy Bunter, rolling up as the American junior went farther along. "Make room for me!"

"Can't be did! All seats full; and you need room for two, anyway!"

Bunter blinked into the carriage.

"Oh, really, you know! Turn that fellow out; he ain't a Greyfriars chap!" said Bunter, blinking at Squiff. "I say, kid, get out, will you?"

The sunburnt lad laughed.

"No jolly fear!" he said.

"Pitch him out, you fellows!"

"I should want some pitching!" remarked Squiff.

"Now, look here, Squiff——" said Bob Cherry.

"Squiff!" said Bunter. "He, he, he! What a name! He, he, he!"

"My name isn't Squiff, you fat chump!"

"You're too cheeky, Squiff! It's up to me to put you out!" said Bob. "Now, hop out, and save me the trouble of landing you on your neck!"

Squiff laughed.

"You couldn't do it!" he said.

"What!"

"Deaf?" said Squiff. "I said you couldn't do it!"

"My hat! I'll——"

"Hold on, Bob! Let him alone!"

"Look here, I'm not going to have a Squiff cheeking me!" roared Bob.

"Well, you cheeked me, to begin with!" said Squiff. "I'm not looking for trouble, but if you try to pitch me out, I shall——"

"Well, what will you do, Squiff?"

"Bump you over, jolly quick!"

"Then I'll give you a chance!" said Bob.

And he laid a pair of powerful hands upon Squiff. Bob Cherry was a famous fighting-man in the Greyfriars Remove. He fully expected to whirl Squiff out of the carriage with a single swing of his strong arms. But it did not happen. He dragged at Squiff, and pulled at him, but Squiff did not come out of his seat. There was evidently a great deal of muscular force in the lithe, well-knit body of Squiff.

"By Jove!" ejaculated Bob. "He's a strong beast—a very strong beast! But I'm jolly well going to shift him! It's up to me now!"

"I'll lend you a hand!" said Johnny Bull.

"Here, fair play, you know!" exclaimed Squiff. "Two to one ain't fair play! We don't go for fellows two to one in New South Wales!"

"Oh!" said Bob, pausing. "You come from New South Wales, do you?"

"Yes."

" Why didn't you say so before ? " growled Bob, taking his hands from Squiff's shoulders. " If I'd known, I wouldn't have handled you. I didn't know you were a stranger in the giddy land. You can stay there ! "

" Thanks ! I'm going to ! " said the youth from New South Wales cheerfully. " You couldn't shift me in a month of Sundays ! "

" By George, he's simply asking for trouble ! " exclaimed Bob, exasperated. " This time he goes out on his neck ! "

And Bob simply hurled himself upon the lad from the land of the Southern Cross. The next moment Bob lay on his back on the floor of the carriage, not quite knowing how he had arrived there.

" B-b-b-by Jove ! " gasped Bob.

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

Bob Cherry sat up, a little dazedly.

The porter slammed the door of the carriage, and the train moved out of the station. It was too late to settle the question whether Squiff should be ejected. He was booked for the journey to Friardale now.

Bob Cherry rose slowly to his feet. His companions were grinning. It tickled them to see the mighty Bob floored so easily by the sunburnt stranger.

" By gum, there's more in that merchant than meets the eye," said Bob, dusting down his clothes. " You did that very well, Squiff."

" I'll do it again if you like," said Squiff.

" Well, there isn't room in this carriage to teach you manners," said Bob. " But if you were coming down to Greyfriars, my son, I should put you through it, I can tell you."

" I am coming to Greyfriars," said Squiff.

" What ! "

" By Jove ! " exclaimed Wharton. " Do you mean to say you're a new boy for Greyfriars, Squiff ? "

" Yes."

The juniors looked at the Australian with new interest. It had not occurred to them before that he was a new boy for the school.

" Oh ! " said Bob. " So you're going to be a Greyfriars chap—what ? "

" That's so."

" Well, if you come into the Remove, we'll make it a point to knock some of the cheek out of you. You're altogether too fresh for a new kid."

" I'm coming into the Remove," said Squiff.

" Oh, that's settled, is it ? "

" Yes. I was examined a few days ago, and they're putting me in the Lower Fourth—that's the Remove, ain't it ? "

" That's it," said Bob. " We're in the Remove. And I warn you, Squiff, that if you're so jolly fresh, you'll find heaps of trouble waiting for you."

" Oh, I don't mind ! " said Squiff calmly. " I can look after myself pretty well, I fancy. I'm not exactly a tenderfoot."

" I was thinking," said Bob witheringly, " of giving you a tremendous walloping for your cheek. But as you're a new boy, I'll let you off. I don't want to be rough on a new kid, and you'll get lickings enough, I expect, without me piling in."

And Bob sat down. The train was gliding through the green countryside towards Friardale. The Famous Five were soon chatting cheerfully, almost forgetting Squiff, sitting in his corner. The Australian junior listened to their talk for some time, and then took a book from his pocket and began to read. Bob Cherry happened to

notice the title on the cover of the book, and he grinned as he saw it : " Cricket for Beginners."

" Learning the game, Squiff ? " he asked.

" I was looking through the rules," said Squiff. " Do you play cricket at Greyfriars ? "

" Do we play cricket ! " ejaculated Bob indignantly. " Well, yes, I should say we do ! Every Form in the school has its own Eleven, down to the fags in the Second. We play the game there, I can tell you ! "

" Oh, good ! " said Squiff. " Then I suppose I shall play in the Remove Eleven ? "

" Ha, ha, ha ! " roared the Co.

Squiff looked at them in surprise.

" Where does the cackle come in ? " he asked.

" Ha, ha, ha ? " roared Bob. " Here's a chap learning the rules of cricket, and asking if he will play in the Form team ! Why, you young ass, I tell you we play cricket—with the accent on the ' play.' We don't put toddling infants, just learning the rules, into the Form team ! When you've been at Greyfriars about a term or two, and have learned the difference between a bat and a wicket, you may have a chance of playing in a practice match—perhaps!"

" I can play cricket ! "

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

" Don't be cheeky, dear boy ! " said Wharton, with a wave of the hand. " Go on learning the rules, and don't be cheeky ! "

" But——"

" In the Form Eleven, by jingo ! " said Nugent indignantly. " I never heard of such cheek ! A new kid, too —just learning the rules ! It takes the cake ! "

" But I tell you——"

" Oh, rats ! I suppose you play baby cricket ! " snorted Nugent. " You close up your head, my son, and don't be cheeky ! "

" But——"

" Bow-wow ! " said Bob. " Cheese it, Squiff ! You're an ass, Squiffy ! You're several sorts of a chump, Squiffy ! Ring off, Squiffy ! "

Squiff stared at the juniors for a moment, and seemed on the verge of making a hot retort. But he did not. He grinned instead, and returned to his book. He was reading the " Laws of the Game " through, and the juniors smiled as they saw it. But Squiff did not seem to be disturbed by their smiles. He read on calmly and cheerfully, while the chums of the Remove chatted and the train ran on to Friardale.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

BUNTER STANDS TREAT !

" HERE we are, my infants ! " Bob Cherry jumped out of the carriage at Friardale Station. Boys of all ages and sizes were pouring out of the train. The long platform, bordered with flower-beds, was swarming with Greyfriars fellows.

The Famous Five walked out of the station together, gathering up their friends as they went. Mark Linley and Tom Brown, the New Zealander, joined them, and Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, and Hazeldene and Fisher T. Fish.

Dick Penfold met them outside the station. Penfold, the son of the village cobbler, was a scholarship boy at Greyfriars, and a great chum of the Famous Five. Billy Bunter joined the party, too. Bunter's study-mates at Greyfriars—Todd and Dutton —had not arrived yet, having got left behind at Lantham, and Bunter attached himself to Harry Wharton & Co.



When it was time to settle for the bill, Bunter ran his fat hand through his pockets. "My hat! I remember now, I lent my last quid to Lord Mauleverer," he said. "I suppose you wouldn't mind settling for this, Field?"

" I say you fellows, shall we stop at Uncle Clegg's ? " asked Bunter. " I could just do with some ginger-beer. I'm standing treat ! "

" Yes, we know how you stand treat ! " grinned Bob Cherry. " And we're not stopping at Uncle Clegg's. Come on you chaps ; we'll walk to the school."

" I say, you know, I'd rather take the hack——"

" Take it, then, my fat tulip ! "

And the Co. started off cheerfully.

Bunter grunted, and looked round him through his big spectacles. He wanted refreshing ginger-beer at Uncle Clegg's, and he wanted to drive to the school ; but he wanted somebody else to foot the little bill.

His eyes fell upon Squiff, who had come out of the station by himself, and was looking round. New boys were a windfall to Bunter of the Remove—they did not know his little ways, and he generally found it easier to extract loans from them than from fellows who did know him. Billy Bunter rolled towards Squiff with an agreeable grin on his fat face.

" Hallo, Squiff——"

The Australian looked at him.

" My name isn't Squiff, Fatty ! "

" Well, what is your name, old chap ? " asked Bunter affably, glancing at the bag in the Australian's hand, which bore the initials " S. Q. I. F."

" My name is Field."

" What do the other letters stand for, Field, old fellow ? "

" Sampson Quincy Iffley."

" My hat ! "

" Well, what's the matter with you, Tubby ? "

" He, he, he ! What a lovely set of names ! " giggled Bunter. " Do you use 'em all every day, or keep some of 'em for Sundays ? "

" Oh, go and eat coke ! " said Squiff, turning away.

But Billy Bunter did not mean to let the new boy escape him.

" Hold on, Field, old chap ! Only my little joke, you know ! "

" I don't like your little jokes, Fatty ! "

" Ahem ! That's all right, Squiff —I mean, Field, old fellow. You come along with me, and I'll look after you," said Bunter. " I'm an awfully good-natured chap. I look after new boys a lot. How would you like a ginger-pop after your journey —what ? "

" First-rate ! " said Squiff.

" Then come along with me," said Bunter. " This way ! I'll take you to the place. Never mind about your box—that'll be sent on to the school. Come along ! "

And Billy Bunter led his victim to Uncle Clegg's. Arrived there, Bunter ordered two ginger-beers and a dozen tarts.

" Pile in, Field, old man," he said hospitably. " I'm standing treat ! "

" You're awfully good ! " said Squiff, evidently a little surprised. From Billy Bunter's look, Squiff would have never supposed that he would take a new boy under his wing and treat him in this hospitable manner. Bunter waved a fat hand.

" Not at all, Field ! I can see that we shall get on together," he said. " I hope they'll put you into my study —that's No. 7 in the Remove. I'm digging with Todd and Dutton now. Peter Todd's rather a beast, and Dutton is as deaf as a post. I'd like you in my study. I like chaps from —from New Zealand—I think I heard one of the fellows say you were from New Zealand—— "

" New South Wales," said Squiff.

" Yes, I knew it was there somewhere," said Bunter, whose knowledge of geography was decidedly vague. " I heard one of those rotters say you were from the Colonies. The rotters were talking about you."

" What rotters ? " asked Squiff.

" Those rotters you were travelling with."

" They looked very decent chaps to me."

" Oh, appearances are deceptive ! " said Bunter, with a shake of the head. " They're rotters. They were telling Penfold you wanted to come into the Remove Eleven."

" So I do."

" Well, there won't be any chance for you, especially if you're a good player," said Bunter. " Wharton is skipper of the Form eleven, and he keeps me out. Personal jealousy, you know—doesn't want to be put in the shade. That'll show you the kind of rotter he is. Have another tart ? "

" Thanks ! "

" That fellow Penfold, who met them outside the station," said Bunter —" did you notice him ? "

" Not specially."

" Well, what do you think he is ? " said Bunter, with a sniff. " He's a scholarship kid, and his father's a cobbler in the village. And those rotters chum up with him more than they do with me. Shows you what sort of fellows they are ! "

" Yes, it does," agreed Squiff. " They must be pretty decent, I should say."

" I tell you the kid's a cobbler ! "

" Well, is there anything wrong in being a cobbler ? " asked Squiff.

" Oh, you don't seem to understand ! " said Bunter ; and certainly

Squiff was never likely to understand Bunter's point of view. " I'm not a snob, you know, but I draw the line at cobblers. Have another tart. Just come from New Zealand, I suppose, what ? "

" New South Wales," said Squiff.

" Well, isn't New South Wales in New Zealand ? "

" Of course it isn't."

" Oh, I see ! New Zealand is in New South Wales," said Bunter. " I knew it was one way or the other."

Squiff chuckled.

" Do you learn geography at Greyfriars ? " he asked.

" Yes ; we have to mug that up with a lot of other rot," said Bunter.

" Well, next time you see a map, you may find out that New South Wales is in Australia," said Squiff.

" Is it ? " said Bunter. " Yes, I knew it was there somewhere. Have another tart ? "

" Thanks ! I've had enough ! "

" Then I'll finish them," said Bunter, and he did. " How much does that little lot come to, Mr. Clegg ? "

" Two shillings and fourpence," said Mr. Clegg.

Bunter ran his fat hands through his pockets.

" My hat ! I remember now, I lent my last quid to Lord Mauleverer," he said. " I suppose you wouldn't mind settling for this, Field ? I'll square up directly we get to Greyfriars, of course."

Squiff gave him a sharp look. He was beginning to have his suspicions of Billy Bunter.

" Oh, all right ! " he said, not very graciously.

He paid the two shillings and fourpence, and they left the shop.

" Better take a cab to the school," said Bunter. " I'll stand treat."

" How can you stand treat if you've

Greyfriars Jingles

FISHY'S FEARFUL FIGHT!

by PETER TODD.



A FIGHT as grim as heart could wish
Took place the other night ;
A combat fought by Snoop and Fish ;
It was a dreadful sight !

Oh, bravely did they stand their ground
That evening, in the dorm,
And bravely did they circle round
Each other's trembling form.

" On, Fishy, on, and floor your foe !
You're surely not afraid ! "
We cried as Fishy dodged a blow
That Snoop had never made.

Oh, never were such men as those
For bravery and pluck !
So very loath to come to blows,
So quick to dodge and duck !

For speed they could not be surpassed,
Snoop led at the beginning,
But Fishy hit the ground so fast
He very soon was winning.

While half-an-hour or so went by
The combatants made whoopee.
" Be careful, Fishy ! " came a cry,
" You nearly hit old Snoopey ! "

In vain did Sydney Snoop resist,
For Fishy pierced his guard
And floored him with a blow that missed
His boko by a yard !

He dropped inert upon the floor ·
We left him there for dead.
And that historic fight was o'er,
So back we went to bed.

not got any money?" demanded Squiff.

"Ahem! I mean you can pay the cabby, and I'll settle up directly we get to Greyfriars," said Bunter. "Lord Mauleverer will hand out that quid the moment I see him. Old Mauly is rolling in money."

"I think I'll walk," said Squiff.

"It's a jolly long way, and I don't suppose you'd know the way," said Bunter. "I'm rather too tired to walk, or I'd come with you. Better take the cab. I'm standing treat."

"I don't want you to treat me," said Squiff bluntly. "If it's a long way we'll take the cab, and I'll stand half."

"I'd rather stand treat, old chap; but just as you like," said Bunter; and a few minutes later they were rolling towards Greyfriars in the station hack.

Arrived at Greyfriars, Squiff paid the cabman, and they entered the gates.

"Lemme see, I owe you three-and-sevenpence now, if you gave him half-a-crown," said Bunter thoughtfully. "I'll tell you what, Squiff. Hand me six-and-fivepence, and make it an even half-quid, will you? Then I'll see Mauly——"

"Why not see Mauly now, and settle up?" asked Squiff.

"Ahem! I don't think Mauly has arrived yet," said Bunter. "He may not be here till later."

"I never lend money," said Squiff coolly.

"Better make it an even half-quid."

"Better not, I think," said Squiff.

"Oh, all right!" said Bunter, with a great deal of dignity. "So-long! I can't give you any more of my time now; I'm full up with engagements."

And as there was nothing more to be squeezed out of the new boy, William George Bunter strolled away, and left the junior from New South Wales to his own devices.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

NO. 1 STUDY CELEBRATES!

"SQUIFF! What a name!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, that isn't his name—that's only his initials added together," said Bob Cherry. "I don't know his name. Squiff will do."

"And he wants to play in the Form Eleven!" roared Bolsover major.

"Yes; and he's studying 'Cricket for Beginners' as a start!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What awful cheek!"

"Oh, he's got plenty of cheek! Tons of it!"

"We'll take some of it out of him in the Remove!" said Bulstrode.

"Studying 'Cricket for Beginners,' and wants to play in the Form Eleven!" exclaimed Tom Brown. "Well, that does take the cake!"

"The cakefulness is terrific!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Sampson Quincy Iffley Field, to give him all his names, had entered the School House, and he heard the buzz of voices from the junior common room. He grinned as he looked in. The Famous Five were relating that example of the awful cheek of the new kid, amid roars of laughter from a crowd of juniors.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he is!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, spotting Squiff in the doorway. "Come in, Squiff! Come and tell us something about cricket."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I dare say I could tell you more about it than you know," said Squiff.

"Of course you could! Haven't you just been reading it up in 'Cricket for Beginners'?" chuckled Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

" The game of cricket," said Tom Brown solemnly, " is played with a bat and a ball. The fellow with the bat is called the batsman. The fellow with the ball is called the bowler. Have you got as far as that, Squiff ? "

" Farther than that ! " said Squiff calmly.

" Oh, good ! Do you know the difference between a wicket and a duck's egg ? "

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

" Sampson Quincy Iffley Field."

" What ! "

" Which ? "

" How ? "

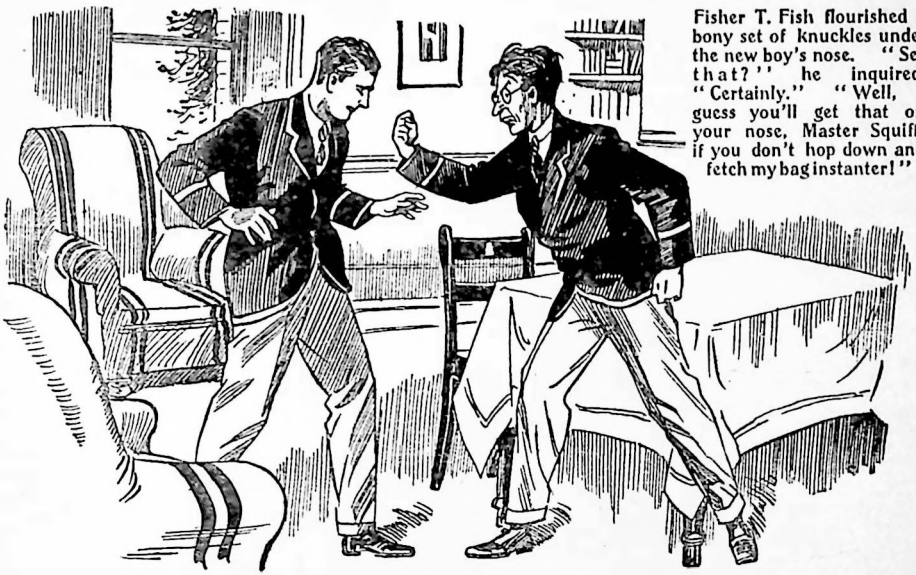
" Oh, crumbs ! "

Bob Cherry shook his head.

" Life's too short for a name like that," he said. " We shall make it Squiff, and save time. This way to Quelchy, Squiff ! "

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

Bob Cherry led the way to the



Fisher T. Fish flourished a bony set of knuckles under the new boy's nose. " See that? " he inquired. " Certainly." " Well, I guess you'll get that on your nose, Master Squiff, if you don't hop down and fetch my bag instanter! "

" Oh, rats ! " said Squiff. " Will somebody show me the way to Mr. Quelch ? I've got to see my Form-master."

" Oh, certainly ! " said Bob good-naturedly. " I'm your man, Squiff."

" My name isn't Squiff ! " exclaimed the Australian.

" My dear chap, you've started here as Squiff, and Squiff you'll remain ! " grinned Bob.

" What is your name ? " asked Bolsover major.

Remove-master's study. He knocked at the door, and Mr. Quelch's metallic voice bade him enter. Bob opened the door.

" Squiff, sir ! I—I mean the new boy," said Bob.

" Oh, Field ! " said Mr. Quelch. " Come in, Field ! "

Field came in, and Bob Cherry retired, closing the door after him. Bob made his way up to No. 1 Study, the quarters of Wharton and Nugent.

There were big preparations going

on in No. 1. The Famous Five intended to celebrate the First Eleven victory with a feed on an unusually large scale. They were in funds, and there were several hampers to be drawn upon, so that study feed was likely to be something of a record. Wharton and Nugent and Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh were there; and a sturdily-built fellow with a rugged, good-humoured face, whom Bob greeted with great heartiness.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Old Trumper!"

It was Dick Trumper, of Courtfield County Council School, the old rival of the Remove fellows in cricket, and a good many other things. He had looked in to see the chums of the Remove on their return, and to make the arrangements for a forthcoming cricket match.

"Just in time for the feed, Trumper, old man!" said Bob. "We're going to knock spots off you at cricket."

Trumper grinned rather ruefully.

"I think that may turn out right," he remarked. "I was just speaking to Wharton about the match next week. Half my team are away, and so the Courtfield eleven won't be in great form. So you may possibly pull it off!"

"Oh, we'd pull it off anyway!" said Bob cheerfully. "Don't you worry about that, Trumper. Hallo, hallo, hallo! What does that porpoise want?"

Billy Bunter blinked into the study.

"I say, you fellows, do you want any help with the cooking——"

"Thanks, no!"

"Can I assist you in any way——"

"No, thanks!"

"Ahem! Of course, I can't desert you on a special occasion like this," said Bunter, coming into the study.

"Toddy's just arrived. So's Mauly."

"Go and tell them to come here," said Wharton.

"Oh, certainly! I'll bring 'em along!" said Bunter, greatly relieved at not being ejected from the study "on his neck," as was very frequently the case when he invited himself to a feed. "Shan't be long, you chaps!"

The feed was ready when Billy Bunter returned with Peter Todd and Lord Mauleverer. Tom Brown and Penfold and Hazeldene had come in also, and Mark Linley, so the study was pretty well crowded. Vernon-Smith dropped in, and Bulstrode. It was a case of standing room only, but the juniors did not mind. The feed was going strong when Sampson Quincy Iffley Field came along the Remove passage, and glanced in at the open doorway.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Here's the cheerful youth who wants to play in the Remove Eleven, and has just begun to study 'Cricket for Beginners.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I want No. 14 Study," said Squiff. "Can you tell me where it is?"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "That's my study."

"Mine, too!" said Squiff.

"Do you mean to say they've put you into my study?" said Johnny Bull. "Fishy and I have had it to ourselves ever since Rake left. Look here, young hopeful, couldn't you get into some other study? You have him, Todd. He will tell you a lot of things about cricket."

"For beginners!" chuckled Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Thanks. I've got one duffer in my study already," said Peter Todd. "Bunter's enough to turn a chap's hair grey. You have him, Smithy?"

Vernon-Smith laughed.

" Thanks. Bull can keep him. I don't want instruction in cricket for beginners ! "

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

" Come in, Squiffy," said Nugent hospitably. " Room for one more ! Come and join in the feed ; but don't tell us anything about cricket. We bar that ! "

" Yes, come in," said Bob Cherry. " Your study's at the end of the passage. But come in and have a whack."

" Trot in," said Wharton.

" You're very good," said Squiff.

" My dear chap, you're more than welcome. Besides, it's an honour to us to entertain an authority upon cricket—for beginners ! "

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

Squiff laughed, and came in. In spite of Squiff's awful cheek, as the Removites naturally regarded it, they had taken a liking to the young Australian, and Bob Cherry had quite forgiven him for the fall in the railway carriage. And the Famous Five were always kind to new fellows, if they were at all decent ; and Squiff certainly looked a very decent fellow. Squiff joined in the feed with great heartiness, evidently having brought a good appetite with him from New South Wales. He joined, too, in the cheery chat, but when he ventured upon the subject of cricket, he was interrupted by roars of laughter. His studying " Cricket for Beginners " had become a standing joke, and the Removites declined to believe that he knew anything at all about the game.

" By Jove, there's a chance for you, Trumper, old man ! " exclaimed Bob Cherry. " You're short of men for the match next week."

" Yes," said Trumper.

" We'll lend you Squiff. Play him ! "

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

" Thank you for nothing," grinned Trumper.

But Squiff looked quickly at the Courtfield captain.

" Is that so ? " he asked. " Where are you playing ? "

" I'm playing these chaps," said Trumper. " And it's true that we're short in the team ; but we're not looking out for beginners."

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

Squiff looked thoughtful, but he said no more on the subject then. But when the feed was over, and Dick Trumper took his departure, Squiff joined him in the Close, and walked down to the gates with him.

" I'd like a little talk with you," said Squiff cheerily. " I'll come part of the way home with you, if you don't mind." Squiff had already learned all about Trumper.

" Certainly," said Trumper, with a smile. " Don't give me any instruction in cricket, though. I've got past the beginner stage."

But as it happened, it was about cricket that Squiff talked, as they walked down the Courtfield road ; and what he had to say on the subject seemed to interest the junior captain of Courtfield very much. When they parted they shook hands very heartily, and Squiff returned to Greyfriars with a grin on his face. And Trumper was grinning, too, as he walked on homeward. Apparently, the two fellows had some little secret between them now ; and, apparently, it was of a humorous nature.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

FISHER T. FISH MAKES A MISTAKE !

FISHER T. FISH, the American junior, was in his study when Squiff came in. Johnny Bull who shared that study with Fish,

was still in No. 1. Fish looked round as the sturdy figure of Squiff was framed in the doorway. He grinned.

"Hallo! The great cricketer!" he remarked.

"Exactly," assented Squiff.

Fish laughed. Squiff and cricket seemed likely to remain a standing joke in the Remove unless, indeed, the new boy should show that he could play the game up to the standard of the Remove. But nobody expected that to happen.

"I guess I hear that you want to play in the Form Eleven?" grinned Fish.

"Why not?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Why, I don't play in the Form Eleven," said Fish.

Squiff looked him over with a keen and critical eye. The weedy form of the Yankee junior did not seem to impress him very favourably.

"I don't suppose you do," he said. "You don't look much of a cricketer, anyway."

Fish stared at him. Fisher T. Fish prided himself upon a good many things, but especially upon the way he could play cricket. It is true that nobody else in the Remove saw any cause for pride in the way Fisher T. Fish played cricket. Fish was always willing to show the fellows how they did things "over there" in the United States. But his performances were not exactly in keeping with his words.

"Waal, you cheeky galoot," said Fish. "I tell you I'm a first-rate, gilt-edged cricketer, sir, and I could show these mugwumps some points about the game, if they were willing to learn! As for you, you haven't got past the A B C of it yet."

Squiff grinned.

"Oh, don't stand there grinning like a Chinese idol!" said Fish irritably. "Buzz along. I guess I'm busy. Thunder! What are you dumping down those books in this study for?"

"My study!" explained Squiff.

"By gum! You don't mean to say they've planted you here?"

"But I do."

"Oh, it's rotten!" said Fish. "There really ain't room for three in this study. Couldn't you vamoose farther along the passage?"

"I'm afraid not."

"Well, if you dig in hyer, you'll have to mind your p's and q's," said Fish. "I can't stand cheek from anybody. I guess you're rather fresh for a new kid."

"Sorry!"

"Well, you toe the line and you'll be all right," said Fish, beginning to think that the new boy would be very easy to handle. "Just you keep your place, and remember that you're only a new kid."

"Certainly."

"I guess I'm head of the study," went on Fish. "As a new kid you will be expected to make yourself useful."

"Yes?"

"Yep! F'rinstance, it's up to you to lay the tea-table, and wash up the things after tea," said Fish.

"Really?"

"You bet! Then you'll have to keep the study tidy, and look after the fire when we have one. In fact, a new kid like you will be expected to fag for the study."

"Anything else?"

"Yep! You can unpack those books for me. And go down into the hall and fetch a bag I've left there. You'll recognise it by the initials F. T. F."

"Is that all?" asked Squiff calmly.

"I guess that's all at present. You'll be expected to do anything

you're told," said Fish, quite pleased at the idea of being fagged for. Fish was not a fighting-man, but he was quite willing and ready to take the upper hand of a fellow who appeared to be disinclined to go on the war-path. He began to think that this quiet new boy would be in his hands like clay in the hands of the potter.

"And suppose I don't?" asked Squiff.

"Eh?"

"Suppose I don't do as I'm told?" asked Squiff, as gently as the cooing dove.

"Oh, in that case I shall probably lick you with a cricket stump," explained Fish. "I guess I shall consider it up to me to teach you manners."

"Then you'd better start at once," said Squiff cheerfully. "I'm not going to fag for the study, not by long chalks."

"Hey?"

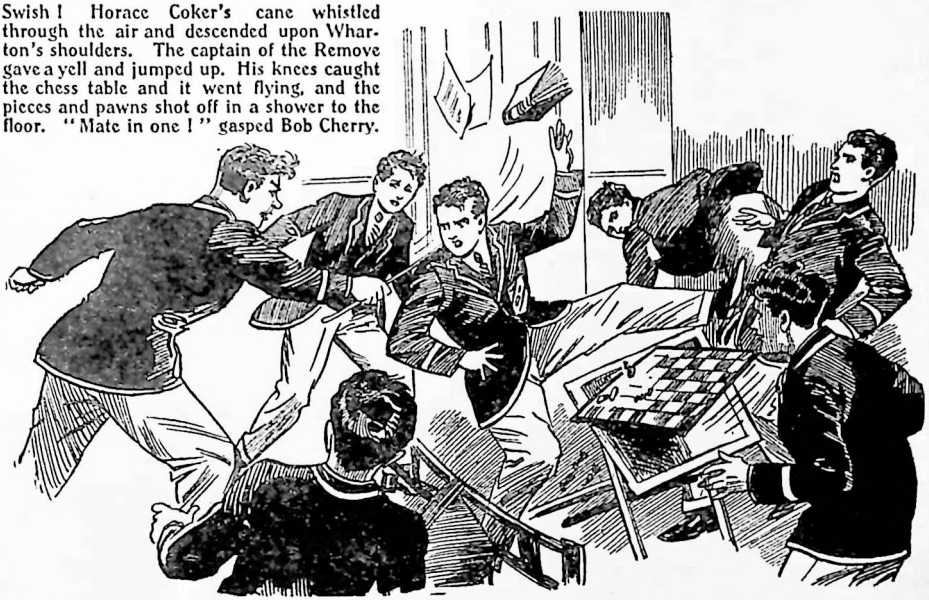
"I'm not going to wash up tea-things, and I'm not going to look after the fire, and I'm not going to fetch your bag up out of the hall," Squiff explained.

"By gum!"

"In fact, I'm going to do pretty much as I like in this study," said Squiff, "and if there is any licking with a cricket stump there will be trouble—heaps of it."

Fisher T. Fish flushed red. He looked the new boy carefully over. The thin Yankee was taller than the new junior, but not nearly so fit. Squiff looked at him with a smile, and that smile caused Fish to imagine that he had a very easy person to deal with. Fisher T. Fish had made many mistakes, but he had never made a bigger mistake than that! He came towards the new junior and flourished a bony set of knuckles under his nose.

"See that?" he inquired.



Swish! Horace Coker's cane whistled through the air and descended upon Wharton's shoulders. The captain of the Remove gave a yell and jumped up. His knees caught the chess table and it went flying, and the pieces and pawns shot off in a shower to the floor. "Mate in one!" gasped Bob Cherry.

" Certainly."

" Well, I guess you'll get that on your nose, Master Squiff, if you don't hop down and fetch my bag instanter!"

" Right-ho ! I'm ready."

" Ready to fetch the bag ? "

" No ; ready to be dotted on the nose."

" You slabsided mugwump. Haven't I told you I won't have any of your cheek ? " roared Fish, crimson with anger. " I guess I'll wipe up the floor with you, and teach you how to behave yourself as a new kid. I guess——"

" Hallo, is this a guessing competition ? " asked Johnny Bull, coming into the study.

" This hyer galoot is giving me lip ! " said Fish savagely. " I'm not standing lip from any man-jack, sir, and I'm going to wipe up the study carpet with him. I guess I'll make him think his name is Dennis before I've done with him—just a few."

" Pile in ! " said Squiff cheerfully.

" Yes, pile in ! " said Johnny Bull, with a chuckle. " I'll see fair play. Rather a new thing to see you in the role of a warrior bold, Fishy ! Pile in ! "

" I guess I'm just going to begin," said Fish, hesitating a little as he observed that the new junior did not show any signs of funk.

" You're a jolly long time beginning," said Squiff.

" I guess——"

" Oh, cheese it ; you're all gas ! "

But that was too much for Fisher T. Fish. He made a rush at the new junior, hitting out with his bony knuckles. Squiff retreated round the study table, guarding his face ; and Fish, encouraged by his retreat, pressed him harder.

All of a sudden Squiff halted, and his right came out like a flash. Fisher T. Fish caught it on the end of his long, sharp nose, and sat down on the carpet with a bump.

" Ow ! By gosh ! " gasped Fish.

" Ha, ha, ha ! " roared Johnny Bull. " Go for him, Fishy ! "

" Ow ! Thunder ! Ow ! "

" Come on ! " said Squiff invitingly. " I kinder guess and calculate that you haven't really started yet. Come on ! "

Fisher T. Fish scrambled painfully to his feet. He clasped his nose with both hands, and snuffled. It had been rather a hard knock, and Fisher T. Fish did not want any more. He mopped his nose with his handkerchief, and the handkerchief came away reddened.

" Ow ! " snuffled Fish. " Grooh ! I guess I've a good mind to make catsmeat of you, you cheeky galoot ! Groogh ! But I guess I don't believe in being hard on a new kid. I'll let you off ! Groogh ! "

" I'm not asking to be let off," said Squiff.

" Groogh ! I guess I'll let you off all the same. You needn't fetch that bag ! "

Squiff chuckled.

" I left my bag down in the hall," he remarked. " Go and fetch it up. You'll know it by the initials S. Q. I. F."

" Wha-a-at ! "

" Getting deaf ? " asked Squiff. " Go and fetch my bag. What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. You told me to fetch your bag, and tried to punch my nose because I wouldn't. Well, now I tell you to fetch my bag, and I'm going to punch your nose if you don't. See ? "

" I—I—I guess——"

" You'd better guess that you'll fetch that bag," said Squiff.

"I reckon I'm not fetching any old bag!" roared Fish.

"Then look out for your nose," said Squiff, advancing with his hands up.

Fisher T. Fish backed away in alarm. He cast an appealing glance towards Johnny Bull; but that youth was roaring with laughter, and not at all inclined to interfere. Fisher T. Fish's little attempt at bullying the new boy had recoiled upon himself, and Johnny Bull's opinion was that it served him right.

"I—I guess——" stammered Fish. "Hyer, hands off! I reckon I was only joking, you galoot!"

"Well, I'm not joking," said Squiff. "Are you going to fetch that bag?"

"Nope!" yelled Fish.

"Then here goes!"

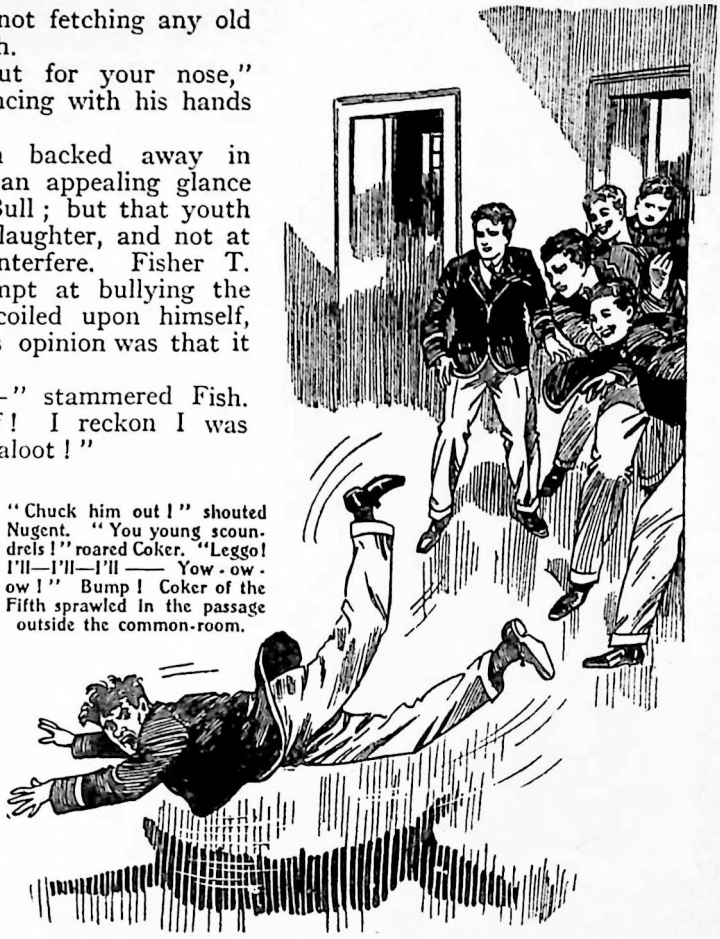
"Hold on!" gasped Fish, scudding round the study table. "I—I guess I don't mind lending a new kid a hand in getting his things straight. I'll go and fetch that bag!"

"Buck up, then!"

And Fisher T. Fish fetched the bag. The expression upon his face was very peculiar as he brought it into the study. Squiff nodded.

"Thanks!" he said. "Next time you rag a new boy, find out first whether he comes from New South Wales. We don't stand it in my part of the world, you know!"

Fisher T. Fish only grunted in response. He did not feel inclined to argue with the cheery youth from New South Wales. He had had quite enough of Squiff.



"Chuck him out!" shouted Nugent. "You young scoundrels!" roared Coker. "Leggo! I'll—I'll—I'll —— Yow-ow-ow!" Bump! Coker of the Fifth sprawled in the passage outside the common-room.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

MATE IN ONE!

"SHUSH!" murmured Bolsover major.

And the juniors "shushed" as Squiff came into the common-room.

Squiff looked round him rather

suspiciously. The juniors were all grinning, and the new fellow could guess easily enough that he had been the subject of the conversation that had suddenly stopped when he came in.

He was quite right. The Remove were taking a great deal of interest in Sampson Quincy Iffley Field. That set of names, if nothing else, attracted attention. And the peculiar nickname Bob Cherry had manufactured from the Australian junior's initials stuck to him. He was never likely to be called anything but Squiff. And the opinion of the Remove was that Squiff was altogether too fresh for a new kid.

Most of the fellows liked his looks. He was so sturdy, healthy, and good-natured that they could not help rather liking him. But it was agreed on all hands that he had too much nerve for a new fellow, who hadn't been more than a few hours at Greyfriars.

New kids often wandered about the place like lost sheep, and were thankful if anybody took the trouble to speak a word to them. They would be very meek when they were put in a study, and have their best manners on towards the occupants of the study.

Not so Squiff! That young gentleman walked about as if the school belonged to him, looking like anything but a lost sheep. And his encounter with Fisher T. Fish was already the talk of the Remove. Johnny Bull had related it, and the juniors had chuckled over the sudden downfall of Fisher T. Fish.

At the same time, it was agreed that Squiff was too cool. And the Removites unanimously agreed that a dormitory ragging, to take some of the cheek out of him, was a really excellent idea.

FAMOUS SQUADRON'S AMAZING STUNT

EVERY great country nowadays is building up a huge Air Force, and fighting aeroplanes are being built in larger quantities than ever before. But modern aircraft, with their terrific speeds, must be handled by expert pilots, and the Royal Air Force pilots are the best in the world. In the course of their training they are encouraged to perform the most hair-raising acrobatics.

The splendid colour plate opposite, which was painted for us by Flying-Officer W. E. Johns, shows Single-Seater Scouts of No. 43 Squadron flying in formation, each group of three machines being tied together by strings of coloured streamers!

It is obvious that every machine must keep station with absolute precision—otherwise the strings of streamers would not long remain intact. It is therefore not only a spectacular "stunt," but is very valuable training for the pilots, who must be able to control their machines to a matter of inches when moving at over one hundred and fifty miles an hour.

In a war-time "dog-fight," with formations of many machines, our pilots must be able to throw their machines about in the air and perform the most intricate manoeuvres almost with the speed of light—for on their quickness and skill their lives depend.

The other great essential for a fighting pilot is the ability to shoot straight. All the famous aces of the Great War were deadly shots, and the greatly increased fire-power of the modern aeroplane, with its battery of synchronised machine-guns, makes good marksmanship in the air more than ever important.



To face page 80.

Painted by Flying-Officer W. E. Johns.

ACROBATS OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCE

And so there was quite a little entertainment in preparation for Squiff that night in the Remove dormitory. On the night of a great cricket or football victory at Greyfriars both masters and prefects were less on the look-out than they became later. Many little freedoms were allowed. And the Removites intended to take advantage of that circumstance to put Squiff through a " course of sprouts," as Fisher T. Fish described it in the American language.

Probably Squiff guessed that there was something on, for the cheerful youth from the Antipodes had all his wits about him. But he made no remark upon the matter, preferring not to meet troubles half-way. He strolled over to the chess-table, where Wharton was playing with Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

The nabob was a past-master in chess, and he could give Wharton a rook and win. Wharton was wrinkling his brows over a difficult situation when Squiff arrived and looked on. Several other juniors were looking on, too. And Bob Cherry remarked, with a chuckle :

" Let Squiff give you a tip, Wharton. I dare say he knows as much about chess as he does about cricket. Have you ever studied ' Chess for Beginners,' Squiff ? "

And there was a laugh.

Squiff looked over the board.

" I could give you a tip, Wharton, if you like," he said.

" Oh, could you ? " said Wharton, a little nettled, for he was in a fix, and could see no way out. " Go it, then ! You don't mind, Inky ? "

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh grinned.

" Not at all, my esteemed chum. If the honourable and esteemed Squiffy can give you the tipfulness, let him rip!"

" Bishop to rook's fourth," said Squiff.

Wharton examined the board again.

" By Jove ! " he said. " That does it ! Inky, old man, you're in the fix now ! "

And the Nabob of Bhanipur admitted that the fixfulness was terrific.

Inky was mate in three. But the gleam of conflict was in the eyes of the dusky junior now. He looked up at Squiff.

" Perhapsfully you will play me a game, my esteemed Squiff ? " he remarked.

" Pleasure ! "

Wharton gave Squiff his chair, and the juniors gathered round to see how Squiff would shape against Inky. Inky politely gave him white, and Squiff opened with the Muzio gambit, Inky playing up to him. The youth from New South Wales evidently knew something about chess ; for that opening, strong as it is, requires a good player to be made effective.

And when Inky was mated at the twentieth move, there was a buzz of surprise.

" By Jove ! " said Harry Wharton. " Squiff isn't such an ass at chess as he is at cricket ! "

" Mate, Inky ! " chuckled Bob. " Oh, how could you ? "

" The matefulness is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh ruefully. " My esteemed and ludicrous Squiff, you are a terror. You try him, Wharton ! "

Harry Wharton sat down in Hurree Singh's place, and took white. He tried the four knights game. But at the tenth move he was in difficulties ; at the twelfth Squiff smiled.

" Wherefore the grin ? " asked Bob Cherry, who was scanning the board.

" Mate in one ! " said Squiff.

Just then there was an interruption. Horace Coker of the Fifth looked in at the door of the junior common-room, with a swagger-cane in his hand. Coker of the Fifth glanced round, evidently in search of someone. The great Coker was apparently on the trail of vengeance for having been made to lose his train at Lantham. But Wharton did not observe him ; his eyes were on the chessboard.

" Blessed if I can see your mate in one ! " he said. " I know I've got you mate in two, anyway ! "

" Oh, here you are ! " exclaimed Coker, striding up to the table.

Wharton looked up, and waved Coker back with an impatient hand.

" Don't bother now, Coker ! "

" What ! "

" Run away ; I'm busy ! "

Coker of the Fifth almost exploded. To be told to run away by a Remove fag, because the said fag was busy, was a little too much for Horace Coker.

" You cheeky young sweep ! " roared Coker. "I lost my train at Lantham to-day——"

" Oh, shut up ! "

" And I'm going to give you a licking."

" Do run away, Coker ! "

Swish !

Horace Coker's cane whistled through the air, and descended upon Wharton's shoulders.

The captain of the Remove gave a yell, and jumped up. His knees caught the chess-table, and it went flying, and the pieces and pawns shot off in a shower to the floor.

" Mate in one ! " gasped Bob Cherry.

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

Wharton fairly hurled himself upon Coker. Big and burly as Horace Coker was, the attack made him stagger, and Wharton, hooking his leg in Coker's, brought the big Fifth-Former to the floor with a tremendous bump, sprawling over him.

Half a dozen Removites piled in at once, and Coker was seized by as many pairs of hands as could find room to seize him.

The Removites were indignant and decidedly " wrathy." Coker of the Fifth was a great man—according to Coker—but for a Fifth-Former to invade the junior common-room to lick a junior was an outrage that was not to be tolerated for a moment. And the Removites proceeded to take it out of Coker.

" Yaroogh ! " roared Coker, as the juniors piled on him. " Leggo ! Lemme gerrup ! You young villains —you awful sweeps ! Yaroooop ! "

" Bump him ! " roared Bob Cherry.

More and more hands seized Horace Coker. The big Fifth-Former struggled furiously, but he struggled in vain. He was lifted from the floor, and bumped down, and he gave a tremendous yell. He was being bumped on the scattered pawns and rooks and bishops, and it was painful.

" Yarooh ! Oh ! Yah ! I'll smash you ! Leggo ! Yarooop ! "

Bump ! Bump ! Bump !

" Chuck him out ! " shouted Nugent.

" Ha, ha, ha ! Outside, Coker ! "

" Great Scott ! You young scoundrels ! Leggo ! I'll—I'll—I'll—Yow-ow-ow ! "

Bump !

Coker of the Fifth sprawled in the passage outside the common-room. He jumped up, breathless and dusty and dishevelled, and foaming with fury. The doorway was blocked by a grinning crowd of juniors, and foremost among them was the new boy from New South Wales. They were ready for Coker !

"This way, Coker!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Come and have some more!"

"Come on, Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker looked for a moment as if he would charge through the crowded doorway. But the reception that was ready for him was a little too hot, and Coker changed his mind, and strode away. A yell of laughter followed him.

"Mate in one!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chess-game was hopelessly done for; and whether Wharton had really been mate in one, or Squiff had been mate in two, remained an open question. But there was no doubt whatever that Coker of the Fifth had been mate in one as Bob expressed it, and both Wharton and Squiff were satisfied with that result.

"Nice evening," said Bob Cherry affably. "It will be dry to-morrow if it doesn't rain. On the other hand, it will be rainy—if it rains!"



Squiff was blindfolded, and then the grand master spoke in a deep and awe-inspiring voice. "Gentlemen, our business is to examine the candidate for Remove honours, and decide whether he is fit to become a member of the ancient and honourable body known as the Greyfriars Remove!"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

A DORMITORY RAGGING!

"BED!" said Loder of the Sixth, looking into the junior common-room. "Now then, get a move on, you young sweeps!"

"Same old Loder!" murmured Bob Cherry. "He hasn't learned any better manners yet."

"What did you say, Cherry?"

"Take fifty lines, Cherry! Now get off to bed!"

The juniors cleared off. Gerald Loder saw lights-out in the Remove dormitory, and then hurried down to his study, where he was entertaining a little party. Loder was not likely to take any notice of noise in

the dormitory that night, unless it was very pronounced indeed, as the juniors knew. They were not likely to be interrupted in dealing with the new boy.

After Loder's footsteps had died away down the passage, Bolsover major sat up in bed. Bolsover major was always to the fore when there was any ragging to be done. But on this occasion the Remove were all in it. Even the Famous Five, who were generally down on rags, saw no reason why the extremely cool youth from the Antipodes should not " go through " it.

" Up with you ! " said Bolsover.

The Removites turned out, with two exceptions. One was Billy Bunter, who never turned out of bed if he could help it. The other was the new junior. Squiff did not see any reason for getting up.

But he was very wide-awake, and his eyes were very wide open, as the juniors lighted candle-ends and bicycle-lamps to illuminate the proceedings.

" Hallo, hallo, hallo ! That kid isn't up ! " said Bob Cherry. " Squiff ! "

There was no reply from the Cornstalk.

" Squiff ! " roared Bolsover major.

" My name's Field ! "

" Never mind what your name is," said Bolsover major. " You're Squiff now, and you've got to answer to the name of Squiff. Savvy ? "

" Rats ! "

" By George, if you say 'Rats' to me, I'll start the proceedings with a jolly good hiding ! " exclaimed Bolsover.

" Rats ! "

Bolsover major made a rush towards the new boy's bed. Bob Cherry promptly stepped into the path, and the burly Removite had to pause.

" Get aside, ass ! " he rapped out.

" Not this evening," said Bob calmly. " There's not going to be any hidings handed out, my son. This is a dormitory rag, but there's not going to be any bullying. Any silly ass starting bullying will be jolly well ragged himself."

" Look here——"

" Quite right," said Harry Wharton. " Don't be such a beastly bully, Bolsover ! "

" Do you think I'm going to have that South Sea Islander saying rats to me ? " demanded Bolsover major fiercely.

" I don't see why not," chimed in Tom Brown. " I'm a South Sea Islander, and I'll say rats to you fast enough, my pippin. Rats ! "

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

" Yes, cheese it, Bolsover ! " said Peter Todd. " We're going to teach the dear boy lessons for his own good, and bullying is barred."

Bolsover major grunted discontentedly, but he gave in ; he had to. The Famous Five were joining in the fun, but they did not mean to have any bullying, and Bolsover major had to toe the line.

" Gentlemen ! " said Bob Cherry, while Squiff sat up in bed, and looked on with an amused grin. " Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows ! We find a new kid among us, who is altogether too fresh."

" Hear, hear ! "

" For his own good ; simply for his own good, and not at all for the fun of the thing, we are going to put that fresh young person through it."

" Hear, hear ! "

" Squiff, you are called upon to rise to the occasion ! Entirely for your own sake, we are going to initiate

you into the mysteries of the Remove. You have probably heard that new kids in schools have to go through a process of initiation. If you pass the test, you will be declared a duly elected and esteemed member of the best Form at Greyfriars—that's us! If you show the white feather, you will be despised with universal despision, and condemned to associate with such persons as Bunter."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Arise, Sampson Quincy Iffley Whiffley Squiff!"

"Hold on," said Squiff coolly. "If this is a little game you work off on new boys, I don't mind going through it. You won't catch me showing the white feather. You can get on with your blessed initiation."

"Arise!"

Squiff grinned and arose.

"Gentlemen, form the court!"

The Removites, composing their faces solemnly, formed in a circle, into the centre of which Squiff was walked. Squiff did not seem to be impressed by the gravity of the proceedings. He more than suspected that the process of initiation had been invented for his especial benefit. As a matter of fact, it was a half-forgotten survival of an old custom, belonging to the rough old days when public school life was a great deal harder than at present. Bolsover major and Skinner and Snoop and one or two others would have been willing to revive the process of "initiation" in all its ancient roughness; but the Famous Five were there to see they did nothing of the kind.

"Order in the court!" said Bob Cherry, who had constituted himself master of the ceremonies. "Russell, you are grinning."

"Was I?" said Russell, grinning more broadly than ever.

"You were—and are! Todd is appointed official executioner. Executioner, do thy duty! Two smites with a bolster!"

Whack! Whack! The executioner did his duty at once. Russell roared.

"Chuck it, you silly ass!"

"Silence in court! Did I see you grinning, Penfold?"

"I hope not."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The candidate was blindfolded, a handkerchief being tied tightly over his eyes. Then the grand master spoke in a deep and awe-inspiring voice.

"Silence!" exclaimed Bob. "Gentlemen, the court is now constituted. Our business is to examine the candidate for Remove honours, and decide whether he is fit to become a member of the ancient and honourable body known as the Greyfriars Remove. Squiff, stand forward!"

"Here I am!" said Squiff.

"What is your name?"

"You jolly well know my name!"

"Answer my question. I am speaking now in my capacity as grand master."

"Oh, rot!"

"Executioner, two smites!"

"Here, hold on!" roared Squiff, as the bolster descended. "I'll jolly well punch your head! Here, fair play, you rotters!"

Two juniors seized the warlike Squiff at once, and held him while he received the two smites.

"This is not a dog-fight," said the grand master, frowning. "The candidate has to answer questions, or he is handed over to the executioner. What is your name?"

"Ow!"

"Nonsense! I do not believe that is a name."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

" Silence ! Candidate, what is your name ? "

" Field."

" Front names ? "

" Sampson Quincy Iffley."

" And what do you mean, sir, by coming to a respectable school with a set of names like that ? " demanded the grand master severely.

The candidate was about to make a warm retort, but he saw the executioner ready with the bolster, and he restrained himself.

" Well, they're my names, you know," he explained meekly. " I'm named after my uncles—Sampson, Quincy and Iffley. It wasn't my fault ; I didn't do it myself. I was present at the christening, but I wasn't allowed a say in the matter."

" Very good. The candidate's explanation is accepted. But he is hereby given warning that life is too short for Sampson Quincy Iffley Field, and he will therefore answer to the name of Squiff."

" Oh, I don't mind ! Any old thing ! "

" Next question. Where were you born ? "

" New South Wales."

" How old are you ? "

" Old enough to know that that isn't your business."

" Two smites, executioner."

Whack, whack !

" Yaroooh ! "

" Now," resumed the grand master, " is it your ambition to become an honourable and worthy member of the Greyfriars Remove ? "

" Ow ! Yes."

" Are you prepared to go through the test without showing the white feather ? "

" Yes."

" Good ! Gentlemen, the candidate has answered questions satisfactorily, and I move that we proceed to the test."

" Right-ho ! The test to-night is the blanket test. Get a blanket."

Four juniors took a blanket by the corners, and Squiff was dropped into it. He sat up in the blanket, gasping.

" Look here——"

" Up with him ! "

" I say—— Yow-ow ! Oh ! "

Squiff shot up into the air as the blanket was swung upward. He came down again in the blanket with a gasp.

" Four times, and the fourth right up to the ceiling ! " said Bob Cherry.

Up went Squiff again. It was the Australian's first experience of being tossed in a blanket ; but he was quick enough to see that it would not hurt him unless he struggled. If he struggled, he was very likely to fall out of the blanket and get a nasty bump. His nerve was like iron, and he took it with great calmness. He had a peculiar feeling of floating in the air as he left the blanket, and he felt dizzy as he came down, but he landed squarely enough in the blanket. Up he went again, and again, and the fourth time he almost reached the ceiling, but his coolness was unshaken.

" Give him another," exclaimed Bolsover, " and let him roll out ! "

" Rats ! Don't be a bully ! Squiff, you have passed the test. You can get up."

Squiff got up, feeling a trifle dizzy, but otherwise quite himself. He was none the worse for his experience.

" Now, he's got to run the gauntlet," said Bolsover major.

" No he hasn't. Gentlemen, I put it to you that the candidate has passed the test satisfactorily, and is entitled to be admitted as an honourable member of the Greyfriars Remove."

" Hear, hear ! "

"Glad you're finished," yawned Squiff. "If you're done, I'll get back to bed. You can call this initiation if you like, but I call it playing the giddy ox! Rats!" And Squiff went towards his bed.

"I tell you it's not finished!" roared Bolsover major. "He hasn't half been through it yet. He's going to run the gauntlet!"

"Rot!"

"Shut up!"

"And he's going to be bumped!" said Bolsover major.

"Bow-wow!" said Bob.

"I'm not going to run the gauntlet, and I'm not going to be bumped," said Squiff. "'Nuff's as good as a feast! You can go and eat coke!"

"Then I'll jolly well bump you myself!" roared Bolsover. And he rushed at the new boy. Squiff snatched the pillow from his bed, and met the bully of the Remove with a mighty swipe, which sent him staggering back to collapse in a heap on the floor, with a loud bump and a louder yell. And as he sprawled on the floor, Squiff rushed at him, and belaboured him with the pillow right and left.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Begad!" grinned Lord Mauleverer. "Bolsover is getting it in the neck—what?"

"Yarooh!" roared Bolsover. "I—I'll scalp you! I'll——" He escaped from the swiping pillow at last, and leaped to his feet. There was a sudden shout:

"Cave!"

Footsteps were heard in the passage. There was a quick blowing out of candles, and a rush into bed. The dormitory door opened.

"Ahem!" It was Mr. Quelch. "Ahem! I fancied I heard a noise here. Please let there be no disturbance to-night, or I shall be obliged—ahem—to return!"

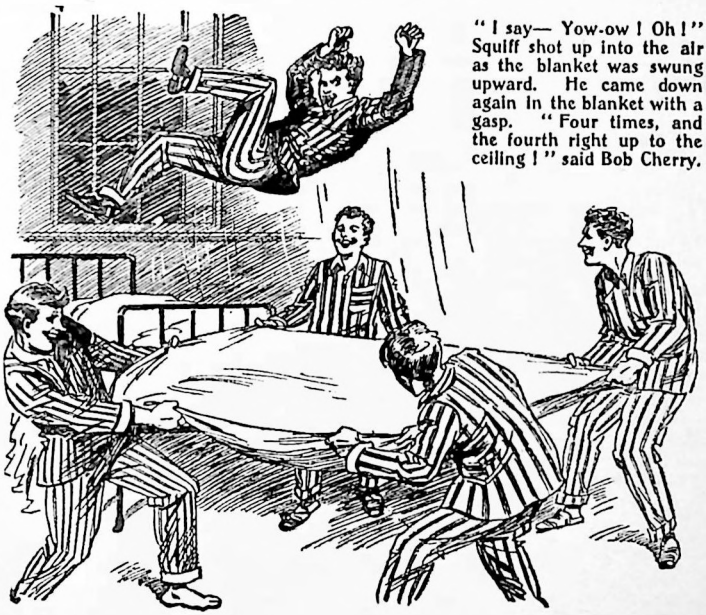
And the door closed again.

"Good old Quelchy!" murmured Bob Cherry. "He knew there was a rag. He's a brick!"

"I'm going to lick that new cad now," growled Bolsover major.

"Quiet, you ass! Quelchy's given us warning!"

"I don't care! I——"



"I say— Yow-ow! Oh!" Squiff shot up into the air as the blanket was swung upward. He came down again in the blanket with a gasp. "Four times, and the fourth right up to the ceiling!" said Bob Cherry.

" But we care ! " said Tom Brown. " It means lines all round if there's any more row. Stick in bed, or you'll get a thumping yourself ! "

" Yaas, begad ! "

" Shut up, Bolsover ! "

" Well, I'll lick him to-morrow ! " grunted Bolsover.

" You'll find me all there," chuckled Squiff. " You couldn't lick one side of me ! I'm your mutton, with the wool on ! "

And Squiff settled down calmly to sleep, not at all perturbed by the prospect of encountering Bolsover major's wrath on the morrow.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

CRICKET !

" Coming down to cricket ? "

Bob Cherry slapped Squiff on the shoulder when he asked the question, as the Remove came out of their Form Room after lessons the next morning.

Squiff grinned.

" Certainly ! " he said. " If I watch you fellows play, perhaps I shall be able to pick up a few tips about the game—what ? "

" That's it," said Bob. " We'll be glad to give you any tips we can. Cricket's compulsory here, you know ; fellows have to turn up to regular practice. Not that anybody ever wants to cut it—excepting rotten slackers like Bunter and Snoop. You don't look like a slacker. No reason why you shouldn't learn the game. Not much time left, either. We shall be starting footer soon."

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

" What are you cackling at ? "

" Ahem ! You're awfully good to offer to show me," said Squiff. " I'll come along with pleasure."

" Have you got a bat ? "

" Oh, yes, I've got my outfit, though, of course, I can't be expected to use the things like you fellows do."

Bob looked at him suspiciously.

" Well, come along, and show us what you can do ! " he said. " Fetch your bat ! "

And Squiff accompanied the Famous Five to the cricket pitch on Little Side. A good many of the Remove went with them, curious to see how the new fellow would shape. Squiff looked over the cricket pitch with an innocent air as if he had never seen one before.

" Go to the wicket," said Bob. " I'll send you a few down, and we'll see if you can bat."

" The wicket ? " repeated Squiff, as if he did not know what that was.

" Yes. You know a wicket when you see one, I suppose ? "

" Well, yes," said Squiff. " But wait a minute. I'm learning this thing, you know, and I believe in being thorough." And to Bob's blank amazement, he took a book out of his pocket and opened it with a thoughtful air. It was " Cricket for Beginners." And Squiff began to read out seriously. " The wickets shall be pitched opposite and parallel to each other, at a distance of twenty-two yards. Each wicket shall be eight inches in width and consist of three stumps, with two bails on the top. The stumps shall be of equal and sufficient size—— "

" My only hat ! " gasped Bob Cherry. " Do you mean to say that you don't know all that already ? And you had the blessed cheek to say you'd play in the Form Eleven ! Oh, crumbs ! "

" I'm a learner, you know," said Squiff meekly.

" Oh, get on the crease ! "

" Which crease ? "

" Eh ? "

" There are two creases, you know ; the popping crease and the bowling crease. The popping crease," went on Squiff, reading from his valuable book, " shall be marked four feet from the wicket, and parallel to it, and shall be deemed—— "

" Cheese it ! " roared Bob, dragging the new junior to the wicket. " Now stand there ! "

" Yes."

" You've got to keep the ball from hitting the wicket —see ? "

" Yes ; I've been told that before."

" And you're only to use the bat to do it with."

" Mustn't I stop it with my boot ? "

" You ass—that would be l.b.w."

" What's that ? "

" Leg before wicket ! " shrieked Bob.

" Oh ! " said Squiff. " Then I mustn't put my leg before the wicket ? "

" Oh, my hat ! " gasped Bob Cherry. " And this is the merchant who was proposing to play in the Form Eleven ! Carry him away and bury him, somebody ! "

" Well, I'm trying to learn, you know," said Squiff apologetically. " I'm afraid I shall give you a lot of trouble. But it's very, very kind of you to teach me."

" Well, well, that's all right," said Bob, mollified. " You seem to be a frightful ass ; but if you want to learn I'll help you to any extent. It's up to anybody to help a chap who wants to learn to play cricket. I wonder you've never learned ; they play a lot of cricket in Australia, don't they ? "

" They do ! " said Squiff.

" Then you ought to have picked it up. But it's never too late to mend. Now, then, don't stand like a sack of coke. Try to look like a human being, and less like a dummy."

" I'll do my best."

" Now, I'm going to pitch down a few. Try to stop them."

" I'll try."

Bob Cherry went to the other end. Squiff stood at the wicket, with a peculiar straddle, and holding his bat as if it were a spade. The juniors yelled with laughter as they looked at him. Even Billy Bunter knew more about batting than that. Harry Wharton kindly and patiently gave the new boy some instruction in holding a bat, and Squiff listened to it with great meekness. He was, in fact, so humbly patient and desirous to learn, that the chums of the Remove felt that it was up to them to take some trouble with him. Certainly, to judge from appearances, it would require a good deal of trouble to turn Squiff into a cricketer.

" Play ! " chirruped Todd.

Bob Cherry sent down the ball. He sent down a very easy one, in order to give the batsman a chance. Squiff looked at it and waved his bat wildly in the air and the ball knocked the middle stump down.

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

" Is that out ? " asked Squiff.

" Yes, that's out ! " gasped Wharton.

" Is it always out when the stumps are knocked down ? "

" Great Scott ! Of course ! "

" Good ; I'm trying to learn, you know." And Squiff took out a pencil and jotted down on his shirt-cuff : " The batsman is always out when his wicket is knocked down."

" What on earth's that for ? " demanded Wharton.

" I'm going to memorise that ! " exclaimed Squiff.

" Oh, my hat ! "

" Chuck us back that ball, and let the image try again ! " said Bob Cherry. " Look out, Squiff ! I'll bowl you a lob this time ! "

" What is a lob ? "

" What is a lob ? " repeated Bob faintly. " Well, look at it, and you'll see what a lob is. I needn't ask you what is a howling idiot."

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

Bob Cherry sent down a lob, and Squiff flourished his bat wildly in the air, and made a mighty smite at space. He spun completely round, and sat down on the ball, which had trundled up to the wicket. Then he gasped.

" Oh, dear ! Great pip ! Did I hit the ball, you chaps ? "

" Ha, ha, ha ! You're sitting on it ! "

" My word ! So I am ! There's a lot more in batting than meets the eye," said Squiff, as he got off the ball. " I think I shall want some practice."

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

" Yes, you'll want some practice," gurgled Todd. " Just a little bit—just a little tiny bit ! Just a decimal fraction."

" Let's see what he can do with the ball," said Wharton. " Stand clear, you chaps—goodness knows where he will chuck it ! "

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

" I'll try," said Squiff.

And he took the ball, and Wharton took the bat.

Squiff's preparations for bowling almost doubled the Removites up. He grasped the round red leather with the air of a fellow determined to do or die, and charged up to the crease and swung up his arm. But he did not bowl. He walked back again.

" Hallo, hallo, hallo ! What are you up to ? " shouted Bob Cherry.

" That's all right. I'm going to make sure before I bowl."

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

Squiff charged again, and this time he hurled the ball. There was a wild yell from Bob Cherry, who was standing a dozen yards away. The ball had caught him on the foot, and Bob hopped on one leg, and roared :

" Ow, ow, ow, ow, ow ! "

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

" Where's the ball gone ? " asked Squiff, looking round.

" Ha, ha, ha ! Ask Bob Cherry ! "

" Yow ! Ow, ow ! "

" Chuck it back," said Squiff. " I'm going to try again ! I feel as if I'm getting the hang of the thing now, you know."

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

" Don't give him that ball ! " groaned Bob Cherry. " Hold him ! Give me that bat, and hold him till I get to him ! "

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

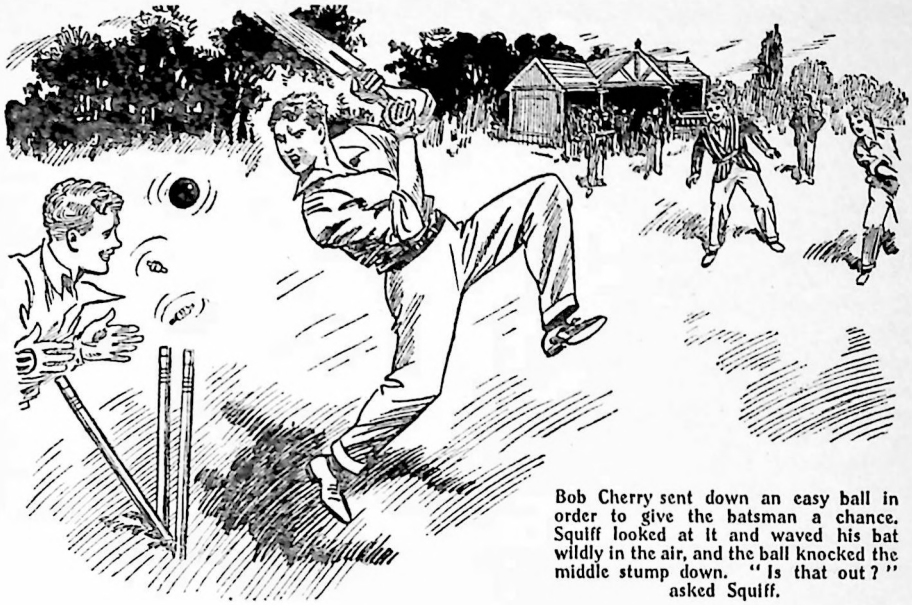
But Squiff did not wait till Bob Cherry got to him with the bat. He walked off the pitch, whistling cheerily, leaving the juniors in convulsions, with the exception of Bob Cherry. Bob was the only fellow who could not see anything funny in Squiff's bowling.

THE NINTH CHAPTER

BUNTER DROPS SQUIFF !

" WHERE's Squiff ? " Billy Bunter asked that question after lessons that afternoon. The Owl of the Remove wanted to see Squiff, and apparently wanted to see him badly. But nobody seemed to be able to tell him where Squiff was.

Certainly, he hadn't gone down to cricket. In spite of the willingness of the Famous Five to help the new junior on with his cricket, they were not keen to get him to practise. Bob Cherry felt a twinge in his foot at the mere idea of it. Bob's opinion was



Bob Cherry sent down an easy ball in order to give the batsman a chance. Squiff looked at it and waved his bat wildly in the air, and the ball knocked the middle stump down. "Is that out?" asked Squiff.

that when Squiff wanted to practise cricket, he ought to go away to a desert island, and do it all by himself.

So Billy Bunter asked after Squiff in vain. And Bunter was very much annoyed. Bunter had come back to Greyfriars for the new term in his usual impecunious state, and though he was expecting several postal-orders, none of them seemed to have "materialised" yet. New boys were Bunter's game, and he had made hardly anything out of Squiff yet, so the Owl intended to devote quite a lot of attention to Sampson Quincy Iffley Field. And now the junior with so many names had disappeared.

"Where is that ass Squiff?"

"Gone out, I think," said Peter Todd. "I saw him carrying out a bat after lessons."

"What on earth did he want with a bat?" said Russell.

"Goodness knows! Perhaps he's going to read up about it in his book, and discover which end to take hold of," said Todd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's gone out," said Ogilvy. "I saw him go out of gates. He had his bat under his arm."

Bunter grunted.

"Gone out to get out of my way, I suppose," said Bolsover major. "He's dodging me! He knows I'm going to lick him!"

Peter Todd laughed. Squiff did not give him the impression of a fellow who would go out of his way to dodge even so awe-inspiring a person as Bolsover major.

Billy Bunter rolled down to the school gates to look for Squiff. Bunter was badly in want of ginger-beer and jam-tarts, and Squiff was the only possible source of supply. But it was quite an hour later that Squiff

came in. He came striding along the road from the direction of Courtfield, with a healthy flush in his sunburnt cheeks and a bat under his arm and a smile on his face. Billy Bunter was still waiting for him.

"I say, Squiff, I've been waiting for you!"

"Good!" said Squiff. "You owe me three and sevenpence, I think!"

"Ahem! I—I wasn't thinking of that!"

"I was!" said Squiff.

"The fact is, Squiff, old man, I've been disappointed about a postal-order," Bunter explained, trotting in with the new junior, his little fat legs going like clockwork to keep pace with the Australian's vigorous stride. "I was thinking that, as you have plenty of ready cash—ahem!—you wouldn't mind——"

"Waiting for the three and sevenpence? All right!"

"H'm! I didn't exactly mean that. The fact is——"

"The fact is," said Squiff, "I don't believe in lending money or in owing money! You needn't settle up the tuck-shop account—I know you don't mean to, anyway! But you owe me one-and-three for your half of the cab yesterday, and I want you to square that up. Fifteenpence, please!"

"Of course I'll square up if you like," said Bunter with dignity. "Several fellows owe me a lot of money. I lent my last half-quid to Peter Todd, and Wharton owes me five shillings, and Bob Cherry owes me a quid from last term. I didn't want to worry them for the money—ahem! —at the beginning of the term. There's Lord Mauleverer, too. But look here, you lend me half a quid now and I'll square up when they settle with me!"

Squiff grinned. He had not known Billy Bunter very long, but he was beginning to understand him very well indeed. Squiff was "all there."

"I won't lend you any money!" said Squiff. "But I'll tell you what I will do—I'll show you how to get some."

"Good!" said Bunter, his eyes glistening behind his big spectacles. "Pile in! I'm your man! How?"

"Make the fellows pay what they owe you!"

"Ahem! I don't want to bother them, you know——"

"Oh, that's rot!" said Squiff coolly. "If they owe the money they ought to pay it. And they're flush with tin at the beginning of the term, so it's just the time to tackle them."

"You—you see, I—I don't want to worry them! Besides, they're rather beasts, you know!" stammered Bunter. "They—they might lick me if I dun them for it!"

"I'll see they don't lick you," said Squiff. "I'll stand by you—after the way you stood treat to me yesterday, too. Rely on me! Come on!"

"I—I say—— Where?"

"We'll try Lord Mauleverer first. I've heard that he's a millionaire, so there's no earthly reason why he shouldn't settle up the quid he owes you!"

"B-b-b-b-but——" said Bunter, in dismay.

"Oh, come on!" said Squiff, taking the reluctant Owl of the Remove by the arm. "I'll see you through!"

"Look here," said Bunter, "I'm not going to dun them! I'll let them keep my money as long as they like. I dare say you mean well, Squiff; but I can't have you interfering in my affairs like this! In fact, mind your own business!"

"I'm making this my business!" said Squiff composedly. "I'm not going to see you done, Bunter! I

suppose they really owe you the money—what? If you've been lying to me I shall take you by the neck and lay this bat round you! Have you been lying?"

"N-n-n-no!"

"Then come on!" said Squiff. "I'll take you round to all the bounders, one after another, and make them settle up the money they owe you!"

"Oh, really——"

"This way," said Squiff. "There's Mauleverer over there. We'll start on him. When he squares up that quid you can square up my fifteenpence. See!"

And, with an iron grasp upon Bunter's arm, Squiff led the dismayed Owl of the Remove up to Lord Mauleverer. The schoolboy earl was chatting outside the School House with Vernon-Smith, and he glanced in some surprise at Bunter's dismayed face, as Squiff marched him up.

"Bunter wants you to settle," said Squiff.

"Begad! Settle what?"

"The quid you owe him!"

"Begad!"

"I—I—I—— It was a—a mistake!" stuttered Bunter. "M-m-mauly doesn't owe me a quid! I—I really meant to say that I owe Mauly a quid! That's what I really meant!"

"Oh, that was what you meant, was it?" said Squiff. "You shouldn't make those mistakes, Bunter. You're liable to get a bat laid round you. We'll try Wharton, then. There's no reason why Wharton shouldn't settle up the five bob he owes you from last term. Come on!"

And Squiff marched the dismayed Bunter off to the cricket-field, leaving Lord Mauleverer and Vernon-Smith laughing.

Harry Wharton was looking on while Nugent bowled to Johnny Bull, when the Australian junior came up with Bunter. Squiff tapped him on the arm.

"Hallo!" said Harry. "Want to play cricket again? Would you mind waiting till we're finished, so that we can get out of danger?"

"I'm not thinking of cricket just now. I'm helping Bunter to collect some money that is due to him," said Squiff. "He's going to settle up fifteenpence he owes me when you've paid him the five bob you borrowed of him last term."

Wharton jumped.

"Five bob! I! Why, what——"

"I—I—I—I don't exactly mean that, you know!" faltered Bunter. "Now I come to think of it, it—it wasn't Wharton at all!"

"You fat Ananias!" growled Wharton wrathfully. "If you say that I owe you money——"

"It—it was a mistake, you know! Squiff is so hasty!"

"Then there's Bob Cherry," said Squiff.

"Me!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Yes. Bunter wants the quid you owe him!"

"Oh, I owe Bunter a quid, do I?" said Bob Cherry, his eyes gleaming. "I'll give Bunter what I owe him—with interest!"

"Yow! Ow, ow!" roared Bunter, as Bob Cherry took hold of his fat ear. "Leggo! Yow! Ow! I—I didn't mean that, you know! It was Squiff's mistake!"

"Do I owe you a quid?" demanded Bob, compressing his grip on Bunter's ear.

"Yow! Ow! No!"

"Do I owe you anything?"

"Grooh-hooh! No!"

"Then you can have that for

nothing," said Bob, giving Bunter's fat ear a final twist, eliciting a wild yell from the fat junior.

" Bunter seems to be making a lot of mistakes," Squiff remarked calmly. " But there's still Peter Todd."

" Oh, there's Peter Todd, is there ?" asked the owner of that name.

" Yes ; Bunter lent you his last half-quid——"

" Did he ? " said Todd, with gleaming eyes.

" Well, he says so ; but perhaps it was another mistake."

" Yes, I think it must have been a mistake," said Todd, taking Bunter by the shoulders and jerking him away from Squiff. " Do I owe you a half-quid, Bunter ? "

" Nunno ! "

" Then why did you say I did ? "

" It—it was a—a—a mistake——"

" You mustn't make those mistakes," said Peter Todd. " When you make mistakes like that, Bunter, I feel it my duty, as head of the study, to teach you to be more careful. I'm going to kick you all the way to the School House."

" Ow ! Yow ! Yaroooh ! "

Billy Bunter roared as Todd's boot came into heavy contact with his person. He broke into flight, and Todd chased after him, letting out his feet alternately, and at every kick Bunter uttered a wild yell. There was a roar of laughter from the cricketers as the two juniors disappeared in the distance, Todd dribbling Bunter across the Close like a football.

" Dear me ! " said Squiff. " Bunter seems to make a lot of mistakes. It seems that nobody owes him any money at all, and I shall never get my fifteenpence."

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

Todd came back to the cricket-field with a flushed face, but a satisfied expression, as of a fellow who had done his duty, and done it well. He had done it very well indeed ; and the Owl of the Remove found it very painful to sit down for some time afterwards. But he did not make any more attempts to extract loans from the new junior. It dawned upon Billy Bunter that Squiff had made that round of debt-collecting with humorous intent, and he felt that the youth from New South Wales was too hard a nut for him to crack. Indeed, Bunter stated to all who would listen to him that he was " done " with Squiff. He had intended to take the fellow up, Bunter explained, and look after him a bit, but under the circumstances he felt that he was bound to drop him. And Squiff seemed to be quite satisfied to be dropped.

THE TENTH CHAPTER

LOST BALL !

SQUIFF joined the Remove fellows when they went down to the cricket on Saturday afternoon. He had his bat under his arm, and so, apparently, intended to play some more cricket. There was no match that afternoon, but the Remove cricketers intended to put in some practice to get into form for the match with Courtfield the following week. The match with Trumper & Co., of Courtfield County Council School, was the first match of the term for the Remove, and they meant to win it. As Trumper's team was not up to its usual form, owing to many of the fellows being away, the match was not likely to be a difficult one ; but Wharton did not mean to leave anything to chance. Trumper & Co. were great cricketers, and the match with them was generally one of the toughest in the Remove list of fixtures.

" What are you going to do with

that cricket bat, Squiff?" asked Nugent.

"Practise!" he replied.

"Ahem!"

"I understand that cricket practice is compulsory here," said Squiff. "Cherry told me so the other day."

"Hum!" said Bob. "That's quite right. But the fact is, Squiffy, we don't want to be lamed or brained."

"Well, I'm bound to get some practice," said Squiff. "If I brain you or lame you, of course, I shall be sorry. But a chap has to take his chance. Besides, there's a chap coming to see my practice—a chap named Trumper—the fellow who was here the other day. If you won't let me play for the Remove I'm going to see if I can play for Trumper, and I want him to see how I shape."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Trumper!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as he spotted the Courtfield captain coming in at the gates. "I didn't know you'd got so chummy with Trumper, Squiff."

"Why not?" said Squiff. "Trumper's a jolly decent chap, and he knows something about cricket."

"One of the best!" agreed Bob Cherry. "But he's as likely to play you in his team as—as Wingate is likely to play you in the First Eleven!"

"Oh, I don't know! Look here, you don't want me in the Remove team——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't cackle!" said Squiff. "Do you want me, or don't you?"

"Ow! Yow! Yaroo-oh!" Billy Bunter roared as Todd's boot came into heavy contact with his person. He broke into flight and Todd chased after him, letting out his feet alternately, and at every kick Bunter uttered a wild yell.



" Ha, ha ! No, thanks ! " yelled Wharton. " Not just now ! "

" Then if Trumper likes to play me, you can't raise any objection."

" If Trumper wants you to brain him, my dear chap, it's Trumper's bizney ; but I should think he could find an easier way of committing suicide."

" Then there's no objection ? "

" Ha, ha ! None at all."

" Then I shall play for Trumper if he'll have me, and do my best against your lot next Wednesday," said Squiff.

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

Trumper joined the Removites as they reached the cricket field.

" Come to see Squiff at cricket ? " asked Harry Wharton, laughing. " Well, it's rather dangerous to let him play; but we'll give you a chance to see him. It's worth seeing—better than anything I've ever seen on the cinema."

Trumper laughed.

" Well, he looks like a cricketer," he remarked.

" Well, yes," said Harry, with a glance at Squiff's active and well-knit frame. " He ought to be able to play, and he comes from a place where they play jolly good cricket, I know. But he can't play for toffee ! "

" Send him down a few, Trumpy, old man," grinned Bob.

" I don't mind," said Trumper.

Bob Cherry tossed him the ball. The Removites gathered round with great glee, but they were careful to keep at a safe distance. There was no telling what Squiff might do with either bat or ball.

Squiff took up his position at the wicket, holding the bat by the extreme end of the handle, and leaning over it in the form of a semi-circle. His attitude at the wicket made the juniors shriek. Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Fourth came to look on, and Coker of the Fifth condescended to stop on his way to Big Side to look at Squiff. The fame of Squiff's cricket had spread though Greyfriars, and fellows came from all quarters to see him.

" Play ! " gurgled Bob.

Trumper sent down the ball, grinning. Squiff made a wild sweep in the air with his bat, and it flew from his hands, described a circle in the air, and dropped upon the turf. The wicket was down before the bat landed on the ground. Squiff looked round in a surprised sort of way.

" Where's my bat ? "

The juniors shrieked.

" I say, that doesn't count, does it ? " asked Squiff.

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

" Of course, I'm not in practice yet——"

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

" Try again ! " said Trumper. " Field that ball, somebody."

Bob Cherry tossed the ball back to Trumper, and set up the bails again. Then he retreated for safety. A cricket bat flying through the air was not safe, and Bob did not want to have his brains knocked out, even for the fun of watching Squiff play cricket.

Trumper bowled again and Squiff swept his bat round in a circle. The ball did not hit the wicket, but the bat did, and all three stumps flew out of the ground.

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

" Is that out ? " asked Squiff.

" Out ! " gasped Wharton. " Yes, I should rather say so ! "

" But the ball missed the wicket —you call it a wicket, I think ? "

" Yes, we call it a wicket. But don't you see that you've

thumped it down with your bat, you ass? That's out!"

"Wait a minute! I'm going to make sure of that," said Squiff, with a wise air; and he drew out his famous book and opened it.

The juniors screamed with laughter as he read aloud:

"'The striker is out if in playing at the ball he hits down his wicket with his bat or any part of his person or dress.' Yes, that's right enough! I suppose that would be out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't seem to get on with the batting," said Squiff. "There's nothing to laugh at, Trumper. Everything has to have a beginning, and I'm studying 'Cricket for Beginners,' you know. In a short time I expect to know all about it. Just you see what I can do with the ball, that's all."

"Run for your lives!" shouted Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a hasty scudding back as Squiff took the ball, and Trumper went to the wicket. Trumper was almost doubled up with laughter. The whole thing seemed to strike him as even funnier than it seemed to the Greyfriars juniors.

Squiff grasped the ball, took a quick run, and turned himself into a sort of amateur catherine-wheel, and the ball flew. It did not fly towards the wicket, however. It flew over Squiff's own head, and there was a rustling sound as it swept through the leaves of the trees in the Close at a considerable distance.

"Well bowled!" roared Bob Cherry. "Lost ball! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lost ball!" said Squiff. "There's something about that in the rules." Out came his book again, and he read loudly: "'If the ball in play cannot be found or recovered, any fieldsman may call "Lost ball!" and six runs shall be added to the score——'"

"But which side takes the six runs?" asked Squiff. "It doesn't seem to say that in the book."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Has somebody got another ball?" asked Squiff. "Of course, you needn't count the six runs, as this is only practice; but I want a ball to bowl with, you know."

Bob Cherry brought another ball, and handed it to Squiff and retreated.

"Go it, Squiffy!"

Squiff "went it." This time the ball whizzed away over the cloisters, and disappeared from sight.

"Lost ball!" shrieked Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Give me another ball!" said Squiff. "I'm jolly well going to take that wicket!"

"You're jolly well not going to lose any more balls!" howled Bob Cherry. "Cricket balls cost money, my son!"

"But I've got to practise——"

"Then you'd better order down a ton of cricket balls to start with. You can run away and play now. We've got to find those blessed balls. What do you think of Squiff's cricket, Trumper? Would you like him in your team?"

"Oh, I could make a cricketer of him!" said Trumper. "I'll take him in hand, if you like, and we'll see the result. You come along with me, Squiff; we're practising on the common this afternoon. Nothing like seeing really good play to help you on."

"I'm your man!" said Squiff.

And he walked away cheerfully with Trumper.

" Hallo ! " roared Bob Cherry. " You'd jolly well better find those balls you've lost before you clear off, you ass ! "

But Squiff seemed suddenly deaf. He walked away and disappeared with Trumper, and the Removites had the pleasure of hunting for the lost leathers before they began their afternoon's practice.

Trumper chuckled gleefully as he walked away down the Courtfield road with Squiff. Funny as Squiff's cricket seemed to the Greyfriars fellows, Trumper seemed to think it funnier still.

" Well, what do you think of my cricket ? " grinned Squiff. " Will you play me next Wednesday ? "

" Yes, rather ! " chuckled Trumper. " I'll play you ! "

Which would have astonished the heroes of the Remove very much if they had heard it.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

BOLSOVER MAJOR IS SURPRISED !

" HERE comes the silly ass ! " said Bolsover major.

The bully of the Remove made that remark loudly enough for Squiff to hear it, as the new junior came towards the School House, with his bat under his arm.

There was a group of Remove fellows outside the School House, chatting, when the Australian came back from Courtfield. Squiff glanced for a moment at Bolsover major, but made no reply to the remark.

Ever since the ragging in the dormitory on Squiff's first night at Greyfriars, Bolsover major had been extremely unpleasant to the new junior, and seemed bent on provoking him into a quarrel ; but Squiff had kept the peace so far.

But Bolsover was far from attributing that to its real reason—a desire to keep the peace. His idea was that the new junior was afraid of him, and that was reason enough for Bolsover to desire to bully Squiff. The Australian's self-confidence irritated Bolsover major. A good many fellows thought that Squiff was altogether too cool for a new kid, but Bolsover major seemed to take it quite personally. He had informed his friends that he intended to take Squiff down a peg or two, and put him in his place ; and Skinner and Snoop and the rest applauded his intention.

" Been playing cricket at Courtfield, eh ? " said Bolsover, as Squiff would have passed him without replying to his offensive remark.

" Yes," said Squiff.

" Must be silly asses to waste their time on you ! " said Bolsover. " You seem to have got jolly thick with those Courtfield fellows all at once."

" Quite so ! " assented Squiff.

" Perhaps Trumper's going to play you against the Remove next Wednesday ? " sniffed Bolsover.

" Perhaps."

Bolsover paused. It was really difficult to pick a quarrel with a fellow who persisted in speaking politely and not taking offence. But it was the case of the wolf and the lamb over again, though Squiff was not exactly a " lamb," as the bully of the Remove was destined to discover.

" Well, I don't believe you've been out to play cricket," said Bolsover at last. " You've been keeping out of my way."

" Keeping out of your way ! " repeated Squiff.

" Yes."

" Well, you're not exactly a thing of beauty, and it's not what I should call a pleasure to look at you," said

Squiff calmly. "But I shouldn't take the trouble to keep out of your way. Faces like yours can't be helped, and a fellow has to put up with them."

There was a giggle from Skinner and Snoop and Stott, and Bolsover's face turned a dull red with anger.

"You cheeky young rotter!" he exclaimed. "You've been skulking out of the way because I owe you a licking, and you know it!"

"Oh, is that it?" asked Squiff cheerfully.

"Yes, that's it!"

"All serene! I've been skulking out of your way because you owe me a licking," said Squiff. "Now that's settled, perhaps you'll get out of my way. I want to go in to tea. I'm hungry."

"You're jolly well not going to get out of the licking, all the same!" roared Bolsover. "You're a rotten funk!"

"Anything else?"

"I'm going to lick you!"

"Good! You won't be satisfied, I suppose, till you've done it?"



"Don't you see that you've thumped the wicket down with your bat?" gasped Harry Wharton. "That's out!" "Wait a minute! I'm going to make sure of that," said Squiff, with a wise air; and he drew out his famous book and opened it, while the juniors roared.

"No, I shan't!" said Bolsover, somewhat puzzled by the new junior's calmness. For a funk, Squiff certainly looked very cool and composed.

"Well, in that case, the sooner I get it over the better!" said Squiff resignedly. "I don't want any trouble with you, Bolsover——"

"I dare say you don't!" sneered the Remove bully; "but you're going to get it all the same. It's time you were taught manners!"

" But you couldn't teach me manners."

" Couldn't I ? I'll jolly well——"

" You see, you haven't any yourself," explained Squiff.

There was another chuckle from Snoop & Co. They were rather enjoying it. Bolsover did not quite seem to be a match for the new junior with his tongue, whatever he might be with his fists. The burly Removite glared round at his followers.

" What are you cackling at ? " he demanded.

" Ahem ! " murmured Snoop.

" Shut up ! If you want something to cackle at you can watch me wipe up the ground with this cheeky sweep ! "

" Hadn't we better get into the gym ? " asked Squiff. " We shan't be interfered with there, you know, and you want to make a thorough job of it, don't you ? "

" You want a chance to dodge off ? " growled Bolsover.

Squiff laughed.

" No ; I'm going to see it through," he said. " Come into the gym and give me that awful licking. I'll grin and bear it if I can."

" I'm coming ! " grunted Bolsover, more and more puzzled. He wondered whether there was more in Squiff than he had supposed. But he was a head taller than the Australian, and much bigger in every way, and it really did not seem that Squiff would have any chance.

" Hallo, hallo, hallo ! What's the trouble ? " asked Bob Cherry, meeting them on the way to the gym. The Famous Five had just come off the cricket-field.

" Bolsover is going to lick me," said Squiff. " He thinks I've been dodging it, and he doesn't mean to let me get away this time. So I'm going through it to get it over. No good having these things hanging about, you know."

" Look here, Bolsover, let him alone," said Harry Wharton. " You're too big for him, and it's not fair play."

Bolsover sneered.

" If the kid's afraid, and says so, I'll let him off," he said. " Then I'll just pull his ear for his cheek. But ——"

" Thanks ! I've an objection to having my ears pulled," said Squiff. " I'd rather have the licking, if it's all the same to you."

" Then come on, and don't jaw ! "

" You fellows can come and see fair play," suggested Squiff. " You can stop Bolsover before he quite kills me, you know."

" Oh, we'll come ! " said Wharton. " But look here, Squiff, he's too big for you, and if you don't want to fight him, you need not. As for pulling your ears, and so on, if he begins that, we'll give him the frog's-march, and soon take all that out of him."

" Oh, let him rip ! " said Squiff. " I've been in a good many scrapes, but I've never been licked yet. It will be a new experience, and new experiences are always worth having. Shall we have the gloves on, Bolsover ? "

They were in the gym now.

" No ! " growled Bolsover. " This won't be a fight. You can't stand up to me for two minutes. I'm just going to lick you."

" Just as you like. Rounds or not ? "

" No, you ass ! You couldn't last a round."

" Please yourself ! " yawned Squiff. " Will you hold my bat, Cherry ? One of you might take my jacket. Thanks ! Now I'm ready to be slaughtered, Bolsover."

The chums of the Remove looked on in perplexity. They were quite ready to chip in and put a stop to Bolsover's bullying; but they could not chip in against Squiff's own wish. He had to have his way. And his coolness indicated that he had no fear of the result of the combat. But if he could stand up against the burly Bolsover, his boxing would have to be very different from his cricket.

The juniors formed a ring, with eager faces. The Australian's coolness impressed them, in spite of themselves, and although they did not think he would have a chance of victory, they knew that he would fight as long as he could stand. And the "mill" was likely, therefore, to be one of unusual interest.

"Go it!" sang out Snoop. "Smash him, Bolsover!"

"You'd better have the gloves on," said Harry Wharton.

"If the kid's afraid of being hurt, he can have the gloves on!" jeered Bolsover. "I don't mind!"

"Thanks! I'm not afraid of being hurt!" said Squiff. "Pile in! I'm waiting to go in to tea, you know, and you're wasting time."

"You won't feel much inclined for tea when I've done with you," said Bolsover, pushing back his cuffs. He did not trouble to take his jacket off.

"Oh, come on, and not so much gas," said Squiff.

Bolsover grunted with wrath, and rushed at him. The Famous Five looked anxious; they fully expected to see Squiff swept off his feet by that rush. And they liked the Australian junior, and did not want to see him hammered by the bully of the Remove.

But there was no occasion for anxiety, as it happened. Squiff was "all there."

Greyfriars Jingles



THERE lives a youth named Sydney Snoop
Who's very often in the soup
And makes old Quelchy growl and bark
Because his favourite remark
Is "I dunno!"

No use to ask him where's Japan
Or when the Trojan war began,
Or what's the Latin alphabet—
One answer you are bound to get:
It's "I dunno!"

In grammar, French or literature,
Or maths or algebra you're sure
To see him stand upon his feet
And hear him stubbornly repeat,
"Well, I dunno!"

Mossoo may dance and tear his hair,
Lascelles may groan in dire despair,
And Quelch may bark and grab his cane—
No good; he sings the same refrain,
"Oh, I dunno!"

And when exam time comes along
He never gets a question wrong!
Not he; the task is easy done,
He simply writes against each one:
"Oh, I dunno!"

And if you asked me now, at once,
"What good is such a lazy dunce?"
I couldn't answer right away,
I'd have to scratch my head and say,
"Well, I dunno!"

He side-stepped with sudden quickness, and Bolsover blundered past him, and as he passed, Squiff's left came out like a hammer, and caught the burly junior on the side of the jaw. Bolsover tumbled over like a felled ox, and crashed to the floor. There was a gasp of astonishment from the onlookers.

" My hat ! "

" I'm blowed ! "

" By gum ! " murmured Fisher T. Fish. " What a sock-dolager ! And that's the galoot I came near scrapping with, by gum ! I guess I was lucky to get off—just a few ! "

Bolsover sat up dazedly. He put his hand to his jaw, and blinked round him. A circle of grinning faces looked down on him.

" M-m-my hat ! " gasped Bolsover.

Squiff looked at his watch.

" I don't want to hurry you, Bolsover," he remarked. " But it's past tea-time, and I'm hungry. Is this the finish ? "

" The—the finish ! " Bolsover scrambled up, red with rage. " I'll finish you ! "

He tore off his jacket and hurled it to the floor. Then he rushed at Squiff like a bull, his big fists hammering out. Bolsover was a bully, but he had plenty of pluck. That knock-down blow would have sickened a good many fellows, but it had only whetted Bolsover's appetite, as it were. Squiff had no chance of avoiding the rush this time—but he did not seem to want to. He stood up to it, his eye clear and steady, his guard perfect, and Bolsover's rain of blows never reached him. Squiff backed away a few steps, and that was all. A heavy drive on the chin stopped Bolsover, and then for a couple of minutes the two juniors " went it " hammer and tongs.

Crash !

Bolsover major was down again, with a crash that seemed to shake the floor. He lay where he had fallen, panting.

Squiff was breathing a little hard now, but he was quite cool. There was a cut on his lip, and a bruise on his cheek, but that was all. Bolsover's nose was streaming red, and one of his eyes was closing, and the other persisted in winking painfully. The bully of the Remove blinked up at the cool Australian.

" My word ! " he gasped. " Oh, crumbs ! You—you beast, where did you learn to hit like that ? "

" Oh, we're hard hitters in New South Wales, you know," said Squiff calmly. " I offered to have the gloves on. I fancied somebody would get hurt, somehow."

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

" Go it, Bolsover ! " yelled Snoop, not with the slightest belief now that Bolsover major could lick the Australian, but with a secret inward keenness to see the Remove bully thoroughly licked.

Bolsover staggered up. He had had enough ; he could not see Squiff very clearly, and he did not want to " go it " in the least.

" Done ? " asked Squiff.

" Ow ! Yes, I'm done," said Bolsover major. He hesitated a moment, and then held out his hand. " You're a good man—a dashed good man, and I'm sorry I jumped on you ! "

Squiff shook hands frankly enough with his opponent.

" Good man ! " he said. " All serene ! A little tiff like this only makes fellows better friends. I think I'll go in to tea now, if you'll excuse me."

Bolsover went ruefully to bathe his nose and eyes, and Squiff put on his

jacket and walked cheerfully out of the gym. Bob Cherry thumped him on the shoulder, with a chuckle.

"You blessed fraud!" he exclaimed. "You never let on that you could scrap like that! Do you know, I was letting you off a licking, because you were a new kid, and—ahem!—I think perhaps now I was letting myself off!"

"Perhaps you were!" grinned Squiff. "Only I should have had more trouble with Bolsover if he'd been cool; he was in too great a hurry, that's all. I'm much obliged to you for letting me off a licking—though I think I could have looked after Sampson Quincy Iffley Field."

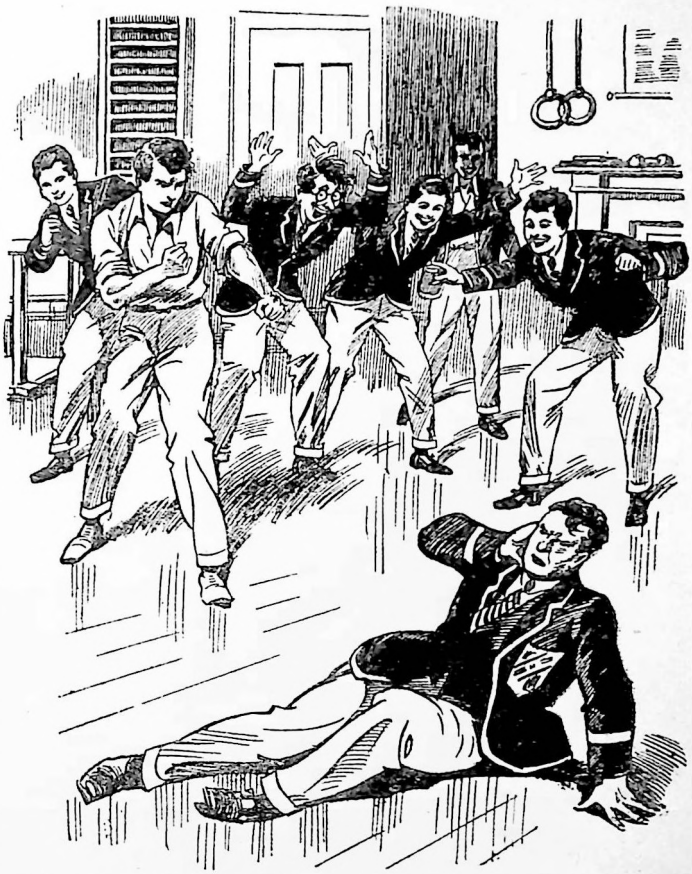
"I think you could!" grinned Bob. "But I'll have the gloves on with you after tea—only in a friendly way, you know."

"Right-ho!"

And after tea nearly all the Remove adjourned to the gym to see Bob Cherry and Squiff with the gloves on. It was a friendly but a very tough "scrap," and it ended with honours even. And as Bob was a celebrated fighting-man in the Remove, Squiff's prowess won him a great deal of respect among the juniors.

"What I can't understand," said Bob, as he peeled off the gloves, "is why a fellow who can scrap as you do should be such an ass at cricket!"

Squiff chuckled.



As Bolsover blundered past, Squiff's left came out like a hammer and caught the burly junior on the side of the jaw. Bolsover tumbled over like a felled ox, and crashed to the floor. There was a gasp of astonishment from the onlookers. "My hat!"

" Perhaps you'll see me play a good game of cricket some day," he suggested.

" Perhaps," said Bob doubtfully. " I should be jolly glad to, but there doesn't seem to be much chance of it ! "

" You never can tell," said Squiff easily.

But Bob Cherry shook his head with a smile. He would require a great deal of convincing before he could believe that Squiff, with all his powers in other directions, would ever make a good cricketer.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

BUNTER SMELLS A RAT !

" It's jolly queer ! "

Thus William George Bunter. And Peter Todd, who had just come into No. 7 Study, and heard that muttered remark, asked : "What's jolly queer, Fatty ? "

Billy Bunter blinked up through his big spectacles. It was Tuesday afternoon, and lessons were over for the day. It was getting near tea-time, but Billy Bunter, for once, was not thinking about tea. He was sprawling in the armchair in No. 7 Study, with a deep wrinkle of thought in his fat brow.

" Hallo, Todd ! I—I was only thinking ! " Bunter stammered.

" Only," said Todd, " first time I've ever known you do anything of the sort. What's jolly queer, you fat bounder ? "

" I wasn't thinking of your face ——"

" Why, you cheeky porpoise——" exclaimed Todd indignantly.

" It's about Squiff," said Bunter. " I mean that fellow Field, you know. Isn't it jolly queer ? He's gone out again."

" Nothing extraordinary in Squiff going out, is there ? " asked Todd.

" He's taken his bat with him."

" Well, I suppose he's taking it for a walk, as he can't play cricket with it," said Todd. " I don't see that you need worry your poor little brain about it ! "

" It's jolly queer ! " said Bunter, rising. " So-long ! "

Bunter waddled out of the study. He was in a very thoughtful frame of mind, but he did not feel inclined to confide his thoughts to Peter Todd. If Todd had guessed what was at the back of Bunter's mind he would probably have descended upon him in great wrath with a cricket-stump.

Harry Wharton & Co. were chatting outside the School House, when Bunter came out. Bunter paused, and blinked at them.

" Squiff hasn't been playing, has he ? " he asked.

The juniors laughed. They always laughed when they thought of Squiff and cricket at the same time.

" No," said Bob. " He seems to have chucked practice, unless he's doing it along with the Courtfield chaps. I wish them joy of him."

" Jolly queer that Trumper should bother his head about him, ain't it ? " said Bunter.

" Well, he's a good-natured chap."

" Squiff is just the sort of fellow one would take to be a good player, from his looks," Bunter remarked.

" Appearances are deceptive," Harry Wharton remarked.

" He always takes his bat out with him," said Bunter. " and he always goes down towards Courtfield. I've noticed that."

" You generally do notice things that don't concern you," said Bob. " What have you got in your fat napper now ? "

" Oh, nothing ! " said Bunter. " Queer, though, wasn't it, the way

Squiff chummed up with Trumper, when he hasn't been here a week yet."

"Why shouldn't he? Trumper may be teaching him something about cricket—and he certainly needs it."

"He was saying something about playing for Trumper on Wednesday."

"That was a joke, of course. Trumper wouldn't be such an ass. Why, Squiff plays cricket worse than you do."

"Oh, really, Cherry! I think it's odd his chumming up with that Board-school bounder——"

"That what?" asked Bob, taking Bunter by the collar. "Are you alluding to Trumper, who is worth fifty thousand of a fat, lazy toad like you, Bunter?"

"Ow! Yow! Leggo!"

Bob Cherry let go, after giving Bunter a whirl with his powerful arm. Billy Bunter spun six yards away and collapsed on the ground. He scrambled up, and shook a fat and furious fist at the grinning Co., and waddled away towards the school gates.

"Beasts!" he murmured. "And asses—silly asses! I believe I've jolly well spotted the little game—rather! And if I have, I'll jolly well make that beast Squiff shell out—rather!" And Bunter chuckled a fat chuckle as he rolled away down the Courtfield Road.

Bunter did not go so far as Courtfield. He climbed to the top of a little knoll, whence he could obtain a view of the common where the Courtfield fellows played cricket after school hours. It was an hour later that Billy Bunter rolled back to Greyfriars, and he was grinning as he went, as if over an excellent joke.

When he came into the School House, the grin on his fat face was so pronounced that several of the fellows noticed it.

"What's the matter with you, porpoise?" asked Peter Todd. "Been squeezing an extra big loan out of somebody?"

"I've been for a walk," said Bunter. "Just a little trot down towards Courtfield. He, he, he!"

"Well, what are you he-he-he-ing about?" demanded Todd.

Bunter chuckled again.

"I could tell you something if I liked," he remarked.

"Lies, most likely!"

"Oh, really, Todd——"

"The fat bounder looks as if he's found something out," remarked Bolsover major. "What is it this time, Tubby?"

"I know what I know," said Bunter mysteriously.

"That's not much, anyway."

"I daresay I could surprise you fellows. Perhaps some fellows are taking you in, and perhaps they ain't," said Bunter.

Bolsover and Todd looked astonished. The fat junior's remarks were decidedly mysterious.

There was no doubt that Bunter had found something out, or thought he had; and when the Owl of the Remove was in possession of information, he never could keep it to himself.

Even when he wanted to keep the secret, his desire to show off his knowledge was too much for him.

"What are you talking about?" Bolsover demanded.

"I daresay you'll find out—in time."

"Blessed if I'm going to take the trouble to find out, you fat ass!" yawned Bolsover; and he walked away.

"He, he, he!"

"Stop going off like a cheap alarm-clock, duffer," said Todd. "If there's

any joke on, why can't you tell a fellow, instead of cachinnating like that ? "

" He, he, he ! I know what I know ! "

" Fathead ! " said Todd.

And he turned away, not sufficiently interested in what Bunter knew, or didn't know, to take the trouble of pumping the fat junior.

Bunter snorted. He was really desirous of keeping his secret, if secret it was ; but, at the same time, he felt an irresistible desire to make a display of secret knowledge. But the entrance of Squiff just then turned his thoughts in another direction. He rolled up to the Australian at once.

" Hallo, Squiffy ! Finished your practice ? "

Squiff started a little.

" Practice ? " he said.

" Yes," grinned Bunter. " Practice —cricket practice ! "

" So you've been practising out of doors, Squiff ? " asked Bob Cherry.

Squiff nodded calmly.

" Yes ; you asked me to go away and practise on a desert island, you know. There are no desert islands going, but I found it all right on Courtfield Common."

" I don't quite see how you could practise by yourself, though."

" I met Trumper and some of the Courtfield chaps," explained Squiff. " They were kind enough to take me in hand."

" Jolly good-natured of them, I must say, considering the way you play ! "

" Yes, considering the way I play," assented Squiff.

" He, he, he ! "

" Hallo, hallo, hallo ! What is that image cackling about ? "

" He, he, he ! Will you come over to the tuckshop, Squiffy ? "

" No, I won't ! " said Squiff.

" I'll stand treat," said Bunter.

" Rats ! "

" I'm expecting a postal order——"

" Rot ! "

" And you can advance me a few bob on it," said Bunter calmly. " I should really like you to, Squiffy ! "

" I daresay you would," said Squiff, with a laugh. " But I'm not going to do it. I know you and your postal orders, you see ! "

" And I know you and your cricket ! "

" Eh ? "

" I saw you at practice," said Bunter. " I happened to be coming along the Courtfield Road, Squiffy, and I saw you. In fact, I watched you for an hour or more. It was very interesting—very ! "

Squiff's expression changed.

" You fat, spying beast——" he began.

" He, he, he ! I suppose a fellow can take a walk on the common if he likes ! " chuckled Bunter. " It doesn't belong to you, Squiffy. Will you come to the tuckshop ? "

" No, you fat rotter ! " said Squiff, frowning.

" All right ; then I'll tell the fellows what your practice was like."

" We know what it's like," said Bob Cherry. " You can't describe anything funnier than we've seen already, Bunter ! "

" He, he, he ! "

" Hold on ! " said Squiff. " I—I don't want—I mean, I'll come to the tuckshop with you if you like, you —you oyster ! "

" Come on ! " said Bunter.

Bob Cherry looked after them in surprise. After the exhibition Squiff had given of his cricket prowess on Little Side at Greyfriars, Bob did not see why he should mind what Bunter

had to say about his performance on Courtfield Common, in company with Trumper & Co.; but Squiff evidently did mind.

He was plainly angry at Bunter's having spied on him, and he was yielding to the fat junior's demand to keep him from talking about what he had seen. And Bob could not help feeling puzzled. However, he reflected that it was no business of his, and dismissed the matter from his mind.

Squiff entered the tuckshop with Bunter, and the Owl of the Remove proceeded to give an extensive order. Mrs. Mimble, however, made no attempt to supply him with the numerous articles he ordered. Mrs. Mimble looked very grim.



"You fat, spying beast——" began Squiff. "He, he, he!" chuckled Bunter. "Will you come to the tuckshop?" "No, you fat rotter!" "All right, then; I'll tell the fellows what your cricket practice was like!"

"Don't you hear me, Mrs. Mimble?" exclaimed Billy Bunter irritably. "Ginger-beer, and jam-tarts, and cake—quick! I'm hungry!"

"You haven't paid up your old account yet, Master Bunter," said the good dame, with great firmness. "You know I have told you I shall let you have nothing without the money!"

"Field's paying."

Mrs. Mimble looked inquiringly at the Australian junior. Squiff did not look as if he felt very friendly towards Bunter at that moment; but he nodded.

"Give the fat beast anything he

likes up to two bob, ma'am," said Squiff, throwing a two-shilling piece on the counter. " That's all you'll get out of me, Bunter ! "

" Oh, really, Squiff, if you put it like that, I shall decline to let you stand treat at all ! " said Bunter, with dignity.

" Well, I do put it like that."

" Ahem ! Under the circumstances I can overlook your bad manners, Squiff. I'm afraid that two bob won't be enough, as I'm hungry ! "

" Two bob will have to be enough," said Squiff quietly. " You know what I'm giving it to you for, Bunter. And if you don't keep your silly mouth shut after I've bribed you, I'll give you such a hiding that you won't be able to crawl round for a week afterwards. I mean that. Keep it in mind ! "

And Squiff walked out of the tuckshop without deigning another glance at the fat junior.

Bunter blinked after him curiously ; but his fat face cleared as he started on the tarts and ginger-beer which Mrs. Mimble supplied in exchange for the two-shilling piece. There were several fellows in the tuckshop, and they regarded Bunter very curiously, wondering what was " up " between him and Squiff.

" What's the little game ? " asked Bulstrode. " What is Squiff giving you money for, Bunter ? "

" It's a loan," said Bunter. " I'm expecting a postal order to-morrow ——"

" Oh, ring off that ! "

" Some fellows can take my word," said Bunter loftily.

" Not fellows who know you," chuckled Bulstrode. " Squiff ought to know you better by this time. Blessed if I can understand it ! Looks to me as if you're screwing this money out of him somehow ! "

" Oh, really, Bulstrode —— "

" So it does to me," said Skinner. " Bunter has all sorts of ways of screwing money out of chaps. It's rather rotten for Bunter to be squeezing money out of an innocent youth from New Zealand, or wherever it is. Under the circumstances, I think we ought to help Bunter finish the tarts ! "

" Oh, really, Skinner—— Skinner, you beast, let my tarts alone ! "

" I agree with Skinner," said Snoop, collaring a tart with each hand. " Bunter is up to some dirty trick, I'm sure of that. My word, these are ripping tarts ! "

" Jolly good ! " agreed Skinner, with his mouth full.

" Topping ! " murmured Bulstrode, who had also helped himself.

" You—you rotters ! " yelled Bunter. " You—you burglars ! Leave my tarts alone ! You—you—you blessed thieves ! You—you——"

But while Bunter was wasting his time in talking, the three juniors were scoffing the tarts ; and Bunter ceased to speak, and wired in at top speed himself. But more than half the tarts were " scoffed," and Bunter rolled out of the tuckshop in a state of breathless indignation. He looked for Squiff, and found the Australian in his study.

" I say, Squiff——" began Bunter, blinking in at the door.

" Clear off ! " growled Squiff.

" I—I've been robbed ! They've been scoffing my tarts——"

" Serve you jolly well right, considering the way you got 'em ! "

" Of course, I'm going to settle up that two bob out—out of my postal order to-morrow. I should utterly refuse to accept money from you, Field, as you ought to know. But you can hand me out another two bob now, and I'll square it up all together!"

" Not a red cent ! " said Squiff.

" Very well. If you refuse to oblige me in the matter of a small loan, of course, you can't expect me to keep your beastly secrets ! As a matter of fact, I don't approve of your trick of spoofing people——"

" You'll hold your tongue," said Squiff. " I'll stand you another bob to-morrow, if you like. That's the limit ! "

" To-morrow won't do ! "

" And if you say a single word," said Squiff impressively, " look out for squalls, that's all. I'll break a cricket-stump over your fat carcase ! I mean it ! Let me hear a single word about what you've been spying out, and the licking you'll get will be a record ! "

" Look here——"

" Now get out of my study ! "

And Squiff forthwith bundled Billy Bunter neck and crop out of the study, and slammed the door after him.

" Beast ! " gasped Bunter, putting his collar straight in the passage. " Yah ! Beast ! I'll jolly well go and tell—ahem !—no, I won't ! I suppose a bob to-morrow is better than nothing, in—in case my postal order doesn't come. And—and the beast would wallop me—the rotter—and—and I don't think I could lick him—ahem ! Beast ! "

And Bunter's secret, whatever it was, remained untold.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER

TRUMPER'S RECRUIT !

THE next day was Wednesday, and a half-holiday. That afternoon the Remove were playing the Courtfield team, who were coming to Greyfriars for the match. Harry Wharton & Co. were very keen about that match ; and Squiff seemed very keen about it, too. After morning lessons, the chums of the Remove went down to the pitch for a little final practice before dinner, and Squiff accompanied them. He looked on while the juniors were at the nets, with his hands in his pockets, and a critical expression on his face.

When they came off, he joined them.

" Well, what did you think of the cricket, O judge ? " asked Bob Cherry, with a grin.

" Not bad," said Squiff.

" Not bad ! " murmured Wharton. " No. Not quite what you're used to, of course ; but not bad. Thanks awfully ! Praise from Squiff is praise indeed."

" You shape pretty well for juniors," said Squiff.

The chums of the Remove stared. For a fellow who knocked down his own wicket and bowled a ball over his own head, to tell them that in his opinion they shaped pretty well, very nearly took their breath away.

" Oh, don't talk out of the back of your neck," growled Johnny Bull. " What do you know about cricket, you duffer ? "

" Well, I'm learning," said Squiff. " I'm reading up ' Cricket for Beginners,' you know——"

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

" And I've been having some practice with the Courtfield chaps, too ! "

" Any casualties ? " asked Frank Nugent.

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

" It will be a good match," said Squiff, unheeding.

" It will," agreed Wharton. " Not that you know anything about it, Squiff."

" But we shall beat you, I think," added Squiff.

" Eh ! "

" What ! "

" I think we shall beat you," said Squiff.

" You—we—who ? "

" Our team," said Squiff. " Didn't I mention to you the other day that I should probably be playing for Courtfield. You said there was no objection, although I'm a member of the Remove. Trumper being short of men, you know——"

" Short of brains, too, if he played you ! " grunted Johnny Bull.

" The shortfulness of the brainful Trumper would be terrific," said Hurree Singh, with a shake of the head.

" Well, he's playing me."

" Oh, come off ! "

" Fact ! " said Squiff.

" Don't be funny," said Wharton warmly. " What do you tell us that for ? You can't expect us to swallow it, I suppose ? "

" You can swallow it or not, as you like," said Squiff calmly. " But Trumper's going to play me. Why, you offered him my services yourselves —don't you remember ?—in the study——"

" Trumper couldn't be such a thumping ass," said Harry Wharton, in astonishment. " I know he's a good-natured chap ; but that would be carrying good-nature too far. It simply means a wicket thrown away."

" It's gammon ! " said Johnny Bull. " Trumper isn't playing him, of course."

" Honest Injun ! " said Squiff.

" Well, my hat ! If you really mean it——"

" Haven't I said honest Injun ? "

" Well, then, Trumper must be dotty ! " said Bob Cherry, with conviction. " Stark, staring, raving, dangerously dotty ! "

" The dottifulness must be——"

" Terrific ! " grinned Nugent.

" He must be potty," said Wharton. " It's throwing the match away. One wicket will make all the difference. The duffer will throw his wicket away —he can't bowl—and he will be a passenger in the field. I can't understand what Trumper's doing it for. If it's good-nature, it's time he was stopped. What the dickens will his team say about it ? "

" They're all agreeable," said Squiff.

" Oh, rot ! "

" I put it to them," said Squiff. " If anybody had raised an objection I should have slid out. But they all said they'd be glad to have me."

" Then they must all be as dotty as Trumper," said Wharton, in blank amazement. " Trumper's seen you at practice."

" Yes ; that's his reason."

" He knows that you're a howling idiot——"

" Thanks ! Same to you, and many of them," said Squiff imperturbably.

" I mean at cricket. You play worse than Bunter. You don't know how to play at all. You are simply a dangerous duffer with a cricket-ball. I don't half like this," said Wharton, frowning. " It looks as if Trumper wants to turn the match into a farce. I think cricket ought to be taken seriously. If Trumper is doing this for a joke on us——"

" They'd hardly throw a match away for a joke," said Bob. " It's just good-nature, I suppose—good-nature gone mad."

Squiff shrugged his shoulders.

" You may find that I've improved a bit," he suggested.

" Oh, rot ! "

Billy Bunter met them as they went into dinner. He turned his big spectacles upon Squiff with a meaning look.

" Lend me a bob, Squiffy ? " he asked.

Squiff tossed a shilling to the Owl of the Remove, and walked on into the dining-room. The astounding information imparted by the Australian junior soon spread; and at the Remove table, at dinner, Sampson Quincy Iffley Field was the cynosure of all eyes. Why Dick Trumper, who was a splendid cricketer, and knew all about the grand old game, should think of playing a duffer like Squiff was a mystery. Indeed, some of the fellows persisted that the Cornstalk must be gammoning. Or else, Tom Brown suggested, he had gone to sleep and dreamed it.

But if Squiff was gammoning, he kept it up, and if it was a dream he evidently believed it would come true; for after dinner he changed into his flannels, in readiness for the match. The sight of Squiff coming out of the house in spotless white, with a bat under his arm, evoked a general chuckle.

"Still dreaming?" asked Tom Brown pleasantly.

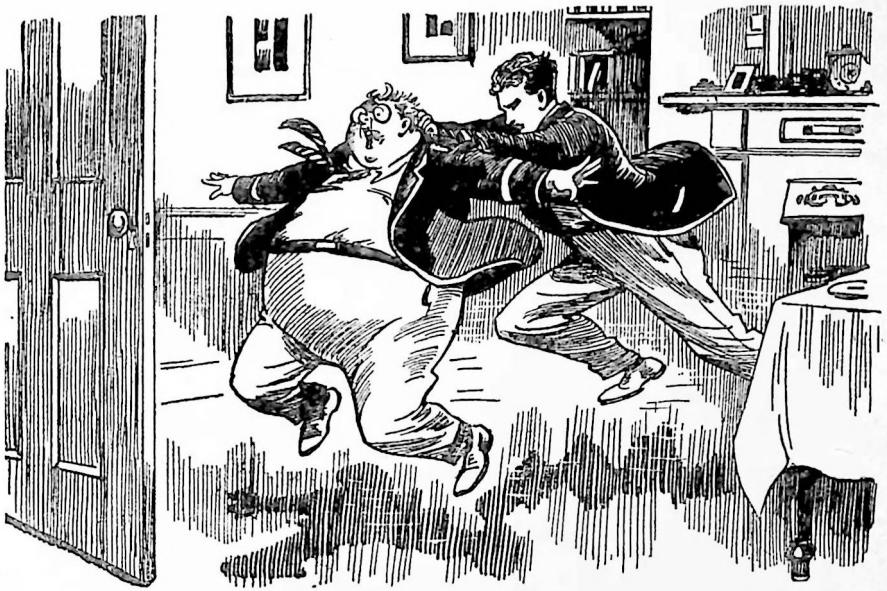
Squiff nodded.

"Wake up before the Courtfield fellows come," grinned Bulstrode.

"Either he's dreaming, or we're dreaming, or Trumper's got sunstroke or something," said Bob Cherry. "Play that duffer—that rank chump! Rats!"

"We'll know when the Courtfield chaps get here," said Nugent. "Until Trumper tells us so with his own mouth I shan't quite believe he's such an idiot."

The Remove Eleven proceeded to the cricket ground to wait for the



"Look here——" protested Bunter. "Now get out of my study!" said Squiff. And he forthwith bundled Billy Bunter neck and crop out of the study and slammed the door after him.

Courtfield team there. Squiff went down to the pavilion with them, cool as a cucumber, seemingly not at all disturbed by the curious glances that were cast at him. The news was spreading, and fellows of other Forms came to see Squiff in flannels. He certainly looked very fit and well in flannels, but the juniors were thinking of the exhibition he had made on the cricket-ground, and they could not help laughing. They were anxious for Trumper to arrive, for the mystery to be cleared up.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here they come!" exclaimed Bob Cherry at last.

The Courtfield crowd were entering the gates. They came down to Little Side. There were a dozen of them. And the Removites greeted them with a general shout:

"Is it true?"

"Is what true?" asked Trumper.

"Are you playing Squiff?"

"Squiff? Oh, Field! Yes."

"You're playing him!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, scarcely able to believe his ears. "You're going to play that howling ass—against us?"

"Certainly! Field tells me that he's asked you whether there was any objection, as he's a Greyfriars chap, and you gave your consent."

"Oh, there's no objection. It's not that. But what are you doing it for?" asked Wharton dazedly. "Isn't there a born idiot you could find in Courtfield, without coming here for one?"

Trumper laughed.

"Perhaps you haven't judged him quite correctly," he suggested. "I know something about cricket, you know. I think he'll do. If you don't object to a member of the Remove playing in a Courtfield side——"

"Not a bit! If you were short of a man we'd offer you one," said Wharton. "But we could offer you something better than that. There's Bolsover major, or Ogilvy, or Russell——"

"Quite satisfied with Field, thanks."

"But—but why?"

"Well, you see, my team's a bit below the usual strength," explained Trumper. "Some of the fellows are away. I've had to put in several reserves, and so we're not quite up to par. So we're glad to have Field."

"Quite dotty!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Quite a hopeless case."

The Courtfield fellows grinned. The Famous Five looked at them—Grahame and Wickers and Buller and Solly Lazarus and the rest—all seemed to be quite satisfied with Trumper's selection of that extraordinary recruit. It was simply an amazing mystery, and the Remove fellows confessed that they gave it up.

"Well, it's your own look-out, I suppose," said Harry Wharton at last. "I warn you that you're chucking the match away."

"We'll chance it!" grinned Grahame.

"Yeth, rather!" said Solly Lazarus, with a fat chuckle. "Let's get to bithneth, dear boys, and we'll thee how it turns out."

"We jolly well know how it will turn out," said Bob Cherry. "But it's your own bizney, I suppose. Pile in."

"We're ready," said Harry.

The two skippers tossed, and Trumper had the best of it and elected to bat. Round Little Side there was a crowd much larger than usually gathered to see a junior match. For Squiff's fame as a cricketer was spread far and wide, and fellows came from all quarters to see his performance. They confidently expected that, if he distinguished himself in any

way, it would be by braining the wicket-keeper, or crippling a fieldsman. Fellows of the Fourth and the Shell and the Fifth came down to Little Side, prepared to laugh themselves breathless.

" Man in ! " said Trumper.

He signed to Squiff, and went out to the wicket. There was a general gasp of surprise as Squiff followed him to the pitch.

" He's opening the innings with that —that image ! " said Bob Cherry, passing his hand across his brow in a dazed sort of way. " Is this a giddy dream ? "

" The dreamfulness of the esteemed Trumper must be terrific, and the wakefulness will be a shock to him ! " grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

" Get into the field," said Harry. " Mind that ass doesn't brain you when you keep wicket, Bulstrode ! "

" I'll give him a jolly wide berth ; I know that ! " said Bulstrode.

" He'll smash his wicket, and it will be one down for nought," said Bob Cherry. " Trumper must be an awful ass to start with a duck's egg. I thought he had some sense ! "

Wharton tossed the ball to Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

" Get that silly ass out first ball, Inky ! We don't want the match turned into a blessed comic cinema."

" The outfulness will be terrific ! " promised Inky.

The crowd were already laughing. Squiff, who was to receive the first over, had taken up his position at the wicket in his usual extraordinary manner. He was leaning over his bat in the form of a U upside-down, with his legs wide apart, and looking about as helpless to deal with a ball as a batsman possibly could look. The Remove cricketers went into the field, accompanied by a chuckle from the spectators. The Courtfield batsmen, in a group outside the pavilion, were grinning, too. Indeed, if Squiff had purposely intended to look as funny as possible, he could not have succeeded better.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh grinned as he gripped the ball and prepared to bowl. He meant to knock out that absurd batsman with the first ball, and the ball came down from the dusky hand like a whizzing shell.

Then, all of a sudden, a change came over that absurd-looking batsman. He straightened up, his hands took a business-like grip on the bat, and the willow gleamed in the air as it swept to meet the ball.

Smack !

" He—he's stopped it ! " gasped Bob Cherry, almost falling down in his astonishment.

" M-m-my hat, they're running !

" Running, by Jove ! "

They were, for that swipe of the bat had driven the ball far out into the country, and the batsmen had run four before it came home. And the bats were safe on the crease in good time, and the Greyfriars fellows rubbed their eyes and wondered if it was a dream.

" Four ! " stuttered Bob. " That—that idiot has hit four ! Four ! First ball of the first over—four ! Well, that beats the band ! "

" Extraordinary fluke ! " said Nugent.

Of course, it was a fluke—there wasn't a Greyfriars fieldsman who had the slightest doubt about that—and they watched Inky again, prepared to see the wicket knocked into smithereens. But it was noted that the batsman had abandoned his absurd attitude now, and was standing up to the bowling in a business-like manner. And when the ball came

down with lightning speed, the willow glanced to meet it, and the leather shot away past point and cover-point, and the batsmen were running again.

Two—and they made good! Nugent sent in the ball, and Inky caught it. But the Nabob of Bhanipur was not grinning now; there was quite a serious expression upon his dusky face. Inky was a first-rate bowler, and he knew when he was facing a first-rate bat; and he knew it now.

And Wharton knew it.

He knew that the second stroke was no fluke, even if the first had been; and he knew that the smiling Australian standing at the wicket was as good a bat as any in the Remove—as good, if not better. And one word dropped from Wharton's lips:

"Spoofed!"

Clack! Willow and leather met again, and Wharton was not surprised to see the ball disappearing against the blue, and the batsmen running once—twice.

"Spoofed! The awful fraud!"

"Spoofed!" gasped Bob Cherry. "He—he—he can play!"

He certainly could, and he proceeded to open the eyes of the Removites on that subject, and to open them very wide indeed!

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

SQUIFF, THE SPOOFER!

SQUIFF did not seem conscious of the amazement that his performances were exciting in the crowd round the cricket ground.

He did not glance round at the sea of faces, where the expressions had changed from merriment to blank wonder.

All his attention was devoted to the game, and he was playing it marvellously. Even Harry Wharton, the champion junior batsman of Greyfriars, had seldom batted as well as that, and it did not seem to cost Squiff an effort. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's bowling was always dangerous, but there did not seem to be any danger in it for Squiff.

Squiff dealt with it as easily as if the ball had been trundled down by a fag of the Second Form, instead of by the best bowler the Remove could produce.

The over gave Courtfield twelve, and then the field crossed and Trumper had the bowling. Tom Brown went on to bowl against the Courtfield skipper. He glared at Squiff as the latter lounged carelessly aside.

"You spoofer!"

Squiff grinned.

"Why didn't you tell us you could play cricket?" demanded the New Zealand junior indignantly.

Squiff only chuckled.

The New Zealander bowled to Trumper, and he was lucky. Trumper was clean bowled at the third ball, after adding two to the score, and he looked a little blue as he came out. He was generally good for forty, at least, and the Removites were greatly relieved to see the Courtfield skipper dismissed for two. Now they had discovered that they had provided Courtfield with a first-class batsman, their confidence in an easy win was considerably diminished, but they were keener than ever to win. It would be too utterly rotten if they were beaten by Courtfield, with the assistance of a fellow whom they had regarded as a hopeless duffer at the game.

Grahame joined Squiff at the wickets. Grahame was a good and reliable bat, and he backed Squiff up well. But when Squiff had the bowling, there was a buzz of excitement in the crowd.

He was a terrific hitter. He seemed to take rash chances, too ; but they always turned out well. And as for chances for the fieldsmen, there simply weren't any. And the leather-hunting the Remove fieldsmen had during the next hour made them hot and breathless and exasperated. For it was a member of the Remove who was giving them all that leather-hunting —a spoofing bounder who ought to have been playing for his own Form instead of against it. And yet in fairness they had to remember that Squiff had offered, indeed asked to play for the Remove, and that his offer had been laughed to scorn before he had made that ridiculous exhibition at practice. Squiff had spoofed them, but it was only his own peculiar way of retorting upon the doubting Thomases who had refused to believe that he could play cricket.

It was pretty plain now that he could play it—and it was plain why the Courtfield fellows had been willing to put him in their team. His practice with them on Courtfield Common had, of course, been very different from his practice on Little Side with the Remove fellows.

The Remove cricketers were in great form that afternoon, and they needed it. The bowling was very good, and accounted for the Courtfield wickets much faster than usual. But there was one wicket that they could not touch—one wicket against which Hurree Jamset Ram Singh and Tom Brown and Peter Todd exhausted their skill in vain—and that wicket was Squiff's.



After a long and glorious innings, Squiff was surrounded by the indignant Removeites. Bob Cherry brandished a big fist under his nose. "You spoofing villain ! Why didn't you tell us you could play ? " he roared.

Squiff's wicket was impregnable.

One by one the wickets fell, and the fieldsmen gave up hope of seeing Squiff's stumps go down. He had been first man in, and it was pretty clear that he would be " not out " at the finish of the innings. When Trumper called " last man in " the score was at a hundred, and of that hundred, fifty-five belonged to Squiff. Squiff's last partner had been dismissed with the last ball of an over, so Squiff had the bowling again now, and he proceeded to make hay of it. Balls fast and slow and medium seemed all the same to him, yorker or googly had no terrors for him. He put " paid " to them all. The score jumped to 116, and the field crossed over ; and the Greyfriars players drew a deep, deep breath of relief when Tom Brown knocked over the Courtfield wicket, and Courtfield were all down for 116—Squiff not out !

Squiff walked off the field, with his bat under his arm, calmly and cheerfully. He was a little flushed, but otherwise his long and heavy innings did not seem to have told upon him in any way.

He was surrounded at once by the indignant Removites. Bob Cherry brandished an indignant fist under his nose.

" You spoofing villain ! Why didn't you tell us you could play ? "

Squiff grinned serenely.

" But I did tell you ! " he replied.

" Well, y-yes ; but we didn't believe it."

" That's your look-out ! "

" But that exhibition you made at practice ! " shouted Wharton. " What did you mean by that, you fraud ? "

" Only my little joke," said Squiff coolly. " You had made up your minds that I couldn't play, so I pulled your leg. Serve you jolly well right ! You duffers concluded that because I was reading ' Cricket For Beginners ' that I couldn't play, and you set me down as a mug. And when I said I'd play for the Remove you jumped on me."

" Well, we—we didn't know——"

" You—you see——"

" Oh, yes, I see ! " said Squiff, with a nod. " You were so jolly well satisfied with yourselves that you didn't think a stranger could teach you anything. That's all right—I didn't mind—but as you had settled it in your minds that I couldn't play cricket, without giving me a chance to show what I could do, I thought I'd pull your leg a teeny-weeny bit. So, as you had settled it among yourselves that I was going to play the giddy ox on the cricket-ground, I played the giddy ox—just to please you, see ? I didn't want to disappoint you when you'd made up your minds about it."

" You—you spoofer ! "

" And Trumper was kind enough to enter into the little joke. I told him I could play, you see, and he gave me a chance to show what I could do," said Squiff. " I satisfied Trumper that I wasn't exactly the mug you fellows supposed. Why, you duffers, I've played cricket ever since I was as tall as this bat ! I was brought up on it ! I've played, and talked, and eaten, and drunk cricket since I was a nipper ! "

" Oh ! "

" And still I'm not above reading over the rules of the game when I've got a quarter of an hour to spare, you know."

The Famous Five looked rather sheepish. They realised that they had jumped to conclusions a little too quickly. That unfortunate volume in Squiff's hand in the railway-

carriage had given them the impression that he was a beginner at the game. His offer to play for the Remove they had received as pure, unadulterated cheek; and they admitted, in fact, that they had condemned him untried, and that the humorous youth from New South Wales was fully justified in "pulling their leg" in return, in the extraordinary way he had done.

But the Removites could be excused for not seeing the joke in quite so humorous a light as it appeared to the Courtfielders, who were roaring with laughter at the amazed faces of the Removites.

It was time for the home innings, and Harry Wharton opened it with Bob Cherry. Trumper led his merry men into the field, and there was a buzz as he tossed the ball to Squiff for the first over. The Removites were wondering whether the redoubtable Squiff could bowl as well as he could bat. They were not left long in doubt. Sampson Quincy Iffley Field went on to bowl against Harry Wharton, and Wharton just stopped the ball—just, and no more. And that one ball was enough to tell him that the Remove had gained a new bowler as good as Hurree Jamset Ram Singh—though, unluckily, just now it was Remove wickets that he was bowling to.

Harry Wharton was very, very careful during that over, and the over gave him only two. The score rose a little in the next, when Bob Cherry knocked Wickers' bowling all over the field. Then Squiff was sent on again to bowl to the captain of the Remove once more.

The Remove fellows watched it breathlessly. Nor were they surprised when Wharton's middle stump was whipped out of the ground, leaving the wicket looking as if it had been on a visit to the dentist's. And Trumper chirruped:

"How's that?"

"Out!"

"Oh, my word!" murmured Bob Cherry. "And that's the chap we thought couldn't play cricket. Oh, my only Uncle Sam!"

After that the Remove batsmen went to the wickets in fear.

And they had reason to fear and tremble.

For the wickets went down at a record speed, and when last man in was announced the board showed the utterly "rotten" score of 40 for the Remove. And Trumper grinned as he asked Squiff if he could manage another over.

"A dozen if you like," said Squiff cheerfully.

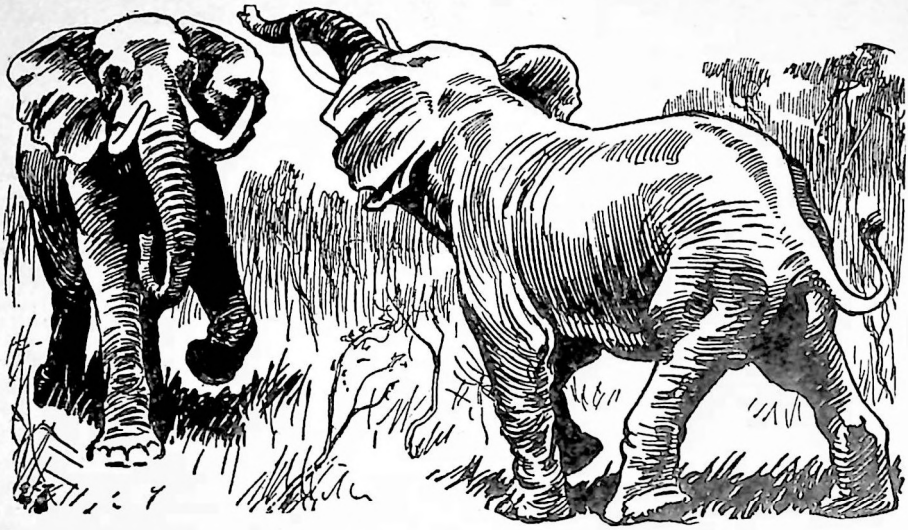
Trumper grinned.

"One will be enough, I fancy," he said. "Go in and put 'em out of their misery."

And one proved to be enough, the wicket going down at the first ball. Then the Courtfield fellows came streaming off the field, winners of the match by the total of 116 runs to 40—a result which afforded them ample cause for satisfaction.

And Harry Wharton & Co. were not quite sure in their minds whether they wanted most to bump Squiff for pulling their leg, or to hug him as a new and amazingly valuable recruit for the Remove Eleven. But satisfaction outweighed all other feelings when they reflected what a rod in pickle Squiff would be for Redclyffe and St. Jim's. So they magnanimously forgave Sampson Quincy Iffley Field, and from that day forth the Form Eleven found a pillar of strength in Squiff of the Remove.

THE END



An ELEPHANT NEVER FORGETS

By CLIVE R. FENN

QUANGO, the big elephant, felt he had good reason to complain. He was acknowledged leader of the herd of huge animals. His authority had gone unquestioned until the day when Turk, a young rogue elephant with ideas of his own, had joined the crowd.

Up to that time Quango had ruled supreme. His knowledge of likely feeding places, his keen scent for danger, had been thoroughly well recognised. He had a keen trunk for elephant pits and other perils.

Turk, however, had altered all that. He had sneered at Quango openly; he had more than hinted that Quango's day was past and over, and that he should make way for new blood, younger elephants of greater spirit and audacity.

The battle between elephant rivals began in the African jungle—and was continued in the high street of an English town!

The matter reached a climax that hot dreamy day in the dense jungle, where the hot mists lay in wreaths over the swampy ground.

Turk trotted out of his place to the rear and trumpeted forth his open defiance of the hitherto respected leader. Turk said plainly that the herd were weakly led, that

the track they were on was very bad.

He spoke his mind. In his elephantine soul the spirit of rebellion was seething. Of course, he wanted the job for himself, and as these things will be, a lot of the younger, more heedless elephants were ready to listen. Very likely this fellow, Turk, with his new ideas, was right!

Probably there had been overmuch caution, always sticking to the wild fastnesses to avoid so-called peril. Yet what was there for an elephant to fear? As likely as not Quango was a doddering old incompetent who should retire and give a bright young pachyderm a chance!

Quango swung round and surveyed the herd he was leading, and he saw a good many of them, elephants he had regarded as friends, swinging their trunks in agreement with the rebel.

The old leader knew it was neck or nothing. If he did not act on the spot he would find himself in the back row for good and all. And so, with an angry challenge to combat, he charged straight for the malcontent who was out to upset the peace of the drove.

For a moment Turk did not seem to realise what was coming to him. Then he saw it was Quango advancing at a hand gallop. There was life in the old elephant yet!

There was a mighty crash. The ground shook as the two antagonists met. Turk gave a piercing squeal as he was swept to his knees by the furious charge of his enemy, but he recovered himself, and then, with the rest of the herd looking on, the fight began.

Turk's flank was badly gored by the tusks of his enemy, but the younger elephant had something to give as well as receive. The soft ground was churned up as the two combatants butted each other; heavy creepers and bamboos were torn aside and beaten into the sticky ooze.

Then, to the amazement of the onlookers, there came a prodigious crashing sound, and the two infuriated elephants, fighting still, vanished from sight through a treacherous bit of ground.

Quango was the first to recover from his surprise. He struggled to his feet, but he found himself a close prisoner in a deep hole, while Turk lay helpless a dozen yards from him in a section of the same huge pit.

Then came the sound of firing, followed by the thunder of the stampede of the herd, and afterwards the appearance of a number of hunters.

There was no more fight left in Quango, while as for Turk, he was plainly frightened as he found himself being roped and forced to step it along a passage-way to where a slope had been made from the elephant trap.

The hunting party were pleased with their "bag," but there was no pleasure for the two prisoners. They were led away to a stockaded compound, where they met some of their fellows, who assured them that captivity was not such a bad affair.

And then, worse still, a tramp into a country which was altogether strange, and stuffy quarters on the ship which carried them across the sea.

Quango, the old champion of the herd, was a philosopher at heart. He did not give his keepers much trouble, but the voyage was no treat to the men who looked after Turk. He stamped and squealed and refused his food.

"I'm glad to be rid of that sulky,

bad-tempered brute ! " growled one of the men as at last the big steamer lay off Liverpool.

It certainly had been a stormy time, and no mistake !

The two elephants caught sight of one another at the docks, but that was the last. Turk, in his crushed state of dejection, did not look a bit formidable to the circus proprietor who bought him.

The two old foes went their separate ways, but they were both in the same line of business, though Quango got the " pull," for he was a really amiable, teachable beast, and was quite willing to make friends with the youngsters who crowded to see him perform.

He dreamed a bit at times of the old swamp and jungle days when he was free to go as he liked, with no one to give him an order ; but, after all, there were advantages in a circus life, and the work was not a bit difficult.

He was far too old and wise, of course, to resent being dressed in a cap and apron, and required to ring a dinner-bell. Folks were very kind to him, and it was no trouble at all to amble round with a party of children on his broad back.

It was otherwise with Turk. After the first big shock, he fell to it that he had to obey orders, so he acquiesced. But at the back of his mind was the hope that something would happen to give him back his chance to lead the herd in the wilds far away across the sea.



Everywhere was pandemonium and chaos as the two elephants fought in the middle of the street. Turk cannoned into an empty tramcar, and the vehicle went reeling on its side.

And then he thought of his old score against the stupid, lumbering Quango who had bumped him so badly long before. He did not expect to meet his enemy again—that would have been asking a bit too much—but if he did—well, then, maybe the world might hear something about it!

As it chanced, the great fête at Whitepool was the gathering place of a great many shows that season, and the two circus companies of which the two elephants were members found vast audiences awaiting them.

And, to Turk's stupefaction, as he gravely marched through the town in a big procession, he saw Quango ahead of him. He could have smelt him anywhere! There could be no mistake. Years of captivity had not wiped out the remembrance.

It certainly was Quango; the same gesture of his little tail, the same smug look of knowing better than anybody else—just that vastly irritating air of calm superiority, so galling to honest pride.

Turk's mind was working hard. He thought of the jungle, and his ambition to be the ruler of the herd, and of Quango's obstinacy.

He was back again in the midst of all the bitter experiences. He felt himself crumbling up in that horrible pit. It was all as clear as if it had been yesterday.

And there was Quango, looking so meek, as if he had got just what he wanted. Perhaps he had. The old buffer who had thwarted him—Turk—and stood in his way when he only wanted to be king of the herd!

There is a time for everything, even maybe to charge and wreak vengeance for wrongs.

To Turk at that moment there was nothing else but his ancient feud, and he waved his trunk and thundered on straight for Quango. The crowd scattered, and cries of terror rose as the elephant who had remembered went forward at a lumbering trot.

Quango turned and looked at his excited adversary, and felt aggrieved at the sight of such hostility. As for himself, he would have cheerfully let bygones be bygones and said no more about the little affair long ago in the forest. Unluckily, bygones meant a lot to Turk.

He came on full tilt, hatred in his little pig-like eyes, his trunk waving. Quango swung round to meet the attack. The unfortunate clown in red and white who was on the big elephant's back went slithering off at record speed, and met terra-firma with a bump.

"Them two beasts have met before, I'll lay!" panted a keeper as he dashed forward.

The infuriated Turk crashed into his foe. The big, old elephant felt a stab from the other's tusks. He backed, his trunk raised, eyes bloodshot, and Turk pressed him half across the crowded market-place of the town, while people fled hither and thither to escape the peril.

Turk was dancing with fury, his blood up, his memory keen. The old feud of the swamps in the back years had got to be fought to a finish now. Quango should see the truth at last!

The two elephants closed, broke apart, then crashed together again. The air was rent with frightened cries. A woman seized up a youngster and, with another clinging to her skirts, gained the momentary safety of a doorway; but there was really no safety anywhere with two angry elephants trampling amidst the booths and side shows.

The fête at Whitepool was a tremendous affair, while, in addition, it was the day of the weekly market. Cabbages, coconuts, and furniture and clothing were strewn all over the place. It was a perfect pandemonium, the disorder made worse by the smash of an empty tramcar.

This vehicle was being piloted into its depot. Turk cannoned it, and the tram went reeling on its side, every pane of glass in shivers, the trolley-arm torn down with the wires.

Quango was meeting the brisk charges of his antagonist with firmness, but his temper rose as Turk got in another thrust. Turk shook his head. To him the contest was only beginning, and he impatiently kicked away a thick rope which suddenly got entangled in his legs.

The posse of keepers who had thrown the rope drew back a bit, temporarily baffled, and Turk lurched into a lorry full of brewer's barrels. The lorry was badly damaged, two of its wheels giving, with the result that the barrels descended in a heavy shower, rolling this way and that.

With a gesture of extreme annoyance and contempt, Turk kicked aside one of the barrels. It was adding insult to injury to pester him with such trifles. Of course, the barrel burst, and the beer ran down the roadway. The keepers were puzzled to know what to do, for in a trice the two scrapping elephants were at it again, hammer and tongs.

" Did you ever ! " panted a keeper, skipping for safety with the coil of rope he was carrying.

Quango retreated strategically till his broad back bumped against the big doors of a huge warehouse. He was not afraid of Turk, but his sounder sense told him that a street row could not lead anywhere good.

Turk was differently minded. He began to think of the old times in the swamps. Maybe he could sweep Quango out of the road and then get clear away back to freedom.

Turk scornfully swung away from a keeper who was advancing upon him, and decided to have another " go " at his old foe.

Quango let out a little squeal, not of fear, but of derision. He received Turk's charge with indifference, but it caused him to bump into the warehouse door, which sank backwards, its hinges smashed. It was at this minute that one of the keepers caught sight of a big beer barrel rolling about the road, and the man gave it a shove in the direction of Turk. The bellicose elephant was not thinking of beer barrels. But the sensation of having the round object rolling against his legs annoyed him. Turk tried to get hold of the ugly article, but failed. He had another shot, and then—well, it was actually the big trundling barrel which gave the watching keepers their chance to rope Turk at last, for the wildly excited animal trod on it and stumbled. For a second he was off his guard, and that moment saved all that was left of a painful situation.

Turk was hobbled and hauled away to repent his hasty temper. Quango gave no trouble at all, but merely shrugged with a gesture of indifference when he was relieved of the attentions of his opponent.

Turk stood facing the scene of disorder, moving his massive head from side to side, far from satisfied. Quango was his enemy still.

For an elephant never forgets !

The GREYFRIARS CALENDAR

OF

Important Events

FOR 1937

JANUARY

1. NEW YEAR'S DAY.—About 111 Greyfriars fellows will make New Year Resolutions. About 1 will keep them.

6. TWELFTH NIGHT.—On this night Billy Bunter will scoff twelve mince pies without pausing for breath.

13. Harry Wharton says fellows who believe in bad luck deserve to get it!

FEBRUARY

4. Anniversary of Coker's arrival at Greyfriars. The Head still remembers Coker asking to be made a prefect to start with. A "start"-ling demand!



TWELFTH NIGHT. Billy Bunter will scoff twelve mince pies without pausing for breath.

14. ST. VALENTINE'S DAY.—No Greyfriars man admits ever sending one—though rumour has it that the young lady in the Friardale bunshop last year received one from Coker!

29???—Billy Bunter bewails the fact that having been born in a Leap Year, he gets only one birthday every four years. No birthday for Bunter this year. A "present" disaster!

MARCH

6. JUNIOR LONG RUN.—Harry Wharton or Bob Cherry is expected to win. Billy Bunter is not expected to "run long"!

GOOD FRIDAY.—We hear 10,000 extra hot cross buns will be made this year. We've noticed Bunter's appetite has grown, certainly.

EASTER MONDAY.—Hikers are starting out to-day. Bob Cherry says 20 miles will put "spring" into your tread!

APRIL

1. ALL FOOLS' DAY.—Vernon-Smith tells the story of the chap who was afraid of being made an "April Fool"—so he stayed in bed till twelve!

BOAT RACE DAY.—Harry Wharton and Co. are very keen on rowing—but Skinner and Co. (h)eight the effort!

24. CUP FINAL DAY.—Greyfriars Inter-Form Cup Final will be played on Little Side. Likely



EASTER MONDAY. Hikers will start out to-day.



MAY DAY. Billy Bunter will dance around the Maypole.

Finalists : *** Remove.
*** denotes a win expected.

MAY

1. MAY DAY.—Billy Bunter will dance around any Maypole—provided he is offered enough jam tarts !

WHIT MONDAY.—Hurree Singh says : " The whoopeefulness will be terrific—if the finefulness is equally terrific ! " A " terrific " risk !

JUNE

1. " THE GLORIOUS FIRST OF JUNE." —England won a Naval Battle in 1794. Remove hope to have Rookwood " all at sea " on the cricket pitch.

10. FOUNDERS' DAY.—Inception of Greyfriars School in 1716.

21. LONGEST DAY.—200 Greyfriars fellows would like to be by the sea. 200 Greyfriars fellows will stick to deponent verbs, like you.

JULY

8. Anniversary of the great thunderstorm of 1777, of which Mr. Quelch gives a " flashing " account in his History of Greyfriars, Volume XXXVIII (we think).

19–24. End of Term " Exams." Mark Linley is hotly fancied for prizes—and "warmly " run down by slackers like Skinner and Co. !



AUGUST 16th. Coker plans to swim the English Channel.

AUGUST

2. BANK HOLIDAY. —We hope to see you all by the sea—especially Bunter, who will let you stand him an ice. A (n)ice chap, Bunter !

16. Coker plans to swim the English Channel in 17 hours. Well, he's 17, but he will probably be 117 before he swims the Channel !



GUY FAWKES DAY. Dicky Nugent and Co. will " let off steam."

27. Holiday task ought to be completed by now. What a task to remember what it was !

28. Football starts again ! Bob Cherry says it almost makes up for the " passing " of summer. A " net " profit !

SEPTEMBER

4. Bob Cherry says " Inky " wears his overcoat from now till next June. " Inky " hates the colder months—except when he is scoring goals " coolly " at footer !

20. Harry Wharton first elected captain of the Remove by a majority of 20.

21. OFFICIAL END OF SUMMER.—And a " wintry " outlook for Skinner and Co., if they don't play up for their Form this term !

OCTOBER

7. Loder the prefect's birthday. A black day for the fags.

23. Harry Wharton and Co. are playing Tom Merry and Co. at St. Jim's. Admission free. Don't miss it !

NOVEMBER

5. GUY FAWKES DAY.—Dicky Nugent and Co. will "let off steam"—and everything explosive they can lay hands on!

11. ARMISTICE DAY.—All Greyfriars will parade in honour of the many Greyfriars Old Boys who lost their lives during the Great War, 1914–18.

19. Anniversary of the solitary occasion on which Billy Bunter got a loan out of Skinner!

DECEMBER

18. Greyfriars "breaks up" for the Christmas Holidays. Lord Mauleverer immediately commences his "winter sleep"—lasting till the new term begins on January 21.

25. CHRISTMAS DAY.—National Festival. Everybody happy. Even Bunter is almost popular to-day!

26. BOXING DAY.—Not the signal for a general fracas, chaps! Keep the "gloves" off till after the holidays!

31. LAST DAY OF THE OLD YEAR.—The bells are ringing the Old Year out and the New Year in. Here's Good Luck and a Happy New Year to you all from Yours sincerely,

HARRY WHARTON & Co.



DECEMBER 18th. Greyfriars "breaks up" for the Christmas Holidays.

KEEP THE POT A-BOILING!

By DICK PENFOLD (*of the Greyfriars Remove*)

UNDER the elms we've made a slide,
Long and slippery, crisp and wide,
Down we go with a graceful glide,
Sailing along so breezily!

Cherry is first, and there he goes!
Wharton is following on his toes!
Bolsover somersaults on his nose,
Grunting and gasping wheezily!

Skimming the slide go Bull and Kipps,
Cannon together as Johnny trips,
Then the schoolboy conjurer slips!
Crash they go in unity!

Some are clever to dodge a spill,
Yet, no matter how great their skill,
All may stumble against their will—
Nobody has immunity!

Here is Bunter, he's going to start!
Down he goes with his legs apart!
Wallop!—and Bunter is in the cart,
Bellowing out right lustily!

Here comes Loder to make us stop!
Spins on the slide like a humming top!
Down he goes with a terrible whop!
Hobbles away quite crustily!

Slippery frost is everywhere,
Mirth and jollity in the air,
Trees are derelict, bleak and bare,
All the earth is wintry.

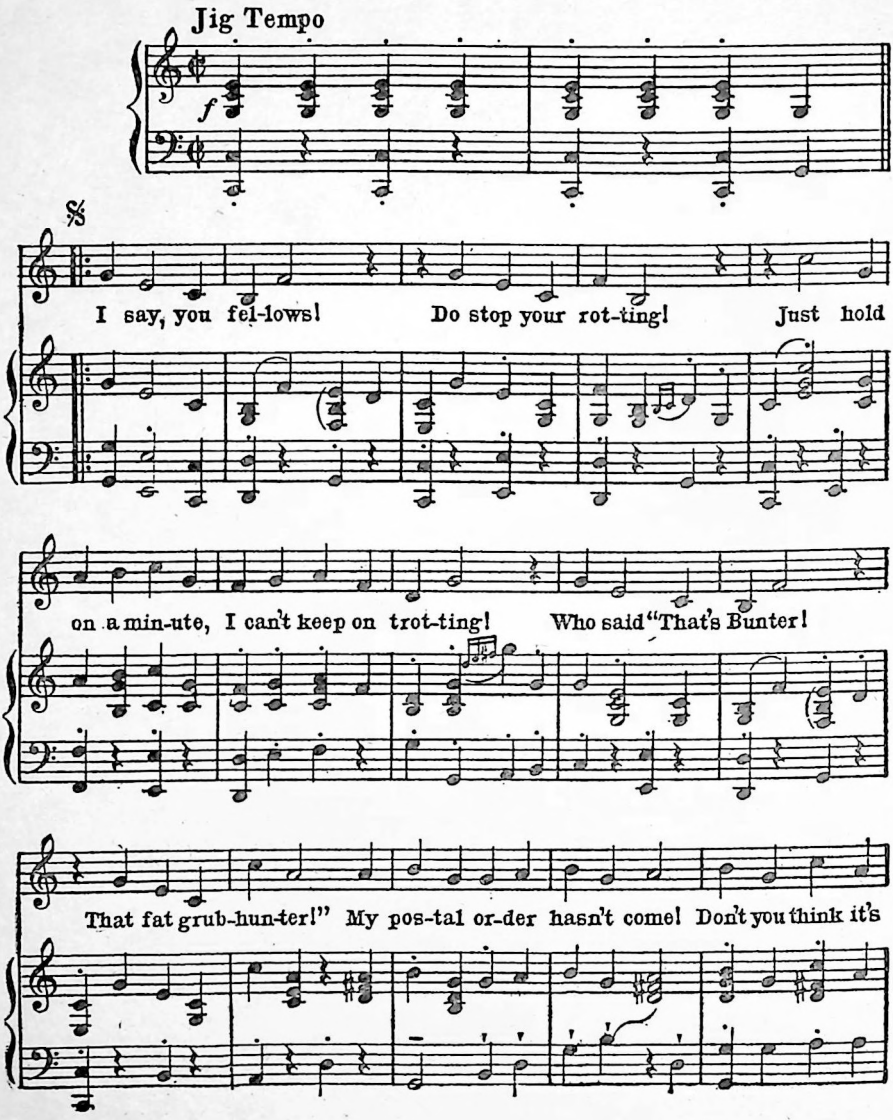
Nevertheless, our hearts are gay,
Passing happily hours away;
Let us enjoy the ice to-day,
To-morrow it may be splintery!

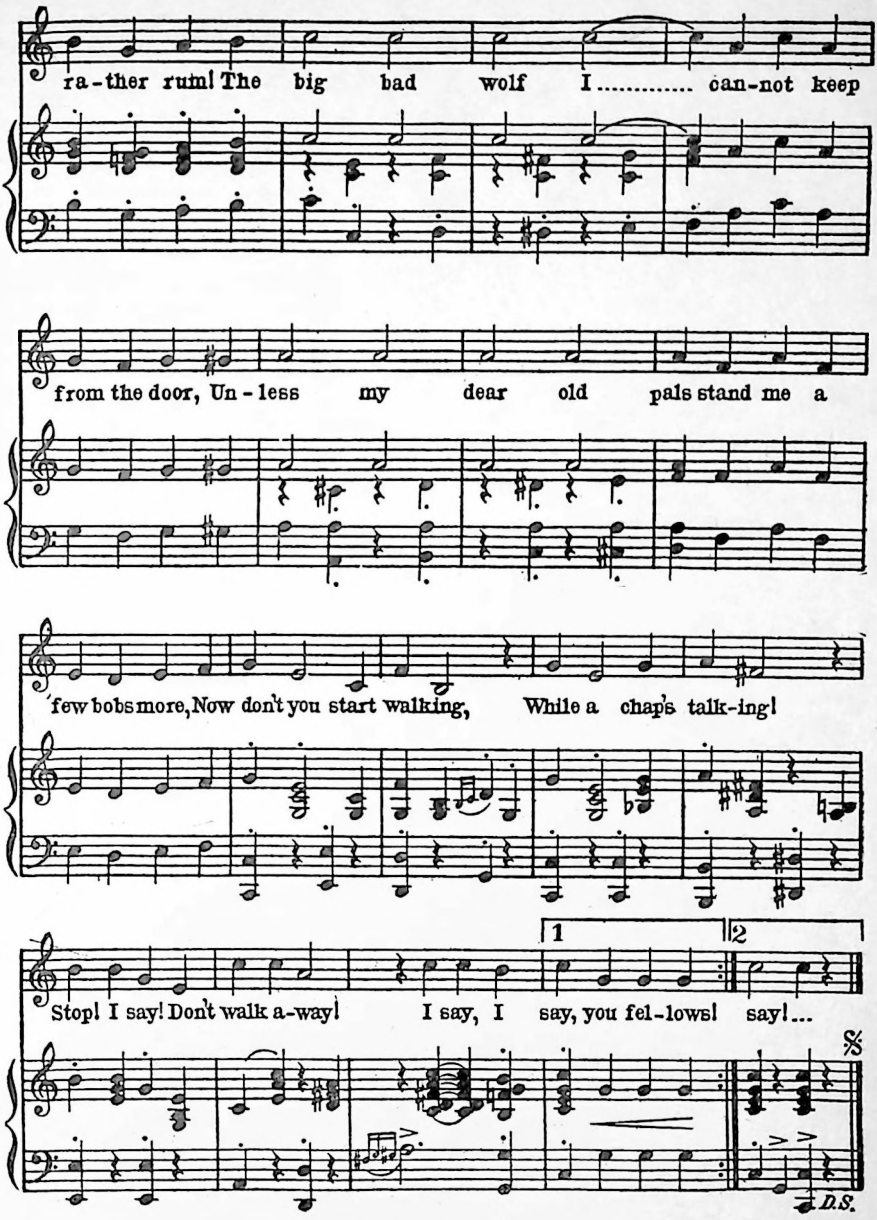
Words by
FRANK RICHARDS

Bunter!

Comedy Fox-Trot Chorus

Music by
JEFF LYTTON




ra-ther rum! The big bad wolf I ..... can-not keep
from the door, Un-less my dear old pals stand me a
few bobs more, Now don't you start walking, While a chap's talk-ing!
1
2
Stop! I say! Don't walk a-way! I say, I say, you fel-lows! say!...
%
D.S.

SHOULD SCHOOLBOYS *have* HOME RULE?

By PETER TODD



Peter Todd, of the Greyfriars Remove, decides that it would be a good wheeze if schoolboys were able to rule themselves instead of being ruled by masters!

MY Cousin Alonzo has been arguing that schoolboys ought to rule themselves instead of being ruled by masters. Most Remove chaps seem to cackle at this idea, but I think it's a jolly good wheeze myself.

Just to see how it would work out in practice, I tried Home Rule for myself all day yesterday. The experiment was a complete success.

I started as soon as rising-bell went in the morning.

"Todd!" I told myself sternly. "Get out of bed at once! How dare you lie there after rising-bell has finished?"

"Sorry, sir!" replied myself to me. "But it's a jolly cold morning and bed's rather comfy and I feel like another five minutes' snooze!"

"Oh!" I exclaimed to myself, more sympathetically. "Well, in that case, of course, Todd, by all means stay on for another five minutes. In fact, make it ten while you're about it!"

"Thank you, sir!" said myself to me gratefully. And off I went to sleep again.

Well, you couldn't have had a more promising start than that, could you? I began to see great possibilities in the Home Rule for Schoolboys stunt—and I wasn't disappointed!

After brekker, I brought in Home Rule again. I actually caught myself leaning out of my study window, throwing a ripe tomato at Coker, who was passing in the quad!

"Todd!" I thundered, as the tomato spread itself out on Coker's face. "You threw that tomato at Coker! Don't attempt to deny it, boy!"

"Nunno, sir! Sus-certainly not, sir!" gasped myself. "I—I don't know what made me do such a thing."

"Then you should know!" I said, with a laugh that relieved myself considerably. "It's because Coker has been asking to be taken down a peg or two for a long time! I was only joking, my boy! Do it again—and more power to your elbow!"

And that was that! Home Rule for Schoolboys seemed to be working out very well in my case, thank you!

I carried on with it enthusiastically during the day. I gave myself fifty lines in class for throwing an ink-pellet at Skinner, and another fifty for pulling Mossoo's leg during French lesson. I ruled myself with a rod of iron all the morning, I can tell you!

Afterwards, I decided to give myself another chance and cancelled the impots.

Later on, I caught myself red-handed fixing up a booby-trap for Loder.

"Todd!" I roared, as I found myself scooting away from the scene of the crime after Loder had copped it. "You fixed up that booby-trap!"

"Ye-es, sir!" stammered myself.

"Boy! How dare you treat a prefect in such a reprehensible manner? Go to my study at once! I shall cane you severely!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"At once!" I roared.

And I took myself along to No. 7 and gave myself six with Alonzo's walking-stick—or, at least, I would have done, if myself hadn't jumped out of the way of the stick each time!



I actually caught myself throwing a ripe tomato at Coker. "Do it again!" I commanded myself.

At the end of the day, my experiment had convinced me that Home Rule for Schoolboys is a rattling good idea—the idea of the future, in fact!

Of course, I realise that in the school of to-morrow masters will still have a place. But they'll be there merely as advisers and equals—not as tyrannical overseers! Just to illustrate what I mean I'll give you an idea of the sort of place the Remove Form-room will be when Home Rule for Schoolboys comes to Greyfriars.



I told myself I could stay in bed for another five minutes. "Thank you, sir!" said myself to me gratefully, and off I went to sleep again.

MR. QUELCH: Good-morning, boys!

BOYS: Good-morning, Quelchy!

MR. QUELCH: Well, boys, what's it to be this morning? Latin, History, Geography or——

WHARTON: Chuck it, old sport! We're fed-up with all that tosh. Let's have a lecture on footer instead!

MR. QUELCH: Entirely as you please, Wharton, of course. But I'm afraid that I really do not know enough of football to——

WHARTON: That's all right, old

bean. We'll do the talking and you can sit down and read the paper or something. Pass the chocs., Bob ! Have one, Quelchy? Catch, then !

MR. QUELCH : Oh ! My nose !

BOYS : Ha, ha, ha !

VERNON-SMITH : Look here, chaps, why not have a little footer practice while we're about it, instead of wasting time gassing over it ? We can use Quelchy's mortar-board as a ball !

MR. QUELCH : Delighted, boys, I am sure. Here it is. Kick it to pieces if you wish. I can easily buy another.

BOYS : Good old Quelchy !

BANG ! CRASH ! WALLOP ! SMASH ! THUD !

MR. QUELCH : Oh ! Whoooooop ! Excuse me, boys, but you're treading on me ! Oh ! Would you mind very much if I went ?

VERNON-SMITH : All serene, Quelchy ! You can buzz ! Drop in at the tuckshop while you're out, will you, and bring back a tuck hamper !

MR. QUELCH : With pleasure ! (*Exit.*)

Roll on Home Rule for Schoolboys ! That's my idea about it !.

THE END

IN DETENTION

By One Who IS

THE classroom's dusky and forlorn,
In solitude abysmal :
I loathe the day when I was born
Upon an earth so dismal.

The minutes seem to drag along,
And really I must mention
I'm sure the clock is always wrong
When I am in detention !

It beats with loud and solemn tick,
Like some confounded hammer !
I'm sick of it, and more than sick
Of beastly Latin grammar.

I hate this smell of ink and dust ;
I don't know how I stick it !
I only stay because I must ;
I'd rather be at cricket !

I hear the echoes, far away,
Through open windows stealing,
Of free and happy lads at play—
How miserable I'm feeling !

I hear them on the cricket ground,
Their cheerful voices blending !
Oh, when will five o'clock come round ?
The afternoon's unending !

Some chaps are talking just outside,
I hear their murmured voices.
The rest are scattered far and wide,
And everyone rejoices.

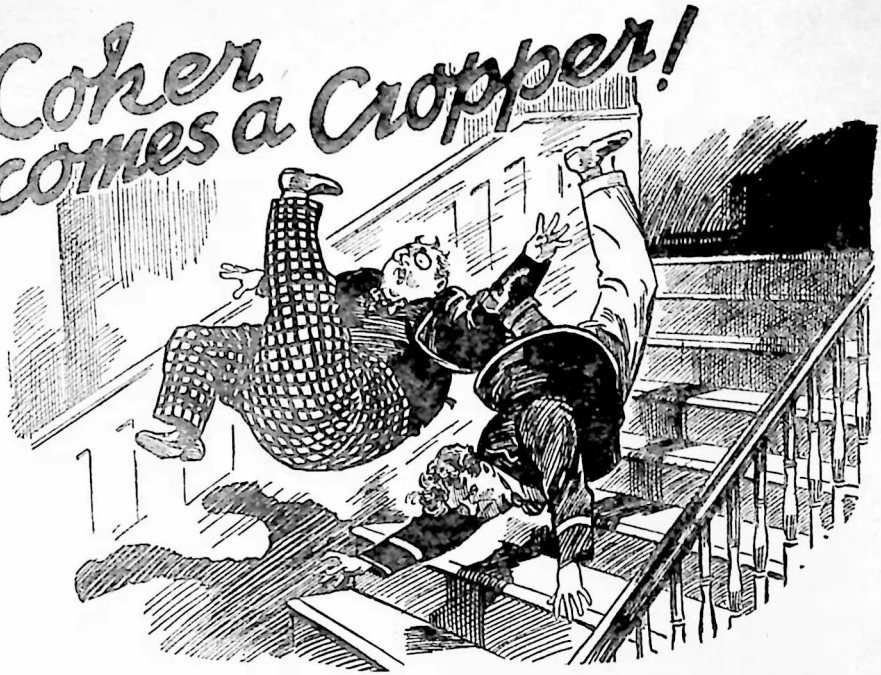
Just then a footstep passed the door ;
I thought it quite exciting,
And listened eagerly for more—
I'm sick and tired of writing !

A spider on the window glass
Attracts my mild attention.
Oh, will it never, never pass,
This afternoon's detention ?

Yes ! Hark ! The clock begins to chime !
Ding-dong ! Now I'm in clover !
'Tis five o'clock ! Oh, blessed time !
And my detention's over !

I shut my grammar up with scorn,
No longer melancholy ;
And glad am I that I was born
Upon an earth so jolly !

Coker comes a Cropper!



Who's the biggest blunderer at Greyfriars? We award that doubtful honour (with more brickbats than bouquets!) to Horace James Coker, and in this very amusing story you will learn why!

By
FRANK NUGENT
(of the Greyfriars Remove Form)

THE FIRST CHAPTER
ON THE WARPATH!

"IT'S a cert!"

"'Hem!"

"A stone certainty!" said Horace Coker of the Fifth at Greyfriars. "Whether he likes it or not, Blundell will have to put me down for this match!"

"Hum!"

"Not that he'll like it!" went on Coker bitterly. "If there's one thing more certain than anything else, it is that Blundell will never get any enjoyment in giving me my place in the Form Eleven. If it rested solely with him, I don't suppose I ever would get it. But fortunately there's such a thing as public opinion!"

"Um!"

"Public opinion's a thing that even Blundell fears," said Coker darkly. "And after my brilliant display in the trial game last week, there's not much doubt about the trend of public opinion. Public opinion demands I shall get my place in the Form Eleven for the match against the Sixth!"

"'Hem!"

"Even the meanest intelligence can now see the point I've been trying to drive home all this season," said Coker. "You chaps yourselves can see it, can't you?"

" Look here, Coker——"

" What's kept me out of the Form Eleven is the same thing that's kept me out of the First Eleven—jealousy. But jealousy cuts no ice when every man in the Form wants me in the team ! "

" Hum ! "

" Can't you fellows do anything but say ' Hem ! ' and ' Hum ! ' ? " demanded Coker wrathfully. " Standing there like a couple of moulting owls, coughing and spluttering every time I say anything ! Nothing wrong in what I've been saying, is there ? "

" Well, old chap——"

" I suppose you're not going to deny that I'm the best all-round footer player in the Fifth ? "

" Well, really, old man——"

" Or that Blundell is a chuckle-headed chump for having kept me out of the Form team so long ? "

" To tell you the truth, old bean—"

" Or that my exclusion from the Form team in the past has been nothing short of a crying scandal and a shame ? "

" 'Hem ! If you put it like that, old chap——"

" I suppose you're not going to deny that I played better in the trial game than ever before ? "

" Well, no ! "

" Not at all, old man ! "

" You played better in the trial game than we've ever seen you play, Coker, old chap ! "

" Much better, old bean ! "

Potter and Greene were rather relieved at finding one assertion from Coker which they could wholeheartedly support. They could quite truthfully say that Coker had played better in the trial game than ever before. That was not saying much, for, as they were both well aware, Coker's best was a long way behind the form expected of a senior player.

Coker, in blissful ignorance of his faithful followers' mental reservation, relaxed a little at their enthusiastic agreement.

" Well, I'm glad you fellows have got enough sense to see that ! " he said, with a nod. " It was there for everybody to see, anyway, and that's why I'm so jolly sure Blundell will have to put me down to play against the Sixth."

" Team should be posted by this time," remarked Potter, with a glance at the study clock.

" Just what I was thinking," Coker said. " We'll trot down and have a look. As I say, it's a stone certainty that Blundell's put my name down ; but if, by any freakish chance, he hasn't, I'll——"

Coker left the sentence unfinished ; but there was a look in his eyes that boded ill for the captain of the Fifth if that remote contingency did happen.

The three Fifth-Formers rose and quitted their study. Coker looked grim and determined. Potter and Greene looked a little uneasy. There was no doubt that Coker had set his heart on playing for the Fifth, and if he failed to achieve that ambition trouble would follow as surely as daytime followed the night.

There was a large crowd round the notice-board as they came into the Hall, and the buzz of talk swelled to a roar as Coker appeared.

" Here he comes ! "

" Break it gently, you chaps, in case it gives him too much of a shock!"

Coker felt a choking sensation grip his throat. " Break it gently " ! " Too much of a shock " ! Did it—could it possibly—mean that that outsider Blundell had flouted public opinion and barred him from the eleven once again ?

As if in answer to that question, Bob Cherry of the Remove, from the centre of a knot of grinning Removites, yelled across to him.

"Poor old Coker! We're awfully sorry for you, aren't we, chaps?"

"Oh, rather!"

"We're even sorrier for the poor old Fifth!" added Bob. "What on earth will they do?"

"Echo answers 'What?'" chuckled Vernon-Smith.

Coker felt his blood boil within him. So Blundell had let him down, after all!

Coker's fists clenched, his lips tightened, and his eyes gleamed with a vengeful gleam.

"I'll show him!" he roared suddenly. And without even deigning to cleave a way through the crowd to look at the list that was the cause of his emotion, he rushed away on the trail of the offending skipper of the Fifth.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

COKER'S LITTLE MISTAKE!

CRASH!

Coker had reached the foot of the stairs. Unfortunately, Trotter, the page, had reached them at the same moment. Still more unfortunately, Trotter was balancing a tray containing hot coffee, intended for Messrs. Prout and Hacker, who were playing chess in Masters' Common-room.

Trotter collided with Coker and went off at a tangent. His tray flew up in the air and descended on Coker's head, shooting a scalding stream of coffee over the hero of the Fifth.

"Whoooooop!" roared Coker, while from the crowd that had followed Coker from the Hall came a roar of quite a different kind.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Clumsy young idiot!" hooted Coker. "Look where you're going next time!"

Coker carried on up the stairs, coffee streaming from his hair as he went. It took more than hot coffee to put Coker off his stroke, once he was aroused.

The dull sound of a second collision smote the ears of Coker's pursuers as Coker turned the bend of the staircase. It was followed by a fiendish howl and a whole series of thuds as two human shapes hurtled down the stairs.

One of those human shapes was Bunter of the Remove. The other was Coker. Coker was gasping, as he staggered to his feet.

"Why didn't you get out of the way, you fat freak?" he panted. "Stay there till I come back and I'll slaughter you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter did not join in the yell of hilarity. Bunter was speechless.

Coker raced up the stairs once more.

Two Fifth-Formers raced after him as he went. They were Potter and Greene. Potter and Greene tried to lay restraining hands on their leader; but they found the task quite beyond their powers.

"Old man——" gasped Potter.

"Old chap——" panted Greene.

"Stand back, you two!" roared Coker. "I'm after Blundell, and you're not going to stop me!"

"Yes, but——"

"You see, old chap——"

"I see a couple of idiots who're going to have their heads knocked together unless they get out of my way!" hooted Coker, as he cleared the last two stairs of the flight and charged across the landing towards the Fifth quarters. "Buzz off!"

"You—you fathead!" gasped Greene.

" Hold on a tick and listen to me ! " begged Potter. " You don't understand——"

" Rot ! You're the fellows who don't understand ! " retorted Coker. " You don't understand what I feel about this ; but I'm going to show you now ! "

Coker charged into the Fifth passage. His henchmen, in a last despairing effort, tried to grab him before he reached Blundell's study—and failed !

" Stop, you idiot ! " yelled Potter.

" Can it, you loony ! " howled Greene.

But Coker was deaf to the voice of the charmers. He flung open the door of Blundell's study and rushed in.

" Put 'em up ! " he roared.

Blundell, the skipper of the Fifth, had been reclining in an armchair, reading a novel. He hurriedly abandoned both as Coker came in, and jumped to his feet in surprise, not unmixed with alarm.

" Mad ? " he inquired.

" Put 'em up ! " repeated Coker, brandishing his fist as he advanced into the study. " Either that or take the licking that's coming to you ! "

" Mad—mad as a hatter ! " said Blundell.

" Leave me out of the team would you ? " asked Coker, in a grinding voice. " I'll show you ! Put 'em up ! "

" But——"

Coker's big fist landed out, and Blundell yelled as he caught it on the nose. An instant later Blundell was responding in kind. As head man of a senior form, Blundell was ordinarily far too dignified to indulge in scrapping. But no considerations of dignity could outweigh the natural instinct to avenge that biff on the nose. Blundell piled in.

When the pursuing crowd of juniors arrived on the scene a few seconds later, the two Fifth-Formers were going great guns, while Potter and Greene danced round the study trying to separate them.

" Go it, ye cripples ! " yelled Skinner of the Remove. " Two to one in doughnuts on Coker ! "

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

Came a thud and a crash, and Blundell went down.

More by luck than judgment, Coker had landed a knock-out !

" There ! " said Coker, with considerable satisfaction. " Perhaps that'll teach you not to bar me from the team in future ! "

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

For some reason, that remark caused an outbreak of wild hilarity among the crowd.

Blundell staggered to his feet. Unlike the onlookers, he was not hilarious. He glared at Coker with an almost wolfish glare.

" You—you maniac ! You imbecile ! " he shrieked. " If you'd looked on the list, you'd have seen that I *have* put you in the team ! "

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

A kind of spasm seized Coker. He blinked ; his jaw dropped ; some vital spark seemed to depart from him.

" You—you what ? " he stuttered.

" I put you in the team ! " roared Blundell. " In a fit of utter insanity, I put you down to play—and you come here and punch me because you say I didn't ! "

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

Coker's face was almost haggard. He stared round at the hysterical crowd and his eye fell on Bob Cherry.

" Cherry, you—you idiotic young scoundrel, didn't you say——"

" I said I was sorry for you, old bean ! " grinned Bob. " So I am ;



"Put 'em up!" roared Coker as he rushed into Blundell's study and brandished his fist. "Either that or take a licking!" "Mad!" said Blundell, rising to his feet. "Mad as a hatter!"

you can't play footer for toffee and the rest can. I'd be sorry for anyone under those circs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I said I was sorrier for the Fifth," added the cheerful Removite. "That's true, too; nobody could help feeling sorry for any team you played in! Nothing in what I said to make you think you weren't in the team, was there?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the juniors.

Coker stared at Bob Cherry almost dazedly. Then, slowly and limply, he sank into Blundell's armchair. Coker's feelings rarely led him to display signs of physical weakness. But there was no doubt on this occasion that Blundell's unexpected revelation had brought him almost to the point of collapse.

Potter and Greene mercifully closed the study door and shut out the hilarious crowd.

What happened in Blundell's study after that was not the crowd's concern.

It was highly probable that Coker would apologise with quite unaccustomed humility and that Coker would not be the same Coker for at least a week.

The crowd didn't bother about that. They only remembered the extraordinary expression on Coker's face when he realised what he had done—and that recollection kept them laughing for the rest of the evening!

THE STORY OF GREYFRIARS



By the Greyfriars Rhymester

A GREY old building in the trees
From ages medieval
Has weathered all the centuries
Of warfare and upheaval;
A monastery of olden time,
Its monks in Holy Orders,
Its chapter-bell would daily chime,
And peace was in its borders.

But came a time of trouble, which
Broke out among the tenants,
The ancient monastery grew rich,
They suffered and did penance;
Alike from commoner and lord
The monks took many acres,
Until the folk, with one accord,
Defied these money-makers!

When later, the Franciscan Friars
(As Grey Friars they were noted)
Were bringing peace throughout the shires,
To lives of good devoted,
King Hal ascended to the throne!
He thought the institution
Of churches ought to be his own,
And caused the Dissolution!

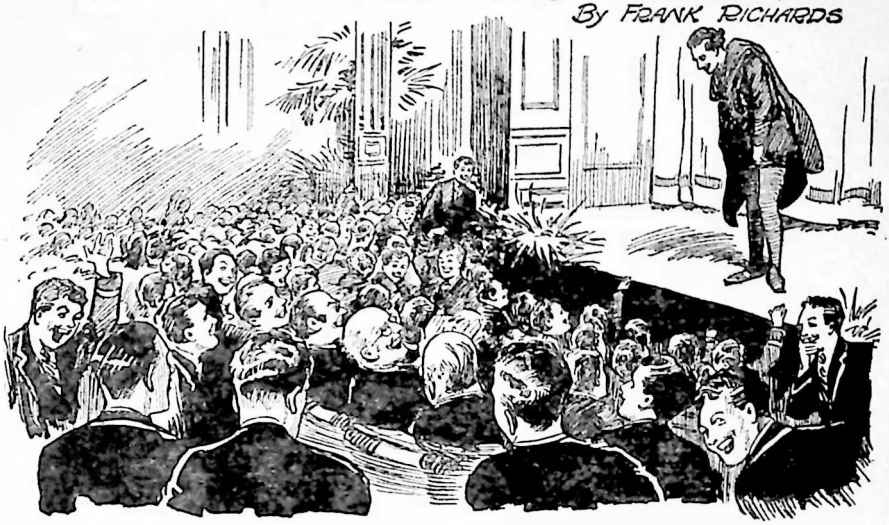
And so the monastery was shut
At Good King Henry's pleasure!
He banished the Franciscans, but
He never found their treasure!
So well the treasure was concealed
That Henry was defeated,
And nobody has since revealed
The place where it's secreted!

The building stood till Edward's reign
Deserted and neglected,
And then it blossomed out again,
To honour resurrected,
"A School for Sons of Gentlemen,
To Educate and Nourish!"
And so it has remained since then,
Long may it grow and flourish!

Now in its hallowed age it stands
With years and honours greater,
With many sons in distant lands
To praise their Alma Mater;
While boys and Old Boys by the score
Are swift to sing its glories,
Yet even they can't love it more
Than we who read their stories.

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 Removites 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 Removites.

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."

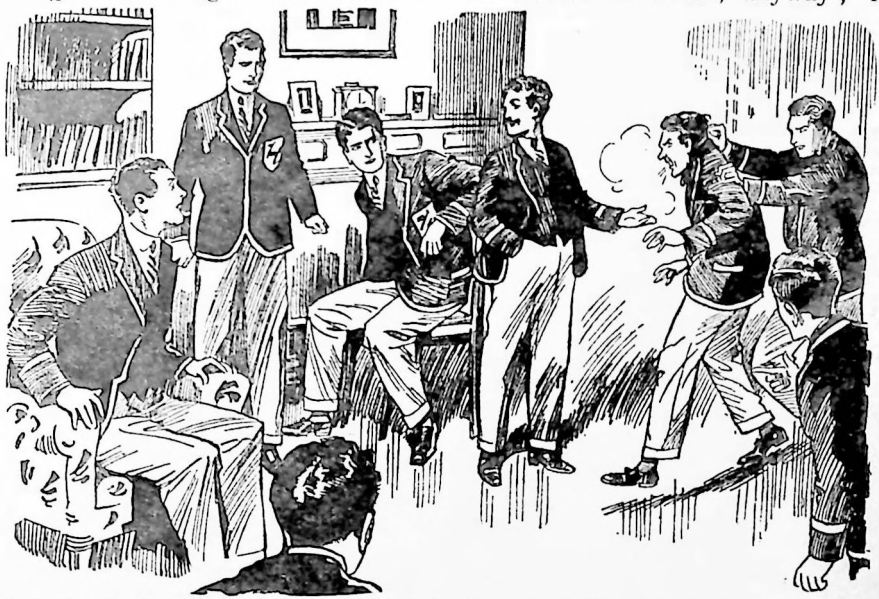
Wibley drew a deep breath. He had entered North's study, determined to refuse any such request. But now that the request had come, his Thespian pride could not ignore the challenge.

"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



By the time the Removites reached North's study in the Sixth passage Wibley's struggles had reduced him to a state of breathlessness. "We've heard Wingate's out of to-night's play, North," said Harry Wharton, "so we've brought along a substitute for you. Here's your man—Wibley!"

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

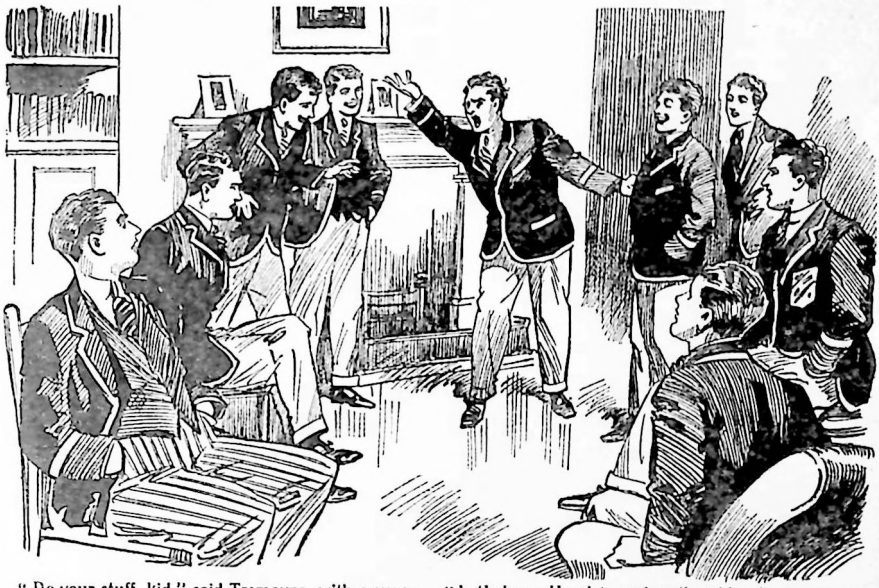
want, old chap," he said, more in sorrow than in anger. " If they get hold of this chap, and he does well, they'll always be able to keep up the story that I wasn't good enough."

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!"

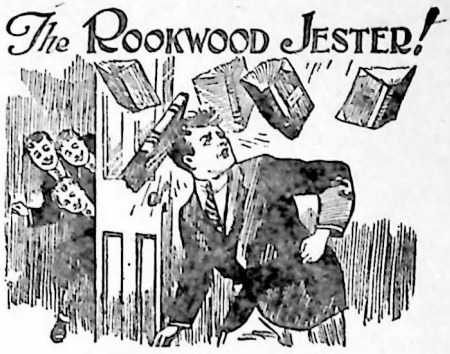
Uproar broke out. Then, as the audience took note of the extraordinary expression on North's face, the uproar changed to laughter, till the gym fairly rang with it. Even Dr. Locke saw the humour of the situation and joined in.

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!



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 Moderns,
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 !



The RIO KID'S RIDE!

The Rio Kid has been branded an outlaw among men—but he proves himself a man among outlaws when he rides a race against death for the sake of a boy pard.

By RALPH REDWAY

THE FIRST CHAPTER

THE SHOT FROM THE TIMBER!

It was the sight of a blue jay, fluttering startled from the cedars, that warned the Rio Kid of danger—of which he had never dreamed.

The flash of the rifle, the whiz of the bullet, came immediately afterwards, but did not catch the Kid napping. He was down on his horse's flank, with only a leg over the saddle, and he felt the wind of the bullet as it passed. The report, a split second later, rolled like thunder through the silent timber.

Danger and the Rio Kid were old acquaintances; but he had not looked for it after crossing the border and leaving behind him the sheriffs who were hunting him.

Outlaw by no fault of his own, honest as the day in spite of it, the Kid had a hard trail to ride, and peril dogged his steps. But he had figured that he had left all that behind his pinto's tail when he rode into Canada. In British Columbia, no guy had ever seen the Kid—it was a far cry from the plains of Texas. His description, maybe, was known; but the Kid had ridden into a new country in a new guise.

The black-muzzled mustang, as well known as the boy outlaw himself, had

been left in trusted hands. With it were left the walnut-butted guns that had seen so much—perhaps too much—service. The band of silver nuggets no longer adorned the Kid's Stetson.

In Canada, they had told the Kid, a guy did not need to ride heeled; and he packed no gun; the holster, which he kept for old times' sake, was empty. He was riding a painted horse—quite a good cayuse, though the Kid reckoned that his own mustang could have given that pinto fifty yards start in a hundred, and beaten him by the length of a Texas riata.

He rode a trail through timber north of the Thompson river—tall timber that was good to see, though it did not please the Kid's eye like the tangled chaparrals of his own Texas. That trail, the Kid reckoned, was going to land him sooner or later at Yellow Mule, where there was placer-mining, and where the Kid was going to try his luck—and which had the advantage, to the Kid's mind at least, of being out of sight and sound of the railroad.

The Kid had been raised on horses, and horseflesh was good enough for him, and always would be. That day he had ridden across a railroad track, stretching over the plain, and heard the shriek of a locomotive coming up from Thompson—and he did not want to hear it again.

But when that sudden shot came from the cedars, the Kid reckoned that the guys who had told him he did not want to pack a gun in Canada had been stringing him along! Only the prompt wariness, bred of a life of danger, had saved him—and had it saved him?

From the cedars, a man leaped out with a smoking rifle in his hands, ready for another shot. The Kid had an instant's glimpse of a tanned vindictive face under a Stetson, barred by a black moustache, as he spun his pinto round.

At that moment, the Kid would have given half Texas to feel the old walnut butt in his grip. It was not the Rio Kid's way to turn his back on an enemy; he hated the idea of it. But he did not bank on facing a full Winchester with bare hands. That was not good enough even for the reckless Kid.

Almost in a twinkling, the pinto spun round, and the Kid was riding back the way he had come, bending low over the horse's neck.

Crash! roared behind him, but his swiftness saved him—the lead missed him by a yard or more. He swept round a bend in the trail—tall timber was quickly between him and his enemy. But there was a clatter of rapid-running feet. If the hombre had a horse, no doubt it was tethered in the trees, but he did not stop for it—he still counted on getting the Kid with the rifle.

Before the Kid now lay a long straight stretch, walled by high cedars; and if that guy got round the bend behind him, before he made the grade, the Kid was a gone coon and he knew it.

Many a time had the Kid ridden hard, with Texas sheriffs or Mexican alcaldes riding hard behind him. But seldom had he driven his mustang, Side-Kicker, as he now drove the galloping pinto.

Who that guy with the black moustache was, and why he wanted him, the Kid could not begin to guess; but it was clear that he wanted him, and wanted him bad; and if he got going with that Winchester in the straight, the Kid was going to tumble off the pinto riddled with lead.

With quirt and spur he rode, driving the pinto to a mad speed, the tall cedars blending into one another as they flashed by.

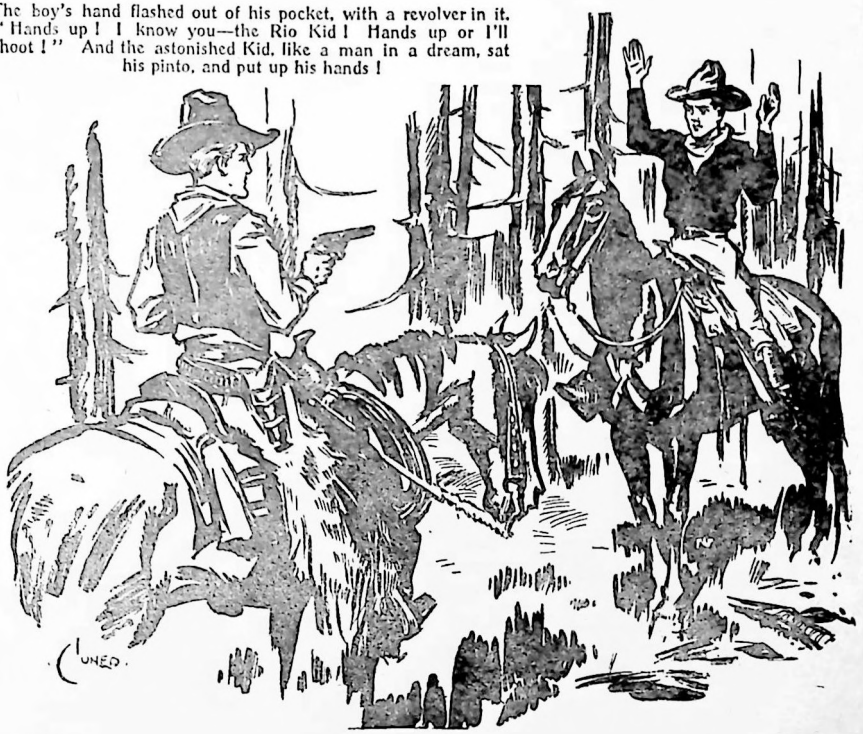
Half a mile of the straight, with no cover that would have sheltered a cicada—would he make it? There was another bend ahead—after that, another stretch of the straight; but there he would be safe from a man on foot. Was he going to make the grade?

Gallop! gallop! The hoofs beat staccato, swift as the rattle of a machine-gun. Bang! The gunman was round the bend behind him, and burning powder. But it was a long range now, and the hot lead clipped only a patch from the Kid's red shirt. But it gave the gunman the range, and another shot——

Sweating, the Kid thundered round the curve in the timber trail. Bang! bang! roared through the cedars, but he was out of the shooting now. The guy with the Winchester was welcome to blaze off all his cartridges at the cedars, if he liked. He was dropped, and the Rio Kid was done with him.

Checking his horse to a more moderate speed, the Kid rode the back-trail. He was done with that hombre—and sorry to have done with him. With a gun in his grip, he would have asked nothing better than to round up that guy with the tanned

The boy's hand flashed out of his pocket, with a revolver in it. "Hands up! I know you—the Rio Kid! Hands up or I'll shoot!" And the astonished Kid, like a man in a dream, sat his pinto, and put up his hands!



face and the black moustache, and give him a lesson about shooting up strangers on the trail.

But, unarmed, it was not good enough, and the Kid reluctantly drove the thought from his mind. Instead of that, he would have to ride a wide circle to get to Yellow Mule without meeting up again with that guy and his Winchester—maybe as far as that doggoned railroad.

Not in a good temper, the Kid rode. It had always been said, in Texas, that the Rio Kid was a bad man to crowd, but that guy had crowded him, and got by with it. It got the Kid's goat sorely.

It puzzled him, too. That guy, he reckoned, was some gunman from over the border—like himself! He knew the breed. Some rustler who had jumped the States to save his neck from a sheriff's rope, as likely as not. But what did he want the Kid for?

Some old enemy whom the Kid had forgotten? It did not seem likely. Or had the gunman, watching the trail for somebody else, made a mistake when the Kid came riding along, mistaking him for the man he wanted? .The Kid nodded as that idea came into his mind. That was more probable.

If that was the case, he was likely to meet the other guy coming up the trail, and a word of warning would not be out of season. The Kid slowed to a trot, thinking it over.

It seemed probable; and the probability became a certainty in his mind when he sighted a rider coming towards him up the trail from the direction of the distant railroad. A fellow of about his own age, in a red shirt like the Kid's, with a cheery boyish face under his Stetson. The Kid grinned as he watched him. Was that boy the galoot the gunman had been waiting for? It looked like it.

The Kid liked the boy's looks. He had a pleasant face, with smiling blue eyes, and a bunch of flaxen hair sticking out under his Stetson. Too good a lad, the Kid reckoned, to let go on his way, to be shot up by a skulking gunman. And as the two riders approached one another, on the trail walled by tall timber, the Kid threw up his hand as a sign to the other to halt.

The boy pulled in, his blue eyes fixing on the Kid, startled. It seemed to the Kid that recognition leaped into those startled eyes. Holding his reins with his left, the boy jammed his right hand into his pocket. The Kid smiled at him.

"Pull in your cayuse, feller, and lissen a piece!" he said. "I reckon—Great jumping painters!" he yelled.

The boy's hand flashed out of his pocket, with a blunt-nosed "bulldog" revolver in it. The black muzzle of the bulldog stared the Kid full in his astonished face.

"Hands up! I know you—the Rio Kid! Hands up, or I'll shoot!"

The boyish blue eyes were gleaming now, over the black barrel, with all a man's grim determination. And the astonished Kid, like a man in a dream, sat his pinto, and put up his hands over the Stetson, staring.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

THE KID GETS THERE

"KEEP them up!" the boy snapped.

"Say, feller——" gasped the Kid.

The Rio Kid was not easily surprised, but he had it coming to him now. He had told himself, when he rode over the border on a dark night, that he had dropped the old dangers in a new country where his name and

fame were known, if at all, only by hearsay—himself unknown. But if that black-moustached gunman back in the timber had made a mistake, this boy was making none. He knew the outlaw of the Rio Grande, and he had him covered.

But the Kid was cool again in a moment. He liked that lad—liked his cheery looks, liked the swift resolution with which he had pulled the gun and covered him.

He did not know the fellow from Adam; but clearly the boy knew him, and, if he knew him, knew that he was a bad man to crowd. But there was no fear, no sign of it, no irresolution about him; the gun in his hand was steady as a rock; his eyes glinted over it. But the Kid did not figure that he was in any great danger.

This boy had courage—the Kid himself had nothing on him for that. But he was no gunman like that hard-faced guy back in the timber. The Kid did not reckon he was great shakes at shooting. The blunt-nosed popgun in his hand made the Kid, accustomed to a .45 Colt, smile.

The boy fancied that the Kid was at his mercy; and the Kid grinned at the idea. He was prepared to undeceive him, pronto; but he did not want to hurt him. Smiling,



The Kid was out of the saddle almost by the time the gun touched the ground. Anderson sprang down for it—but by then it was in the Kid's hand!

he sat his horse with his hands up.

"You figure you know me, feller?" drawled the Kid, banteringly.

His grin found no reflection on the boyish face confronting him. That was hard set and grim.

"I know you—the Rio Kid!"

" It's sort of slipped my memory if we've met up before, old-timer! What'll you call yourself when you're sitting around with the old folks at home? "

" My name's Jack Anderson."

" Fossicker? " asked the Kid.

There were plenty of signs about the boy that he was one of the place-miners of the Yellow Mule section.

" Yes. Never mind that. Keep your hands up——"

" Ain't I reaching for the sky, feller, like a good little man, same as you've told me to? " grinned the Kid. " But you got me guessing! You've called me by a name fairly well known along the Rio Grande and the Frio, but I never figured to hear it barked at me in Canada. Where'd you hear it? "

" In Texas," said Anderson, quietly, " I was on the cow-punching there for a few months. I saw you riding through Packsaddle—with a crowd at your heels. I reckon you never saw me—I was one of hundreds—but I saw you, and I'd know you anywhere."

The Kid whistled softly. He remembered that wild adventure—he remembered how a Texas sheriff had nearly roped him in, and how he had ridden through Main Street, Packsaddle, with a roaring gun in either hand, a roaring mob round him, bullets flying like hail.

And this boy had seen him then—seen him fight a desperate way through a swarm of armed men—and yet dared to hold him up, as he was doing, with a toy popgun in his grip for which the Kid would not have given a continental red cent!

The Kid wanted to laugh, but he respected the boy all the more.

" Feller," said the Kid, soberly, " you know too much, if I was the all-fired firebug that the sheriff of Frio would tell you I was! But I wouldn't hurt one curl of that pretty mop of yourn."

The boy flushed angrily.

" I don't reckon you could hurt me," he snapped. " I've got you covered, and I'll pull the trigger if you give trouble. Mind, I mean that! "

" I ain't doubting that you do," said the Kid, amicably. " Might a cornered guy ask what's the next bit on the bill? "

" You're going to ride ahead of me till we get to Yellow Mule, and I'm going to hand you over! " said Jack Anderson, determinedly.

" Carry me home to die! " said the Kid. He could not see himself riding back to the disappointed gunman! " Say, what do you figure I stopped you on the trail for? "

" That's not a hard one to guess, as you're the Rio Kid " said Anderson. " You've heard of my strike on the Porcupine, and you're after my dust! I've thought more than once that Frisco Dave and his gang had an eye on me—maybe you're in with them——"

" Never heered of the cuss! " said the Kid. " But—say, is that Frisco a hard-faced guy with a black moustache like it was dyed? "

" I see you know him! "

" I'll say I've given him the once-over, and not half-an-hour ago," agreed the Kid, " and I'll let on to this—that identical guy turned me back on the trail to Yellow Mule, trying to make a colander of me with his Winchester, and I reckoned he had got the wrong cayuse on the rope. That was why I stopped you, feller—to warn you that if you was on the wrong side of a guy with a black moustache, to strike for Yellow Mule

by some other trail—and a safer one."

Anderson laughed contemptuously.

"You won't fool me with a tale like that!" he said. "Now, get on—ride ahead of me and keep your hands up."

The Kid looked at him, quietly. He reckoned that the man with the Winchester was still in the timber; perhaps coming along the trail hoping for another chance with the rifle. He was not likely to turn back and chance it; even if he had had any fancy for riding into Yellow Mule under a gun and being handed over there. But the boy miner was in deadly earnest. The Kid had to be wary.

"Say, feller, lissen to a guy!" he urged. "I'm telling you, that gunman is watching for a guy on the trail—and it's all Texas to a Mexican centavo that you're the guy, and he took me for you at the distance. And I'll mention that he's the hombre to shoot first and talk afterwards. You aiming to ride on to your own funeral?"

"That's enough! Get to it."

"Down in Texas," said the Kid, softly, "they'll tell you wild tales about the Rio Kid; but they'll tell you, too, that he's the slave of his word. And I'll sure give you my word—and prove it."

"I don't see how you'd prove it, and I'm not banking on an outlaw's word. Get to it, or——"

"You sure are an obstinate little man, and I'll say you must have given them a lot of trouble in the nursery you ain't long out of!" sighed the Kid.

Anderson reddened again.

"Last time of asking——" he rapped.

"Your say-so!" drawled the Kid. With his hands still up, touching his Stetson, he began to wheel the pinto with his knees. Anderson pushed his horse nearer, his gun still up. And as he did so the Kid's right hand suddenly swept down, with the Stetson in its grasp, and the big hat crashed on the revolver—so suddenly and so swiftly and unexpectedly that the gun clattered onto the trail before Anderson knew what was happening.

The Kid was out of the saddle almost by the time the gun touched the ground. Anderson sprang down for it—but it was in the Kid's hand, and the black muzzle looked its owner in the face, the Kid's eyes laughing over it. The boy leaped back.

The Kid saw his face set, his teeth come together hard. He expected instant death—a bullet from his own revolver crashing through flesh and bone. But his set jaw dropped, in sheer amazement, as the Kid took the revolver by the barrel and extended the butt to him.

"Your gun, feller," said the Rio Kid, politely. "But take a hint from a guy that's handled guns—them bulldogs jump a foot when you let them rip, and if you want to get your guy, aim low!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER

PARTNERS!

JACK ANDERSON took the gun, in blank wonder. He gripped it by the butt—hard; but he did not raise it again.

His face was the picture of astonishment and wonder as he stared at the laughing Kid. Slowly, he slid the bulldog back into the pocket he had taken it from. He did not understand. But he knew that the boy outlaw of Texas could have shot him dead in his tracks, with his own gun; instead of which he had handed it back. There

was a long moment of silence, and then the boy spoke frankly.

" Sorry ! I reckon you're not so black as you're painted, even if you are the Rio Kid. Then—you were not laying for me on the trail ? You hadn't picked it up that I ride into Yellow Mule Mondays, to buy at the store, and——"

" Not so's you notice it ! " grinned the Kid. " But there's a guy laying for you on the trail, O.K., and I guess his name is Frisco Dave ; and I'll mention that that popgun of yourn wouldn't give his Winchester a lot of worry. And if he's got a gang around, like you allowed, I'll whisper that you want to ride clear of him—as clear as you know how."

Jack Anderson nodded.

" I believe you now, of course. But —you're an outlaw——"

" I allow I never did what they made me an outlaw for, feller," said the Kid. " And if I've burned some powder since, I was sure crowded when I let the band play. But I figured on leaving all that on the other side of the Canadian border, and looking for a chance to wash out pay-dirt in this section."

The boy eyed him curiously and earnestly.

" I'll tell a man," continued the Kid whimsically, " I always was a locoed geck ! I'll risk it that you're the only guy in this section knows me for the Texas fire-bug, the Rio Kid—and there's a gunman up the trail waiting to blow a hole in your roof, which I guess would keep you quiet for keeps ! You wouldn't talk a whole lot after that guy got busy with his Winchester—nope ! And I'm letting you run, to shout out to all Canada that the Rio Kid is around ! I sure ought to give up riding the trails, and buy me a candy stand ! "

The boy laughed.

" I'm not shouting it out a lot, now you've proved up that you're white," he said. " Say, I'm giving Yellow Mule a miss, after what you've told me. I can get what I want from Railroad Camp, south, another day. It's a longer ride, but if Frisco and his gang are laying for me, I reckon it will be a safer."

" Bank on that ! " agreed the Kid.

" You've saved my life," said Jack Anderson quietly. " All Yellow Mule knows that I ride in Mondays, and it was easy for Frisco to put up an ambush—though I never thought of it—till now ! Look ! "

Far in the distance on the timber trail, the way the Kid had come, and the way Anderson had been riding when the Kid stopped him, a figure appeared in sight. Even at that distance, which was great, could be discerned the black moustache that barred the hard face.

At the sight of the two of them, standing by their horses, the gunman broke into a run, half-raising his rifle as he did so. The Kid grinned.

" I guessed he might be follering on, looking for another chance," he said. " If he had a cayuse along, I reckon we'd get our ticket for soup, young feller ! Leave that popgun of yourn where it is—it don't signify two hoots agin that Winchester. You want to ride."

Anderson nodded, and mounted his horse. The Kid leapt on his pinto. They rode down the trail side by side, at a gallop ; and as they rode, the roar of the Winchester woke the echoes of the timber behind them. But the range was too long ; and in a few minutes the galloping horses dropped the desperado out of sight.

When they checked to a trot the Kid spoke.



Early one sunny morning Anderson set off for Railway Camp to buy supplies. The Rio Kid saw the boy off, and waved his hand as he went, riding away through the hills.

" Say, if that guy knows where you hang out, feller, you got sumthin' coming to you."

The boy laughed.

" He doesn't know—nobody in Yellow Mule knows—I've made a strike in the Porcupine, but I've let on to nobody. They know I ride in with nuggets, to buy at the store ; that's all they know. Frisco Dave won't find out in a hurry."

" I guess he looks the man to try, if you don't show up in Yellow Mule no more ! " said the Kid.

" Let him ! " said Jack Anderson carelessly. He gave the Kid a friendly, frank look. " You were heading for the diggings ? "

" Yep—though I reckon I'd better buy me a gun afore I buy me a pick ! " grinned the Kid. " They sure was putting it on my simple nature when they told me a guy wouldn't want to pack a gun this side of the Line."

" Will you try your luck with me ? "

" With you ? " repeated the Kid.

" You've saved my life to-day. And I held you up with a gun, in return—though I fancy, now, that I couldn't have done you a lot of damage," added Anderson, rather ruefully.

" Not a whole lot, I allow ! " grinned the Kid. " But you sure have all the pluck of a bagful of fightin' painters, to hold up the Rio Kid with that pea-shooter of yourn. But what's the lay-out ? "

" I've struck it on a creek in the Porcupine ! There isn't enough for a

crowd, but there's more than enough for two. What do you say to partners?"

"Search me!" ejaculated the Kid.

He checked his pinto, and stared at the boy.

"You trust me all that?" he demanded.

"All the way, and then some!" said Anderson. "If you wanted my dust, or my life, you had both, back there on the trail. Think I'm a fool? I know a white man when I see one. If you're looking for gold-washing, go in with me on Porcupine Creek—share and share alike! I tell you, there's more than enough for two. I've been taking out a hundred dollars a day."

The Kid did not answer.

His face was working.

The thought had been in his mind. He liked the boy; and he would have been glad to be on hand if Frisco Dave and his gang succeeded in nosing out his claim in the hills. But he would never have thought of making the proposition—he, an outlaw, hunted by the sheriffs in his own country, with an endless tale of wild deeds laid to his credit.

And the proposition had come from the boy, who trusted him! The boy was no fool! Plenty of guys would have called him a fool, trusting the firebug of Texas with the secret of his gold claim. But the Kid knew that he was no fool.

They rode in silence, the timber left behind. They clattered on the plain, in sight of the railroad that stretched snake-like, endless lines of rails and sleepers, hateful to the eyes of the Kid.

Jack Anderson glanced at his companion several times, but without speaking. But all the time, the Kid knew, he was leading him on the way to his secret claim in the hills. The plain and the railroad vanished as they rode into the foothills of the Porcupine, and the horses' hoofs clattered on the stony soil of a rocky gulch.

Anderson broke the silence at last.

"Don't you like the idea, Kid?"

"Feller," said the Kid, and there was a faltering note in his voice, "I like it a whole lot! Suits me fine! But——"

"Call it a cinch, then!"

"But," said the Kid, "you know me—the Rio Kid! Outlaw and firebug, and a heap of other things—at least, they say so. And you're allowing you're going to trust me with a gold claim, and your life, and all——"

"You said it! Is it a cinch?"

"Sure!" said the Kid, at last. "It's a cinch! And I'll tell you, feller, you've hit plumb centre, though there's a heap of folks would tell you you was the world's prize boob!"

Jack Anderson laughed.

"This way," he said.

They rode through a rocky draw, and came out on the bank of a creek, that rippled down from the pine-clad slopes of the Porcupine. There was a wooden shack by the stream, with a lean-to at the back for a stable. Anderson alighted, and unlocked the door.

"Home!" he said.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER
FOR LIFE OR DEATH!

THE Rio Kid was a happy man the next few days.

He worked on the placer with his partner, from sunrise to sunset, washing out dust and nuggets on the bar in the Porcupine Creek.

He had the satisfaction of being a very useful man to his partner. The young Canadian had tried his hand at cow-punching in the States, and at

lumber-jacking in his own country, before he had drifted to the new diggings, and made his lucky strike prospecting in the Porcupine.

Sitting by the rusty iron stove, evenings, he told the Kid of his people back in Montreal, having hard times ; and his keen desire to get to them with dollars in his belt. And

day, built a cradle to wash out the gold; and the second day the output was doubled. And day after day they worked, and the tin can in the shack grew fuller and fuller.

The Kid did not care a whole lot about the precious grains, for with him it had always been easy come and easy go ; but he rejoiced to see his boy



Frisco Dave's roughnecks were coming down the creek at a gallop. Crack, crack crack ! The Kid moved like greased lightning. Bullets clattered on the rocks as he leaped for the shelter of the shack.

he was going to get away with it at last, for he was taking a small fortune out of the creek.

The Kid was a cow-puncher born and bred, but he had fossicked for gold in Arizona, and knew the game ; and he was able to tell the boy many things, and put him wise. Anderson had been hardly scraping the surface of his strike ; but the Kid, the first partner getting nearer and nearer to the realisation of his hopes.

Anderson had not registered his claim ; in that unsettled section, he told the Kid, that would have amounted to pointing it out to claim-jumpers, and the Kid agreed. It was a "placer," and sooner or later would be completely washed out. With a gang like Frisco Dave's in the vicinity,

it could not be kept too secret.

And it was secret enough. Hidden in that remote recess of the Porcupine foothills, it was not likely that any guy would happen on it, except by the purest chance, as Jack had done when prospecting.

The Kid, remembering the hard, tanned face with the black moustache, reckoned that Frisco Dave was the hombre to hunt his hardest ; and for several days he was very watchful and wary, and bitterly regretted having left the walnut-butted guns with Side-Kicker on the southern side of the border.

But there was no sign of an enemy ; they worked in peace, day after day. Maybe, the Kid thought, Frisco was waiting for Anderson to make his usual trip to Yellow Mule, on the ensuing Monday, for supplies. But when that Monday came, Anderson did not ride to Yellow Mule—he fully agreed with the Kid that it was wise to ride clear of Yellow Mule.

Supplies were not needed for a time —the Kid had bully beef and biscuit in his pack, and with the old skill he had not forgotten, he netted fish in the creek, and trapped rabbits in the thickets.

" I guess," said the Kid, " we'll kinder lay low a few, in case them fire-bugs are cavorting around looking for you, partner. You don't want to run into Frisco Dave and put up an argument agin his Winchester with that popgun of yourn. And when we got to get in the grub-stakes, I guess you want to hit the trail the other way."

" You said it ! " agreed Anderson. " We'll leave it till next Monday—and I'll ride down to Railroad Camp for the supplies. It's a five-mile longer trip——"

" And five miles safer, with Frisco loafing around Yellow Mule," said the Kid. They were sitting by the rusty iron stove, crammed with pine chips, in the dusk of evening after a hard day's work, as they talked. The Kid gave his comrade a whimsical grin. " Say, when you ride down to Railroad Camp, you taking the dust with you in your rags ? "

" Enough to pay at the store," said Anderson.

" And the rest ? " asked the Kid.

" That stays here, in the tin can."

" With me to see it safe ? "

" Sure ! "

" Feller," said the Kid, " you're a good little man, and I'll tell all Canada I like you a whole lot. But there's five thousand dollars of the yellow stuff in that tin can; and what'd folks say to you if you let on that you left it to be looked after by the Rio Kid ? "

" Aw, pack that up ! " said Anderson. " You make me tired, Kid ! "

And the Kid grinned, and packed it up.

Another week slipped by ; with a steady adding of ounces to the store in the tin can. By that time, even the wary Kid reckoned that there was no more danger from Frisco Dave and his gang.

If they were hunting for Jack Anderson, and his hidden claim in the foothills, it had not brought them anything. And when Monday came again, and Anderson prepared for the ride to Railroad Camp, the Kid figured that it was all clear.

He was going south, instead of north as formerly—a longer but a safer ride ; and the gunmen of Yellow Mule were not likely to see anything of him.

He packed a sufficient quantity of dust to pay for the supplies at the railroad store. The rest was left in

the tin can in the shack. And on the list of purchases that Jack was to make, the Kid carefully put down a Colt, and cartridges for the same. Remote as danger from Frisco Dave seemed, the Kid reckoned that it would be wise to pack a gun as soon as he could get hold of one.

He saw the boy off, and waved his hand as he went, riding away through the hills, in the early sunny morning. When the boy was gone, the Rio Kid stood in silence for some minutes, staring at the rocky gulches that had swallowed him from sight. Then, with a strange expression on his sunburnt face, he stepped into the shack, and stood staring at the old tin can, in which glistened gold dust and tiny nuggets, worth six thousand dollars of any guy's money.

"Carry me home to die!" murmured the Kid, and he laughed. He wondered what the sheriff of Frio, in far-off Texas, would have thought had he known that the outlaw of the Rio Grande was left in charge of six thousand dollars—and that it was safer in his hands than in a bank!

The lonely ravine in the Porcupine seemed lonelier with the boy's happy face gone, no sound of his cheery voice. The Rio Kid was accustomed to solitary days; but he disliked the silence now. He went to the lean-to and gave the pinto fodder and water and talked to him and stroked his glossy neck.

He would have been glad to saddle up, and enjoy a gallop in the keen air of the foothills; it was two weeks since he had been in the saddle. But he did not think of it. He could not leave the gold unguarded, and he was there to work on the placer, while his partner was absent. And he went to work in the creek, and the morning hours passed.

At noon he rested, and ate his rations. Anderson could hardly be back before sundown; and it was many long hours yet to sundown. Not for a long time had a day seemed so long to the Kid.

But he found comfort in work, toiling in the creek, adding fraction after fraction to the golden store. It was pleasant to think of having that little pile in the tin can an inch higher when Jack Anderson came back to see it.

The Kid was thinking of that as he toiled in the hot sun, when something struck a rock a foot from him, and he jumped, and his startled eyes flashed round. It was a bullet that had glanced, and the report of the rifle rolled over the hills with a thousand echoes.

"Great gophers!" breathed the Kid.

His eyes fixed on a bunch of riders coming down the draw to the creek —roughnecks in Stetsons, and the man in the lead was a man with a hard tanned face barred by a black moustache!

A smoking rifle was in Frisco Dave's hand—it was he who had fired, and he fired again as the Kid straightened up and stared, and the boy outlaw barely dodged the bullet.

They were still at a distance—coming down to the creek at a gallop —five of them, armed and desperate men—and the Kid stood there, with nothing but a shovel in his hands. Crack, crack, crack! came the ring of Colts.

The Kid moved like greased lightning. Bullets clattered on the rocks as he leaped for the shelter of the shack.

The pinewood door slammed after

him; he slammed the bar into position. For the moment, he was safe from the shooting.

Hoof-beats rang on the rocks. Rattling bullets dropped like hail on the timber walls.

The Rio Kid clenched his hands desperately. With one of his old guns in his grip he would not have feared that bunch of gunmen—not the whole five of them. He was unarmed, and they were shooting to kill.

Only one glimmer of thankfulness came to him in that terrible moment—Jack was away; his life was saved. The Kid was alone to stand the racket. But the gold—the gold for which the boy had worked so long and so hard; the gold that was to bring prosperity to his father and mother, hit by hard times, back in Montreal—the gold left in the Kid's keeping!

The Texas outlaw gritted his teeth with fury as he thought of the gold slipping into the hands of Frisco Dave and his gang. With his life, ten times over, he would have saved it if he could—not for himself, not a nugget for himself, but for the boy who had trusted him.

Would Jack believe that his faith had been misplaced, that the outlaw of the Rio Grande had failed in his trust, when he came back to find the claim deserted, the gold gone?

It was a black and bitter thought to the Kid. Yet he must believe so—unless, indeed, he found the Kid's body, riddled with bullets, lying where he had vainly striven to save the gold. He would save it—he must save it!

Clattering hoofs rang on the rocks and ceased. The Kid peered from a chink in a shutter.

They had dismounted at a distance from the shack. He wondered, for a moment, why. Then he realised that they did not know that he was unarmed. They expected shooting when they came, and they were wary

It gave the Kid a respite. If only he had had even Jack's popgun! But he had nothing but the shovel that was still in his grasp—good for cracking one skull before he was shot down.

The Kid cursed his own carelessness. In two weeks he had grown satisfied that Frisco Dave, even if he was hunting for the boy fossicker, had failed and thrown in his hand. Now he knew better.

Because Anderson came no more to Yellow Mule, the hard-faced gunman had not thrown in his hand; he had set out to trail him down with the grim determination of a wolf, like the human wolf he was. And he had found the hidden claim at long last, though it was the Kid, and not the Canadian boy, that he had cornered there.

The Kid was glad of that, at least. Even his own life was not too much to give to save that of his partner. But the gold—he had to save the gold!

He had a respite. They were gathered in a bunch at a distance in front of the shack, muttering together, watchful as wolves. Soon they would guess that no shooting was to be looked for. Then a rush and a stream of bullets, and the end of the Rio Kid's wild-life trail! But he had a brief respite, and minutes were priceless to the Kid now.

His horse was in the lean-to at the back of the shack. He could reach it without emerging from cover, by dragging down an end board—easy enough in the flimsy building. To mount and ride under a shower of bullets—that was the only chance that remained to the Kid, if it was a chance.

Minutes spelled the difference, perhaps, between life and death ; but the Kid did not even think of riding without the gold. Swiftly, but with steady hands, he emptied the tin can into a leather bag, which he buckled to his belt under the red shirt.

Then he wrenched down an end board and stepped into the lean-to, the iron miner's shovel in his grasp. He set down the shovel—his only weapon—and swiftly saddled and bridled the pinto.

He listened.

There were sounds from the enemy —sounds of rough boots on the rocks. They were coming !

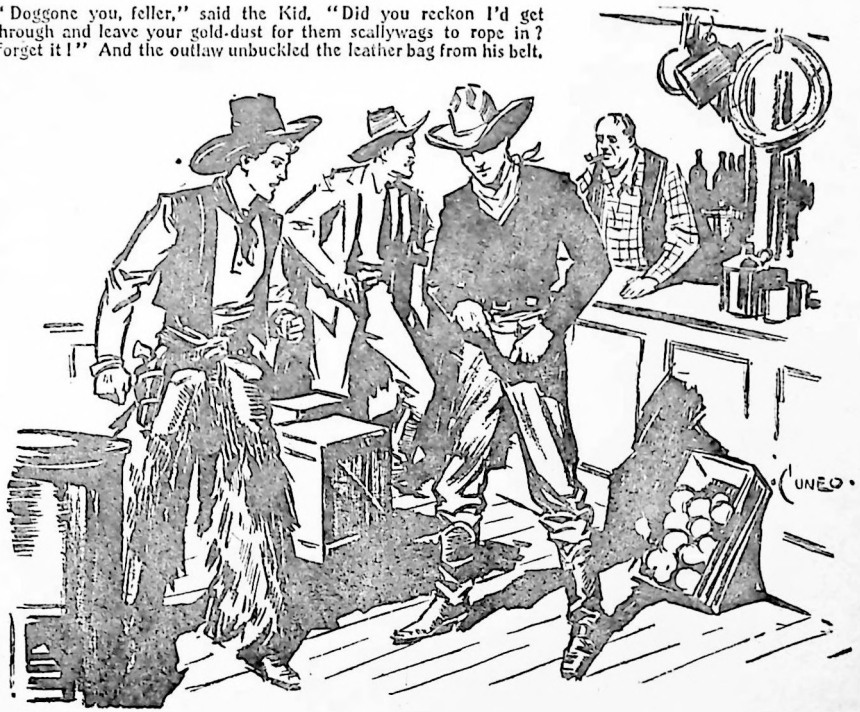
Crash ! It was a heavy blow on the door of the shack in front—a crashing rock wielded in sinewy hands. Another such blow and the door would be in. They had guessed now that he was unarmed, or they were chancing it.

The Kid led his pinto out from the lean-to, bridle in his left, the iron shovel in his right. He had to lead the horse clear before he could mount, and when they saw him——

A startled yell rang out. One of the gang, at the corner of the shack, saw him, and yelled to the others, lifting his revolver as he yelled. But swifter than the rough-neck, the Kid's arm went up—the iron shovel flew before the gun was at a level.

The Kid saw it crash into a savage bearded face—he saw the ruffian go reeling, his skull smashed in by the

"Doggone you, feller," said the Kid. "Did you reckon I'd get through and leave your gold-dust for them scallywags to rope in ? Forget it ! " And the outlaw unbuckled the leather bag from his belt.



blow, a dead man before he touched the ground. The next instant the Kid was in the saddle, pulling out for his life.

Wild yells and shouts and shots rang out behind him. But the Kid was in the saddle, ducking low and spurring like a madman. The pinto bounded like a mad thing—the hurried firing spattered the air round him; a bullet tore his shirt, another spun the Stetson from his head, but the Rio Kid tore madly on, and the gang of gunmen—only four of them now—rushed for their horses.

Clatter, clatter, clatter!

The Kid spurred and spurred; behind him the clattering of hoofs, the ringing of revolvers. Frisco Dave had dropped his rifle; there was a six-gun in his grip as he dashed ahead of his men in fierce pursuit. Hard rock rang and clattered under the beating hoofs; but the Rio Kid had a start, and in the rapid motion of the horses shooting was wild; he was still unhit as he galloped madly down the gulch for the plains.

With a thunder of hoofs they swept after him. They knew—at least, they could guess—that he had not ridden without the gold—the gold for which they were ready to shed blood, for which they were risking their worthless lives if the law came to deal with them.

But it did not look like coming to that. The four were well-mounted, and if they did not gain they did not lose, as they swept clattering down the gulch in fierce pursuit. And every minute a Colt roared.

The Kid spurred. More than a bullet for himself he feared for a bullet to hit the pinto. That would be the finish. But wild riding made wild shooting.

Mile on mile of rocks rang under the galloping hoofs, and the Kid was riding on the open plain that stretched endless between the foothills and the railroad. Endless rugged plains and many a long mile away, Railroad Camp his only place of safety.

If he reached it alive the Rio Kid reckoned that he was going to be a lucky guy. Crack on crack rang out behind him as the rugged miles flew beneath the lashing hoofs.

Mounted on his mustang, Side-Kicker, the Kid would have shown his heels to the gang and laughed at the chase. The pinto was a good horse—the Kid would never have been found riding poor horseflesh. But the enemy were as well-mounted as he.

Oh for the grip of a walnut butt—to feel one of his old six-guns in his hand—to turn on that bunch and give them all the shooting they wanted, and then some!

But he packed no gun—and he could only ride and ride, with Death for his comrade in that mad race

Ahead of the Kid, like a black snake crawling over the prairie, lay the railroad track—obnoxious to a puncher's eyes, but now a glad sight to the hunted Kid, for it told him that he had a chance.

Once across that line Railroad Camp would be in sight, he reckoned, and a chance for life—and to save his partner's gold.

Nearer and clearer came the long line of rails and sleepers—barring the plain ahead of him, endless in either direction. And something, far away, was moving—what was it?

A train on the line—the trail of smoke floating back from the tall engine—the Canadian Pacific express coming up from Thompson. Behind the engine, the long, almost unending line of cars and Pullmans. The Kid hardly heeded it. He rode for the

line, ahead of the coming train—ample time to get across before the express drew nigh.

Crack!

The pinto gave a sudden lurch.

The Kid's hand was like iron on the rein. He knew that his horse had been hit—the wild shooting had got close at last. There was a trickle of red on the horse's heaving flank. Grimly, fiercely, the Kid kept him to the gallop.

Bravely the pinto responded But he was losing—losing ground—behind him, the clatter of hoofs, the popping of guns, rang closer—closer. A yell rang in his ears—a yell of triumph that was coming.

And the Kid knew it as well as they did: his game was up, and they would round him up against the railroad track, and riddle him with lead, perhaps within sight of the staring eyes of passengers on the express!

Death was his comrade in that wild ride, and the hand of Death was on him—but the Rio Kid still rode, game to the last.

Booming across the plain came the roar of the C.P. express. It was close now, the great engine, the endless line of cars. The Kid had calculated to get across before the train rushed down—but the wound to his pinto had changed all that—and as he came thundering to the track, the great engine seemed to be swooping down on him.

There was a clinking of bridles behind, as the pursuers drew rein—they dared not ride in front of the roaring express. And they had him now—had him cinched, his way barred by the train; once it was in front of him, the long line of cars barred him off from escape.

With the long train in front of him, the gunmen behind with Colts spitting death, the Rio Kid was crowded to his doom. But the train was not in front of him yet. The towering engine was still to his left when the Rio Kid, casting all his chances on a last desperate hazard, dashed break-neck across the line.

He heard a shout behind him of rage and amazement. He heard another shout—it came from a man on the engine. They rang through the roar of the train—the thunder of the express.

Spurred madly, the pinto leaped on, clattering over rails and sleepers—pitfalls of death, where a single slip meant fearful destruction; and as the Rio Kid hurled onward, the great engine towered over him, rushing down to crush him to dust!

He felt the wind of it, like a prairie gale, as he rode clear—but only barely clear, and thundered on—with the long line of cars behind him now, blotting out his pursuers—barring their pursuit.

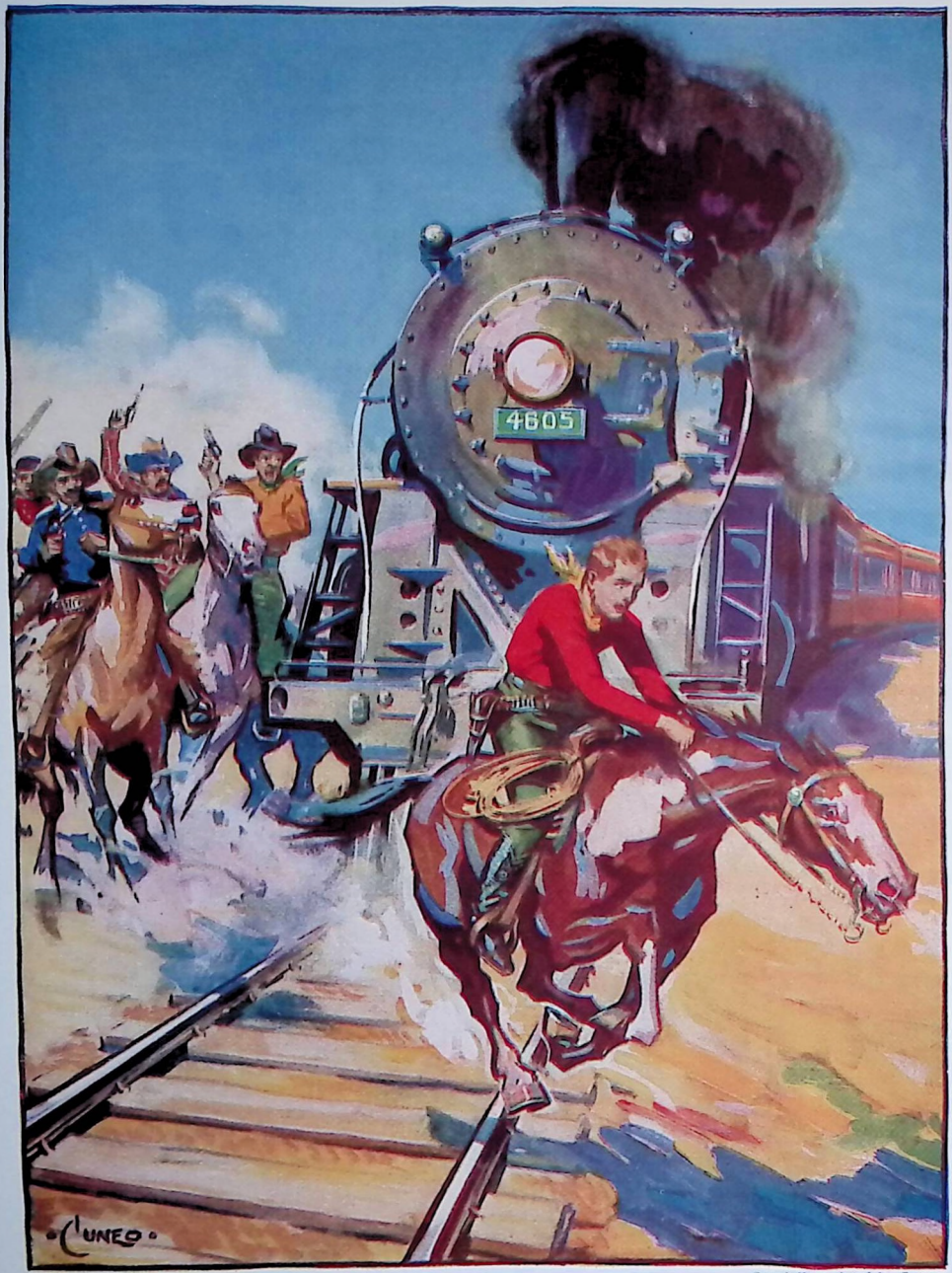
. . . . . .

The Rio Kid had made the grade.

He knew it as he rode on from the railroad track, the cars booming by behind him. Frisco Dave and his gang had to wait—wait till the long line of cars was past; and by the time it was past the Kid was far ahead and Railroad Camp was in sight.

Whether they pursued him farther the Kid did not know. Breathless, his horse lathered with blood and foam, he rode into the camp and drew rein at the office of the Canadian Mounted Police.

And when the Mounties rode out to look for Frisco Dave, the Kid chuckled, wondering what they would have thought had they known that it was the Rio Kid, the outlaw of Texas, who had called them out.



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Specially painted by Cuneo.

THE RIO KID TAKES A DESPERATE CHANCE!

And having cared for his horse—always the Kid's first thought—he went along to the store and found Jack Anderson. His boy partner stared at him blankly. The Kid told him.

Jack drew a deep breath.

"Thank the good Lord you got through, Kid!" he said. "It'll hit us hard, losing the gold—but there's more in the creek, and I guess the Mounties will look after Frisco Dave after this——"

"I'll say that guy is already hitting the high spots for the border!" grinned the Kid. "But don't you worry any about the gold——"

"I ain't worrying, seeing you've got through——"

"Doggone you, feller," said the Kid, "did you reckon I'd get through and leave your dust for them scallywags to rope in? Forget it!" He unbuckled the leather bag from his belt. "I guess if they'd got your pile, feller, they'd have got this Kid along of it; but they never cinched neither—and now you're in town, I'll say your best guess is to tote it along to the bank, and cache it where it won't come to no harm."

"Kid!"

The Kid chuckled.

"Jest worry out one nugget," he said, "and I'll buy me a gun! I sure do feel sort of lost and lonesome without a gun!"

ST. JIM'S CHARACTERS

Acquainting you with popular St. Jim's fellows

HE'S the Captain of the Shell,
And he does his duties well;
Always sunny, always true—
MERRY—name and nature too!

Skipper of the New House boys,
Sport of all kinds he enjoys;
Not so good in class, perhaps—
FIGGINS, liked by all the chaps!

He's the type of Vere de Vere,
And his father is a peer;
Thinks a lot of socks and spats—
D'ARCY! Readers, raise your hats!

Jokes and japes and merry jests,
These are his chief interests;
Pulls our unsuspecting limbs—
LOWTHER! Jester of St. Jim's!

Leader of the Fourth is he,
Staunch and true, as all agree;
Full of blithe good-humoured tricks—
BLAKE of Study No. 6!

Thinks he's great at every sport,
Thinks his play's the finest sort:
All the other fellows yell!—
GRUNDY, Duffer of the Shell!

Fat? Well, let us call him plump!
He's good-humoured, and no chump;
Demon bowler, great in goal—
FATTY WYNN, a cheery soul!

Cranky, batty, strangely dense,
Full of words which have no sense:
Talks until you shake your fist—
SKIMPOLE, the Determinist!

DIARY of a GREYFRIARS GO-GETTER



Intimate extracts from the autobiography of Fisher T. Fish, the "guy" from "Noo York."

MONDAY.—Scrammed outa bed with a swell idea buzzing through the brain-box. "Anti-Caning Lotion for Schoolboys"! Boy! What a scheme! Imagine the ads! "The 'Solution' to Your Troubles!"—"The Wonder-Worker that Can't Be Whacked!"—"Don't Be 'Palmed' Off With Substitutes!" Got busy pronto. Bought up stock of old bottles. Only one snag—knew of nothing that would work the trick. Mixed up some coloured water. Guessed the mere suggestion would numb the guys to pain! Sold out by dinner-time. Nice work, Fisher, boy!

Bad finish, though. After afternoon classes got ducked in the lily-pond by dissatisfied customers. Reckon I'll give that anti-caning lotion the air. These tight-wads want too much for their dough, I guess!



MONDAY. "Anti-caning lotion for schoolboys"—a great success. Sold out by dinner-time.

TUESDAY.—Flew outa bed with one grand sweet song of a brain-wave agitating the grey matter. "Fish For Impots! Why Write Lines? Come to the Wholesale Impot Merchant and Buy Back Your Old Impots Instead!"

Spent best part of day collecting old impots from waste-paper baskets and ash-cans. Opened shop at 5 p.m. What a flop! First caller—Quelch! He'd heard about it and moseyed in to inspect the stock! Did I feel that cane he'd brought with him? I'll tell the world! 'Nother good racket gone wrong! They certainly don't understand Business in this sleepy old shebang!

WEDNESDAY.—Shot outa bed with a really nifty hunch bubbling outa the cranium. Early morning cups of tea for Remove guys—fourpence a time! What a break, with an army of fags making them at



FRIDAY. Insurance for schoolboys against caning! Wholesale slaughter in Quelch's study—bankrupt!

twopence a time! Got busy before the guys woke up. Secured willing fags and told them to bring up the liquor and make it snappy. All went well—till the customers tasted the tea! Fierce rioting followed instanter—guys didn't like it. Found out after that the fags couldn't get any tea and made it with brown paint instead. Silly jays said it couldn't taste worse than tea in Hall, anyway! I guess I'd make potato-scrapings of those young galoots if I could spare the time!

THURSDAY.—Leaped outa bed thinking out the dandiest notion ever! Valet Service for Schoolboys! Old Clothes Made Like New by the Fish Improved Method! Benzine would work the oracle, I guessed. Hired Skinner to do the work. Boy! Couldn't I scrag that guy? He ran outa benzine and finished the work with acid from the Chemistry Lab. Result: five suits ruined and five lickings for yours truly! How can a guy make money in this burg?

FRIDAY.—Streaked outa bed, mind fixed on the cutest way of making greenbacks. Insurance for schoolboys! What a racket! Pay in a shilling a week and draw ten shillings every time you're caned! Sez me, "Fisher, my boy, this is a cinch!" Opened the office after morning classes and took twenty shillings in twenty minutes. Opened again at tea-time and took ten shillings more. Dream then busted! Six guys mos-eyed in in a bunch, fresh from a wholesale slaughter in Quelch's study and registered their claims! Gave 'em back the day's takings and declared the business bankrupt—and the ungrateful hoodlums whopped me for my trouble!



SATURDAY. Took a crowd to Redclyffe for the match at two dollars per head. Got there—but the durned 'bus broke down coming back!

SATURDAY.—Dived outa my bed with just the slickest bee in my bonnet! Figured I could hire a milk lorry from the village for two dollars with driver thrown in, and get five dollars at least for taking a crowd of saps over to Redclyffe for the Greyfriars match. Fixed it. Got the crowd to Redclyffe all right. But the durned old 'bus broke down coming back, and I'll say that finished it! Whole crowd got lines for being late, and—insult to injury!—the Head collared my profits complete and handed them to the Football Club! Am I sore?

SUNDAY.—Crawled outa bed with the firm conviction that it's no use a go-getter trying to make dough in this shack. I'm through, and that's all about it! Yes, siree!



THURSDAY. Valet service for schoolboys! Hired Skinner, and he used acid instead of benzine. Five suits ruined—five lickings for yours truly!

MR. RATCLIFF HAS A BUSY DAY!

by MARTIN CLIFFORD



When Mr. Ratcliff, the sour-tempered Housemaster at St. Jim's, "put his foot down," he stepped into trouble which dogged his footsteps all day long!

THE FIRST CHAPTER
INKY!

GEORGE FIGGINS grinned.

"Here he comes!" he said.

Figgins, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, was looking out of his study window in the New House.

His chums, Kerr and Fatty Wynn, were busy at the study table. They were filling squirts from a bottle of ink. A third squirt, already filled, lay on the table. It seemed that Figgins and Co. were expecting a visitor, and were making rather unusual preparations for his reception in the study.

"Gussy coming?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"Yes!"

"We're ready!" remarked Kerr.

They joined Figgins at the window and looked out. Across the quad, from the direction of the School House, came an elegant figure.

It was that of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the ornament of the Fourth Form.

Arthur Augustus was not looking his usual serene and amiable self. There was a dark frown on his noble brow. His eye gleamed behind his eyeglass.

Something, evidently, had roused the wrath of the swell of St. Jim's. He was coming across from his House to the New House, not with friendly intent.

"Looks fearfully wrathy, doesn't he?" remarked Figgins. "Coming over to wallop the lot of us!"

"And all because a fellow dropped an ink-ball down his neck in class!" said Kerr. "What a fuss over a trifle!"

The chums of the New House chuckled.

Arthur Augustus glanced up. His wrathy frown deepened at the sight of the three grinning faces looking down.

"Oh! So you're there, you wottahs!" he called up.

"Coming to see us, old bean?" asked Figgins affably.

"Yaas, wathah! I told you in class that I would give you a feahful thwashin' for dwoppin' that beastly

ink-ball down my neck ! If you will come wound to the gym, I will thwash you one aftah anothah ! "

" Come up to the study and thrash us one after another ! " suggested Figgins.

" I should pwefer to deal with you in the gym, Figgins ! If Watty hears a wow in the studay, he may barge in."

" You'll be glad for somebody to barge in before you get through ! " said Kerr.

" Wats ! "

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy marched on to the doorway of the House. It was very probable that if Mr. Ratcliff, the Housemaster of the New House, heard a row in the study, he would " barge " in. But if the mountain would not come to Mahomet, Mahomet had to go to the mountain ! An ink-ball down his noble neck might seem a trifle light as air to the fellow who had dropped it there. But it was no trifle to Gussy, who had had a considerable amount of cleaning and changing to do since class. He had warned Figgins and Co. that he was going to thrash them, as they richly deserved ; and now he was coming over to do it.

The New House trio stepped back from the window. They picked up the inky squirts from the table.

Squirts in hand, they took up a strategic position inside the door. There they waited, with grinning faces, for Gussy ! They were not feeling fearfully nervous about the thrashing he had promised them. But they did not want him to begin ; they did not want to damage Gussy. They hoped that three squirts, full of ink, would be enough for him when he arrived. If not, they were ready to follow it up with the bottle !

They listened for Arthur Augustus' footsteps. The swell of St. Jim's had gone in at the doorway of the New House. They expected to hear him about a minute later.

But a minute passed, and they did not hear him. There was no sound of footsteps in the study passage. Another minute passed !

" He's taking his time up the stairs!" remarked Fatty Wynn.

" Gussy never hurries ! " grinned Figgins.

" I hope he hasn't chucked it up, and gone back to the School House ! " grunted Kerr. " All our trouble for nothing——"

" No fear ! " said Figgins confidently. " Gussy's a man of his word ! He's coming all right ! "

" Hark ! "

" He's coming ! "

There was a sound of footsteps in the passage, coming along from the staircase. They approached the study door.

Figgins and Co. exchanged a blissful grin.

With the squirts at a level, they waited for the door to open. Had the footsteps passed the study door they would have been disappointed. But the footsteps did not pass. They stopped outside. The proprietor of those footsteps was coming direct to Figgy's study.

" Ready ! " breathed Figgins, as the door-handle was grasped from without and turned.

" What-ho ! "

The door flew open without a knock ! It flew wide, and as it flew, three squirts shot at the same moment. It was beautifully timed !

Squish !

Splash !

Full upon the figure in the open doorway shot three drenching streams of ink, all landing together. There was a startled howl !



"Hark!" exclaimed Kerr. "Gussy's coming!" There was the sound of footsteps in the passage, approaching the study door. With the ink-filled squirts held ready, Figgins and Co. waited for the door to open.

"What—what—upon my word! How dare you!"

The figure, as it howled, staggered back, stumbled, and sat down in the passage. It sat and streamed with ink!

Figgins and Co. gazed at it—in horror!

The squirts dropped from their nerveless hands!

They stood rooted to the floor, gazing with bulging eyes at the ink-splashed face that glared at them: not the face of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form, but the face of Mr. Horace Ratcliff, Housemaster of the New House!

THE SECOND CHAPTER

TRIBULATIONS OF A FOOTBALL CAPTAIN!

TOM MERRY ran his fingers through his curly hair—a way he had when he was worried. On the paper before him, in No. 10 Study in the School House, lay a rather crumpled sheet of paper, on which a number of names were pencilled. It might have been a problem in "maths" instead of a list of juniors of St. Jim's, to judge by Tom's expression. That list of names seemed to be giving him food for thought.

His chums, Manners and Lowther, were in the study. Manners was carefully loading his camera with

films, having some snaps to take on the morrow, when the Rookwooders were coming over to play football. Monty Lowther was poaching eggs for tea at the study fire.

"Ready!" said Lowther.

"Thank goodness we've got Fatty Wynn!" said Tom.

Lowther looked round.

"Fatty Wynn?" he exclaimed.

"Yes; thank goodness for that!"

"You've asked that fat New House bounder?"

"Eh, what? Of course."

"Well, you might have said so!" said Lowther warmly. "What's the good of three poached eggs for tea if Fatty's coming?"

"Not much!" remarked Manners, closing his camera. "Three hundred would be nearer the mark."

Tom Merry stared at his chums.

"What on earth are you fellows burbling about?" he inquired. "What the thump have poached eggs got to do with football?"

"Football!" repeated Manners and Lowther.

"Yes, ass! Yes, fathead! Do you think I'm bothering over cricket, or tennis, or kiss-in-the-ring?"

"You said you'd asked Fatty——"

"Of course I have, and thank goodness we've got him," said Tom. "If we hadn't got Fatty Wynn to keep goal to-morrow we shouldn't have an earthly. As it is, it will be touch and go. But with Fatty in goal——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Manners and Lowther. Evidently there had been a slight misunderstanding.

"What are you cackling at, you duffers?" asked Tom crossly. "I can tell you it's not jolly easy to make up a team to beat Jimmy Silver's crowd from Rookwood with a lot of fellows in sanny with colds. They had to catch colds just before the Rookwood fixture—that's the sort of asses they are! But with that fat New House man in goal——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They won't get past him in a hurry," said Tom. "Thank goodness——"

"You howling ass!" said Lowther. "I thought you meant you'd asked him to tea!"

"Tea!" repeated Tom. "Fathead! Who's thinking about tea?"

"Well, I am, for one, as it's past tea-time," said Monty, "and the eggs are ready, likewise the toast. If you've finished that jig-saw puzzle, let's have tea."

"Let's!" agreed Manners.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, now I come to think of it, I'm ready for tea," he confessed. "I fancy we've got a good team, even with so many men knocked out. Fatty Wynn's the best goalkeeper that ever was or will be——"

"Not bad, for a New House bounder!" admitted Lowther.

"Figgins is magnificent in the front line——"

"Don't let the eggs get cold!"

"And Kerr is jolly good at half! Thank goodness they haven't been catching colds in the New House."

"The toast's getting cold."

"Front line, Blake, D'Arcy, little me, you, Lowther, and Figgins——"

"Who's making the tea?"

"Halves, Kangaroo, Kerr, and Manners——"

"I say, I shall be taking photographs!" said Manners.

"You won't!" said Tom. "You'll be playing half. Backs, Herries and Digby. Goal, Fatty Wynn, and thank goodness we've got him there. If he catches a cold before to-morrow I'll spiflicate him. He can catch pneumonia after the match if he likes."

" Good enough team ! " remarked Manners.

" Gratters, old bean, on working out your jig-saw so successfully ! " said Monty Lowther gravely. " Now, what about tea ? "

The chums of the Shell sat down to tea.

Tap !

" Trot in ! " called out Tom Merry.

The door of No. 10 opened, and George Figgins walked in. Tom Merry and Co. looked at him. Generally, Figgy of the New House looked as cheerful as any fellow at St. Jim's. Now he seemed to be in the dismal depths of dolefulness. His brow was darkly clouded, and he looked as if most of the troubles of the universe had descended on his youthful shoulders.

" What's the row ? " asked Tom anxiously. " Don't tell me that Fatty Wynn's caught a cold, like so many other silly asses."

" Eh ? " said Figgins. " Oh, no ! He's all right."

" And Kerr——"

" Oh, Kerr's all right."

" And you ? " asked Tom. " You look all right, except that you look as if you'd lost a half-crown and found a farthing."

" It's rotten ! " said Figgins miserably. " I—I say, it's fearfully rotten. All the fat's in the fire."

" Give it a name ! " suggested Manners.

" That ass D'Arcy——"

Tom Merry looked alarmed at once.

" Nothing wrong with D'Arcy, surely ? I saw him after class. He looked wrathy about something, but ——"

" The blithering idiot ! " said Figgins. " He's done it."

" Done what ? " roared Tom Merry. " Look here, we want D'Arcy to-morrow. We can't spare him. He's a silly ass, if you like, but he can play soccer. If anything's happened to him, I'll jolly well punch his head."

" Nothing's happened to him that I know of, except a jaw from Ratty."

" Well, that's all right, then," said Tom in relief. " I've had worry enough making up a team to meet Rookwood, with a lot of fatheads on the sick list. But if the team's all right——"

" It isn't ! " groaned Figgins.

" Then what—— " The junior captain of St. Jim's was alarmed again.

" We're out of it ! " groaned Figgins.

" Who ? "

" Kerr, Fatty, and me ! "

Tom Merry jumped up from the tea-table. His face was a study.

" Out of it ! You silly ass ! What do you mean ? "

" Detention from our Housemaster——"

" You've gone and got yourself detained by your fatheaded Housemaster on Rookwood day ! " roared Tom.

" It was that born idiot Gussy——"

" My goalkeeper — detained ! " gasped Tom Merry. " Is Ratty mad ? Doesn't he know we're playing Jimmy Silver to-morrow ? "

" He doesn't know or care ! " snapped Figgins. " Lot Ratty thinks about footer. He's not like old Railton ! Blow him ! "

" He will have to let you off——"

" Catch him letting a man off when he's had three squirts full of ink bunged in his chivvy ! " groaned Figgins.

" You—you—you—— " stuttered Tom. " You—you've been squirting ink over your Housemaster the day before the Rookwood match ?"

" It was an accident, of course !

That ass D'Arcy came across to look for trouble! We waited in the study for him with the squirts. How were we to guess that he barged into Ratty when he came in——"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I suppose Ratty spotted from the fathead's looks that there was trouble on," groaned Figgins. "He seems to have jawed Gussy, and sent him off with a flea in his ear; and then came up to our study to jaw us! Of—of course, we thought it was D'Arcy butting in, and let him have it with the squirts as soon as the door opened, and—and—and it was Ratty!"

"Great pip!"

"He was wild——" mumbled Figgins.

"Housemasters squirted with ink are liable to get a little wild!" said Monty Lowther solemnly. "It's the nature of the beasts."

"Oh, don't be a funny ass!" said Figgins dismally. "The long and the short of it is that he gave us six each, and detained us for four half-holidays. And the first of them is to-morrow — Rookwood day; and that's that!"

Tom Merry glared.

"You ass! You fathead! You chump! I could manage without you or Kerr, at a pinch, but I can't manage without Wynn in goal! He's got to play."

"He can't!"

"He must!" roared Tom.

"If it were an away match, we might cut, and chance it!" said Figgins. "But we can't play under Ratty's eyes here."

"He's got to let you off!"

"He won't!"

"Tell him it's a big fixture to-morrow——"

"I've told him!"

"Well, what did he say?"

"He said that I should have thought of that before committing an unheard-of outrage——"

"Ratty all over!" agreed Manners.

"Oh, just!" said Lowther.

"I—I came over to tell you!" said Figgins dismally. "Of course, it's frightfully unfortunate. Leaving New House men out of the team means a licking for St. Jim's. School House men ain't much good——"

That was the last straw.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther made a converging movement on Figgins of the New House. They collared him on all sides.

"Here, hold on!" yelled Figgins.

The Shell fellows held on—hard! —though not in the sense intended by George Figgins.

"Bump him!" said Tom. "Bump the silly ass! Knock the stuffing out of the howling chump! Squirting Housemasters the day before a match —mop him up! Getting my goal-keeper detained—scrag him!"

"Yarooooh!" roared Figgins, as the Shell fellows proceeded to bump him, mop him up, and scrag him. "I say—whoop! Leggo! I tell you—ow! I say—yaroooop! Oh, crikey! Yaroooooooh!"

What was left of George Figgins was hurled headlong out of No. 10 in the Shell. The door slammed on him.

Manners and Lowther resumed tea; Tom Merry took up his football list—now sadly in need of revision. His tea was cold—his egg was cold—his toast was cold—but he heeded them not. On the other hand, his temper was hot! He had had many difficulties in sorting out a team to meet Rookwood on Wednesday—and now it was knocked into a cocked hat! He was feeling rather like the Raven's unhappy master, whom unmerciful

disaster followed fast and followed faster! Really, it was the limit!

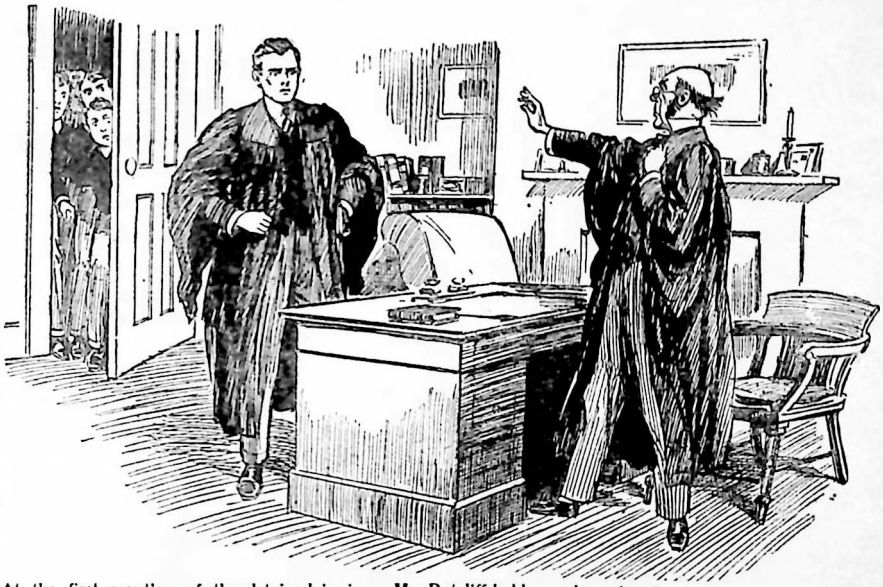
THE THIRD CHAPTER

ROUGH ON GUSSY!

"WATS!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that remark in Study No. 6.

Tea was going on in that celebrated study in the Fourth Form passage in the School House of St. Jim's.



At the first mention of the detained juniors, Mr. Ratcliff held up a bony hand. "Kindly go no farther Mr. Railton," he said acidly. "Nothing can be done." "But the juniors attach a great deal of importance to the fixture this afternoon," said the School House master.

There were four fellows in the study—and three of them, Blake and Herries and Digby, were grinning. D'Arcy was frowning.

"My dear chap," said Jack Blake, "Ratty did you a good turn in sending you back before you'd thrashed Figgins. You ought to have thanked him."

"Weally, Blake——"

"You see, you're wanted in the footer match to-morrow!" said Digby.

"I fail to see the connection, deah boy——"

"I mean, if you started thrashing Figgins, you'd be in sanny to-morrow instead of on Little Side!" explained Digby.

"You uttah ass!"

"You'd need assembling again, like a car after a crash!" remarked Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"So it's all for the best!" said Blake. "Glad you came back in one piece, Gussy! How many pieces do you think you'd have been in if you'd started thrashing old Figgy?"

"I wegard you as an ass, Blake!"

"I've never thought much of Ratty!" said Blake. "But I must say I'm obliged to him now. He ought to have a medal for life-saving."

" Hear, hear ! " concurred Herries and Digby.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his eyeglass into his noble eye, and surveyed his smiling study-mates with scorn and indignation.

" I wegard you all as uttah asses," he said, " and I wegard Mr. Watcliff as a meddlin', interferin' old boundah ! He had no wight whatevah to stop me fwom callin' on fellows in his House ! I weally don't know how he guessed that I was goin' up to Figgins' studay to thwash those cheekay wottahs. Pewwaps he noticed that I was lookin' wathah watty."

" Must have, if he wasn't blind," said Blake. " You were scowling like a demon in a panto when you started."

" Weally, Blake——"

" Looking like the First Murderer in a play ! " said Herries.

" I wefuse to admit anythin' of the sort ! Pewwaps I was fwownin'. I should think it was enough to make any fellow fwown to have an ink-ball dwopped down his neck in class ! "

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

" I see no occasion whatevah for wibald laughtah ! It was howwibly uncomfy ! And I am goin' to thwash Figgins, Watty or no Watty."

" Leave it till after the Rookwood match, then," suggested Blake. " And I'll tell you what—we'll all come to the funeral."

" Wats ! "

" Did Ratty ask you what you'd come for ? " inquired Digby.

" Yaas, wathah ! I considahed it wathah impertinent of him ; but I answahed him civilly ; a fellow has to be civil to a Housemastah, you know. I thought I had bettah not tell him that I wegarded him as an inquisitive old ass ! "

" Oh, my hat ! " gasped Blake.

" Yes, I think it was better not to tell him that ! It might possibly have offended him ! You never know ! "

" Ha ha, ha ! "

" I merely said that I was goin' up to see Figgins ! Fwom that, he seemed to think there was a wow on, and ordahed me out of the House ! " Arthur Augustus breathed hard. " I came vewy neah tellin' him what I thought of him ! But I westwained myself."

" You ass ! " said Blake. " I'll bet he's jawed Figgins if you let out that it was a House row ! He never loses a chance of jawing a fellow."

" Wats ! "

There was a tramp of feet in the passage outside. The door of No. 6 was hurled open. Tom Merry appeared in the doorway ; behind him, Manners and Lowther. The chums of the Fourth stared at their sudden visitors.

" Hallo, don't they teach you in the Shell to knock at a door before barging into a study ? " asked Blake.

Tom Merry did not answer. He strode in. Judging by his expression, he was in a mood of towering wrath.

" That idiot Gussy——" he gasped.

" Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

" You blithering, blethering ass ! " roared the junior football captain of St. Jim's. " Do you know what you've done ? "

Arthur Augustus rose from the tea-table. He jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and surveyed Tom Merry with calm disapproval.

" Pway calm yourself, deah boy," he suggested. " I do not like bein' woared at ! It thwows me into quite a fluttah to be woared at."

" You unutterable idiot——"

" I wefuse to be chawactewised as an unuttewable idiot——"

" What on earth's the row ? " exclaimed Blake, in astonishment.

" What has Gussy done this time? He's always doing something, of course—never was such a born ass, and never will be. But what——"

" He's got three of my men detained for to-morrow ! " roared Tom Merry. " He had to go over to Ratcliff's House and kick up a shindy——"

" I wefuse to admit that I was kickin' up a shinday ! " exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. " I was goin' ovah to thwash Figgins——"

" And those fatheads waited for him in the study with ink-squirts, and squirted Ratty by mistake, and got detained for to-morrow——"

" Bai Jove ! "

" Now we're three men short in the Rookwood match ! " roared Tom Merry. " And who's going to keep goal, what ? "

" All the fault of that howling ass ! " said Lowther.

" That gibbering image ! " said Manners.

" Bai Jove ! I am sowwy if Figgins and Co. are detained for to-mowwow," said Arthur Augustus. " That is wathah wotten ! But I wefuse to admit for one moment that it was my fault ! If the wottahs were waitin' for me with squirts, it is wathah luckay that Watty got it instead of me. I wegard that as vewy fortunate indeed."

" You—you—— ! " gasped Tom.

" It might have wuined my clothes ! "

" You—you—you—— "

" Pway do not stuttah at a chap, Tom Mewwy ! I considah——"

" Figgins and Co. out of the team ! " said Blake, with a whistle. " My hat ! That tears it ! It will be a walk-over for Rookwood."

" Wats ! I shall be in the team, Blake. I wathah think that I shall bag a few goals——"

" We're dished and done ! " said Tom Merry. " We've come here to slaughter that burbling image ! We're going to make mincemeat of him ! We've mopped up Figgins, and now——"

" Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

" Collar him ! "

" Bai Jove ! I weally must say—yawoooh ! Gweat Scott ! Wescue ! " yelled Arthur Augustus, as he rolled over in the vengeful grasp of the Terrible Three of the Shell.

But there was no rescue for Gussy ! Blake and Herries and Dig looked on cheerfully while Arthur Augustus went through five hectic minutes. What happened to him, Gussy hardly knew. It felt like a series of earthquakes, mixed up with half a dozen motor-crashes.

When the Shell fellows left the study, rather breathless, Arthur Augustus lay in a heap on the carpet, more than breathless. He gasped and gurgled and guggled.

" Oooooogh ! Urrrggh ! Gwoooogh ! Oh, bai Jove ! Wow ! Urrrrgh ! "

He sat up at last.

" Wurrgh ! I am quite bweathless ! Bai Jove, I will give those feahful wuffians a thwashin' all wound ! Urrrgh ! "

The swell of St. Jim's staggered to his feet. His face was crimson, and his eyes gleamed with wrath.

" Come on, you fellows ! " he gasped. " Back up, you know ! " Arthur Augustus started for the door, on the trail of vengeance. But he did not get far.

" Back up ? " repeated Blake. " You've played the giddy ox, and lost us the Rookwood match to-morrow. You haven't had enough ! Those Shell fellows don't know how to rag ! Collar him, you men ! "

" Bai Jove ! I—yawoooh ! I

pwotest—I considah—I say—whoop!"

Blake and Herries and Dig did not back up their noble chum on the trail of vengeance! They collared him, and up-ended him in the study. They rolled him and bumped him. The last state of Arthur Augustus was worse than his first.

When Blake and Co. had finished, and left the study, Arthur Augustus remained on the carpet, with a dizzy feeling that the universe had crashed in pieces round him.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

NOTHING DOING!

THE following morning there were serious, not to say solemn, faces in both Houses at St. Jim's.

Gloomiest of all were the visages of Figgins, Kerr and Wynn of the New House.

In class that morning in the Fourth Form-room, Figgins and Co. looked so gloomy and glum that Mr. Lathom glanced at them several times, and wondered what was wrong with the usually cheery trio.

Figgy and Co., of course, felt it the most. Not only were the prospects of the Rookwood game jeopardised by three fellows standing out—but they were the three fellows! Apart from jeopardising the match, they had to cut football, and sit in a Form-room, in detention.

It was too absolutely rotten for words—though Figgins and Co. found a good many words to utter on the subject, all the same.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked gloomy, too, though not so gloomy as the chums of the New House. Fellows persisted in taking the view that Gussy was partly to blame for the catastrophe—a view that Gussy warmly repudiated. Gussy was a little comforted by the prospect of the goals he was going to score against Rookwood; which, he hoped, would compensate for the weakening of the team. That prospect was no comfort to the other fellows, who did not expect Gussy to get away with a bagful of goals.

In the Shell room Mr. Linton found Tom Merry rather inattentive in class. He was quite sharp with him several times.

But it could not be helped. A football captain who had lost three of his best men, on the eve of an important fixture, really could not fix his attention on verbs in are, ēre, ere, or ire! It was asking too much, though the master of the Shell did not seem to realise it.

It was a fine, clear day—ideal for football! It would not have been so bad, really, if it had been fearfully rainy or impenetrably foggy. In such a case footer could not have been played. But the weather was beautifully propitious, while everything else was unpropitious.

Tom Merry gave hardly a thought to the valuable instruction of Mr. Linton that morning! He was wondering who was going to take Figgy's place in the first line, Kerr's in the second, and Fatty Wynn's in goal.

All the footballers were glad when they got out in break. Lessons, in such distressful circumstances, were the limit. Really, they felt that they had more important matters to think of!

"I'm going to Railton!" Tom Merry said to his chums, when they came out. "He's a good chap, and he will put in a word for us."

"Um!" said Manners and Lowther.

Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, was undoubtedly a good chap! The trouble was that Horace Ratcliff, Housemaster of the

New House, wasn't! And the decision rested with Ratty.

However, Tom's chums agreed that it could do no harm, if it did no good, so off he went to Railton's study.

Railton listened with sympathy; and promised to speak to Mr. Ratcliff—though without holding out much hope of a beneficial result.

He lost no time, walking across the quad at once to the other House, and presenting himself in his colleague's study.

Mr. Ratcliff greeted him with frosty politeness.

The stiff, crusty, acid New House master had no great liking for Railton, who was a younger man and keen on games. Ratcliff disliked games. Also, he regarded the School House master as too easy-going with his boys. Ratcliff was a whale on discipline; and his idea of discipline was unbending severity.

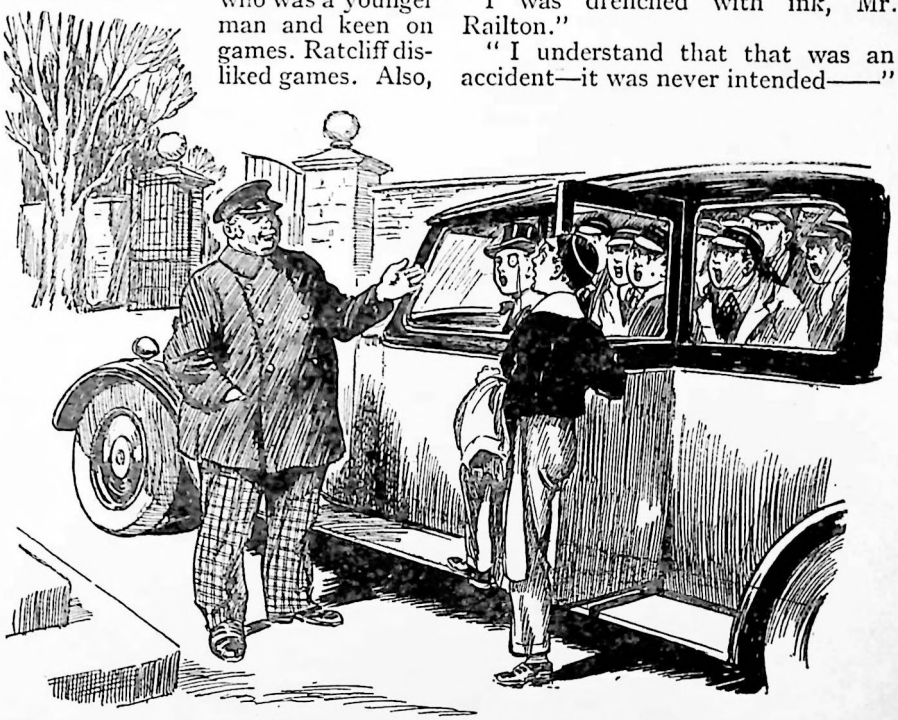
At the first mention of the detained juniors Mr. Ratcliff held up a bony hand.

"Kindly go no farther, my dear Railton!" he said acidly. "Nothing can be done!"

"The juniors attach a great deal of importance to the fixture this afternoon, sir!" said Mr. Railton mildly.

"Possibly! I shall hardly pardon an act of outrageous hooliganism on that account!" said Mr. Ratcliff. "I was drenched with ink, Mr. Railton."

"I understand that that was an accident—it was never intended——"



"Cheap prices are good for business," said Mr. Snooks. "It ain't every garage that could do this trip for fourteen bob a head." "Wha-a-t?" ejaculated Lovell. There was a general gasp of surprise among the fellows packed in the car, for Lovell had told them it would be four shillings a head!

"Had it been intentional, Mr. Railton, I should have taken the three boys to Dr. Holmes, and requested him to expel them from the school. It is because it was an accident that I have been lenient."

"Oh!" said Mr. Railton.

"Such accidents must not happen," said Mr. Ratcliff.

"I fully agree! Yet, in the circumstances——"

"No circumstances could cause me to rescind the punishment of the three juniors who drenched me with ink."

Mr. Railton retired defeated.

It was hardly necessary for Tom Merry to ask him the result when he came back to his own House. His expression was enough.

"I am sorry that nothing can be done, Merry!" said the School House master. "Very sorry indeed!"

"Thank you, sir!" said Tom, dismally.

That was that!

Kildare of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's, was indignant—if that was any use.

"Look here, I'll speak to Ratcliff," he said. "He's bound to listen to me as Head of the Games."

And Mr. Ratcliff had a second visitor in his study.

But he did not listen to the Head of the Games! He cut Kildare even shorter than he had cut Mr. Railton.

"Not a word on that subject, Kildare!" he said sharply.

"But, sir——" urged the St. Jim's captain.

"Not a word! I do not desire advice from a School House prefect in the management of my House," said Mr. Ratcliff sourly. "Neither advice nor assistance."

"As Head of the Games, sir——"

"Kindly close the door after you, Kildare."

Kildare breathed hard.

"Some other punishment, sir, some other time—it seems rather rotten to spoil a football match for the Lower School!" he said.

Mr. Ratcliff looked at him.

"Did you say rotten?" he asked. "Am I to understand that you are describing my method of maintaining discipline in my House by that word, Kildare?"

"Not at all, sir! I did not mean that—but——"

"I am glad you did not mean that, Kildare! Had you meant that, I should certainly have laid a complaint before the Head!" said Mr. Ratcliff grimly.

Kildare breathed harder.

"If you'll listen to me, sir——"

"I have no time to waste on the subject, Kildare! Please leave my study."

The captain of St. Jim's went. He realised that he had not improved matters. His obvious belief that Ratcliff was acting in a tyrannical and cantankerous way only helped to confirm that crusty gentleman in his grim determination.

"Sorry—nothing doing!" he told Tom Merry.

And that, again, was that!

"The crusty old tick!" Tom said to his chums. "He doesn't care a rap if he mucks up a football match. Any other master would let a man off detention for a match. He can whop Figgins and Co. as much as he likes—that wouldn't matter. But——"

"Dashed old acid-drop!" said Manners.

"Can't anything be done?" said Monty Lowther. "Look here, old Ratty sticks in his study, like a winkle in a shell, on half-holidays. Those

New House bounders will be in the Form-room. Ratty mightn't even know, if they got out and played football——"

Tom pursed his lips thoughtfully. But he shook his head.

"More likely he'll keep an eye on them," he said. "Anyhow, if he found out they'd cut detention all the fat would be in the fire! He would barge into the game and yank them off the field."

"N.G.!" said Manners.

"If he would go out for a walk," said Lowther.

"Catch him going out for a walk! Frowsting over his study fire—that's his mark!" grunted Tom.

"Talkin' it ovah, you men?" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came up to the three Shell fellows in the quad. "It's wathah wotten, isn't it? I twust, Tom Mewwy, that you wealise, on weflection, that I am not to blame in the mattah?"

"Fathead!"

"I do not wegard that wemark as polite, Tom Mewwy."

"Ass!"

"There is a silvah linin' to the cloud, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus encouragingly.

"Blessed if I see it! What is it?"

"I shall be there——"

"Eh?"

"And I can tell you, I am goin' to have my shootin' boots on. If I get thwee or four goals——"

"Kill him!" said Tom.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Slaughter him!"

"Yaroooh!" roared Arthur Augustus as he was suddenly upended in three pairs of hands. "You feahful wuffians—you wotten wottahs—whoop!"

Bump!

"Oh, cwikey!"

The Shell fellows walked into the House for third school, leaving Arthur Augustus to roar. Evidently they drew no consolation from the prospect of Gussy scoring three or four goals against Jimmy Silver and Co., of Rookwood.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

LEAVE IT TO LOVELL!

JIMMY SILVER stared.

"Car!" he ejaculated.

"Car!" assented Arthur Edward Lovell.

"But——"

"Leave it to me!" said Lovell.

"But——"

"My dear chap, leave it to me."

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome, of the Rookwood Classical Fourth, looked at him very dubiously. Arthur Edward Lovell was smiling in rather a complacent way.

The Fistical Four of Rookwood were sauntering in the quad, killing time till the hour of departure for St. Jim's and football. It was rather a long step from Rookwood to St. Jim's, and the train was to be a rather early one from Coombe. Lovell had come out of the house and joined his chums, with that satisfied smile on his face which apprised them that he had been up to something.

Arthur Edward Lovell was often up to something. He had a firm belief that he was a managing sort of fellow, and that if things were left to him to manage, all would go well.

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome were not so sure of it. They had had a good many samples of Arthur Edward's management. Only too frequently something went wrong. This, according to Lovell, was through somebody being an ass! His chums agreed that it was, and that the ass was Arthur Edward!

" Now, look here, Lovell, old man ! " said Jimmy. " We'd all rather cut across to St. Jim's by car, instead of changing trains and so on, but——"

" That's all right ! We're going to do it."

" But we're not made of money ! " Newcome pointed out. " A car to carry a dozen fellows that distance and wait to bring them back again, costs money."

" You don't travel on the railway for nothing ! " Lovell pointed out in his turn. " They charge for railway tickets, you know ! Ask 'em at the station—they'll tell you so."

Lovell was being sarcastic.

" Oh, don't be an ass ! " said Raby. " I jolly well know that the railway costs less than half any car I could get hold of."

" Very likely ! " assented Lovell. " If it were left to you, old chap, it would be N.G. But if you leave it to me——"

" I'd rather know the figure first ! " said Jimmy Silver. " Then we can arrange about the car."

" That's all right ; I've arranged it," said Lovell calmly.

" You've arranged it ! " ejaculated Jimmy.

" Yes ; saves time to get it through ! I've fixed it up on the telephone, with Snooks in Coombe."

" Well, my hat ! Without asking anybody's leave ! " exclaimed Raby. " Of all the cheeky asses——"

" If you prefer a stuffy train, and changing at three or four stations, nobody's stopping you ! " said Lovell. " I'm going by car ! I fancy the rest will be going by car, too ! But please yourself."

" You've engaged Snooks' car to take the football eleven over to St. Jim's ! " exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

" I have ! " said Lovell calmly. " As soon as he named the price, I jumped at it. It works out at much less than the return tickets for the whole bunch. To be exact, four bob a head."

" Four shillings each ! " yelled Jimmy Silver, Raby and Newcome with one yell.

" Four shillings ! Cheap, what ? "

" Well, Snooks must be in the business for his health," said Jimmy Silver. " He can't want to make any profits ! Four bob a head to run a whole crowd of fellows over into Sussex, wait for us, and bring us back ! "

" Exactly ! I was a bit surprised myself ! " confessed Lovell. " I knew Snooks was a reasonable man, and keen on custom. I knew he'd cut it as fine as he could to get the order. We might tip him five bob over, I think."

" I think we might ! " grinned Raby

" I explained to him, over the phone, that it had to be a low figure, or it couldn't be done ! " said Lovell. " He made his own price—and you can bet I didn't wait for him to say it twice ! I closed on it—snap ! "

Jimmy Silver nodded.

" Well, I suppose Snooks knows his own business best ! " he said. " Blessed if I see how he can do it. But I suppose he knows."

" Lovely day for a long motor run," said Lovell. " Better than sticking in stuffy old trains, what ? "

" Hear, hear ! " said his comrades heartily.

Jimmy Silver and Co. looked quite merry and bright. There was no doubt that a motor drive was preferable to stuffy trains and changing at various stations. Likewise, it saved time, for the railway was not direct, and a car, of course, could cut across country. For once, the Rookwood Co. felt

that it was all right to leave it to Lovell!

Tommy Dodd and Cook and Doyle, of the Modern Side of Rookwood, came over to the Fistical Four.

"Time to get along for the train, you chaps!" said Tommy Dodd.

Lovell grinned, the grin of superiority.

"We're not going by train, old bean! We're going by car."

"Come into a fortune intirely?" asked Doyle.

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"Lovell's found a man to do it fearfully cheap! Four bob each——"

"Four rats!" said Cook.

"Honest Injun!"

"Well, my hat!"

"And we needn't start till half an hour later than we intended," Lovell pointed out. "Lots of time—we cut off nearly half the distance by car!"

"Well, I'd like a motor run as well as anybody," said Tommy Dodd. "But I don't quite see——"

"Leave it to me!" said Lovell.

It was left to Lovell. Other fellows in the Rookwood junior eleven—Mornington, Erroll, Conroy, Rawson—were glad enough to hear that it was going to be a motor trip, though they marvelled at the amazingly low price quoted by Mr. Snooks of Coombe.

Arthur Edward Lovell had a very pleased and satisfied expression on his face when the time came to start.

Mr. Snooks arrived with the big car—big enough not only for the football eleven, but for five or six more fellows, too. And every fellow who could pack in was anxious to go along and see the Rookwooders beat St. Jim's—or be beaten by them, as the case might be. Mr. Snooks, a little plump gentleman with a cheery face and a twinkling eye, was in great good humour—evidently pleased to get this order for a long motor trip He had recently started in business in Coombe, and was anxious for custom, and he touched his hat to Lovell, and thanked him very civilly for having put this business in his way.

"Not at all," said Lovell airily. "Jolly glad I thought of ringing you up, Snooks." He grinned at the fellows packing in. "These chaps can't understand how you do it at the price."

"Reasonable prices make more custom, sir!" said Mr. Snooks genially. "Cut it down to the bone, sir."

"That's right," said Lovell. "That's business. Well, it's time we were off. Glad you left it to me, you men?"

"Yes, rather!" said Jimmy.

"Hear, hear!"

"Toppin'," said Mornington. "I suppose there's no mistake?"

Lovell stared at him.

"Mistake!" he repeated. "What do you mean? How could there be any mistake?"

"Well, you know what an ass you are!" remarked Morny.

"Look here, you cheeky fathead——"

"Shut up, Morny," said Erroll. "We're all obliged to Lovell. This is going to be a ripping trip."

"Yes, rather!"

"Cheap trip, anyhow," said Mornington.

"Cheap prices good for business, sir," said Mr. Snooks. "It ain't every garage that could do this trip for fourteen bob a head——"

"Wh-a-a-t?" ejaculated Lovell.

There was a general jump among the fellows packed in the big car. They stared at Mr. Snooks.

"Fourteen shillings!" repeated Jimmy Silver.

"Yes, sir; and what with the

tance, and waiting to bring you back, and the price of petrol and oil, I think you'll admit it's reasonable."

"Oh my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Mornington.

Lovell stood as if rooted, one foot on the ground, one on the step. He blinked at the cheerful Mr. Snooks.

"Did—did—did you just say fourteen shillings?" he asked, finding his voice at last.

"Yes, sir, same as I said on the phone!" answered Mr. Snooks in surprise.

"Oh, crikey! I—I thought—I—I thought—I thought you said four shillings!" said Lovell faintly.

"Oh, sir, give a man a chance!" said Mr. Snooks. "'Ow's a man to live?"

Arthur Edward Lovell did not answer that question. He was not really interested in how Mr. Snooks was to live!

"Fourteen shillings!" said Jimmy Silver faintly. "Oh, you ass, Lovell! You blithering ass! Why didn't you ask the man to repeat what he said, if you couldn't hear——"

"I—I thought——"

"Gammon!" said Mornington. "If you thought, what did you do it with?"

"I 'ope you young gentlemen are satisfied," said Mr. Snooks anxiously. "If you tot up the distance, and the juice, you'll own up that fourteen bob a head is pretty reasonable."

"I've no doubt it is!" said Jimmy. "But——"

"But——" gasped Tommy Dodd.

"But——" murmured Newcome.

"We've lost the train!" said Valentine Mornington. "It's the car, or washing out the football match!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Oh, crikey!"

Jimmy Silver drew a deep breath.

"This is what comes of leaving it to Lovell! Get in, you ass—get in, you fathead—get in, you dummy! We've got to play St. Jim's this afternoon if it bankrupts us! Get in, you blitherer."

Arthur Edward Lovell got in.

He got in, in silence.

He had nothing to say! It was seldom, very seldom indeed, that Arthur Edward Lovell, of the Rookwood Classical Fourth, had nothing to say! This was one of the rare occasions.

The car rolled away, packed like a sardine can. It was a ripping day for a motor drive. Snooks was a good driver, and the car ran well. But——

But it was useless to think of "buts." Jimmy Silver and Co. had left it to Lovell—and that was that! And most of the way to St. Jim's was occupied by the Rookwooders in telling Arthur Edward Lovell what they thought of him, of his brains, of his management, and of everything that was his! And everything they thought was frightfully uncomplimentary.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

MONTY TO THE RESCUE!

MONTY LOWTHER smiled.

The smile widened into a grin.

The grin developed into a chuckle.

Lowther laughed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry and Manners looked at him. After third school the three were in the quad; Tom wrestling with the mental problem of the football eleven, Manners sympathetically silent; Lowther deep in thought. Tom's thoughts were glum enough; but Lowther's, to judge by the outcome, were of a cheery and exhilarating nature.

"You silly ass!" said Tom.

" Chuck it ! If you think all this is funny, go somewhere else and cackle! "

" Tommy, old bean, you're losing your good temper and your nice manners," said Lowther chidingly.

" Well, don't be an ass ! "

" Yes, don't be an ass, old chap, when Tommy's so fearfully worried," said Manners. " Tom feels about the footer just as I felt that time when a

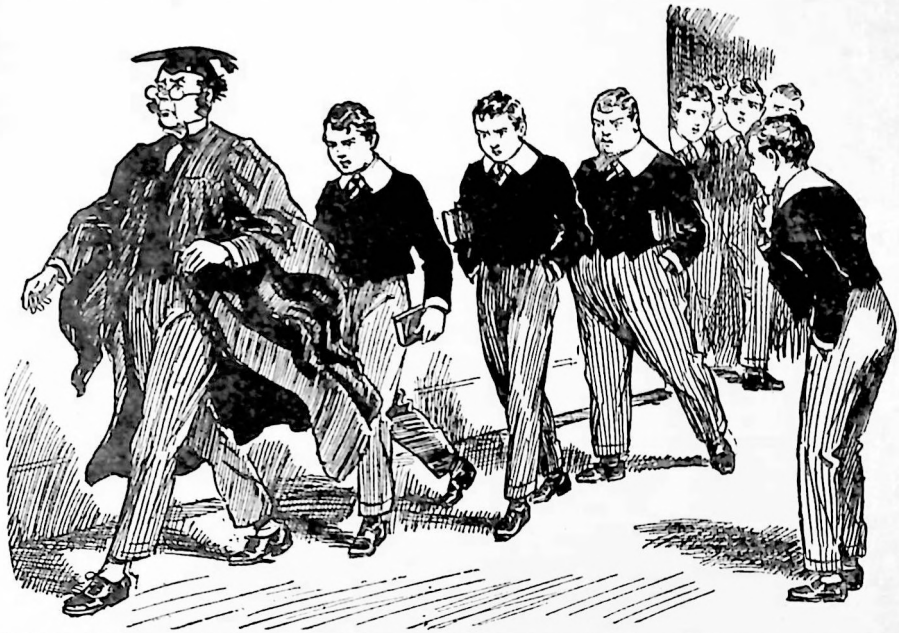
" Go and boil it."

" About the footer——"

" Oh," said Tom. " What about that ? Looks to me as if I shall have to stick Pratt in Figgy's place, and Glyn in Kerr's. But what about goal ? "

" I mean, suppose Figgins and Co. could play after all——"

" They can't ! "



Feeling rather fed-up, Figgins, Kerr and Wynn followed on the heels of Mr. Ratcliff to the Form-room. Many sympathetic glances were turned on them, for it was the general opinion that Mr. Ratcliff was being too severe in detaining the juniors when there was an important football match on.

fathead hid my camera, and I couldn't find it."

" Ass ! " said Tom ungratefully. All the cameras in the wide world did not matter, in comparison with one football match, in the opinion of the junior captain of St. Jim's.

" But look here ! " said Lowther.

" Give us a rest ! "

" I've got an idea——"

" They'd be game to cut detention——"

" Oh, rats ! We've had all that ! Can't risk it with Ratty."

" Suppose Ratty went over to Wayland——"

" Why should he, fathead ? "

" He might get a telephone call."

" What rot ! "

" I heard from Figgins that Ratty's

given them lines to do during detention. They go into the Form-room at two-thirty and write five hundred lines each. They're booked till five, anyhow, and longer if the lines ain't done! That's the jolly old sentence, I hear from Figgy."

"Serve 'em right, if it wasn't for the footer!" growled Tom Merry.

"But they could pile into the lines and get them done, if they liked, before Rookwood gets here, and have them all ready for Ratty."

"What on earth for, fathead? If they're going to stick in the Form-room they may as well do the lines there, I suppose. What do you mean?"

"I mean that I've got something to say, if you'll shut up a minute and listen to a chap."

"About a man for goal, do you mean?"

"Oh! Yes."

"Who, then?"

"David Llewellyn Wynn, Fourth Form."

"You silly ass——"

"Oh, give a man a chance to speak," urged Lowther. "I tell you I've got a wheeze—a gilt-edged stunt—the catch of the season! I tell you I can make Ratty walk over to Wayland this afternoon. Sure to walk—he's too jolly stingy to take taxi-cabs. All the better—it will keep him busy all the longer. The game will be over when he gets back."

"You howling ass!" said Tom. "Are you going to walk into Ratty's study and ask him to go for a walk so that the New House men can cut detention while he's gone? Think he'd do it?"

"The advantage of living in modern times," said Lowther, "is that we have the advantage of modern gadgets. In the reign of King John, for instance, if you wanted to tip a bloke anything you had to see him and speak to him, or else write him a message. The rapid march of science in modern days, my beloved 'earers, has changed all that. Science has enabled a fellow to pull a man's leg——"

"What on earth are you burbling about?" asked Manners.

"The telephone!" answered Monty.

"If that ass, Gore, kept himself a bit more fit I could shove him into goal!" said Tom Merry musingly. "But——"

"Will you listen?" hooted Monty Lowther. "Don't I keep on telling you I've got a wheeze, and Fatty Wynn can keep goal?"

"Oh, rot!"

"Ratty is Housemaster of the New House," went on Monty. "He pays the House bills. He draws cheques on the Wayland and County Bank."

"Does he? I suppose he does! Mad?" asked Tom.

"Suppose——"

"Suppose I try Gore in goal?"

"No!" shrieked Lowther. "Suppose you shut up a minute and let me speak! Suppose Ratty got a telephone call from Mr. Sneff, the manager of the Wayland and County Bank——"

"He won't!"

"Telling him something—we can think out the details later—but something that would make Ratty hop over to Wayland in a hurry to see Sneff at the bank——"

"For the love of Mike stop talking rot! Why should Sneff telephone to him on this particular afternoon, just to oblige us?"

"They haven't installed television in the New House!"

"Television!" repeated Tom Merry blankly.

"Yes! If they had it wouldn't work! But they haven't! Ratty won't see Sneff when he phones! He won't know that that particular Sneff is a Shell fellow of St. Jim's, pulling his leg."

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Oh, scissors!" ejaculated Manners.

"Catching on?" asked Lowther sarcastically. "I must say it's time you did! Ratty gets a call from Sneff—or thinks he does! He goes trotting over to the bank at Wayland—keeping him nice and busy while we're playing Rookwood. Figgins and Co. have their lines all ready done. They nip out of the Form-room as soon as Ratty's signalled clear. They play in the match. When Ratty comes in, they've got their lines all ready for him. The old bean won't have a single suspish."

"He will know his leg's been pulled when he sees Sneff at the bank," said Manners.

"He won't know who did it!"

"Well, that's so."

"Never mind if he did," said Tom. "It's worth while taking a whopping for playing tricks, Monty, if we can get Figgins and Co. in the game."

"Why, you silly ass——"

"But will it work? I don't see——"

"You're not expected to see anything, Tommy, except a football and a couple of goal-posts. That's the limit of your intelligence."

Tom Merry laughed.

"If there's a chance, Monty, old man——"

"Of course there is! I've been thinking this out, and I tell you, it's as easy as falling off a form," said Monty Lowther confidently. "Everybody knows how stingy old Ratty is—the mere suggestion of losing some money would make him get up on his hind legs and bark. Touch him on his pocket and you hit him where he lives!"

"Yes, that's so, but——"

"I tell you, he will go hopping over to Wayland like a kangaroo. It's a good hour's walk for anybody—nearly twice that for Ratty; you know how he crawls. If he walks down to Rylcombe to take the local train, it's half an hour's walk, and the train's slow. Then he's got to walk to the bank from Wayland Station, and it's a good step. And then there will be a jaw with Sneff, who will be jolly surprised to see him——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll time it for him to clear just before three—kick-off's at three," said Monty. "I tell you, he will be kept busy till the game's over, and Figgins and Co. can change and get back into the Form-room, ready for Ratty to trot in and collect their lines."

Manners nodded thoughtfully.

Tom Merry's eyes glistened.

The mere thought of getting David Llewellyn Wynn into the St. Jim's goal that afternoon was enough to make Tom Merry keen.

"If—if it can be worked!" he said breathlessly.

"Work like a charm!" said Monty.

"A walk will do him good," said Tom. "He never takes enough exercise. That's one reason why he's so jolly crusty."

"Sheer benefit to him!" agreed Lowther. "And it's up to us, as really nice boys, to think of our kind masters, and work for their benefit."

"Hear, hear!" grinned Manners.

"If——" said Tom.

" No ' if ' about it," said Monty Lowther. " I'm going to wangle it ! I shall have to think out the details, of course. I can't tell Ratty any crammers on the phone ! I shall have to put it diplomatically."

" If he spots your voice——"

" Think I can't alter my voice, fathead ! " grunted Lowther. " Who's the best actor in the School House Dramatic Society, I'd like to know ? "

" Blessed if it doesn't look as if there's something in it ! " said Tom.

" Lots in it ! " said Monty. " Heaps in it ! Tons in it ! All you've got to do is to go and tip Figgins and Co. to get their lines ready, as they'll be playing soccer this afternoon and won't have time later. Leave me to think out the jolly old details."

" If it works——"

" Didn't I mention that there was no ' if ' in it ? "

" Well, I'll speak to Figgins, anyhow."

" That's right ! Linton is going out this afternoon—I heard him speak to Lathom about going for a walk—so we can use his phone. Right as rain ! "

Tom Merry, perhaps with some lingering doubt, but feeling hopeful, went in search of Figgins and Co. Monty Lowther, until dinner-time, was deep in thought—elaborating the details of that masterly scheme for getting Mr. Horace Ratcliff off the scene for the afternoon. And the cheery, confident grin on Monty's face told that he, at least, had no doubts about the matter.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

CALLED ON THE PHONE !

" FIGGINS ! Kerr ! Wynn ! "

" Yes, sir ! "

" You will follow me to the Form-room ! " said Mr. Ratcliff.

" Yes, sir ! "

The three New House juniors followed their Housemaster to the Form-room. Many sympathetic glances turned on them as they went.

Mr. Railton saw them and frowned slightly. Kildare of the Sixth saw them and remarked to Darrell, of that Form, that Ratty ought to be lynched.

That opinion was widely held at St. Jim's that afternoon.

But whether Ratty ought to have been lynched or not, it was evidently impracticable to lynch Ratty ; and, like an obstinate horse, he had to be given his head.

Indeed, the knowledge of the general disapproval of his severity made Mr. Ratcliff all the more acidly determined. That was the kind of crusty gentleman he was.

The Form-rooms were silent and deserted. It was a glorious winter's day, with a bright gleam of sunshine on the old quad and the playing-fields.

Figgins and Co. trod quietly into the Fourth Form-room, on the heels of their tall, angular Housemaster.

They took their places at their desks. Their manner was very quiet and subdued.

" You will remain here ! " said Mr. Ratcliff.

" If you please, sir——"

" You need not speak, Figgins."

" If you'd let us off this afternoon, sir——"

" I have said that you need not speak, Figgins."

" It's rather a special occasion, sir ! " said Kerr. " And if you'd give us detention another day instead, sir——"

" You may be silent, Kerr ! "

" We never meant that ink for you, sir ! " said Fatty Wynn. " We ——"

" Silence ! "

The hapless three were silent. Mr. Ratcliff gave them an exceedingly sour look.

" I quite understand," he said, " that you would rather play games than remain in detention. No doubt this will impress upon your minds to be more circumspect on another occasion. I trust so."

Figgins and Co. made no reply to that. They had only one comfort at the moment : Ratty, anyhow, had got the ink !

" You will remain here until five o'clock. I shall then come over and release you from detention. By that time you will each have written five hundred lines of Virgil. If you have not finished your task, you will be kept in detention until the total number of lines has been written. I warn you, therefore, not to waste your time in idleness."

With that, Mr. Ratcliff left the three to their dismal fate, and closed the door of the Form-room on them. Figgins and Co. exchanged expressive looks.

As the angular gentleman went into the quad, to return to the New House, he came on Tom Merry.

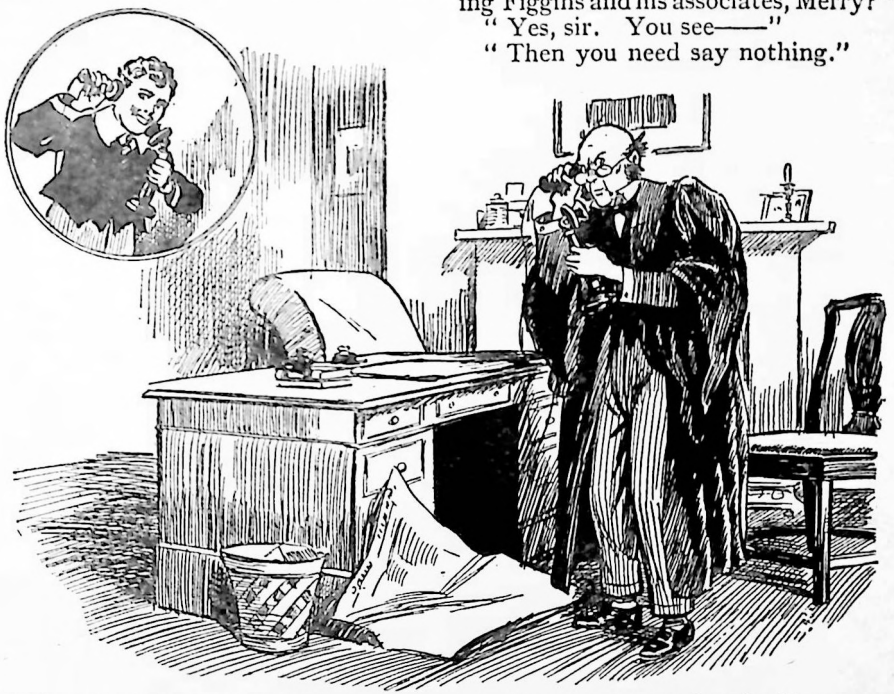
" If you please, sir——" began Tom.

Mr. Ratcliff raised a bony hand.

" Are you about to speak concerning Figgins and his associates, Merry? "

" Yes, sir. You see——"

" Then you need say nothing."



" What ? " barked Mr. Ratcliff into the transmitter. A slightly husky voice came through. " I am sorry to disturb you, sir, but the matter is urgent. Could you possibly come over to the bank this afternoon ? "
Little did the New House master know that it was Monty Lowther who was speaking !

" But, sir——"

Mr. Ratcliff walked on, leaving Tom Merry breathing very hard. In the quad he encountered Kildare of the Sixth.

" If you'd allow me to speak one word, sir, about the juniors who are detained this afternoon," said the captain of St. Jim's.

" I can do nothing of the kind, Kildare."

Mr. Ratcliff proceeded on his way, leaving Kildare feeling how very unfortunate it was that a Sixth Form man couldn't possibly think of kicking a Housemaster !

That gentleman went into his House, and to his study. Bright as it was out of doors, the out-of-doors did not tempt Ratty out. It was cold and there was a keen wind. Mr. Ratcliff preferred a warm, cosy, snug study, with a big fire and the window shut.

With a sigh of content he sat down in his armchair, put his feet on the fender and opened a financial newspaper. The prices of stocks and shares were the most interesting reading for Mr. Ratcliff. He dabbled in the stock markets, and his acid temper was, perhaps, sometimes due to the prices going the wrong way. A man who bought Pinky-Pong Tin shares at 10s. could hardly feel happy and equable when he saw their value falling to 2s. 6d.

Buzzzzz !

Mr. Ratcliff had been only a few minutes in his armchair when the telephone bell rang.

He rose, laid down the newspaper, reached for the receiver, and unhooked it with an annoyed ejaculation.

" What ? " he barked into the transmitter.

A slightly husky voice came through.

" Is that Mr. Ratcliff ? "

" Mr. Ratcliff speaking."

" I am sorry to disturb you, sir, but the matter is urgent. Could you possibly come over to the bank this afternoon ? "

" The bank ? " repeated Mr. Ratcliff.

" The Wayland and County Bank, sir."

" That is Mr. Sneff speaking, I presume ? But why——"

" I would rather not go into details on the telephone, sir ! But if you could possibly call at the bank this afternoon——"

" Certainly I could do so, if necessary. But——"

" Up to four o'clock, sir——"

" But what——"

" It is not a matter, sir, that I can explain on the telephone. To be frank, it is a matter in which it is necessary to use some caution. I understand that Wednesday is a half-holiday at the school, and you will therefore be at leisure, I presume. If you could call——"

" Certainly. If the matter is serious——"

" Undoubtedly it has its serious side, sir, a very serious side ; but, as I have said, on the telephone——"

" Oh, quite, quite. I will certainly call—let me see, there is a train from Rylcombe at three-fifteen ; I can catch it without difficulty. I shall be at the bank by four, Mr. Sneff."

" Very good, sir ! That will be satisfactory in every way."

Five minutes later, Mr. Horace Ratcliff, in coat and hat, stepped out of the New House and walked down to the gates.

From the window of Mr. Linton's study in the School House, three Shell fellows watched him go.

" He's off ! " breathed Manners.

" The walk will do him good ! "

said Tom Merry. "And he's asked for it."

"Begged for it!" agreed Manners.

"I wonder," said Monty Lowther musingly, "whether Ratcliff thought it was Mr. Sneff speaking? I never said so. Ratty said so."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He can have a jaw with Sneff, when he gets to the bank. He likes wagging his chin over stocks and shares. The matter has its serious side, my beloved 'earers—it's rather serious if we lose our goalkeeper in the Rookwood match, but one cannot explain these things on the telephone——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is a matter in which it is necessary to use some caution——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lots of caution, in fact! Now I'll cut off and tip Figgins, and you'd better be ready to give the Rookwooders the glad hand, Tommy—they may blow in any minute now."

Two or three minutes later, Figgins, Kerr and Wynn were changing for football. Ratty was safe off the scene—and all was calm and bright!

But was it?

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING!

"RIGHT!" said Lovell.

"Left!" suggested Jimmy Silver.

"I said right!" remarked Arthur Edward Lovell coldly.

"Quite! And you said four shillings when you meant fourteen——"

"Look here——"

"Left!" said Newcome decidedly. "If Lovell thinks we ought to turn to the right, it's bound to be left."

"Sure thing!" agreed Raby.

"Leave it to me!" said Lovell.

"What?" roared nearly every Rookwood fellow in the big car.

"I said leave it to me——"

"Oh, leave it to Lovell!" said Mornington satirically. "We may get to Greyfriars or Highcliffe or Eton or Harrow if we leave it to Lovell! Quite nice places."

"You ass, Lovell!"

"You fathead, Lovell!"

Snort from Arthur Edward! It was one of Arthur Edward's weaknesses that he always knew best, and had no hesitation in saying so. He was not discouraged by a series of mistakes that might have discouraged any less confident fellow.

During the run across from Rookwood in Mr. Snooks' car, the other fellows had had quite a lot to say to Lovell. But they had tired of the subject at last—though not, perhaps, so soon as Lovell had.

Apparently Arthur Edward had recovered his confidence. He did not, in fact, see that he was to blame at all in the little matter of that misunderstanding with Mr. Snooks. If a man did not speak plainly over the phone, Lovell could not be expected to catch on. All the other fellows thought he was to blame; but that only showed what asses they were. Fresh from that disastrous mistake, Arthur Edward was happily prepared to make another. But the other Rookwooders, perhaps naturally, were not quite prepared to leave anything to Lovell just now!

The big car had stopped at a crossroads. That they were quite near St. Jim's, all the fellows knew. Jimmy Silver was fairly certain that the turning to the left was Rylcombe Lane, which led direct to the school. Lovell was absolutely certain that it was necessary to turn to the right. Mr. Snooks sat at the wheel and waited

patiently. He was a patient and obliging man, and particularly anxious to oblige because of that rather unfortunate misunderstanding about the cost of the trip. Had it been possible, Mr. Snooks would willingly have turned both to the right and to the left and thus satisfied both parties. That not being practicable, he sat at the wheel and waited for directions. He was a stranger in Sussex, and he looked in vain for sign-posts.

"Better turn to the left!" said Tommy Dodd.

"And why?" demanded Lovell hotly. "Mean to say you remember this road any better than I do?"

"Not at all. We came by train before," said Tommy Dodd. "Never been over this ground that I know of."

"Then why do you think we ought to take the left turning?"

"Because you think we ought to take the right!" explained Tommy Dodd.

"You silly ass!" roared Lovell.

"I think it's left——" said Jimmy.

"I know it's right!" retorted Lovell. "We've left ourselves none too much time, either. If you want to be late for the kick-off——"

"If we could only spot a native and ask him," sighed Raby.

"You never spot a native when you want one!" grunted Lovell. "Luckily, I remember this corner perfectly."

"Bow-wow!"

Nobody but Arthur Edward relied on Lovell's perfect memory of that corner. The Rookwooders were fed up with leaving things to Lovell.

"Hallo, here comes a jolly old native!" exclaimed Cook, as a tall, angular figure came into view on the left turning.

"My hat, and here comes another!" said Newcome, as a short, plump gentleman appeared in sight, coming along behind the halted car.

"It never rains but it pours!" said Jimmy Silver. "We shall get the news now, from one or both of them. But I'll bet that the left turning is the one—that tall johnny is coming from the school, I fancy."

"What's put that into your head?" sniffed Lovell.

Jimmy Silver smiled.

"I happen to remember having seen him at St. Jim's when we were over there for the cricket," he said. "He's a Housemaster. And he's got a face a fellow doesn't forget in a hurry. I think his name's Ratcliff."

Lovell stared at the tall, angular gentleman who was coming up the lane. He nodded. He had a faint recollection of having seen that sharp-featured face before, with its penetrating eyes and thin, set lips.

It was, in fact, Mr. Ratcliff, Housemaster of the New House, on his way to Rylcombe, which he had nearly reached.

"Well, if he's a St. Jim's master, he will know the way to the school, and he can tell us," said Lovell. "I fancy it's to the right!"

"I believe that turning to the right leads to the village," said Jimmy. "I dare say Mr. Ratcliff's going there."

"Coming away from it, more likely!" said Lovell.

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"Well, we shall soon see, fathead."

The Rookwooders, in the halted car, waited for Mr. Ratcliff to come up. Several of them recognised him and remembered him, though it was not likely that he remembered them. He came on with his quick, jerky strides, a very cross expression on his face, and breathing a little stertorously. Mr. Ratcliff took little exercise, and walking soon put him out of breath

He was, in fact, looking forward to getting to the station and getting a rest in the train. The more tired Mr. Ratcliff grew the more cross he grew; and so his expression was not in the least amiable as he drew nearer to the Rookwood car.

Behind the car, the plump gentleman who was coming from the direction of Wayland was also drawing nearer. But he was the farther off of the two, so the Rookwooders gave their attention to Mr. Ratcliff.

That angular gentleman glanced at the car as he came up, and at the cheery schoolboy faces within. He frowned a little. He did not know the Rookwooders; if he had ever seen any of them before he had forgotten them, but their cheery looks did not please a cross-tempered man who had corns, and was feeling them.



From the window of Mr. Linton's study, Tom Merry and Co. watched Mr. Ratcliff walk down to the gates. "He's off," said Manners. "The walk will do him good!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "He's asked for it!"

Jimmy Silver raised his cap politely.

"Excuse me, sir——" he began.

Mr. Ratcliff stared at him.

"What?" he barked. "What?"

"We're not sure of our way, sir," said Jimmy. "If you'd kindly tell us——"

Jimmy Silver broke off in sheer surprise. It was Mr. Ratcliff who caused his surprise. Having arrived at the corner where the car stood, Mr. Ratcliff could see along the lane to Wayland. His eyes fell on the short, plump gentleman who was coming from that direction. And his eyes bulged with astonishment. Apparently forgetting the existence of the junior who was speaking to him, Mr. Ratcliff stepped away from the car and stared blankly at the plump gentleman, now near at hand.

He actually jumped!

"Bless my soul!" he ejaculated. "What—what——"

Jimmy Silver and Co. could only blink at him.

The plump gentleman coming up to the corner seemed, to their eyes, a perfectly ordinary and commonplace gentleman. He was elderly, he was quietly dressed, and might have been

a banker, or something of the kind, by his looks. Certainly there seemed to be nothing about him to cause a schoolmaster to jump nearly clear of the ground in astonishment.

Mr. Ratcliff now stood, the picture of amazement. It seemed as if the grisly ghost of a plump gentleman could not have startled him more.

"I say, sir——" recommenced Jimmy Silver.

Mr. Ratcliff did not even hear.

He made a stride towards the plump gentleman. And he fairly barked at him:

"Mr. Sneff! Sir! What does this mean? I insist, sir, upon knowing what this means—and at once!"

THE NINTH CHAPTER

ROUGH ON RATTY!

MR. SNEFF stopped.

He stared at Mr. Ratcliff.

Evidently he was surprised by that gentleman's tone and manner.

"My dear sir!" he ejaculated.

Mr. Ratcliff breathed hard through his nose. He was looking more angry than astonished now.

"I repeat, sir, what does it mean?" he snapped.

"I fail to follow you, sir!" said the manager of the Wayland branch of the Wayland and County Bank. "To what, Mr. Ratcliff, do you allude?"

"To your extraordinary conduct, sir!" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff. "I was on my way to Rylcombe Station, sir, to take the train to Wayland, sir, to see you at the bank, sir, and I find you walking here, sir, by the purest chance, as if you had made no appointment with me this afternoon, sir!"

"An appointment?"

"If I had not seen you here, sir, I should have gone on to Wayland and missed you at the bank. And I have met you by the merest chance. Is that, sir, the way to deal with a customer of the bank?"

Mr. Sneff looked bewildered.

"But I have no recollection of an appointment, Mr. Ratcliff! I have no recollection whatever."

"You have no recollection, sir, of an appointment made hardly half an hour ago!" barked Mr. Ratcliff.

The bank manager looked still more hopelessly bewildered.

"Half an hour ago!" he repeated.

"Yes, sir!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff. "By telephone, sir! I started immediately, as you said that it was urgent."

"There is some mistake, sir," said Mr. Sneff soothingly. "You must have taken a wrong call, or something of the kind. I certainly have not telephoned to you to-day."

"You—you—you have not telephoned?" stuttered Mr. Ratcliff.

"Certainly not! I have not even been in the bank since lunch," said Mr. Sneff. "Other affairs——"

"You did not telephone from the bank?"

"I did not telephone at all!"

"You—you—you did not want to see me on an urgent matter?" gasped Mr. Ratcliff. "A matter requiring caution?"

"Certainly not!"

"Then what—who——"

"Some error at the telephone exchange," suggested the bank manager.

"Nothing of the kind, sir!" barked Mr. Ratcliff. "Names were mentioned, sir—my name, sir, and your name. You stated—or, at least, the person who spoke to me stated—that it was an urgent matter, a serious matter, that could not be explained on the telephone."

"Then you have been deceived, sir, by some trickster," said Mr. Sneff.

" Some impudent person has played a trick on you."

" A-a-a trick ! " repeated Mr. Ratcliff.

" I should have thought that you would know that it was not my voice, sir ! " said the bank manager.

" I noticed that your voice was husky—I supposed a cold, or something of the kind——"

" Not my voice, sir ! " said Mr. Sneff firmly. " I have certainly not called you up on the phone to-day. Doubtless the huskiness was assumed to disguise the voice, as it is clear that a trick has been played."

" You mean that someone else in the bank——"

" Certainly not, sir ! " said Mr. Sneff warmly. " No one in the bank has telephoned to you ! Of that I am assured. Someone has played an absurd trick on you by means of the telephone ; but I am absolutely certain that it was no one at the bank."

Mr. Ratcliff gave him a grim look.

He was by no means so absolutely assured of that, as Mr. Sneff declared himself to be. The idea was fixed in his mind that the telephone call had come from the Wayland and County Bank. When once an idea was in Mr. Ratcliff's mind, it was rooted there and he did not part with it easily.

" Some thoughtless junior clerk, perhaps——"

" Nothing of the kind, sir ! "

" Then who, sir ? " barked Mr. Ratcliff. " I was most certainly called on the telephone and asked to come across to the bank. Who ——"

" That is not for me to say, sir ! Perhaps some mischievous boy at the school——"

" Nonsense ! " barked Mr. Ratcliff.

" Mr. Ratcliff ! "

" I said nonsense, sir, and I repeat, nonsense ! " said the New House master acidly. " No boy at the school would venture to play such a trick ! The mere idea is unthinkable."

" It is certainly unthinkable, sir, that any member of my staff at the bank would even dream of playing such a trick ! " exclaimed Mr. Sneff. " That idea is simply absurd."

" At all events, it is clear that I have been deluded by some trickster," said Mr. Ratcliff tartly. " Luckily, I have been saved a useless journey by this chance meeting. Good-afternoon, Mr. Sneff ! "

" Good-afternoon, sir ! "

Mr. Ratcliff, with a brow of thunder, turned and started walking back to St. Jim's.

The manager of the Wayland and County Bank glanced after him, and smiled faintly. Mr. Ratcliff scouted the idea that any St. Jim's fellow could have had the unexampled nerve to play such a trick on a Housemaster. Mr. Sneff did not feel so sure of that. From his own experience of Mr. Ratcliff, he could guess that that gentleman was not popular with the boys.

Jimmy Silver and Co. in the car smiled, too.

Like Mr. Sneff, they rather considered that there was a probability that that mysterious telephone call had come from a telephone at St. Jim's, and not from Wayland. However, they were glad to see that Mr. Ratcliff did not think so.

Jimmy Silver called to the banker as he resumed his walk towards Rylcombe.

" Which way to St. Jim's, sir ? "

Mr. Sneff looked round.

" Take the left——" he said.

" Not the right ? " asked Arthur Edward Lovell.

" Cheese it, Lovell ! "

" Well, I think——"

" The left ! " repeated Mr. Sneff. " Follow that gentleman to whom I was just speaking—he is returning to the school."

" Thank you, sir ! " said Jimmy.

Mr. Sneff walked on towards the village and disappeared. The Rookwood car snorted into motion again.

" What a game ! " grinned Mornington. " I'll bet it was some fellow at St. Jim's who's been pullin' that bony old bean's leg."

" Shouldn't wonder ! " said Jimmy Silver, laughing.

" Somebody wanted to get him out of the way for the afternoon ! " remarked Raby. " He looks the kind of man that lots of fellows would rather not see about the place."

" He do—he does ! " grinned Newcome.

" If that's the case, it's rather rotten for the fellow that he met that banker johnny at the corner of the lane ! " remarked Arthur Edward Lovell. " He's going back now—and whoever wanted to get shot of him will see him again sooner than he expects."

Jimmy Silver whistled.

" Well, we shall get in long before he does," he said. " We'll mention it to Tom Merry, and if it's a St. Jim's jape, he can pass the word on."

" Good egg ! " agreed Lovell.

" Rotten luck on the japer," said Mornington. " I suppose we mustn't ask Snooks to bump into the old gent from behind ! That would keep him out of harm's way ! Would you do it for another ten bob, Snooks ? "

Mr. Snooks chuckled.

He was always open to an offer of an extra ten " bob " ; but he did not think of earning that sum by bumping his car into a schoolmaster's back !

He honked on his horn as a hint to Mr. Ratcliff, who was walking along the middle of the lane, to get out of the way.

Honk ! honk !

Mr. Ratcliff frowned round at the car. He was not in a good temper. He had a pain in his corns, and a still more severe pain in his temper.

No doubt that chance meeting with the bank manager was fortunate, as it had saved him from spending most of the afternoon on a wild-goose chase. On the other hand, instead of getting a rest in the train, he had another walk before him—and he disliked walking intensely. Twinges in his corns did not make walking a pleasure.

He grunted angrily as he stepped to the side of the road for the car to pass ! He grunted again, still more angrily, as it swept by in a cloud of dust, leaving a scent of petrol behind.

The Rookwooders smiled back at his thunderous face as they rushed on, Mr. Snooks letting out the car to top speed to make up for lost time.

Mr. Ratcliff waited for the dust to subside and then jogged on again. He made slow progress. The Rookwood car was out of sight almost in a moment.

Ratty gave it no heed. He did not know the schoolboys in the car, and did not even think of them in connection with the football match Tom Merry and Co. were booked to play that afternoon. He had, indeed, forgotten all about that football match—it was not a matter in which the New House master took any interest. He had far more important matters to think of—chiefly the twinges in his corns.

If any practical joker at St. Jim's needed a warning that Mr. Ratcliff was returning, instead of going on to Wayland, there was ample time to deliver that warning. At his present



"Mr. Sneff! Sir!" barked Mr. Ratcliff. "What does this mean? I was on my way to the bank to keep my appointment with you, and by the purest chance, sir, I find you walking here!" Mr. Sneff looked bewildered. "But I have no recollection of an appointment, Mr. Ratcliff."

rate of progress, Mr. Ratcliff was likely to arrive at the school a good twenty minutes later than the Rookwood car. And—with a strong suspicion in his mind that such was the case—Jimmy Silver intended to drop a hint to Tom Merry as soon as he saw him.

The car rushed on.

Horace Ratcliff was still far, far away when the Rookwood car honked up to the gates of St. Jim's.

THE TENTH CHAPTER
DISASTROUS!

"WIGHT as wain!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that remark.

The other fellows agreed.

It was—or seemed to be—as right as rain! Every face wore a cheery smile.

Figgins and Co. looked cheerfullest of all. Everything in the garden—so far as Figgins and Co. could see—was lovely!

They had taken Tom Merry's tip, and got their lines done in time. Mr. Ratcliff had certainly not dreamed of it when he left the three juniors in the Form-room. But, in point of fact, each of them was already provided with five hundred lines of Virgil, ready to be shown up after detention. Those lines were in their desks in the Fourth Form room. Ratty was far away on a wild-goose chase—Figgins and Co. had changed for footer—and

the Rookwood crowd had just arrived. In these happy circumstances, Figgins and Co. fully agreed with that celebrated philosopher, Monsieur Pangloss, that everything was for the best in the best of all possible worlds!

"It's weally wippin'," declared Arthur Augustus, who was looking a thing of beauty and a joy for ever in the most elegant football clobber that ever was. "I wathah wondah that I did not think of this wheeze myself, you know——"

"What could you have thought of it with?" inquired Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"It's a jolly old winner, anyhow!" said Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You New House kids can always rely on a School House man to pull you through!" said Monty Lowther affably.

To which Figgins and Co. ungratefully rejoined:

"You School House fathead!"

"It's weally wippin', you know," said Arthur Augustus. "Watty is wight out of the way, and evewythin' is wight as wain! In these happy circs, deah boys, I shall not give you the thwashin' you asked for, for dwoppin' that beastly ink-ball down my neck in class yestahday."

"Oh, do!" urged Figgins.

"Weally, Figgins——"

"We've time to strew you over the ground in small detached pieces while Tom Merry is jawing to Jimmy Silver," remarked Figgins.

"Bai Jove! I have a good mind ——"

"Gammon!" said Kerr, shaking his head. "If you had a mind, old bean, good or bad, you'd have shown some sign of it before now."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy breathed hard. In the present happy and satisfactory circumstances, he had been prepared to overlook the dire offences of Figgins and Co. Now he looked warlike again.

"Bai Jove! You cheekay New House wottah——" he began.

"Hallo, something's up!" exclaimed Blake. His eyes were on Tom Merry, who was deep in talk with the junior captain of Rookwood. There was a startled and dismayed expression on Tom's face.

Apparently, what Jimmy Silver had to say had had that effect on him.

"What the dickens?" said Figgins.

"Bai Jove! What——"

"Oh, crumbs!" Tom Merry was heard to exclaim. "Of all the rotten luck—of all the absolutely putrid luck——"

Arthur Augustus forgot his rising wrath as he heard that.

"Bai Jove! Somethin's up!" he exclaimed. "Whatevah is the mattah, Tom Mewwy? What's the twouble, old bean?"

"What's up?" demanded Figgins.

"The game is!" groaned Tom Merry.

"What the thump——"

"Ratty!"

"Bother Ratty! Ratty's far enough away by this time!" said Monty Lowther. "Ratty's safe till after the game.

"He isn't!" groaned Tom.

"How the dickens do you know, then?"

"He's coming back!"

"Coming back!" yelled the footballers blankly.

"Yes! Jimmy Silver's seen him—they passed him on the road—and he's coming back——"

"Oh, gweat Scott!"

"But—but—but——" stuttered

Monty Lowther, utterly taken aback by this unexpected outcome of his masterly scheme for getting rid of Ratty. "How—why—what—how?"

"Cough it up, Silver!" said Tom Merry dismally.

Jimmy Silver looked concerned. Arthur Edward Lovell looked deeply sympathetic. All the Rookwooders were sympathetic, now they knew how the matter stood. Jimmy had given Tom Merry the "tip," little dreaming how serious the matter was. But he knew now.

"I'm sorry, you fellows," he said. "I thought I'd better give the tip here, after what I heard the old bean say to the bank manager. I fancied somebody here might have been japing, and that he would want to know that the old bean was coming back, and——"

"The—the—the bank manager!" stuttered Lowther.

"Yes—man named Sneff——"

"But what—how?" stammered Lowther helplessly.

Jimmy Silver succinctly related what the Rookwooders had witnessed, and heard, at the cross-roads near Rylcombe. The St. Jim's fellows listened in utter dismay.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "Watty comin' back! All the fat's in the fiah now, and no ewwah!"

"Putrid luck," said Lovell. "But ——"

"What ghastly luck!" groaned Figgins. "Thanks for giving us the tip, Silver, but—what utterly ghastly luck!"

"Rotten!" groaned Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"From what the old bean said to the banker johnny, I fancied that some fellow here might be rather anxious to know that he wasn't clear for the afternoon," said Jimmy Silver. "So——"

"After all, he's a good way off yet!" remarked Arthur Edward Lovell, in a very thoughtful sort of way. "And he was rather crawling when we lost sight of him. There's time——"

"It's tough luck, you fellows," said Jimmy Silver. "Still, you've got the tip in time to get clear. I never guessed that it was fellows in Tom Merry's team who were in the soup! It seems that that is so——"

"Yes, rather!" groaned Figgins. "It's us! And—and—and Ratty's coming back. You—you—you saw him coming back?"

"Yes; passed him on the road in the car!" said Lovell.

"Oh, great pip!"

"Bai Jove! It's feahfully luckay that these chaps spotted it!" said Arthur Augustus. "Watty would have butted in aftah we had started, and you can bet on it that he would have dwagged Figgay and Kerr and Wynn off the ground. Now they've got time to change and cut back to the Form-room."

"Yes, that's lucky!" said Tom Merry.

But he did not look happy! Owing to the warning kindly given by the Rookwood fellows, Figgins and Co. had ample time to get back into detention, undiscovered by their Housemaster. That was all to the good, so far as it went. But it left Tom Merry without three men he wanted for the game. Monty Lowther's masterly scheme had been a hopeless frost.

"Who'd have thought it?" grunted Monty. "It was a ripping wheeze—the catch of the season! Who could have guessed that that ass, Sneff, would be taking a walk

this afternoon instead of sticking in the bank! Bank managers ought to stick in banks."

"Bai Jove! Even a bank managah is entitled to take a wamble sometimes, Lowthah!" remarked Arthur Augustus. "I should think they would get feahfully stuffay, stickin' in a bank all the time."

"The old ass!" hissed Lowther. "If he wanted to take a walk, which he shouldn't have done, why couldn't he walk in some other direction? Of course, he was bound to barge into Ratty! The bank ought to sack him."

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Oh, ring off, fathead! All the fat's in the fire now!" groaned Monty. "Ratty won't be in yet—he crawls like a snail! But even Ratty won't take long enough walking back to let us get through the game."

"Hardly!" grinned Blake.

"Aftah all, you can pick out thwee School House men, Tom Mewwy!" suggested Arthur Augustus. "I have always thought it wathah a good ideah to play a team entirely fwom the School House—New House men are not weally vewy much good, you know."

"Kill him!" said Figgins.

"Weally, Figgins——"

"Shut up, Gussy, for goodness' sake!" said Tom. "You men will have to stand out now; that can't be helped. I shall have to fill your places somehow. Thank goodness these Rookwood chaps gave us the tip—Ratty would have barged in and mucked up the game if he'd found you playing. That would have given us the kybosh and no mistake."

"But——" said Figgins.

"But——" mumbled Fatty Wynn.

"But——" grunted Kerr.

Arthur Edward Lovell smiled. Arthur Edward had been standing with a deep wrinkle of thought on his brow. Apparently his meditations had given him satisfaction, for he smiled.

"I'll tell you what——" said Lovell.

Tom Merry and Co. glanced at him. If anybody had any suggestion to make, in these harrowing circumstances, they were only too willing to listen to it.

"It seems that you can't spare these three men!" said Lovell.

"Well, I can fill their places," said Tom, "but a lot of men here are on the sick list, and——"

"You want them badly?"

"Frightfully!"

"That bony old bean isn't anywhere near the place yet," said Lovell. "When we passed him he was crawling. You've got at least a quarter of an hour yet."

"We can't play a football match in a quartah of an hour, old thing," said Arthur Augustus.

"Shut up, Gussy!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Well, leave it to me!" said Lovell.

"What?" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

Lovell did not heed him.

"Leave it to me!" he said. "Put off the kick-off for a quarter of an hour—that won't hurt! And leave it to me."

"But what——" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"What——" ejaculated Figgins.

"No time for talk!" said Lovell briskly. "Leave it to me, and I'll pull you through! Willing?"

"Yes, but——"

"Then it's a go!"

Arthur Edward Lovell turned away.

He departed at a trot. Jimmy Silver and Co. gazed after him blankly. Tom Merry and Co. gazed after him equally blankly.

" Lovell ! " hooted Jimmy.

Arthur Edward Lovell did not answer or turn his head. He was making for the spot where the Rookwood car had been parked, and he was going at top speed. Whatever was the mysterious " wheeze " that was in the mind of Arthur Edward, it was clear that he considered that there was not a moment to be lost.

" Lovell, you ass ! " shouted Raby.

" Lovell, you fathead ! " roared Newcome.

" Lovell, you duffer ! " yelled Mornington.

Lovell disappeared !

The footballers gazed at one another. What Arthur Edward Lovell fancied that he was up to was a mystery to the Rookwooders and St. Jim's men alike ! Tom Merry and Co. were willing to catch at the merest straw of hope. But they were utterly mystified.

" What on earth——" gasped Tom Merry.

" He's gone ! " said Blake.



" Driver, stop ! " shouted Mr. Ratcliff. " Good gracious, is the man deaf ? Will you stop ? " Mr. Snooks smiled and drove on, giving no attention to the acid voice yapping from behind.

" But what—— " ejaculated Monty Lowther.

" Bai Jove, you know, I wondah if that chap is a little cwacked——"

" Hallo, that's the car going ! " yelled Raby in amazement. Wafted on the wind came the sound of the Rookwood car starting up.

" Is he mad ? " breathed Jimmy Silver.

" Mad as a hatter ! " said Morny. " He's gone—in the car——"

" What the merry thump——"

In sheer amazement the footballers listened as the car roared away from St. Jim's. The roar died away in the direction of Rylcombe.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

A LIFT FOR RATTY !

MR. RATCLIFF gasped.

He snorted.

Seldom, or never, had the master of the New House at St. Jim's felt so angry, so irritable, so extremely unpleasant in every imaginable way.

He had stopped to rest. He sat on a grassy knoll, half-way back to St. Jim's, rested his corns, and breathed hard.

Such a trick as had been played on the telephone might have annoyed even a good-tempered man. And Horace Ratcliff was anything but a good-tempered man.

His corns had given him a little trouble on his outward journey. They gave him more when he was homeward bound. He was glad of a rest.

He had not even the consolation of looking forward to the punishment of the unknown trickster who had befooled him on the telephone. He scouted contemptuously Mr. Sneff's suggestion that any schoolboy would have ventured to play such a trick on so august a person as a Housemaster. In spite of Mr. Sneff's assurance on the subject, he suspected that it was some thoughtless young clerk at the bank who had pulled his leg. He wished that he knew for certain ! He would have been glad to get that thoughtless young clerk sacked !

Unwilling as he was to spend money, Mr. Ratcliff would have been glad, just then, to hail a passing taxi. But passing taxis were few and far between in a lonely country lane.

There was no sign of a taxi or any other vehicle. Not even a farmer's cart—if the Housemaster could have asked for a lift in one ! He would have been glad of a lift in almost anything.

Honk-honk-honk !

Mr. Ratcliff looked up hopefully.

It was the honking of a car ! But his momentary hope died away as he saw that it was coming from the direction of the school. He wanted a lift, but not in the wrong direction. Mr. Ratcliff grunted angrily.

But the car slowed down and stopped. Mr. Ratcliff, looking at it, fancied that he had seen it before. It looked like the big car he had seen at the cross-roads when he had stopped there to speak to the bank manager. But if it was the same car, it was no longer loaded with the same crowd. Only one fellow was in it, who looked like a schoolboy. As for the driver, Mr. Ratcliff had not even glanced at him, and did not know him again. He did not, indeed, glance at him now, and certainly did not observe a twinkle in the eye of Mr. Snooks or a lurking grin on his plump face.

The schoolboy in the car stepped out.

" Looking for a lift, sir ? " he asked, raising his cap very politely.

The Housemaster blinked at him.

" I should be very glad of a lift, if the car were going in my direction," he answered. " But——"

" Well, the car can turn easily enough," said Arthur Edward Lovell cheerfully. " If you're looking for a lift, I'm getting down here. The fact is, I've done with it now, and the driver would be glad of another job."

He glanced at the driver.

" Very glad, sir ! " said Mr. Snooks. " Drive you anywhere, sir ! Shilling a mile, sir, any distance."

Mr. Ratcliff jumped up from the grassy knoll.

This offer came like corn in Egypt in one of the lean years.

It was only half a mile to St. Jim's from that spot ; so on the terms stated by Mr. Snooks, the charge would only be sixpence to get back to the school. But Mr. Ratcliff was prepared to go to the length of giving him a whole shilling, so troublesome were his corns.

" I shall be very glad to hire the car for a short distance," he said. " Can you turn in the lane here, my man ? "

" Bit narrer here for turning, sir ! " said the driver. " I can turn easy enough at the cross-roads, a bit farther up."

" Very good," said Mr. Ratcliff.

He stepped into the big car thankfully. Lovell stepped along to the driver and spoke in a low tone.

" You've got it clear, Snooks ? "

" Yessir. Eightpence a mile for you, sir ! "

" We'll see that the eightpences are all right," said Lovell, with a cheery grin. " It's worth a lot of eightpences."

" Anything to oblige, sir ! " said Snooks. " Very glad to oblige you, sir, specially arter that little mistake on the phone this morning."

" Off you go, then ! "

Lovell stepped back, raising his cap once more with great politeness in farewell to Mr. Ratcliff.

The car ran on.

Arthur Edward Lovell started walking in the opposite direction. It was not going to take him long to get back to St. Jim's. But it was likely to take Mr. Ratcliff much longer—though he was not yet aware of that fact !

With a feeling of great satisfaction, the New House master leaned back in a seat in the big car.

It sped on to the cross-roads, where a short time ago the Rookwooders had witnessed his interview with Mr. Sneff.

But it did not slow down there to reverse.

It turned the corner and sped on.

Mr. Ratcliff sat up in surprise.

Why the driver was going on, instead of turning and going back, was past his comprehension.

But that was what the driver was doing !

Certainly it did not occur to Mr. Ratcliff that that polite schoolboy had had any ulterior motive in getting him that lift. Neither did he guess that the driver of the car had any private instructions. He was simply astonished.

" Driver ! " called out Mr. Ratcliff. " Stop ! You should have turned at that corner."

Mr. Snooks seemed deaf.

" That was the corner ! " shouted Mr. Ratcliff.

Snooks drove on.

" Driver ! Stop ! Good gracious, is the man deaf ? Driver ! Will you stop ? " yapped the New House master.

The driver certainly seemed deaf. He gave no attention whatever to the acid voice yapping from the car behind him.

He drove on, letting the car out to great speed ! Mr. Ratcliff sat transfixed with astonishment and anger.

" The man is deaf or mad ! " he gasped. " Upon my word ! Deaf men should not be allowed to drive cars ! It is dangerous ! Upon my word ! "

The car whizzed on. It avoided Wayland by taking a side-road, and rushed on into the open country.

Mr. Ratcliff leaned over and clutched the driver by the shoulder. The man glanced at him.

"Stop!" shouted Mr. Ratcliff frantically. "I desired a lift to the school. Cannot you understand? The school!"

"Yessir."

"You are going directly away from it."

"Yessir,"

"Are you deaf?"

"Yessir."

"Goodness gracious! The man appears to be stone deaf!" gasped Mr. Ratcliff. "Where can he possibly be taking me? He must have misunderstood, and—and—where can he be going?"

They were five miles from St. Jim's already. Mr. Ratcliff, in an absolutely frantic state, shouted, roared, and howled at the driver. Suddenly, to his immense relief, the car slowed down and stopped.

"Thank goodness!" gasped Mr. Ratcliff.

The driver dismounted and opened the bonnet. He stared and groped within and whistled.

Mr. Ratcliff descended. He was glad to get out of the car, at all events. He stared round him. Fields and trees and hedges met his gaze. He knew where he was—miles from the town of Wayland, the nearest spot where he could obtain a conveyance. He gritted his teeth.

Mr. Snooks seemed utterly engrossed in his engine. But he looked round as Mr. Ratcliff grabbed his arm.

"You utterly stupid man!" yapped Mr. Ratcliff. "You have brought me in the wrong direction."

"Yessir! It's the carburettor, I think," said Mr. Snooks.

"The—the what?"

"The carburettor! But it's all right—I'll get going again, sir! P'r'aps an hour——"

Mr. Ratcliff gazed at him. He had a strong suspicion that the man was either insane or intoxicated. He had not seemed deaf when Mr. Ratcliff hired his car in Rylcombe Lane; yet he had seemed stone deaf during that wild drive. Now, apparently, he had engine trouble—miles from everywhere. Mr. Ratcliff was disinclined to trust himself in that car again, even if the man agreed to drive him direct to St. Jim's. Certainly he was not willing to wait an hour while an insane or intoxicated man tinkered with the engine.

"Soon set her right, sir!" said Mr. Snooks cheerfully. "She's a good old bus, sir! If it's the carburettor, I'll 'ave her right under the hour. Now, where's them tools? My eye, if I forgot to put in my tools——"

Mr. Ratcliff breathed hard through his thin nose. Taking no further notice of the man, he turned away, and started walking in the direction of Wayland. If the man had claimed a fare, Mr. Ratcliff was prepared to refuse, in the most bitter and determined way, to give him a single penny! But the man did not claim a fare! With his head in the bonnet of the car he did not even seem to observe Mr. Ratcliff go. On the whole, Mr. Ratcliff was glad to get away without an argument with a man whom he suspected of being intoxicated, if not actually insane.

He walked to Wayland.

When he was out of sight, Mr. Snooks smiled, helped himself to a cigarette, and sat down cheerfully

to smoke. When, considerably later, Mr. Snooks drove away from that spot, the engine trouble seemed to have disappeared of its own accord! Mr. Snooks smiled as he drove. He had put in an extra ten miles to oblige Master Lovell, which at eightpence a mile came to six and eight. All was grist that came to Mr. Snooks' mill.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

THANKS TO LOVELL!

"THE ass!" breathed Jimmy Silver.

"The fathead!" murmured Raby.

"The dummy!" hissed Newcome.

Jimmy Silver and Co. were nonplussed. So, indeed, were Tom Merry and Co. The footballers were waiting—they could do nothing else! But exactly what they were waiting for—and how long they were to wait—they did not know!

Lovell had asked them to leave it to him! If he had any stunt for getting the St. Jim's men out of their present disastrous scrape, they were



"You're playing those New House men, after all," said Kildare, giving Tom Merry a very keen look. "Aren't they detained this afternoon?" "They—they were," said Tom Merry. "But—hem—but——" Tom could not explain that they had broken detention!

only too willing to leave it to him. He had said that he would pull them through. How, they had no idea! Having said that, he had gone off in the car! And that was that!

The minutes that passed were packed with worry. Jimmy Silver and Co. were in a state of suppressed wrath. They had had some experience of leaving things to Lovell!

Tom Merry and his men were quite puzzled, but they had a tincture of hope. Anyhow they had to wait. It did not matter very much whether kick-off was a quarter of an hour later than the time fixed. Jimmy Silver could hardly decide to play without Lovell in the team. Tom Merry certainly could not begin the game, with Figgins and Co. in the ranks, at the risk of Ratty barging in and calling them off soon after the game had started. Both parties, therefore, were willing to wait, and see what on earth it was Arthur Edward Lovell intended.

But they were puzzled and worried.

Some of the fellows punted a footer about, to pass the long minutes. Others discussed the strange state of affairs.

Figgins and Co. remained on the spot. They were in dread, every moment, of seeing their Housemaster in the offing. Still, if there was a dog's chance of playing in the match, they weren't going back to the Form-room. Not if Figgy and Co. could help it.

"Bai Jove, you fellows," murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "I weally fail to compwehend what that chap Lovell can do in the mattah, and I weally wathah feah that he is off his wockah! Do you fellows think he is off his wockah?"

"Blessed if I know," said Tom Merry. "He said he would pull us through, but——"

"As that Indian chap at Greyfriars would say, the butfulness is terrific!" remarked Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"The car went off towards Rylcombe," said Figgins. "I suppose he can't be thinking of running over Ratty!"

"Bai Jove! That would keep the old bean cleah of us," remarked Arthur Augustus. "But it would be wathah a dwastic measuah, Figgay! I twust Lovell is not thinkin' of anythin' so vewy dwastic."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I make the fellow out!" said Kerr. "But one thing's certain; if there's a chance to play, we're playing."

"What-ho!" said Fatty Wynn emphatically.

"How long is the dashed ass going to be?" growled Herries. "Can't hear anything of the car coming back!"

"His pals don't seem to have a lot of faith in his stunt, whatever it is," grinned Kangaroo of the Shell. "They're calling him all sorts of names."

"Well, we've got to wait!" sighed Tom Merry. "Can't let Figgins and Kerr and Wynn join in unless we're safe about Ratty. But—oh, bother!"

"Blow!" said Monty Lowther. Lowther's spirits were quite dashed by the unexpected failure of his great scheme.

"All that ass Gussy's fault!" growled Figgins. "If he hadn't got us detained——"

"Weally, Figgins——"

"Hallo!" yelled Blake. "Here's Lovell!"

"Bai Jove! Here he comes!"

Arthur Edward Lovell reappeared

in sight, coming down to the football field at a rapid run. His face was pink with exertion. Evidently he had been hurrying.

The juniors stared at him. They had heard no sound of a returning car. It seemed that Lovell had left the car somewhere, and returned on foot.

They were more and more puzzled.

"Kick him!" murmured Raby. "Kick him as soon as he gets here, the silly ass!"

"Hard!" said Newcome, with a nod.

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"Let's hear first what he's done," he said. "Give a man a chance."

"Rot! You know what comes of leaving anything to Lovell!" growled Raby. "What he wants is a jolly good kicking."

All eyes were on Lovell as he came trotting up. Not only the footballers, but a crowd of fellows who had gathered round the field, watched him with curiosity. Lefevre of the Fifth, who was going to referee the match, stared at him rather grimly.

"Is that the man you're waiting for?" he asked.

"That's the man," answered Jimmy Silver.

"Then I suppose you'll get started, sooner or later!" grunted Lefevre.

Without answering that remark, Jimmy Silver and Co. ran to meet Lovell. The St. Jim's fellows followed.

Lovell stopped, breathing rather hard, but grinning. It was clear that he had come back in a state of great satisfaction.

"Well?" hooted Jimmy.

Lovell chuckled.

"All serene!" he said.

"Look here, put us wise, there's a good fellow!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "You've been gone a quarter of an hour, and Ratcliff may come in any second now, and if he finds these three fellows out of detention——"

"He won't!" chuckled Lovell.

"But how?"

"I've lent him the car!"

"What!" roared a score of voices.

"Lent him the car!" said Lovell cheerily. "The old bean was fagged, you know, and I thought he'd like a lift. He jumped at it."

"You—you—you've lent Ratty your car!" gasped Tom Merry, while Jimmy Silver and Co. gazed speechlessly at the happy Arthur Edward. "That means that he will get here sooner——"

"Later!" corrected Lovell.

"Later in a car than by walking?" said Tom.

"Lots!"

"Look here, Lovell——" roared Jimmy Silver.

"Give a man a chance to speak," said Lovell. "You see, it depends on the direction taken by the car. I've tipped Snooks to take him on a run into the country——"

"Wha-a-t!"

"And land him somewhere miles from a station——"

"Oh!"

"And he'll do it!" said Lovell. "Snooks is a very obliging man. He will do anything for a tip!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Lovell!" gasped Jimmy.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Figgins. "You—you—you've tipped your driver to take Ratty for a ride——"

"Miles!" said Lovell.

"And—and strand him!"

"Just that!"

"Oh, crikey!"

"And—and—and has it worked?" gasped Tom Merry.

"Like a charm! Last I saw of the

car, it was doing forty, with the bony old bean inside!"

"Great pip!"

The juniors gazed at Arthur Edward Lovell. They just gazed! He had almost taken their breath away.

"Then—then——" Tom found his voice. "Then Ratty's safe off the scene!"

"Safe for some time, at any rate!" said Lovell cheerfully. "He will blow in later—tired, very likely! I dare say we shall be gone by then—I'd rather not meet him again, if avoidable. I think very likely he might be unpleasant."

"Bai Jove! I should think that vewy pwobable indeed!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Anyhow, I've told Snooks to bring back the car after he's stranded him, and wait at a distance from the school here," said Lovell. "We can walk to the car after the game. Might be a row, or something, if the bony old bean ran into Snooks here, what?"

"Well, my hat!" said Jimmy Silver.

Raby and Newcome could only stare—or rather, gape! Leaving it to Lovell had, for once, been a success!

There was no doubt about that! Lovell had done the trick! He had worked the oracle! He was the goods!

"Bai Jove, you men, I weally think we ought to pass a vote of thanks to Lovell!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Hear, hear!"

"Passed unanimously!"

"Bravo!"

Arthur Edward smiled complacently.

"Not at all!" he said. "Just an idea, you know! You see, it was my doing that we had a car here at all—the fellows left it to me, and I fixed it. I generally manage all right when things are left to me."

Jimmy Silver gasped. Then he laughed.

"Let's get going!" he said.

And the footballers, in a joyous mood, safe now from interference from the obnoxious Ratty, got going!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER

A GREAT GAME!

Tom Merry kicked off.

The game was soon going hot and strong.

Rookwood had come over in great form; but they found the home team in great form also. In the first few minutes of the game, Rookwood got through, and made a fierce attack on goal. But a fat figure in the St. Jim's goal seemed all eyes and hands and feet. The deadliest shot failed to beat David Llewellyn Wynn. Again and again the fat Fourth-Former saved, till the leather went to midfield, with the St. Jim's men after it.

"Bravo, Fatty!" shouted fellows round the goal. Fatty Wynn grinned at them cheerily.

"This is better than detention!" he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

No doubt it was! After that sample of Fatty Wynn between the posts, Jimmy Silver and Co. realised that they had all their work cut out to carry out their programme of beating St. Jim's on their own ground.

But for Arthur Edward Lovell, that capable custodian would not have been standing in the chicken-run. Neither, it was certain, would the first goal have been scored by George Figgins—as it actually was! Figgy was the first man to find the net,

amid a roar of cheers from the St. Jim's crowd.

"Goal!"

"Bravo, Figgy!"

"Good man!" gasped Tom Merry, clapping the New House junior on the back. "Good man, Figgy!"

George Figgins chuckled.

"We owe that to that Rookwood man, Lovell!" he said.

And Tom Merry laughed.

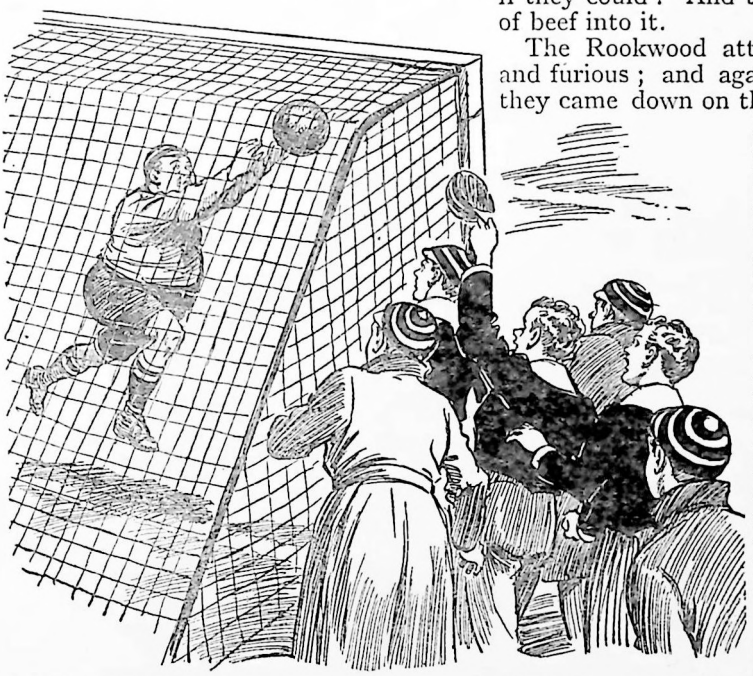
There was no doubt that the St. Jim's men owed a great deal to Arthur Edward Lovell. The teams were fairly evenly matched; but without Figgins and Co., St. Jim's would certainly have been playing a losing game.

The Rookwooders were quite aware of that fact. But they were too good sportsmen to care about that. They were at St. Jim's to play the game; and though they certainly were very keen on winning, they did not want a hollow victory over a weakened team. If Jimmy Silver and Co. could not beat St. Jim's at their best, they were willing to take what was coming to them.



But they were going to beat them if they could! And they put a lot of beef into it.

The Rookwood attack was fast and furious; and again and again they came down on the home goal, like wolves on the fold. But David Llewellyn Wynn was a tower of strength between the posts.



Receiving the ball from Jimmy Silver, Mornington rushed it down on the home goal and then let drive. Thud! It was a great shot, and Fatty Wynn made a vain effort to prevent the ball entering the net. "Goal!" howled the Rookwooders. "Goal! Hurrah!"

It was not till close on half-time that Raby put the leather in for Rookwood, and the score stood level when Lefevre blew the whistle.

It had been a rather gruelling half; and all the men

were breathing hard and glad of a rest.

In the excitement of the keen game, they had forgotten all about Ratty. In the interval, they remembered the unpleasant existence of that gentleman.

Tom Merry cast a quick glance round, as he sucked a lemon. But there was no sign of a tall, angular figure. Mr. Ratcliff was still at a safe distance.

Nearly all the Lower School of St. Jim's had gathered round the ropes to watch. Among them were a good many seniors, for the game was well worth watching. And it was rather gratifying to the juniors to see the athletic figure of Kildare, the captain of the school, in the crowd. This was honour indeed for the junior eleven!

"Bai Jove! There's old Kildare!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Jollay old Kildare lookin' on, deah boys."

"Looking for those goals you were going to get, perhaps!" remarked Blake. "He will have to go on looking."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Hallo, he's making faces at you, Tom!" said Monty Lowther.

Kildare of the Sixth was not exactly making faces at Tom Merry. But he was beckoning to him.

Tom went across to the ropes, to see what he wanted. He had rather a misgiving that he could guess!

Kildare gave him a very keen look.

"You're playing those New House men, after all," he said.

"Um! Yes!"

"Aren't they detained this afternoon?"

"They—they were!" murmured Tom. "But—hem—but——"

Kildare looked rather grave. He was a keen footballer, and in complete sympathy with the junior captain in this matter. Still, he was a Sixth Form man and a prefect.

Then a faint smile dawned on Kildare's face. He remembered what Mr. Ratcliff had said to him that morning!

"Well, I suppose it's no bizney of mine!" he remarked. "Mr. Ratcliff told me this morning that he desired neither advice nor assistance from a School House prefect in the management of his House! I suppose he knew what he was talking about."

And Kildare, with a nod to Tom, strolled away. Tom Merry was smiling as he rejoined his friends.

The sides lined up for the second half. There was still no sign of Mr. Ratcliff, and the juniors had no doubt that he was still wearily walking from the solitary spot where Snooks had stranded him. They charitably hoped that the walk would do him good!

The whistle went.

It was hammer and tongs again, both sides going strong. A goal came to Tom Merry, and St. Jim's were leading two—one.

Then came a determined attack from Rookwood, overrunning the defence, with the exception of the fat Fourth-Former in goal, who not only seemed all eyes and hands and feet, but seemed to have two or three pairs of each! There were three or four narrow escapes, before St. Jim's rallied and drove the enemy over the half-way line again. Fatty Wynn fanned his crimson face in goal.

Now came Arthur Augustus' chance. Gussy, so far, had contributed none of those brilliant goals with which he had intended to enliven the match and enrich the home score.

Now the ball was at his feet, and one at least of those brilliant goals was on the point of materialising!

But at the psychological moment a Rookwood half crashed into Gussy, and the swell of St. Jim's found himself sprawling, with Arthur Edward Lovell sprawling over him.

Arthur Augustus gasped. Arthur Edward grinned. Where the leather went, Gussy did not know!

But Jimmy Silver knew!

He sent it to Mornington, who rushed it down to the home goal, and for once took David Llewellyn Wynn by surprise.

There was a howl from the Rookwooders.

"Goal!"

"Hurrah!"

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus, as he staggered up. It was quite a brilliant goal; but it was not, unfortunately, Gussy's; it was Rookwood's!

"Two all," said Tom Merry, as the footballers went back to the centre of the field, "and five minutes to go! We've got to pull up our socks, you men, and whop 'em!"

"Two all," said Jimmy Silver, at the same moment, "and five minutes to go! We've got to put some beef into it, you fellows, and mop 'em up!"

And both sides played up to the finish with that deadly determination which was rather like the old story of the irresistible force brought to bear upon the immovable object!

They were still going strong when the whistle went!

And the great game ended in a draw. Honours were even!

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

ALL SERENE!

"FIVE minutes to five!" remarked Figgins.

"Only five minutes more!" yawned Kerr.

"I'm ready for tea!" remarked Fatty Wynn.

Figgins and Co. made those remarks, as the door-handle turned and the door of the Fourth Form room opened.

Mr. Ratcliff heard them as he opened the door.

Nobody looking at Figgins and Co. just then, sitting patiently at their desks with piles of finished lines before them, would have supposed that they had been engaged in a strenuous football match that afternoon! Nobody would have supposed that they had changed after it—the quickest change on record—and fairly flown from the changing-room to the Form-room; and that they had been there only three or four minutes.

Certainly Mr. Ratcliff had no reason to suppose so!

He looked in, sourly.

He was tired—very tired! He was cross—very cross! Still, there seemed no reason for visiting his crossness on the devoted heads of Figgins and Co.!

He had had to walk to Wayland from the spot where he had parted with the cheerful Mr. Snooks. From Wayland he had taken a taxi back to the school, partly because he was so very tired, partly because his tea-time was at five. And here he was, looking sourly into the Form-room—acidly resolved to keep the three juniors in detention if they had not finished their lines!

He stepped in.

Figgins and Co. rose respectfully. He eyed them, and then eyed the lines. But there was no fault to be found with the lines. Three impositions of five hundred lines each, quite nicely written, were ready for Ratty's inspection.

There was a grim silence for a moment. Then——

"You may go!" said Mr. Ratcliff.

"Thank you, sir!" said Figgins.

And they went!

Outside, in the passage, they winked at one another! Then they scudded away, to join Tom Merry and Co. who were entertaining the Rookwooders in the School House after the match.

Mr. Ratcliff walked sourly back to his own House.

He was glad to sink into the armchair in his study, after his fatiguing adventures that eventful afternoon.

He saw nothing of the merry party in the School House, and knew nothing of it. Which was just as well, for he might have recognised among the Rookwooders the polite youth who had placed Mr. Snooks' car at his disposal; and that might have led to trouble!

After tea, Tom Merry and Co. walked with the Rookwood crowd to the spot where Mr. Snooks waited for them with the car, and saw them off.

"Beat you next time, old bean!" said Tom Merry and Jimmy Silver simultaneously—and they laughed, and parted.

. . . !

Nobody ever discovered who had put through that mysterious telephone call to Mr. Ratcliff on Rookwood day.

Certainly, there were plenty of fellows who knew, but the fellows who knew kept their own counsel.

Mr. Ratcliff never knew! And that was all that mattered!

THE END

THE TIGER OF THE SEAS!

It happened one hot morning during the summer holidays. Jimmy Silver and his chums, Lovell, Raby and Newcome, of the Fourth Form at Rookwood School, were staying together in a little fishing village on the Cornish coast. With them, also, on a short visit were Val Mornington and Tubby Muffin, who, truth to tell, had invited himself!

The six boys took out a rowing-boat and paddled lazily about the bay. Jimmy Silver and Lovell elected to bathe, and Tubby Muffin decided to join them.

The three boys swam to an isolated rock which jutted out of the bay. Jimmy and Lovell dived in again and swam back to the boat, but Tubby Muffin seemed reluctant to take the plunge. Shouts of encouragement from the boat failed to move him; then a sudden flurry in the water showed that there was a very good reason for Tubby's hesitation!

For swimming round and round the rock was a shark, albeit a small one! The sinister triangular fin of the tiger of the seas seemed to have a sort of horrid fascination for the fat Tubby, as it sheared through the water.

It was dinner-time for Tubby; and he wondered dismally whether it was the shark's dinner-time too!

Tubby's yells soon brought the boat up to take him off, and the shark, balked of his fat prey, made off out to sea. After that, Tubby Muffin did not bathe again! The boys learned from the fishermen that such unwelcome visitors, though very rare in those parts, did sometimes stray into home waters.



Facing page 208

Specially painted by Savile Lumley

HA

DINNER TIME!

CARTHEW GOES TOO FAR!

by Owen Conquest



When Carthew, the unpopular prefect, is attacked and tarred, things look black for Jimmy Silver & Co., of the Rookwood Fourth. But in his thirst for revenge, Carthew oversteps the mark, with totally unexpected results.

THE FIRST CHAPTER

BEND OVER!

"BEND over!" Carthew, of the Sixth Form, rapped out the order.

He stood in the doorway of the end study in the Classical Fourth passage at Rookwood, the official ashplant in his hand.

Jimmy Silver, Raby, Lovell, and Newcome were standing in the study, their eyes on Mark Carthew.

They heard his command; but, like the celebrated Dying Gladiator, they heard it, but they heeded not.

"Bend over!" repeated Carthew. "Do you hear me, Lovell?"

Arthur Edward Lovell nodded.

"I'm not deaf!" he remarked.

"Bend over, then!"

Carthew twirled the ashplant, evidently anxious to get to work with it.

Still Arthur Edward Lovell, the member of the Fistical Four upon whose devoted head Carthew's wrath had fallen, made no movement to obey.

No doubt Lovell was wrong.

Carthew, as a prefect of the Sixth Form, was invested with the power of the ashplant. At his command to bend over, a Lower School fellow was supposed to bend and to be caught bending. And, indeed, an order from

Bulkeley or Neville or any other prefect of Rookwood never was disputed. But with Carthew it was different.

True it was that he was a Sixth Form prefect. True it was that Arthur Edward Lovell had descended the staircase an hour ago, not by the stairs according to rule, but by the banisters, with arms and legs wildly flying, to the imminent risk of the said arms and legs if not of his valuable neck. True it was that any junior doing the same was liable to a perfect's licking.

In fact, it is much to be regretted that Arthur Edward Lovell was in the wrong all along the line.

Still, there were extenuating circumstances.

Carthew had been hanging about in his silent, spying, stealthy-footed way and Lovell had not seen him till too late, so he felt that he had been unfairly caught out. And Carthew had an old grudge against the end study, and Jimmy Silver & Co. were all quite assured that he had seized upon that trivial incident as an excuse for administering punishment there.

So Arthur Edward Lovell, instead of bending over, gave Mark Carthew a glare of truculent defiance. And Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome joined in the glare and the defiance. The Fistical Four stood in a row in the study, facing the prefect in the doorway with the fairly evident intention of standing by one another and putting up resistance if the bully of the Sixth came too close with the ashplant.

Carthew waited.

He was waiting for Lovell to bend over a chair. But he might have waited till he was an old, old man; Arthur Edward had no intention whatever of bending over.

There was a long pause.

"Lovell!" rapped out Carthew at last. "I've ordered you to bend over!"

"You've ordered me!" agreed Lovell.

"Are you going to do it?"

"Not this afternoon!" said Lovell pleasantly. "Call another day, and we'll see what we can do for you."

And the Fistical Four grinned.

"That's enough!" said Carthew; and he strode at Arthur Edward Lovell and grasped him by the collar with his left hand, the ashplant flourishing in his right.

Whack!

"Whoooooop!"

There was one hefty whack from the ashplant, one formidable roar from Arthur Edward Lovell as he struggled.

Then the Fistical Four closed on Mark Carthew as one man, and the bully of the Sixth was collared and swept over.

"Hands off!" yelled Carthew.

But it was a case of "hands on." And Carthew, big Sixth Former as he was, found himself not quite able to handle four of the Fourth. And Carthew, a funk at heart, weakened when a firm grasp was laid on him. He staggered back into the doorway with the Fistical Four clinging to him like cats, and in the doorway he reeled to and fro, gasping.

"Outside!" gasped Raby.

"Chuck him out!"

Crash!

Carthew went flying.

He landed on his back in the Fourth Form passage and lay there spluttering, almost foaming with rage.

Whizz!

His official ashplant came whirling out after him. It landed on Mark Carthew's nose, gently tapping that feature.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a shout from a crowd of

the Fourth, rushing out of their studies at the sound of the uproar. Carthew was not popular in the Fourth or in any other Form at Rookwood, even his own. The sight of Carthew of the Sixth sprawling breathlessly on his back in the Fourth Form passage was a quite agreeable one to the juniors.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Putty of the Fourth, the first to arrive; and his roar was echoed by a swarm of Classical juniors.

Carthew sat up quite dazedly.

He had been ejected from a junior study; he, a prefect of the Sixth Form! It was incredible; but it had happened. Only too assuredly it had happened. The ache in Carthew's bones was an indubitable proof that it had happened.

"Oh!" gasped Carthew.

"Come back and have another?" asked Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What price dribblin' him along to the stairs?" said Valentine Mornington cheerily. "Let's make a job of it!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Erroll. "Don't be an ass, Morny!"

"Bosh! Let's boot him out!"

"After all, he's a prefect," said Peele. "It means a frightful row with the Head! I wouldn't care to be in Jimmy Silver's shoes!"

Carthew staggered to his feet.

He gripped his ashplant and seemed for a moment about to make a fierce rush into the end study. The juniors watched him breathlessly.

Jimmy Silver & Co. stood firm in their doorway, grimly defiant. They were ready to handle Carthew again if he came. Precisely for that reason he did not come.

"I shall report this to your Formmaster!" he gasped.

"Report and be blowed!" said Lovell.

"Go and eat coke!"

"Rats!"

"Get out!"

Almost choking with rage, the discomfited prefect swung away towards the stairs. He had to pass through a grinning crowd of the Fourth. Certainly the prefect's report meant serious trouble for the end study; but Carthew himself was defeated and discomfited, and his defeat and discomfiture caused gleeful rejoicing in the Fourth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Carthew paused as he passed Mornington and caught the mocking grin on Morny's face.

Smack!

"Oh!" gasped Morny.

He reeled away from a savage box on the ear and went sprawling along the floor.

Carthew strode on to the stairs, rather quickening his pace. He disappeared down the staircase as Mornington staggered up, his face convulsed with rage.

Morny was speeding towards the stairs when Erroll caught him by the arm.

"Let me go, you fool!" shouted Mornington.

"Stop!"

"I tell you——"

"Stop!" said Erroll quietly.

And, almost by force, Erroll led his excited chum into Study No. 4 and slammed the door.

THE SECOND CHAPTER
FOR IT!

"WELL, this does it!" Raby made that remark in the end study.

His chums nodded rather gloomy assent.

It did ; there was no mistake about that.

Even Arthur Edward Lovell was beginning to doubt whether he would not have done well, after all, to have bent over at the prefect's command.

" He's gone to Dalton, of course," said Newcome.

" Of course."

" That means being up before Mr. Dalton or the Head," said Jimmy Silver. " Well, it can't be helped ! Keep smiling ! "

" He's a beastly bully ! " said Lovell.

" He is—he are ! "

" He didn't care a rap about my sliding down the banisters ! He wouldn't have seen me, anyhow, if he hadn't been sneaking about like a cat ! 'Tain't a prefect's bizney to spy on fellows ! "

" True, O king ! "

" We can explain to Mr. Dalton—" Lovell paused.

As a matter of fact, there was nothing to explain, and he realised it. Mr. Dalton, master of the Fourth Form, had more than once checked Carthew's bullying proclivities, especially in the direction of the end study. He held the scales of justice with a firm and impartial hand. Had Mark Carthew been bullying as usual, his report to the master of the Fourth would not have mattered very much.

But in this case it could not be denied that Carthew had been within his rights and duties. He had acted as any other Rookwood prefect would have acted in the same circumstances ; even " old Bulkeley " himself.

There was the rub.

Jimmy Silver & Co. realised that they were " for it," and that, practically, they hadn't a leg to stand on.

They had only to wait for the chopper to come down.

It was not long in coming.

The chortling in the Classical Fourth passage died away as the stalwart figure of Bulkeley of the Sixth came along. The captain of Rookwood School had a very grave and serious face, and his look showed that the end study were up against it.

He looked into the end study grimly.

" Come along, you four ! " he said. " Mr. Dalton wants you."

" Right-ho, Bulkeley ! "

In a rather dismal mood, Jimmy Silver & Co. followed the captain of the school. Sympathetic glances followed them along the Fourth Form passage. They went down the staircase and on to Mr. Dalton's study.

In that apartment they found their Form-master and Carthew.

Mr. Richard Dalton was looking very stern.

He fixed his eyes on the four culprits as they came rather sheepishly into his study.

Carthew eyed them malevolently. As a rule, he had little sympathy to expect from Mr. Dalton ; but in the present case he was sure of support from the master of the Fourth Form.

" I have sent for you on Carthew's report to me ! " said Mr. Dalton sternly. " You have attacked a prefect of the Sixth Form ! "

" Hem ! "

" You laid hands on Carthew and ejected him from your study ? "

" Hem ! "

" Yes or no ? " snapped Richard Dalton.

" Yes, sir ! " said Jimmy Silver.

" What excuse have you to offer, if any ? "

" Hem ! "

" You have nothing to say ? " asked Mr. Dalton.

" Carthew was going to lick me, sir ! " mumbled Lovell. " He's down

on our study, sir, and always looking for a chance against us."

"In the present instance, Lovell, Carthew informs me that he saw you sliding down the banisters, and that you ran off when he called to you. He came to your study later to deal with you. Do you deny this?"

"No, sir."

"Then why did you resist punishment, which you know very well was just?"

Lovell hung his head.

He had nothing to say—except that Carthew was a bully, and that he, Arthur Edward Lovell, disliked him, and was, personally, a rather hot-headed and unreflecting fellow. But it was not of much use saying that. So Arthur Edward was silent.

"It comes to this, then," said Mr. Dalton, taking up his cane. "That Lovell disobeyed a prefect who was exercising his proper authority, and that you others helped him in assaulting Carthew."

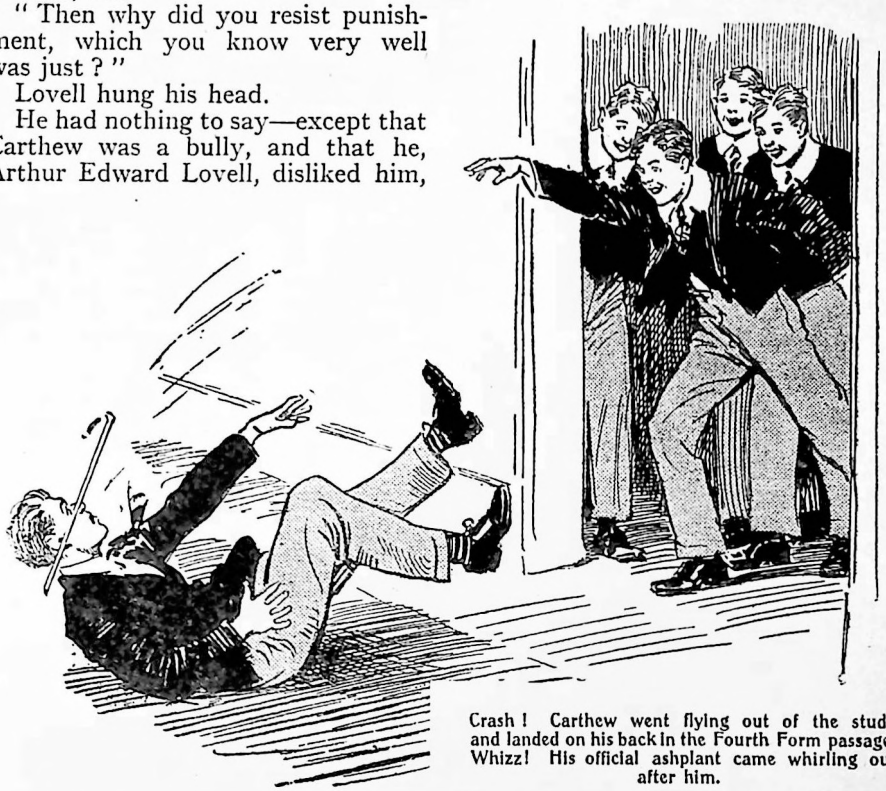
"Hem!"

It came to that, really, though that was not exactly how the Fistical Four looked at it.

"I doubt whether I ought not to report this matter to Dr. Chisholm and leave the Head to deal with it!" said Mr. Dalton sternly. "If, however, you apologise to Carthew at once, I will deal with the matter myself. You will, of course, be severely punished in any case."

"Oh!"

Carthew's eyes gleamed.



Crash! Carthew went flying out of the study and landed on his back in the Fourth Form passage. Whizz! His official ashplant came whirling out after him.

He was hardly sorry by this time that he had been " chucked " out of the end study. He had his old enemies now just where he wanted them, as it were.

Jimmy Silver & Co. exchanged dismal glances.

Apologising to the bully of the Sixth was a bitter pill to swallow, even though they realised that for once they had been in the wrong in their contest with their old enemy.

" You hear me ? " snapped Mr. Dalton. He was very angry, and it dawned upon the juniors that he was annoyed not only at their lawless action, but at having to admit that the bully of the Sixth had just cause for complaint against boys in his Form. They had, in fact, placed their Form-master in a very uncomfortable position.

" Very well, sir," said Jimmy Silver with an effort. " We were in the wrong, I suppose."

" I am glad you can see that, at all events," said Mr. Dalton dryly.

Jimmy looked at the prefect.

" Sorry, Carthew ! " he gasped.

" Sorry, Carthew ! " stammered Raby and Newcome, with visible efforts.

Arthur Edward Lovell gulped.

" Lovell ! " said Mr. Dalton, in an ominous voice.

" I—I——"

" I am waiting ! "

" Sorry, Carthew ! " spluttered Lovell, with a face crimson with rage.

" Very good ! " said Mr. Dalton. " Take this cane, Carthew, and cane these boys in my presence ! "

" Certainly, sir ! " said Carthew, unable to restrain a grin of triumph.

He gripped the cane.

" Bend over ! " he rapped out.

This time the order was not disobeyed. Under the keen, grim eye of Mr. Dalton, there was no question of disobedience.

Four hapless juniors bent over in turn, and each of them received six from the cane, well laid on by Carthew. The whacks of the cane rang through Mr. Dalton's study.

Carthew, perhaps, was a believer in the saying of that ancient king, that to spare the rod was to spoil the child. Certainly he ran no risk of spoiling Jimmy Silver & Co. by sparing the rod. He laid it on with all the force of his arm, and it was fortunate for them that he was not an athlete like Bulkeley.

It was over at last.

Four juniors stood wriggling with anguish, their faces quite pale. Mr. Dalton made a gesture of dismissal.

" You may go ! "

They went.

They wriggled out of the study, they wriggled along the passage, they wriggled up the stairs, they wriggled to the end study. They seemed unable to do anything but wriggle.

In the end study Lovell threw himself into the armchair. He jumped up again as if the seat of the chair were red-hot.

" Ow ! "

" Oh dear ! "

Sympathetic Fourth Formers looked into the study. They made sympathetic remarks. But sympathy, though doubtless grateful and comforting in its way, did not help the suffering four very much.

They groaned and grunted and wriggled dolorously.

" We'll make Carthew sit up for this ! " gasped Lovell at last. " We'll jolly well scrag him ! "

Jimmy Silver groaned.

" Oh, chuck it ! " he said.

" Yes, chuck it, for goodness' sake ! " mumbled Raby. " I'm fed-up with

Carthew! We played the goat and asked for this."

"Look here——"

"Chuck it!" growled Newcome. "Ow! Do you think we want any more of this, you silly owl? We asked for it and got it. We're not going to ask for any more. Wow!"

"I think——"

"No, you don't! You can't! If you were able to think, you wouldn't have landed us in this! Wow!"

"Look here——"

"Chuck it!" howled the three, in chorus.

And Arthur Edward Lovell snorted and chucked it.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

TOEING THE LINE.

"WHAT are you fellows going to do?"

"Nothing!"

It was the following day, after morning class.

Valentine Mornington joined the Fistical Four as the Fourth came out of their Form-room and walked out into the quadrangle with them.

Morny's face was dark, and there was a glint in his eyes.

He had been rather troublesome in class that morning, being in one of his bitter tempers, and Mr. Dalton had given him lines. Mr. Dalton, however, was not the object of Morny's wrath. All the Fourth knew what was the matter with Morny; it was the box on the ear he had received from Carthew the previous day.

That box on the ear had hurt Morny, especially in his pride. He had been savage and sulky ever since, even with Erroll, his best chum. Erroll had prevented him seeking instant vengeance on the bully of the Sixth; rightly judging that "punching a prefect" was rather too risky a proceeding for a junior of the Fourth Form. Besides, Morny had given provocation. He had grinned mockingly at the discomfited prefect, which was not respectful and was very irritating to Carthew. Really, he had no reason to be surprised that Carthew had smacked his head on that occasion. But, undoubtedly, he was deeply incensed and vengeful.

Morny's lip curled sardonically as Jimmy answered his question. The Fistical Four had recovered from their licking now and were in their usual cheery spirits. They were thinking chiefly of cricket and not at all of vengeance, which certainly was a much healthier frame of mind than Morny's.

"So you're taking it lyin' down?" asked Mornington.

"We took it bending over," grinned Newcome.

"You lettin' Carthew have the best of it?"

"Oh, rot!" said Jimmy Silver. "What's the good of that sort of talk, Morny? We played the goat, and got what we asked for. Carthew happened to be in the right for once."

"What a good little boy!" said Mornington admiringly. "Keep on like this, Jimmy, and you'll be a real shinin' light in the school!"

Jimmy Silver flushed angrily.

"Dry up, Morny," he said. "That's enough!"

"If you want to handle Carthew I'm willin' to help," said Mornington. "He smacked my head, and I'm not lettin' him off."

"Oh, rot!"

"You're lettin' it drop, then?"

"We've let it drop—or, rather, there's nothing to let drop," said Jimmy Silver impatiently. "Talk about something else, or don't talk at all!"

Valentine Mornington shrugged his shoulders.

"Go an' eat coke!" he said politely; and he walked away.

Lovell looked rather rebellious.

"That's all very well, Jimmy Silver!" he said.

"Of course it is," said Jimmy.

"But I think——"

"Don't begin thinking, old chap; you're not used to it, and goodness knows what might happen!"

"I think——" roared Lovell, "I tell you, Jimmy Silver, I think it's up to us to make Carthew sit up."

"What's that?"

It was Carthew's voice. He stepped out from behind a big beech as the Fistical Four came along. They had not seen him there. Carthew had a way of appearing silently and unexpectedly.

"Well, what are you young rascals plotting?" he asked.

Jimmy compressed his lips.

"Nothing!" he answered.

"What did you say, Lovell?"

"You heard what I said!" retorted Lovell. "You were listening!"

"So you are going to make me sit up, are you?"

Lovell did not answer.

"Is that the way to speak of a prefect, Lovell?"

No reply.

"You will take a hundred lines, Lovell!" said Carthew. "I'm going to teach you cheeky fags manners, or know the reason why. I shall expect those lines by tea-time!"

Lovell gasped with rage.

"You can expect!"

"If they're not handed in I shall look in at your study and bring my ashplant with me!" smiled Carthew.

He walked away airily.

"Do you think I'm going to stand this?" asked Arthur Edward Lovell, in a suppressed voice, glaring at his comrades.

"Don't be a goat!" said Jimmy Silver crossly. "You keep on putting us in the wrong. Any prefect would give you lines for talking like that!"

"Any other prefect wouldn't listen without letting a fellow see that he was there."

"I know that! But that doesn't alter the case. If you don't do the lines, you get a licking; if you don't take the licking, it means another row with Dicky Dalton. We've got to wait till Carthew puts himself in the wrong before we go for him."

"I'm not going to do the lines!"

"Oh, rats!"

There was rather a rift in the lute among the Fistical Four that day.

The hot-headed Lovell was determined not to do the lines, reckless of consequences. Jimmy Silver took quite a different view, and impressed it on Lovell without being heeded. Lovell was in the wrong again, and it was useless to let the matter go before Mr. Dalton. But Arthur Edward declined to listen to reason, and, instead of settling down to write his lines before tea, he picked up his hat in the study to go down to the nets.

Whereupon Jimmy Silver put his back to the study door.

"You haven't done your lines, Lovell!"

"I'm not going to do them!"

"Now look here, Lovell, don't be a silly ass! We don't want another row with Mr. Dalton, and we jolly well don't want another licking! Get your lines done before tea!"

"Bosh!"

"Then it's a study ragging for you!" said Jimmy.

Arthur Edward Lovell breathed wrath. He looked extremely belligerent; but fortunately he decided to

yield to the voice of the majority. With a very bad grace, he sat down to his lines. Even upon Arthur Edward's unreflecting mind it dawned that the end study's feud with Carthew would not prosper if they placed themselves in the wrong all the time.

The lines were duly written, and Lovell, with suppressed feelings, went to Carthew's study with them.

Carthew grinned as they were handed in to him.

"Thought better of it—what?" he asked pleasantly.

Lovell did not answer; he could not trust himself to speak. He backed out of the prefect's study, leaving Carthew grinning.

"Lovell!" shouted Carthew.

"Yes?" gasped Lovell.

"Come back and shut the door!"

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome were waiting for Lovell in the passage, sagely keeping an eye on their irate chum. Lovell gritted his teeth; but the whispered urging of his comrades influenced him, and he went back and shut Carthew's door.

"Now for the cricket!" said Jimmy cheerily.

"I shall land that jeering cad in the eye one of these days!" hissed Lovell.

"Oh, never mind him! Let's get some cricket."

And the Fistical Four walked away to Little Side and soon forgot Carthew of the Sixth and all his work.

Carthew was feeling quite pleased with himself.

'Carthew, you will cane these boys in my presence," said Mr. Dalton. "Certainly, sir," said Carthew, gripping the cane. "Bend over!"



He had a bitter dislike of the end study, formed chiefly upon the cheery independence of Jimmy Silver & Co. He flattered himself that he was bringing the cheeky young sweeps to heel at last. He was quite prepared for some reckless attempt at vengeance on their part, and prepared to make the most of it to their detriment if it happened.

But he was not quite prepared for what was to happen to him, all the same.

Carthew of the Sixth crossed over to Mr. Manders' House that evening for a visit to his friend Frampton there. When he came back the quadrangle was dark; the Houses were closed for all, except masters and prefects. It was a dark night; scarcely a glimmer of stars in the sky. In the distance, as Carthew walked along under the beeches, there was a glimmer of lighted windows in the House.

Certainly no thought of danger crossed Carthew's mind, but the danger was close at hand. There was a sudden rush of footsteps in the darkness and a whisper.

"Down him!"

And in the darkness hands closed suddenly and fiercely upon the bully of the Sixth, and he went with a crash to the ground.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

CARTHEW CATCHES IT.

CARTHEW of the Sixth lay and gurgled.

He was taken utterly by surprise, and the crash on the hard earth dazed him a little. His unseen and unexpected captors were not handling him ceremoniously.

"Groogh! Oh! Oooooh!"

Smack!

A hand came sharply over his mouth and closed there hard. Carthew was only spluttering for breath, but the unseen owner of the hand was taking precautions against a yell for help.

A knee was planted on Carthew's chest, pinning him down; another hand was added to that over his mouth, effectually silencing him; and his wrists were strongly grasped. Someone was trampling on his struggling legs at the same time.

Four of them—Carthew could feel four separate assailants—and he had no doubt about the identity of the four, though he could see hardly an inch from his nose in the thick darkness under the wide-spreading branches of the beech-trees.

The four chums of the end study, of course—Jimmy Silver and Lovell, Raby and Newcome! Carthew had not a doubt of it. This was the revenge of the Fistical Four—this was their retaliation, which he had been expecting more or less, though certainly not in this style.

Enraged, dazed as he was, Carthew could not help wondering at the reckless temerity of the four. This was a terribly serious matter—an attack on a Sixth Form prefect in the dark. It would mean a Head's flogging at least, if not the "sack," for the fellows concerned. And they could not hope to conceal their action. Carthew was absolutely assured that he knew into whose hands he had fallen. Indeed, it did not cross his excited mind for a single moment that his assailants were any other than Jimmy Silver & Co.—though, as a matter of fact, his bullying had made for him enemies enough in all the Lower Forms of Rookwood School.

He lay gasping, half-choking, under the grasp of the unseen juniors. The

hands over his mouth gripped hard; he was unable to utter a cry.

Suddenly the hands were withdrawn; but before Carthew could yell a cloth took their place, and it was wound round his face and head, not only gagging him, but blindfolding him as well.

He gasped helplessly.

Evidently his assailants had come prepared. This was no chance attack due to the juniors happening to see their opportunity. It was plain that he had been seen leaving the House, and that these young ruffians had watched and waited for him to return from Manders' House. It was an ambush that Carthew had blindly walked into.

But what did they mean? What did they intend to do with him?

A vague alarm crept over Carthew.

They might intend to give him a licking, perhaps with a borrowed ashplant from a prefect's study. That would have been bad enough. But he was beginning to dread that something worse was intended.

He struggled; but as he did so his head was seized and banged on the ground, as a warning to cease.

He ceased at once.

He was no match for the four fellows who had him in their grasp, and they had him at too great a disadvantage, too. And that reckless banging of his head warned him that he was in ruthless hands.

He lay quivering and gurgling, by this time in a state of something like terror. What was their game?

His wrists were drawn together, and a cord was slid round them. The cord was securely knotted.

Then his ankles were tied together.

After that another cord was wound about the cloth that circled his face, and tied over his mouth.

His assailants were leaving nothing to chance.

All the time not a word had been spoken; the unseen enemy worked in a silence that had something terrifying in it. Since the two whispered words that had preluded the rush he had heard no word spoken even in a whisper. They did not want him to hear their voices, doubtless. As if he was in any doubt of their identity whether he heard their voices or not!

His heart was throbbing with rage and fear as he felt himself lifted from the ground.

The four were moving away with him in the darkness. Whither? He gasped under the gagging cloth as his head knocked on the trunk of a tree.

"Careful!"

It was a whisper, but he heard it, though it was impossible to recognise the whispering voice. But, assured as he was that he was in the hands of the Fistical Four, he was quite certain it was the voice of one of the Co., and he thought it was Jimmy Silver's.

He was swung on—whither he could not even guess, but he knew that it must be in a direction away from the House. They would never dare to carry him near the lighted windows.

A door opened; he heard the creak of a hinge.

Then he was dumped down.

There was a sound of falling faggots, and two or three from the displaced heap knocked against him; and by that he knew that he was in the woodshed. The woodshed was locked up at night; apparently these young rascals had forced the padlock.

Carthew palpitated.

Why had they brought him there—a lonely and utterly deserted spot at night-time? A beating could have been administered under the beeches in the quad. Why was he taken there?

The cloth was drawn from his face. He opened his mouth for a yell, though it was very doubtful whether anyone was near enough to the woodshed at that hour to hear him yell. But a crumpled handkerchief was stuffed into his mouth as it opened—his own handkerchief, taken from his pocket. It effectually gagged him, jammed between his open jaws, and unseen hands ran the cord round it and secured it there. He glared about him in the darkness of the interior of the woodshed, but he could see nothing. He wondered savagely why his face had been uncovered. He was soon to learn.

The cloth—by its chalky smell he guessed that it was a duster annexed from a Form-room—was bandaged across his eyes. Then he heard a match strike, but still he could see nothing.

A familiar scent greeted his nostrils —the scent of tar. It reminded him of the fact that old Mack kept his tar-bucket in the woodshed.

Carthew shuddered.

He knew now what was coming, and he wriggled furiously in his bonds, but he wriggled in vain.

Cold and thick and clammy, the tar was daubed on his face.

He shuddered and wriggled.

There was a suppressed chuckle, and several matches were struck one after another. No doubt Carthew's face, blackening under the tar, afforded entertainment to the young rascals who were tarring him.

Thicker and thicker the tar was daubed on.

It was daubed on Carthew's hair, on the bandage over his eyes, on the stuffed handkerchief in his mouth, it oozed round his ears and down his neck, it trickled all over him.

And still it was daubed on thicker and thicker.

The chuckling was incessant, but no word was spoken. The tar-brush was stuck back into the bucket at last.

There was a rustling sound as the juniors groped away. Carthew heard them leaving the woodshed; he heard the door close; he heard the clink of the padlock chain as it was replaced.

Carthew was left alone, wriggling in his bonds, clammy with tar, and mad with rage.

How long was he to remain there?

He felt a chill of horror at the thought that he might not be missed and might have to remain as he was till Mack or someone came along to the woodshed in the morning. The four juniors, of course, had scuttled back into the House; they had to turn up for dorm. or be missed. But a prefect of the Sixth would not be missed after last roll unless somebody dropped into his room and noticed he was not there; after the House was locked up it would be supposed that he had gone to bed.

It was an unnerving thought. He struggled furiously in his bonds, but only succeeded in abrading his wrists and ankles. He was tied too securely to get loose. Then he concentrated on the stuffed handkerchief in his mouth, and bit and chewed at it, almost choking over the tar that oozed into his mouth as he did so. But it was a long, long time before he succeeded in getting partly rid of the gag and was able to yell.

Then he yelled, huskily and frantically, for help.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

THE FISTICAL FOUR ARE WANTED.

JIMMY SILVER looked into Study No. 4 in the Classical Fourth passage.

"Dorm!" he said. "We're going up! Hallo, isn't Morny here?"

Erroll shook his head.

There was a cloud on Kit Erroll's brow.

"No," he answered. "All serene, I'll call him!"

"Right-ho," said Jimmy, and he walked away and joined Lovell and Raby and Newcome.

Erroll, with a clouded face, went along the passage to the first study. That study belonged to Peele, Lattrey, and Gower, the three black sheep of the Rookwood Fourth. As a rule, Valentine Mornington kept clear of that study, but when he was annoyed with his chum he would drop in on Peele & Co., possibly because the wilful and reckless fellow knew that it troubled Erroll to know that he was in bad company.



Cold and thick and clammy, the tar daubed on Carthew's face! No word was spoken, but the chuckling was incessant.

Erroll knocked at the door, and heard a chuckle as he opened it. There was a whiff of smoke in the study, and Peele, Lattrey and Gower grinned at him over cigarettes.

Valentine Mornington was there, though he was not smoking like the three shady rascals with whom he consorted.

"Hallo, old Sobersides!" said Morny cheerfully. He had been ratty with his chum all day, and had wholly deserted him that evening; but he seemed to be restored to good humour now.

"Looked in to join us in a smoke, what?" asked Peele, with a grin.

Erroll's lip curled. He was not likely to join the dingy trio in any of their delectable pursuits.

"I've looked in to mention that it's bedtime, Morny," he said, taking no notice of Cyril Peele. "Better not let a prefect come and look for you and find you here like this."

"What-ho!" chuckled Peele. "Thanks for the tip, Erroll! Blessed if I noticed it was so late. We've

been rather busy this evenin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Valentine Mornington left the study with his chum, with a nod to Peele & Co., and followed more slowly.

Erroll's face was set and clouded. Morny grinned as he glanced at him.

"Missed me this evenin'?" he asked.

"Not specially," answered Erroll shortly.

"Thanks!" grinned Mornington. "You've been enjoying yourself with jolly old Euripides, what?"

"Yes. I've been putting in some Greek."

"Then you didn't want me," yawned Mornington.

"You're your own master," said Erroll. "You know I'm sorry to see you playing the goat again, but it's your own bizney."

Mornington laughed.

"You think I've been playin' banker in Peele's study?" he asked.

"I know you have."

"Off-side!" chuckled Mornington. "I haven't touched or even seen a giddy card all the evenin'! You're caught out, old man! Ha, ha!"

Erroll looked at him.

"Well, I know what usually goes on in Peele's study when those fellows stay up after prep," he said. "Naturally, I supposed——"

"Naturally!" agreed Mornington. "Nevertheless, my beloved 'earers, you were wrong for once."

"I'm glad of it. But"—Erroll looked puzzled—"I can't imagine what you've been up to, then. An hour with that crew would bore me to tears—and you, too, without nap or banker to pass the time."

"Oh, they can be entertainin' at times," said Morny. "They're fellows I can ask to back me up in a stunt that you would turn down at once."

"I'd back you up in anything, and you know it, Morny—if it was anything a fellow ought to do."

"It might be something a fellow oughtn't to do!" chuckled Morny. "Depends on the point of view! Might be some awfully lawless proceedin', with the jolly old sack loomin' in the distance. Fancy you backin' me up in anythin' you might be bunked for."

"I don't quite follow. You haven't been out of school bounds during the evening, have you?"

"Oh, no! I've been applyin' some salve to my damaged ear."

"What?"

"Don't you remember Carthew smacked my ear yesterday? It hurt me fearfully—in my jolly old dignity. I had to apply a healin' salve; and that's what I've been doin' this evenin'. Those fellows helped me."

"I don't understand you in the least."

"No need," said Mornington coolly.

They arrived in the dormitory and nothing more was said, Erroll remaining very much puzzled. Bulkeley of the Sixth was there to turn out the lights for the Classical Fourth.

"Hallo, there's Dicky!" murmured Arthur Edward Lovell, as Mr. Dalton appeared in the doorway.

The Fourth Form master glanced in, and the juniors observed that his face was very grave.

Mornington started a little. Peele and Lattrey and Gower exchanged quick glances uneasily and avoided looking at the Form-master.

Mr. Dalton stepped in.

"Silver!"

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy.

"You and Lovell and Raby and Newcome will follow me. The rest of the Form will go to bed. as usual," said Mr. Dalton.

" Oh, my hat ! I mean—yes, sir."

Bulkeley looked inquiringly at the Form-master. Mr. Dalton gave no explanation, however.

He waited while the Fistical Four put on their shoes, which they had already removed.

Then they followed him from the dormitory. A buzz of excited voices broke out after they were gone. Bulkeley, in great astonishment at the unusual proceeding, stepped into the passage and glanced at the Form-master and the four juniors following him to the stairs. He was quite in the dark as to what had happened.

" What on earth——" said Putty of the Fourth. " Anybody know what's up ? "

" Goodness knows ! " said Conroy.

" Those chaps are for it, anyhow," said Townsend. " I could see that in Dicky Dalton's face."

" They've been goin' for that cad Carthew, I'll bet my hat ! " said Topham.

" Yaas, that's it," agreed Towny.

Erroll crossed over to Mornington, who was sitting on the side of his bed, taking his shoes off in a leisurely way.

" Morny, do you know what's up ? "

Valentine Mornington looked at him with a smile.

" How should I know ? "

" You've been up to something with Peele's gang. They looked scared when Mr. Dalton showed up and——"

" Did they ? What eyes you've got. Did I look scared ? " smiled Morny.

" No. But——" Erroll breathed hard. " Morny, old man, if you've been playing some fool trick you can't leave others to take the blame of it."

Mornington shrugged his shoulders.

" Am I the kind of fellow to hide behind other chaps ? " he asked disdainfully.

" No ; I'm not sure. But——"

" Leave it alone, old man ! The less you know about it the better," said Morny coolly. " It's a bunkin' job if it comes out. I'm not exactly yearnin' to be sacked from the school. And for that jolly good reason I'm not goin' to open my mouth too wide. Catch on ? "

" But——" muttered Erroll.

" Assez, mon cher ! " grinned Mornington.

Bulkeley came back into the dormitory.

" Now then, turn in, you kids ! "

" What's up, Bulkeley ? " asked a dozen voices.

" I don't know. Turn in ! "

The Classical Fourth turned in, and Bulkeley put out the light and left the dormitory. But the juniors were not likely to settle down to sleep. From one end of the dormitory to the other ran an excited buzz of talk.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

ACCUSED !

HORACE GREELY jumped.

It was enough to make any man jump, even a heavy-weight like Horace Greely, master of the Rookwood Fifth.

Mr. Greely was taking a little walk and smoking a cigar in the pleasant summer evening. The night was soft and still and dark. Only a whisper of a breeze stirred the leaves of the old beeches. And suddenly from the silence came a hoarse, husky howl.

" Help ! "

" Bless my soul ! " exclaimed Mr. Greely.

" Help ! Help ! "

" Upon my word ! "

The Fifth Form-master removed the cigar from his mouth and stared about him. The husky shout was

repeated again and again, and then Mr. Greely got his bearings.

He rolled off towards the woodshed, whence the husky shouting proceeded. Something had happened to somebody there, that was certain. Mr. Greely had a vague idea that perhaps old Mack had had a fall, perhaps with a stack of logs tumbling over him, or something of the sort. Anyhow, Horace Greely was prepared to render first aid.

He reached the woodshed and struck a match. It was very dark. The padlock appeared to be in order, and he was puzzled. But from the interior of the building came the husky shouting.

"Bless my soul! Who is calling?" exclaimed Mr. Greely.

"Help! It's me—I—Carthew!"

"Carthew of the Sixth Form!" exclaimed the astonished Mr. Greely.

"Ow! Yes."

"Bless my soul! Are you hurt?"

"Groogh! I'm tied up. Help!"

"Tied up?" repeated Mr. Greely. "How can you be tied up in the woodshed, Carthew? This is absurd!"

"Wow! Help!"

"I am quite unable to enter Carthew, as the door is padlocked. I will call Mack."

"It isn't locked!" howled Carthew.

"It appears to be locked."

"It isn't!" yelled Carthew. "It can't be, as those young scoundrels brought me in here. Try it!"

"I will try it, Carthew. But it certainly appears to be locked," said Mr. Greely.

He struck another match and examined the padlock. He discerned now what had escaped his first glance—that the lock had been forced and replaced to give it an appearance of being fastened. It was, however, easy to jerk open, and Mr. Greely jerked it open and threw back the door.

"Where are you, Carthew?"

"Here," hissed Carthew, wriggling painfully. "I'm tied hand and foot."

"Absurd! Who could have tied you hand and foot, Carthew?"

Carthew spluttered with rage. He recognised Mr. Greely's fruity voice and he would have been glad to tell Mr. Greely what he thought of him. Obviously, however, it was not a judicious moment for doing so.

"A gang of fags—Silver and his friends. I was rushed in the dark and brought here, tied up!" he gasped.

"Bless my soul!"

"Let me loose!"

"Certainly, Carthew! This is a most extraordinary occurrence—most extraordinary!" said Mr. Greely, in great astonishment. "A most lawless proceeding—extremely lawless! I am surprised and shocked."

"Will you let me loose?" hissed Carthew, not at all interested in the surprised and shocked state of Horace Greely.

"Certainly—certainly!"

Mr. Greely struck another match and blinked round for Carthew. He gave a jump as a black face stared at him the eyes blindfolded.

"Who—who is that?" The match burned his fingers, and he dropped it with a sharp exclamation. "Ow! Oh! Oh dear! What—what is that? Is—is there a negro here, Carthew?"

"No!" shrieked Carthew.

"I—I saw a black face—a hideous black face!"

"They've tarred my face."

"Oh!"

Another match gleamed out, and the Fifth Form master stooped over Mark Carthew. He stooped over him



"Who is that? What—what——" exclaimed Mr. Dalton, startled. "Is it possible that that is a Rookwood boy?" "I'm Carthew!" shrieked the tarry object. "I'm going to the Head."

very gingerly. In his present state, with clammy tar oozing all over him, the bully of the Sixth was not nice to touch.

"There's a cord knotted round my wrists and another round my ankles!" gasped Carthew. "Take this rag off my eyes and let me see!"

Mr. Greely removed the tarry duster, and Carthew's glaring eyes glowed at him. The ferocity in Carthew's glare quite startled Mr. Greely.

"You've got a penknife, sir?" gasped Carthew.

"Yes, I—I certainly have a penknife, Carthew. But I really do not see how I can touch you without becoming very unpleasantly tarry, Carthew. You are—hem—in a disgusting state!"

"Please cut the cords, sir!"

Mr. Greely eyed him very dubiously in the light of a match.

"I will call Mack, Carthew," he said.

"I say, sir, don't go!"

"I will tell Mack to come quickly."

"I—I say——"

No answer.

Mr. Greely was gone. Carthew really was too tarry for a particular gentleman to touch.

Carthew of the Sixth lay, gritting his teeth, for long minutes. Mr. Greely had promised to send Mack

quickly, but old Mack was a leisurely man in his movements. It seemed to the hapless Carthew an age before the glimmer of a lantern broke into the darkness of the woodshed.

Old Mack came in grunting.

"Cut me loose, Mack!" howled Carthew, glaring at him.

"Mr. Greely, he says——"

"Will you cut me loose?"

"Jest what I've come 'ere for, sir," said old Mack stolidly. "You ain't nice to touch, sir, but 'ere goes."

Mack set down the lantern and, with maddening slowness, opened an old, horn-handled pocket-knife. Carthew looked at him as if he could bite him the while. But at last old Mack began to saw the cords.

There was a fiendish yell from Carthew.

"Yarooh!"

"What's the matter, sir?"

"You silly idiot!" shrieked Carthew. "You're sawing my skin."

"P'r'aps you'd rather I didn't cut these 'ere cords, sir?"

Carthew ground his teeth.

"Get on with it, you fool!"

Old Mack got on with it.

He did not get on very fast, and perhaps by accident he sawed the hapless Carthew several times in the process. Possibly he did not like being called an idiot and a fool by the fellow he had come there to help.

But Carthew was released at last.

He squirmed to his feet, panting for breath, giving Mack a glare of rage in return for the grin that wrinkled old Mack's ancient countenance.

Then he rushed out of the woodshed.

Black and tarry, dishevelled and breathless, he rushed for the House. The door had been left ajar by Mr. Greely, and Carthew hurled it open and rushed in. There was a yell from Neville of the Sixth as he sighted him.

"Who — what — what — who's that?"

"Who's that dashed nigger?" yelled Hansom of the Fifth. A dozen senior fellows stared at Carthew blankly.

"It's Carthew!" yelled Talboys of the Fifth suddenly. "I know his bags. I don't know his face. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Carthew cast a tarry glare of fury round him. Mr. Dalton came quickly out of his study with a startled face.

"Who is that? What—what—— Is it possible that that is a Rookwood boy? What does this mean?"

"I'm Carthew!" shrieked the tarry object. "I'm going to the Head. Your boys have done this, Mr. Dalton. Silver and Lovell and that lot. I'm going to the Head!"

"Carthew, you accuse——"

"I've been kidnapped, tied up, tarred!" Carthew choked with rage. "They'll jolly well be bunked for this! Grooogh! I'm going to the Head!"

"You had better not go to the Head in that state, Carthew!"

"I'm going!"

Carthew rushed on. Mr. Dalton stared after him, and then quietly ascended the staircase to the Fourth Form dormitory, to call the accused juniors. The Classical Fourth had gone to bed, but this was a matter that would not wait.

"Well, Carthew got it this time!" chuckled Hansom of the Fifth. "He's a beastly bully, anyhow. I dare say he asked for it."

"But it's the sack for the johnnies who did it, all the same!" remarked Talboys.

"Oh, no doubt about that! It's the sack for Silver of the Fourth and

his pals!" agreed Hansom. And that remark greeted Jimmy Silver & Co. as they came down the staircase at the heels of Mr. Dalton.

Jimmy Silver started.

"What's that?" he exclaimed.

"The jolly old sack for you!" grinned Hansom. "I suppose you knew what to expect when you handled Carthew like that?"

"What do you mean? We haven't touched Carthew."

"He says you have, and he seems to know!" chuckled Hansom.

"Follow me, my boys!" broke in Mr. Dalton sternly. "Carthew is with Dr. Chisholm now, and you must see the Head at once."

"But, sir——" exclaimed Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Follow me!"

And in a surprised and extremely unquiet frame of mind, Jimmy Silver and Co. followed their Form-master to the Head's study.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

CARTHEW'S REPORT!

"WHAT—what—what——" Dr. Chisholm started to his feet.

He started so suddenly that he dropped his pen, scattering blots over the sheet of paper on his writing table that was half-covered with Greek.

He was startled.

It was enough to startle any old gentleman, to hear a sudden, piercing scream ring out in the corridor outside his study door.

The Head of Rookwood had been deep in a pleasant task—elucidating some of the little difficulties in one of the more obscure passages of Sophocles. This was the kind of occupation that made Dr. Chisholm really happy and contented, and helped him to realise that life really was worth living. But as that loud, terrified scream rang through the House he forgot even Sophocles.

"What—what—— Bless my soul, what——"

There was a patter of flying feet in the corridor.

The Head's study door burst open.

A female figure rushed in, still screaming.

"Janet!" gasped the Head.

It was the duty of Janet, the maid, to close the corridor windows in the evening. Apparently she had been occupied with that duty when something had happened.

And quite evidently that something had scared her.

Janet was pale with terror, and screaming, as she flew into the Head's study, the nearest refuge.

"Oh, save me!"

"What—what——"

"Save me!"

The Head came round from behind his writing-table. Sophocles lay unheeded; a dozen blots congealed on the Head's masterly elucidation of the obscurities of that great poet. A terrified housemaid was not really of much importance, in comparison with Sophocles; but the Head was a kind-hearted old gentleman. Moreover, he was startled and alarmed.

"Janet! What—what——"

Scream from Janet.

"Oh, save me!"

She flung herself into the protecting arms of the headmaster. She clutched him for support.

"Bless my soul!" gasped Dr. Chisholm. "Janet, calm yourself! Release me at once, my good girl! For goodness' sake——"

"Save me! Keep him off!"

"He—— Who—— What?"

"That dreadful negro—— Save me!"

" Good heavens ! Janet, I command you to release me ! This is most—most embarrassing ! " gasped the Head.

There were footsteps in the corridor. Someone was hurrying towards the Head's study. Apparently it was the dreadful apparition that Janet had seen, and that had so terrified her.

The Head stared at the open doorway.

It was impossible to get rid of Janet ; the terrified girl was clinging to the Head for protection quite convulsively, and still screaming. Really, it was a very embarrassing position for the old gentleman.

" What—— Who—who—— " stuttered the Head, as a startled figure appeared in the doorway.

A black face—black as the ace of spades—glared into the study. For a second the Head was petrified.

Janet shrieked.

" Keep him away ! Save me ! "

" Who—what—who are you ? " shouted the Head.

His alarm was only momentary ; it quickly changed to wrath. In the dimly lit corridor Janet had taken that fearsome figure for a " dreadful negro " ; but in the light of the study the Head saw, at the second glance, that the blackness of the face was caused by tar. Tar, thick and clammy, covered the face of the newcomer and oozed over his clothes. But his clothes were the ordinary garb of a Sixth Form fellow of Rookwood.

" Sir—— "

" Who are you ? " thundered the Head. " What does this mean ? "

" I'm Carthew—— "

" Carthew ! Are you Carthew of the Sixth Form ? "

" Yes, sir ! I—— "

" How dare you ? How dare you play these pranks, Carthew—you, a Sixth Form prefect ! " exclaimed the Head passionately. " Upon my word ! You have dared to blacken your face and frighten the maids, you—you utterly absurd and idiotic boy ! Are you in your right senses, Carthew ? "

" I—I—I—— "

" Janet ! Calm yourself ! Release me instantly ! " roared the Head. " Cannot you see, you foolish girl, that this is not a negro at all ? It is simply a foolish boy playing an absurd trick ! Release me, I tell you ! "

With more energy than courtesy, Dr. Chisholm jerked away Janet's clutching arms and fairly shoved her off.

His face was crimson with anger and mortification.

The situation was ridiculous ; and the Head was keenly sensitive on the point of his dignity ; ridicule and the Head of Rookwood ought to have been as far as the poles asunder.

Janet tottered and blinked uneasily and fearfully at the amazing figure in the doorway.

" I—I—I—was frightened ! " she stammered.

" Naturally," said the Head. " I excuse you ! It was natural ! The blame is this foolish boy's ! I shall punish him with the greatest severity ! "

" I—I thought it was a burglar."

" Yes, yes ! "

" A dreadful negro—— "

" Yes, yes, yes ! "

" I was so frightened—— "

" Yes, yes, yes, yes ! Pray go now, Janet, and leave me to deal with this stupid, this reckless trickster ! "

Janet tottered from the study, still very much upset.

Dr. Chisholm fixed an almost deadly look on Carthew of the Sixth.

" I shall now deal with you, Carthew ! " he said. " Your conduct

is inexplicable—absolutely inexplicable. Such a trick in a junior boy of the Fourth Form would be inexcusable; but in a Sixth Form boy—a prefect——"

"It isn't a trick, sir!" stuttered Carthew. "Let me explain, sir."

"What do you mean?" thundered the Head.

"I've been attacked, sir."

"What?"

"I was collared——"

"Collared?"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Carthew.

"What do you mean by 'collared'?"

"I—I mean, collared, sir—that is, seized."

"If you mean that you were seized, why do you not say that you were seized! Cannot you, a Sixth Form boy, speak English?"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Carthew. "I mean I was collared—that is, seized—suddenly in the quad, in the dark, and tied up—tied hand and foot, sir——"

"Nonsense!"

"I was, sir!" spluttered Carthew. "Four Fourth Form boys did it. They tied me up and yanked me——"

"They what?"

"I mean, dragged me, sir—dragged me away to the woodshed, and smothered me with tar, sir——"

"Impossible!"

"They left me tied up, sir, and gagged, and—and I should be there now, only I managed to shout, and Mr. Greely heard me——"

"Incredible!"

"On my word, sir! I—I came at once to tell you, sir—to report what had happened. I thought I'd let you see me like this, sir, so that you would know——"

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the Head, aghast. "A Sixth Form prefect of Rookwood seized in the dark, tied up, tarred—impossible! I could never have believed that such a thing could happen at Rookwood! If matters are as you state, Carthew, of course you are not to blame, though it was very unfortunate that you frightened that foolish girl. Who were the boys that attacked you as you describe?"

"Silver, Lovell, Raby and Newcome, of the Fourth Form, sir."

"I will send for them at once!"

And Carthew of the Sixth grinned



A black face—black as the ace of spades—glanced into the study. For a second the Head was petrified, and Janet shrieked. "Keep him away! Save me!"

under his coating of tar. At long last he had downed Jimmy Silver and Co. This was a " bunking " matter, and it was the " long jump " for the end study, a very satisfactory ending to the feud, so far as Mark Carthew was concerned.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

THE CHOPPER COMES DOWN!

JIMMY SILVER & Co. followed Mr. Dalton, their Form-master, to the Head's study with grave and troubled faces.

It was past the bedtime of the juniors; all other fellows of Forms below the Fifth were in their dormitories. But behind the Fistical Four, as they followed Mr. Dalton, was a buzz of voices. The amazing appearance of Carthew, covered and smothered with tar, had caused a sensation in the House.

Janet was not the only person who had been startled.

Hansom & Co. of the Fifth were chuckling; they were greatly entertained by Carthew's misadventure. Most of the Sixth Form fellows had come out of their rooms, but these fellows took a more serious view of the matter than the Fifth did.

Carthew was not popular in his own Form, but he was a Sixth Form man and a prefect, so the affair seemed serious to the Sixth. When a Sixth Form prefect was treated like this, it was time for the skies to fall —in the opinion of the Sixth, at least.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were worried and troubled. They hardly knew yet what had happened, only that something of a startling nature had happened to Carthew, the bully of the Sixth, their old enemy. But they knew that they were accused, and that they had been fetched away from their dormitory to appear before the Head. Innocent or guilty, it was not a light matter to be called on the carpet before the Head.

Mr. Dalton shepherded them into the study.

" Here are the boys, sir, whom Carthew accuses," he said.

" Very good, Mr. Dalton."

Jimmy Silver & Co. stared at Carthew.

Had they not known that the tarry, blackened fellow was Carthew of the Sixth, certainly they would not have recognised him. His features had disappeared under the tar.

Carthew's eyes glittered at them.

To do him justice, Carthew had no doubt—no doubt whatever—that the Fistical Four were the authors of this unexampled outrage.

In the whispering voices he was assured that he had detected the tones of the juniors of the end study. He had, in fact, heard what he expected to hear!

And now they were going to get the " chopper." An affair like this would not be dealt with by a flogging. It was the " sack," short and sharp, for Lower boys who had handled a prefect in this manner.

This was the hour of Carthew's triumph, and it solaced him for the tar and for the long time he had spent tied up in the woodshed.

The Head's face was dark with anger.

In spite of the seriousness of the situation, Jimmy Silver & Co. could scarcely repress a grin at the sight of Carthew's extraordinary aspect.

The Head's deep voice boomed at them.

" This is not a laughing matter! "

The four juniors became serious at once.

It was not, indeed, a laughing

matter, for the fellows who had handled Carthew! They were not the fellows, as it happened; but, obviously, they were going to be accused.

"Silver! Lovell! Raby! Newcome!"

The Head rapped out the names like pistol-shots.

"Yes, sir!"

"Carthew accuses you of seizing him in the quadrangle, in the dark, and treating him in this disgraceful manner. You must be aware that if your guilt is proved, you will leave Rookwood School immediately! Have you anything to say?"

"We didn't do it, sir," said Jimmy Silver.

"You deny it?"

"Yes, sir!"

"We never knew anything had happened, sir, till Mr. Dalton came to the dormitory for us," said Arthur Edward Lovell.

"I shall not condemn you lightly," said the Head. "The matter will be dealt with at once, and you will be allowed to defend yourselves. You have no doubt, Carthew, as to the identity of your assailants?"

"None whatever, sir."

"You definitely accuse these boys?"

"Yes, sir."

Carthew glared at the four with contempt, as well as anger. Assured as he was of their guilt, he was taken aback by their prompt denial. He disliked Jimmy Silver & Co. intensely, but, somehow, he could not help respecting them; he had never expected to hear them tell falsehoods, even to avert the "sack."

Somehow or other, he had expected them to stand manfully by what they had done, in spite of the serious consequences.

But it was rather a satisfaction to him, than otherwise, to hear them utter false denials, as he supposed. It seemed to justify, to some extent, his dislike of them.

Carthew was a bad-hearted fellow; but he did not like to admit to himself that he disliked fellows for their good qualities.

There was a pause in the Head's study.

Mr. Dalton broke in:

"Dr. Chisholm, I am bound to say that I have always found these four boys truthful, and should have no hesitation in relying on their word."

"They are lying, sir!" said Carthew contemptuously.

"That must be proved!" said the Fourth Form master tartly.

"Undoubtedly!" said the Head. "The authors of this outrage will be expelled from the school without mercy. But the punishment must fall on the right shoulders. Carthew, tell me precisely what occurred."

"I'd been over to Mr. Manders' House, sir, to see Frampton about—about the cricket. I was coming back, when these four juniors rushed on me under the beeches, and knocked me over."

"You recognised them?"

"It was very dark, sir, under the trees."

"You did not recognise them?" asked Mr. Dalton coldly.

"I couldn't in the dark!" said Carthew savagely. "That is why they chose that place where the trees are thick over the path. But I jolly well recognised their voices when they spoke!"

"And what occurred next?" asked the Head.

"I was tied up, sir, like a—a turkey, hand and foot, and carried away to the woodshed. There they

smothered me with tar, as you see me now, sir. I was left tied up, with a handkerchief stuffed in my mouth."

"Outrageous!"

"I think I must have been there hours—anyhow, it was a long time," said Carthew. "It seemed a jolly long time. But I got the handkerchief out of my mouth at last, and shouted, and Mr. Greely heard me, and came. I never expected them to deny it. They knew I knew them at the time."

"What have you to say now, Silver?"

"Only that we never touched Carthew, sir," said Jimmy.

"You have heard Carthew state that he recognised your voices."

"He must have been mistaken, sir."

"Have you had any trouble recently with these juniors, Carthew, to cause a desire for revenge?"

"Yes, sir. Mr. Dalton knows," said Carthew. "I had to punish Lovell yesterday for breaking the rule about sliding down the banisters. The four of them set on me——"

"Upon my word!"

"Mr. Dalton sent for them, and they were punished," said Carthew.

"That is correct," said the Fourth Form master.

"Only to-day, I heard Lovell uttering threats against me," went on Carthew. "I gave him a hundred lines for it."

"I did the lines!" growled Lovell.

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome gave Arthur Edward expressive glances. Often and often they had told Arthur Edward that he opened his mouth too wide. Once more he had done so, with unfortunate results. They realised very clearly how much reckless talk would tell against them now, if the real culprits were not discovered.

"You threatened Carthew, Lovell?" said the Head grimly.

"Not exactly threatened him, sir!" stammered Lovell.

"What words did you use?"

"I—I said we'd make him sit up."

"Sit up!" repeated the Head. Apparently the headmaster of Rookwood was unacquainted with that slangy expression; or, at least, chose to appear unacquainted with it. "What did you mean by that, Lovell?"

"I—I mean we'd make him squirm, sir!" said Lovell, reddening.

"Squirm?"

"I—I mean——"

"Well, what do you mean?" snapped the Head. "Cannot the boys of your Form express themselves in their mother-tongue, Mr. Dalton?"

"I—I only meant we'd go for him. I mean I meant we'd—we'd retaliate!" gasped Lovell.

"I understand! You assaulted a prefect who was carrying out his duties and your Form-master very properly punished you; and then you threatened to retaliate on the prefect?"

Lovell was silent.

Put like that, it sounded serious enough; but, of course, it had never presented itself to Lovell's mind quite like that. But it was obviously useless to attempt to explain further.

"And your retaliation, it seems, has taken place," said the Head grimly. "It took the form of seizing upon Carthew and treating him in this disgraceful and disgusting manner?"

"No, sir!" gasped Lovell.

"You admit——"

"I—I said we'd make him sit up," groaned Lovell. "I—I never meant anything in particular, sir. I was

waxy—I mean, wild—that is annoyed."

"You are absolutely certain, Carthew, that you recognised the voices of the juniors here present?"

"Absolutely, sir!"

"You have no doubt whatever that they were your assailants?"

"None at all, sir! I know they were! I can't understand their impudence in denying it."

The juniors looked at Carthew. He was speaking with bitter emphasis and undoubted earnestness. He believed what he said, they could see that; at all events, he believed so deeply and sincerely that they were the guilty parties that he allowed himself to stretch a point to prove what he believed to be the truth.

Had Carthew been lying—had he simply taken this opportunity of "downing" his old enemies, regardless of the truth—doubtless the Head would have discerned some clue to it; he was an extremely keen old gentleman, and thirty years' experience with boys of all sorts and conditions had enabled him to sift the false from the true.

But the fact was that Carthew was not lying. He was mistaken; but he was saying what he believed to be true, and that was quite a different matter.

His words carried conviction.

Not only in the Head's face, but in that of Mr. Dalton the hapless four could read conviction.

There was a long, long pause, during which the hearts of the four juniors beat painfully.

The Head's face was hardening grimly.

"It comes to this!" he said at last, with the manner of a judge summing-up. "You four juniors assaulted Carthew, and were punished for it; you were heard uttering threats against him; and this was followed by this outrage. And Carthew states explicitly that he recognised the voices of his assailants, and that the voices were yours. It is impossible for any doubt to exist in the matter. You agree with me, Mr. Dalton?"

"I can only assent, sir," said the master of the Fourth reluctantly. "If Carthew is positive that——"

"Absolutely, sir!"

Dr. Chisholm raised his hand and regarded Jimmy Silver & Co.

"To-morrow morning you will leave Rookwood!" he said. "This matter is too serious for a mere flogging. Boys who are guilty of such an outrage as this cannot be suffered to remain in the school, or, indeed, to associate in any way with other Rookwood boys. Mr. Dalton, you will kindly see that the punishment-room is prepared, and that these boys are placed in it for the night; they are not to be allowed to return to their dormitory. They will leave by the first train in the morning!"

"Very well, sir!" said Richard Dalton heavily.

Jimmy Silver's heart thumped.

The "chopper" had come down—come down so suddenly, so overwhelmingly, that it was bewildering.

"We did not do it, sir!" gasped Jimmy.

"That will do!"

"We never touched Carthew, sir!" exclaimed Raby.

"Falsehood will not serve you now!" said the Head coldly.

"But we—we didn't, sir!" gasped Newcome, in bewildered dismay. "You—you can't bunk us for something we never did, sir!"

"Silence!"

"But, sir——"

"The matter is closed! Mr. Dalton,

kindly take these boys to the punishment-room."

"But, sir——" stuttered Jimmy Silver.

"Come, my boys!" said Mr. Dalton quietly.

And in overwhelming dismay, hardly able to believe in the reality of the catastrophe that had fallen on them, Jimmy Silver & Co. almost tottered from the Head's study.

THE NINTH CHAPTER

A SURPRISE FOR THE FOURTH

VALENTINE MORNINGTON sat up in bed as the rising-bell rang out in the summer morning, and yawned. Then he glanced along the row of white beds and started a little as he noted that four of them were vacant.

Morny whistled softly.

Jimmy Silver and Lovell, Raby and Newcome, were not in the dormitory. Their beds had not been slept in.

Mornington's careless face became rather grave. He met the glance of his chum Erroll as the latter sat up.

"The dear boys seem to have had a night out, Erroll!" Morny remarked lightly, with a gesture towards the empty beds.

"I knew they hadn't come back," said Erroll quietly. "I was awake rather late, and they hadn't come."

"I dropped off," said Morny, with another yawn. "Why the thump have they stayed out?"

"It's trouble, of course."

"Looks like it!" agreed Morny. And he turned lazily out of bed.

There was a buzz of excited comment in the Fourth Form dormitory as the other fellows turned out and all the Form became aware of the fact that Jimmy Silver & Co. had passed the night elsewhere.

It was an extraordinary happening; it was amazing. The four juniors had followed Mr. Dalton downstairs to see the Head the night before, and they had not returned. What had happened to them?

"The punishment-room, of course," said Conroy. "But what the thump are they there for?"

"Goodness knows!" yawned Morny.

"It's something jolly serious!" said Oswald. "It must be."

"No doubt about that!" agreed Putty of the Fourth. "But what?"

"They've been going for Carthew, you know," said Tubby Muffin. "You fellows know that Lovell has been shouting out what he was going to do to Carthew. Well, he's done it, and he's got nailed."

"Likely enough," said Oswald.

"Looks like it, by gad!" remarked Cyril Peele, and he closed one eye at Valentine Mornington, who laughed.

Peele's chums, Gower and Lattrey, looked rather uneasy. Peele was quite cool, however; and Mornington was even more airy and careless than was his wont. Kit Erroll, looking at the four many times with doubt and suspicion, wondered.

The Classical Fourth were soon down; even Tubby Muffin did not dawdle that morning. All the juniors were anxious to hear what had happened to Jimmy Silver & Co.

Erroll joined Morny going down; and the dandy of the Fourth gave him a rather cynical, mocking look. Plainly, he expected Erroll to speak and question him; but Erroll said nothing, though his handsome face, always grave, was now much graver than usual.

The big door of the House was open, and Mr. Dalton was standing there, looking out into the morning sunshine in the green old quad, with a puckered and troubled brow.

Erroll came up to the Form-master, and some of the Fourth lingered at hand to hear what was said.

"Excuse me, sir!" began Erroll. "May I ask whether anything has happened to Silver and his friends?"

Mr. Dalton nodded to him.

"Yes, Erroll! I am sorry to say that they are expelled from the school," he said.

"Expelled, sir!" exclaimed Erroll.

There was an excited buzz from the other juniors. Gower and Lattrey turned quite pale; Peel breathed deep and hard. Even Mornington started and bit his lip.

"Yes, Erroll! It is a heavy blow to me," said Mr. Dalton. "I am more sorry than I can say."

"But—but what—what——"

"What have they done, sir?" asked Mornington. "I suppose they've done somethin' to be bunked for."

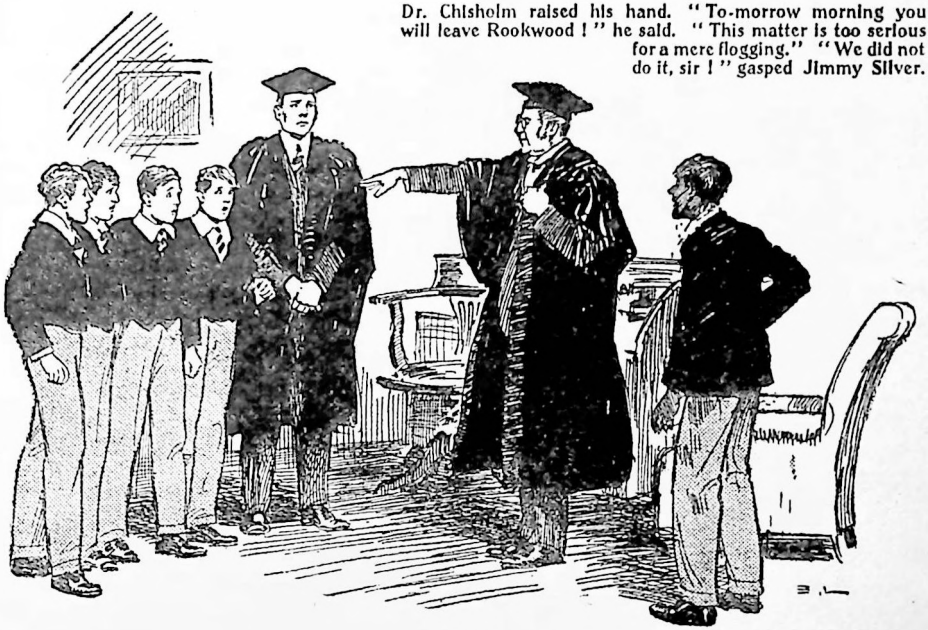
Mr. Dalton glanced at him. Evidently he did not approve of Morny's light and bantering tone. But he answered quietly.

"Last night Carthew of the Sixth was attacked in the quadrangle. He was tied up, dragged to a shed, and covered with tar. Such an attack on a Sixth Form prefect is naturally followed by the expulsion of the offenders."

"Oh, gad!" murmured Peele.

Peele moved away quickly, and went out into the quadrangle with Gower and Lattrey. The three black sheep of Rookwood were anxious for reasons of their own not to meet Richard Dalton's keen eye. But Mr. Dalton did not notice them.

"I say, that sounds awfully thick, sir!" said Mornington. "A Sixth Form prefect actually tied up and tarred!"



Dr. Chisholm raised his hand. "To-morrow morning you will leave Rookwood!" he said. "This matter is too serious for a mere flogging." "We did not do it, sir!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

" Yes," said Mr. Dalton curtly.

" And Jimmy Silver did it ? "

" Yes ; he and his friends."

" Have they admitted it, sir ? " exclaimed Erroll.

" I am sorry to say not. But there is no doubt on the subject."

Erroll flushed.

" I am sure, sir, that there is doubt on the subject ! " he exclaimed. " I am quite sure that, if Jimmy Silver denies it, he is telling the truth."

" Yesterday, Erroll, I should have said the same," answered Mr. Dalton. " But the matter is clear."

" Silver's a friend of ours, sir," said Mornington, in his silkiest tone. " If a fellow may ask, sir, was there any evidence against Silver—apart from the fact that Carthew would like to see him kicked out of Rookwood, which really isn't evidence ? "

Erroll gave his chum a warning look.

" Kindly do not speak in that flippant tone, Mornington, upon such a very serious matter ! " said Mr. Dalton sharply.

" My mistake, sir ! I stand corrected ! " said Morny meekly. " But still, a fellow may ask why the Head has come down so heavy on these fellows when they deny, as you say, having laid hands on Carthew."

" Carthew knew them," said Mr. Dalton briefly.

" Didn't you say he was collared at night, sir ? Did he recognise the fellows in the dark ? " asked Mornington. " I wasn't aware that Carthew had eyes like a cat."

" I repeat, Mornington, that I will not allow you to talk in this flippant tone ! " exclaimed Mr. Dalton angrily. " Take a hundred lines ! "

" Oh, very well, sir ! But with the greatest respect, sir, a fellow may be allowed to point out that nobody would dream of takin' Carthew's word that he recognised fellows in the dark."

" Carthew has not stated that he recognised the boys, Mornington. He has stated that he recognised their voices."

Mr. Dalton turned his back and walked away. Morny glanced after him with a smile.

Erroll hurried after the Form-master.

" One moment, sir ! Can I speak to Jimmy Silver ? "

" It is forbidden, Erroll ! The four boys are in the punishment-room, and they will breakfast there."

" But just a word, sir."

" The Head has forbidden any communication between them and the rest of the Fourth Form, Erroll."

" I'm quite sure there is some mistake, sir," said Erroll, in great distress. " Jimmy Silver would not tell a lie about it if he had done it ! "

Mr. Dalton made no reply to that ; and Erroll, deeply troubled, went out into the quadrangle with Mornington. In the quad the Classical Fourth were in a buzz of excitement over the startling news, and it soon spread to the Modern Fourth, and Tommy Dodd and Co. discussed it breathlessly.

Fellows of other Forms heard the news, and jumped when they learned that Jimmy Silver & Co. of the Classical Fourth were " bunked " from Rookwood. The news really seemed too startling to be true.

" The silly asses ! " said Smythe of the Shell. " All very well tarring a prefect—serve him jolly well right ! But what silly asses to get bagged ! "

" It's not really like Jimmy Silver ! " Tommy Dodd remarked to his chums, Cook and Doyle. " Carthew's a cad, but smothering a chap with tar is rather too thick. And what chumps, lettin' him hear their voices, you

know, and recognise them! Just like Classical chaps!"

"Oh, just!" agreed the other two Moderns.

And both Houses at Rookwood went in to breakfast in a state of great excitement. One expulsion in the school was rare enough to cause a sensation; four in one day was catastrophic. Rookwood, from the Sixth Form to the Second, could talk about nothing else.

THE TENTH CHAPTER
UP TO MORNY!

"CAREFUL, for goodness' sake!"

"Mind what you're up to, Morny!"

Lattrey and Gower spoke together in low, anxious tones. It was after breakfast, and the two black sheep had got Valentine Mornington by himself in a quiet corner of the quad.

Morny was smiling jeeringly.

"What's the trouble?" he asked.

"Well, it's rather thick, those chaps gettin' it in the neck," mumbled Gower. "I never expected anythin' of the kind, or I'm dashed if I'd have had a hand in it! Carthew's a rotter, and I was glad to down him. But—but Morny said it was all safe."

"So it was all safe!" yawned Valentine Mornington carelessly. "Can you see any danger now?"

"No—not so long as we keep it dark, of course."

"We're keepin' it dark," said Peele, with a laugh. "We're not likely to change places with Jimmy Silver and his gang."

"It's thick, though," muttered Gower. "I say, Carthew was lyin' when he said he recognised their voices. How could he, when it was us——"

"Hush!" whispered Lattrey.

Mornington laughed.

"Carthew jumped to the conclusion that it was that gang," he remarked. "He felt quite certain of it, and invented evidence to suit."

Gower eyed Morny very dubiously.

"I hate to let those chaps get the chopper for nothin'," he said. "I don't like the fellows, but it's thick—it's too thick. But, of course, we've got to take care of ourselves first."

"Our precious selves!" chuckled Mornington.

"Well, we can't be bunked, I suppose. But—but it's rotten! I—I wish we'd never laid a finger on Carthew."

"Too late, old scout!" smiled Mornington. "You don't feel inclined to own up, do you?

Gower almost gasped.

"You idiot, Morny! That's just what I was afraid of—that you'd get some potty idea like that into your head. A fellow never knows how to take you!"

"For goodness' sake, Morny——" breathed Lattrey.

Cyril Peele laughed.

"Leave Morny alone," he said. "Morny doesn't want to be bunked, any more than we do; and, with Jimmy Silver gone, he's got a good chance of gettin' in as captain of the Fourth. This is a bit unexpected, but it doesn't work out so badly from our point of view."

"You awful rotter!" said Mornington.

"What?"

"Precious seedy crew, aren't you?" said Mornington, surveying the three with a curling lip. "Frightened out of your wits, and ready to let other chaps get the chopper! You're worried because you think I mayn't be such a worm as to let them get it in the neck, when they've done nothin'. Well, I can tell you that

I'm not standin' by and seein' Jimmy Silver bunked from Rookwood for somethin' that I've done ! "

Gower and Lattrey panted, and Peele's coolness suddenly forsook him. The three glared at Mornington.

" You—you rotter ! " hissed Peele. " We backed you up. You don't dare to give us away ! "

" Morny ! " gasped Gower.

" You wouldn't ? " panted Lattrey.

Mornington shrugged his shoulders.

" Pull yourselves together ! " he said scornfully. " Anybody seein' your faces now would jolly soon guess what's worryin' you ! I'm not givin' you away. I had to get level with Carthew for smackin' my head, and I've done it ; but I'm not seein' Jimmy Silver booted for it. If it all comes out, I shan't mention your names. I led you into it and I'm the man to stand the racket ! "

" You're goin' to own up ? " breathed Peele.

" I haven't said so."

" You said—— "

" I said I'd own up and take the gruel rather than land it on another chap, and so I would ! " sneered Mornington. " That's where we differ, you see. I don't happen to be a sneaking funk. But I'm not lookin' for the chopper—I fancy there may be other ways. Anyhow, you fellows are safe. Keep mum and keep a stiff upper lip and don't bother me with any more of your scared whinin', for goodness' sake ! "

And Mornington walked away, leaving Peele & Co. considerably relieved, though still uneasy.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

THE WHIP HAND.

BULKELEY of the Sixth stopped at the door of Carthew's study in the Sixth Form passage and glanced in. Mark Carthew was there, sorting out books for class, and he glanced round and smiled in a sneering way at the sight of the Rookwood captain's troubled face. George Bulkeley was booked for the task of taking four expelled juniors to the railway-station, and it was a task he disliked extremely.

" Just off ? " asked Carthew, with a grin. " You'll get out of some of the Greek, Bulkeley. You're the lucky man. If you like, and if you can fix it with the Head, I'll take the fags to the station."

" I want to speak about that, Carthew," said the Rookwood captain abruptly. " Look here. Are you quite sure ? I suppose you know what a serious matter this is for those fags ? "

" Oh, quite ! " smiled Carthew. " They should have thought of that when they collared me last night and tarred me."

" Are you quite sure they did ? "

" Oh, quite ! "

" They deny it."

" They would," smiled Carthew. " Lying young rascals ! "

" Well, I've never found them lying young rascals," said the captain of Rookwood. " I suppose the Head knows what he's about. But I don't feel easy about this, Carthew. It seems that it was all done in the dark. You saw nothing. It's only a question of recognising their voices. Is it possible you've made a mistake and fixed this on the wrong parties ? "

" No, it isn't."

" If you're quite sure, the matter ends," said Bulkeley.

" I'm quite sure."

And the Rookwood captain went.

Carthew bit his lip uneasily as he stood staring at the open doorway, a book in his hand. He was feeling

disquieted. Carthew had a conscience, though it was a fairly tough one.

"Oh, rot!" he muttered at last. He threw aside the uneasy misgiving Bulkeley's words had caused him.

The fellows were guilty right enough. He had stretched a point to prove guilt otherwise not provable, that was all.

There was a tap at the half-open door, and Valentine Mornington stepped into the study. Carthew gave him a frown.

"What the thump do you want, Mornington?"

"About Jimmy Silver and his pals," said Mornington cheerily. "It seems that they're bunked and goin' this mornin'. I want you to get them out of this."

"What?"

"You're the man that can do it, you know," said Morny. "I want you to. I'm makin' an appeal to your tender heart, Carthew."

Carthew looked at him blackly and stepped to the table on which his ashplant lay. He picked up the cane.

"Bend over!"

Mornington smiled.

"Cut it out, old bean!" he said cheerily. "Bendin' over will be a thing of the past—a happy memory of Rookwood—if I go this mornin'."

Carthew stared at him, cane in hand.

"If you go! What do you mean? You're not sacked, I suppose?"

"Bound to be for attackin' a giddy prefect and tyin' him up and tarrin' him," drawled Mornington.

Carthew started violently.

"What?"

"Guessin' it?" smiled Morny.

"You?" gasped Carthew.

"Little me!"

"You young scoundrel!"

"You smacked my head, you know," explained Morny. "You're rather given to smackin' fellows' heads, Carthew. But there's some heads you mustn't smack. Mine's one of them. I had to make you sorry for it, and I did. I never expected anythin' to come out. How was I to guess that you'd jump on Jimmy Silver and tell lies to fix it on him? A fellow couldn't be expected to foresee all that, could he?"

Carthew breathed hard.

"If you hadn't jumped on them I should have said nothin', of course. I'm not anxious for the long jump. But as matters stand I'm bound to speak out. Can't see another fellow sacked for what I've done."

"Who helped you?" panted Carthew. "There were four——"

"I'm keepin' that dark. Can't give pals away. But it wasn't any of that jolly old party now roostin' in the punishment-room. I was leader, anyhow, and the Head will have to be satisfied with sackin' the ringleader. Sorry I can't oblige you by bendin' over, Carthew. I shall get enough from the Head, you know."

Mornington moved towards the door.

"Stop!"

Carthew gnawed his lip. He knew that the Head would believe Morny's confession. It was true on the face of it. A fellow would not ask for the "sack" if he could help it.

And then—then what became of Carthew's statement that he had recognised the voices of the Fistical Four when he was attacked? Even Carthew did not believe now that Jimmy Silver & Co. had had a hand in the affair. Morny had found help among his own friends. That was fairly clear. Probably they would be found out when Mornington had confessed. And Carthew had

caused the Head to sentence four innocent fellows to expulsion by a statement that was now palpably a false one. He had borne false witness, and the falsity would be brought home to him beyond the shadow of a doubt.

His mind whirled as he thought of it. Morny's confession was ruin to him. Undoubtedly he would lose his prefectship ; that was certain ; and it was likely enough that he would be sent away from Rookwood himself.

" Look here, Mornington "—Carthew's voice was husky—" don't be a fool ! I'll let you off for what you've done. Keep your mouth shut ! "

" I'll mention that suggestion of yours to the Head," grinned Morny.

Carthew shivered.

" You really mean to go to the Head, asking for the sack ? "

" Unless those fellows are got off some other way."

" Oh ! "

" Not much more time to lose," said Mornington airily. " Look here, Carthew. Let's come down to brass tacks. You've lied about those fellows, and the Head will jump on you like thunder when he knows you've made him sack four fellows for nothin'. I shall get kicked out of Rookwood, and I fancy you won't be long in followin' in my footsteps. There's time still. If you speak before I do you can still make out that it was a mistake. Make out anythin' you jolly well like so long as Jimmy Silver and his pals are cleared. But you've got no time to lose. After all, even you can't want to see them bunked, now that you know they had nothin' to do with it. I dare say you want to see me bunked for tarrin' you," Mornington chuckled, " but you'll have to deny yourself that pleasure, old bean, unless you want to be bunked along with me."

Carthew gritted his teeth.

" Hold your tongue and leave it to me," he muttered.

" With pleasure, old scout."

Carthew of the Sixth hurried from the study.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

ALL CLEAR !

RICHARD DALTON unlocked the door of the punishment-room.

Four juniors rose to their feet and looked at him.

" I have good news for you, my boys," said Mr. Dalton gravely and kindly. " I am sorry—deeply sorry—that you have been put to such a trial. You will not leave Rookwood. You will go to your Form-room as usual."

Four faces brightened up wonderfully.

" But what——" asked Jimmy Silver.

" It seems that Carthew has reflected since making his statement to the Head last night," said Mr. Dalton quietly. " He has seen Dr. Chisholm this morning and informed him that upon reflection he fears that he made a mistake in supposing he recognised your voices last night when he was attacked in the quadrangle by some unknown persons."

" My hat ! " ejaculated Raby.

" It appears that he felt quite certain at the time. But reflection has convinced him that he could not be sure that he was able to recognise whispering voices," said Mr. Dalton. " He has told the Head so, in time to prevent a possible injustice being done. He goes further and states that he is personally prepared to take your word that you had no hand in the attack on him."

" Oh ! "

" The Head is naturally very much surprised and very much annoyed at Carthew's recklessness," said Mr. Dalton. " But it is very fortunate that he has had the moral courage to speak out and admit his mistake. Naturally, you boys must feel some resentment ; but you must remember that it must have required considerable moral courage on Carthew's part to admit himself in the wrong so amply. The matter is now over so far as you boys are concerned, and I cannot say how glad and relieved I am. You will now go to your Form-room."

And the Fistical Four went, quite dazed by this sudden turn of fortune.

There was quite a sensation in the Fourth Form-room when Jimmy Silver & Co. walked in and took their places as usual.

Mornington gave them a nod and a grin. Erroll's face was bright and smiling. His faith in his chum had been justified. Even Peele & Co. were pleased.

It was not till after class that Jimmy Silver & Co. learned from Morny what had happened.

" You see, you never were in any danger, really," drawled Morny. " I should have owned up like a shot if it had been needed. As it happens, it isn't."

" But you ? " said Jimmy Silver. " Now Carthew knows——"

Mornington grinned cheerily.

" Now Carthew knows, he's keepin' the giddy knowledge to himself," he said. " I fancy he's rather keen to let the whole matter drop. He doesn't want me to go up before the Beak and tell the whole jolly story of my interview with him. The Head's pretty ratty with him now, but he believes that Carthew owned up to a mistake of his own accord. If he knew that I frightened Carthew into doin' it, it would be a gee-gee of quite another colour."

" My hat, that's so ! " agreed Lovell. " Carthew will have to take it lying down, for his own sake."

" Just that," smiled Mornington. " My idea is that Carthew will let the whole thing drop like a hot brick, and the sooner the better. If it all comes out, it will come out what I said to him before he saw the Beak this mornin', and the dear man doesn't want that—not a little bit. I fancy we've heard the end of the story."

Mornington was right.

Carthew of the Sixth was only too anxious to let the whole matter drop, and to let nothing more be heard of it. By whose hand the bully of the Sixth had been tarred in the woodshed remained undiscovered by the Head. But most of the Classical Fourth knew, and they chuckled over it. The bully of the Sixth indemnified himself, so far as he could, by making things generally as warm as he could for Valentine Mornington and Jimmy Silver & Co. But he found those cheery youths, as usual, pretty well able to take care of themselves, though they were glad when the summer holidays came along and they had a long rest from their old enemy.

THE END

LAST MAN IN!



A Play in Verse for Amateur Actors

by

THE GREYFRIARS RHYMESTER

Characters

HARRY WHARTON	Captain of the Remove.
BOB CHERRY ..	Members of the Junior Cricket Team.
HURREE JAMSET RAM SINGH ..	
JOHNNY BULL ..	
TOM BROWN ..	
DONALD OGILVY	
DICK PENFOLD ..	
PETER TODD ..	
S. Q. I. FIELD ..	
MARK LINLEY ..	
HERBERT VERNON-SMITH	The Bounder of Greyfriars
BILLY BUNTER ..	The famous fat boy of Greyfriars.
MR. QUELCH ..	Master of the Remove.
A PORTER	At Courtfield Junction.

Special Note

These characters are not all "speaking parts," and the full number of cricketers is not strictly necessary if you have only a few actors. The speeches of the ordinary cricketers can mostly be given to any characters you please. But it is advisable to have as many actors as possible in order to work the "off-stage effects"—station noises, passengers, etc., for Act 1, and applause, roars from the crowd, etc., in Act 2. In both acts it is better to let "non-speaking" characters wander on and off the stage.

This play may be performed by readers of the HOLIDAY ANNUAL without fee or licence on condition that the words "By permission of the Editor of the HOLIDAY ANNUAL" appear on every programme.

ACT 1.

SCENE : *The Waiting Room and Buffet at Courtfield Junction Station. A dreary-looking room, with a counter at one end, on which are a few pre-historic sandwiches and an antique tea-urn. Seats round the walls.* HARRY WHARTON *and several other juniors walk in, all of them clad in flannels and carrying cricket bags.* VERNON-SMITH, *however, is* not *present.*

WHARTON (*looking at his watch*) :
What matters if it's getting late ?
We're here, without compunction!
A pleasant, never-ending wait
At dear old Courtfield Junction.

BULL :
If I'd not paid my railway fare,
I'd take a cab, and bilk 'em !

BROWN (*looking out of the door*) :
Look, there's a porter over there !
(*Shouts.*) When's the train to Rylcombe ?
(*The* PORTER *enters. He is also antique.*)

PORTER :
Let's see, now ! When's it doo ?
There's one at two-to-two——
No, just a minnit—wait !
That train's one fifty-eight !
Well, that'll come along
At—wait a bit ! I'm wrong !
One fifty-eight don't run.
It's changed to ten past one,
While Summer Time is on,
So that 'ere train is gone !
Well, then, the two-to-two
Will be the next one through !

CHERRY :
The two-to-two, old addle-pate,
Is also the one fifty-eight !

PORTER :
Ay, yes, sir, so it be !
Well, wait a bit ! Let's see !
The two-to-two's gone by,
It's Summer Time, that's why !
Well, then, the next will run
At fifty-eight past one !

TODD :
But we explained to you
That that's the two-to-two !

PORTER :
Ay, so you did ! Let's see !
Well, then, you 'ark to me !
One fifty-eight's gone through,
The next is——

ALL TOGETHER :
Two-to-two !

PORTER :
Exactly, sirs, you got it plain !
(*Shouts as he walks out.*)
Herne Bay and Whitstable this train !

WHARTON :
St. Jim's will wonder where we are.
I wish we could afford a car.

HURREE SINGH :
We shan't be very latefulness,
The cricket match will duly start,
For what does proverb statefulness ?
Faint lady never won fair heart !

WHARTON :
Let's hope you won't be wrong !

BULL (*grimly*) :
If Smithy comes along !

BROWN :
Yes, why should Smithy stay behind
And hire a car to bring him here ?

TODD (*dryly*) :
He had to wait, I think you'll find,
Until he knew the coast was clear !

WHARTON (*sharply*) :
You're talking through your hat !
What do you mean by that ?

TODD :
Oh, nothing much ! I merely mention
This morning Smithy got detention !

WHARTON :
But Quelchy let him off, we know !

TODD :
We know that Smithy told us so !

CHERRY :
Oh, rot ! It's rather thick
To doubt old Smithy's word !

'Twould be a dirty trick,
The worst I've ever heard,
And Smithy's not the sort
To leave us one man short.

BULL :

We left while Quelch was still about.
Did Smithy wait till Quelch went out ?

WHARTON :

If Smithy's still detained—my hat !



WHARTON (shaking Bunter angrily) : Have you left Smithy stranded ? Quick ! Explain, you bloated lunatic !

I'll have a word to say to that.
If, owing to his swanking whims,
We're one man missing at St. Jim's,
I'll knock his napper off its hinges,
I'll punch him till he fairly cringes !

HURREE SINGH :

My honoured chum must not forget
That nothing has been proved as yet.

CHERRY :

If Smithy says he'll meet us here,
He'll keep his promise, don't you fear !

PORTER (*heard shouting outside*) :

Herne Bay, this train ! Herne Bay ! Herne Bay !
Unless it goes the other way !
(*The guard's whistle blows and the train is heard puffing out.*)

CHERRY (*looking round*) :

Well, here we've got to stop !
Let's have a ginger pop !
(*He raps on the counter.*)

PORTER (*outside*) :

Herne Bay, Herne Bay, Herne Bay, Herne Bay !
Why, darn the train—it's gone away !
(*The* PORTER *comes in.*)
Now, why d'ye want to make a scene ?
And what ye knocking for ?
There's no one there, and 'asn't been
Since 1894.

CHERRY :

We thought we'd like a ginger beer !

PORTER :

All right ! I'll see if any's here !
(*As the* PORTER *searches for it,* BILLY BUNTER *rolls in, also clad in flannels.*)

BUNTER :

I say, you fellows ! Here you are !

BULL (*groaning*) :

It's Bunter ! How did he arrive ?

BUNTER :

Oh, really, Bull ! I came by car !
A fairly comfortable drive !
I'm going with you to the game,
Although it's not what I call cricket !
But still, I'm going all the same ;

You chaps can buy my railway ticket!

TODD:

I don't think! How d'you get the car?
You've bilked the taxi-driver!

BUNTER:

Yah!
I daresay Vernon-Smith will pay,
He 'phoned the order, anyway!
The taxi came for him, you see,
I met it in the lane—hee, hee!

WHARTON (*roaring*):

What! My hat! If you took that,
You've left us absolutely flat!
(*He shakes* BUNTER *angrily.*)
Have you left Smithy stranded? Quick!
Explain, you bloated lunatic!

BUNTER:

Leggo, you beast! It's your fault—there!
You wouldn't pay my railway fare!
(*There is a silence as they gaze at him.*)

PORTER:

Can't find no ginger-beer, young gents!
But here's a pot of peppermints!

TODD (*roaring*):

Bag him! Rag him! Scrag him!
Bump him! Clump him! Thump him!
(BUNTER *makes a jump for the counter and sprawls over it face downwards. The others pin him there in a nice position for whopping.*)

WHARTON:

Now, you chuckling chump!
Here, Toddy, fetch a stump!
(TODD *takes a cricket stump out of a bag and starts work on* BUNTER.)

CHERRY:

Just keep on whacking him!
Never mind cracking him!
Give him some ginger, he
Well deserves injury!

BUNTER (*yelling frantically*):

Leggo! I haven't seen it!
Yarooh! I didn't mean it!

WHARTON (*fiercely*):

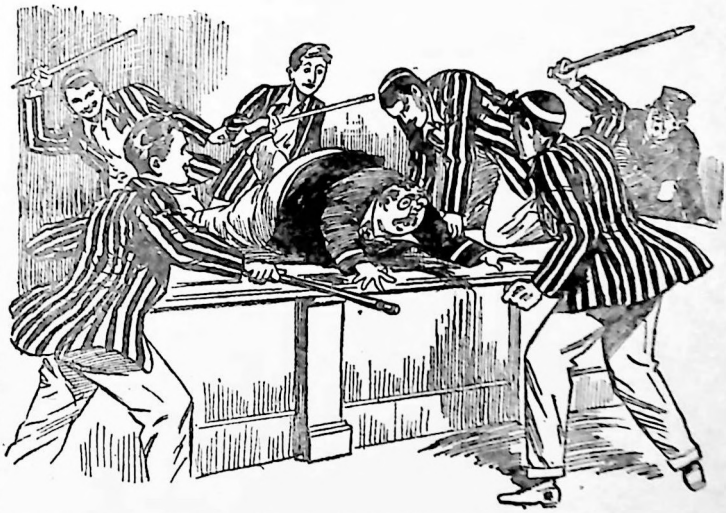
You've stranded Vernon-Smith, you brute!
We haven't got a substitute!

BUNTER:

I didn't take the car——
(VERNON-SMITH *enters, breathless and furious, with trouser-clips on his flannel bags.*)

CHERRY (*jubilantly*):

Here's Smithy now! Hurrah!



BUNTER: Leggo! I haven't seen it! Yarooh! I didn't mean it!
WHARTON: You've stranded Vernon-Smith, you brute! We haven't got a substitute!

VERNON-SMITH :
I had to scorch here on my bike—

WHARTON :
That's cycle-racing, if you like !

VERNON-SMITH :
Dashed if I know what was wrong,
The taxi never came along !
I should have come in any case,
While you were keeping me a place ;
If not by motor-car or train,
Then in a private aeroplane !
You couldn't beat St. Jim's, that's flat,
If I weren't in the team to bat !

BULL :
Swank as usual ! What a youth !

VERNON-SMITH :
Swank be hanged ! It's solid truth !
I'm going to bat with all my power,
I'll be the Hero of the Hour !

CHERRY :
Yes, yes, old chap, we're not denying
That you'll be rather stupefying !

PORTER :
These peppermints, by all accounts,
Are tuppence-haperny a hounce !

BUNTER (*behind counter*) :
Yes, I say, what about some grub ?

WHARTON :
Ring off, you over-fatted tub !
Good job for you that Smithy's present,
Or you'd have found it most unpleasant !

BROWN :
It's beastly mean and underhanded
To take his car and leave him stranded.

VERNON-SMITH (*shouting*) :
What's that ?

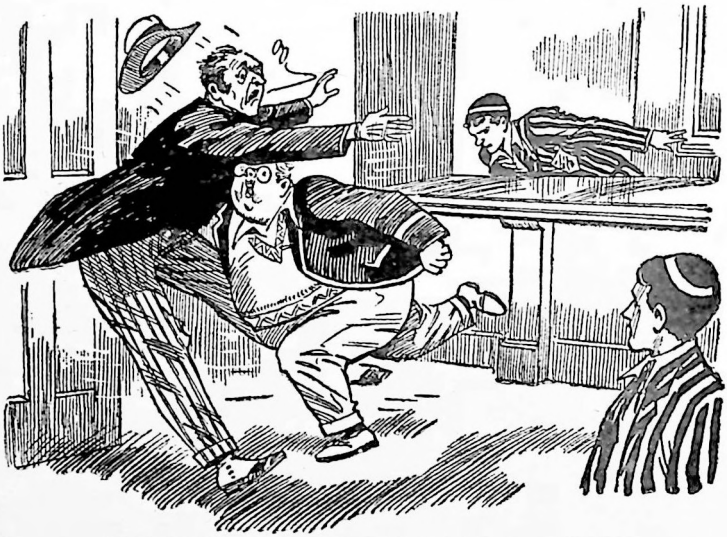
BUNTER (*also shouting*) :
I never took it !
I'm sorry, anyway !

CHERRY :
You look it !

VERNON-SMITH :
I'll scrag and slay and slaughter you,
I'll hang and draw and quarter you !
(*He sprints round the counter to get at* BUNTER, *who scrambles over it and makes a burst for the door. At this moment* MR. QUELCH *enters, and there is a grinding collision.*)

MR QUELCH (*reeling*) :
Ow ! Oh ! Wha-at was that ?

BUNTER (*on the floor*) :
Ow ! Yow ! Whoop ! My hat !



MR. QUELCH (reeling) : Ow ! Oh ! Wha-at was that ?
BUNTER : Ow ! Yow ! Whoop ! My hat !

(*On seeing* MR. QUELCH, VERNON-SMITH *drops out of sight behind the counter.*)

MR. QUELCH :

Bunter ! Boy, what means this riot ?

BUNTER :

Ow-wow ! Yooop ! Oh, lor' !

MR. QUELCH :

Be quiet !
How dare you rush about a station
With such absurd acceleration ?
Behave yourself more circumspectly,
Get up, and try to walk correctly !

BUNTER (*rising*) :

Oh, yes, sir ! So I do !

MR. QUELCH :

No doubt !
Then let me see how you walk out !
(BUNTER *starts to walk out with dignity, but trips over a cricket bag and exits on his neck with a yell.*)
Not very dignified, I fear !
Now what are you boys doing here ?

WHARTON :

We're waiting for a train, sir, and
It's rather late.

MR. QUELCH :

I understand.
(*A train roars into the station, and stops.*)

CHERRY :

A train's here, porter !

PORTER :

Let it wait !
It's only forty minutes late.
I asked ye half-an-hour ago
D'ye want some pepperments, eh ?

THE CRICKETERS :

No !

PORTER :

They're quite all right, and nothing wrong,
All nice and white and hextra strong.
Still, if you won't, you won't, that's plain !

(*He shouts as he goes out.*)
Redcliffe, Lantham, Rylcombe train !

TODD :

Rylcombe ! That's our train at last !
I hope the creeping beast is fast !
(*They gather their bags together in great confusion, not thinking of* VERNON-SMITH.)

MR. QUELCH :

I'm sure you'll have a pleasant game

CHERRY :

Hope so, sir—thanks all the same
(BUNTER *comes hurrying in.*)

BUNTER :

I say, what about my fare ?

TODD :

Nothing doing ! Shanks's mare !

BUNTER :

Look here, I'm coming, too !

BROWN :

All right, old barrel—do,
If you can pinch another car.
If not—well, then, it's au revoir !

PORTER (*outside*) :

Redcliffe, Lantham, Rylcombe train,
Unless it's going back again !
(*The cricketers hurry out,* MR. QUELCH *following them.*)

BUNTER :

Look here, you beasts ! I say——
(VERNON-SMITH *dodges out from behind the counter.*)

VERNON-SMITH (*hissing*) :

See if Quelch has gone away !
Get on with it, you fool ! Be quick !
The train will go in half a tick !
(BUNTER *looks out of the door.*)

BUNTER :

No, he's standing just outside !
I say, old chap, what made you hide ?

VERNON-SMITH (*savagely*) :

What brings that old fool here ?
I fancied I'd got clear.
I suppose he's waiting for a train—
Here, Bunter, go on—look again !
(BUNTER *does so.*)

BUNTER :
Still there, old chap ! But what——
VERNON-SMITH :
What rotten luck ! Great Scott !
The last dashed minute, too !
I don't know what to do.
(*A guard's whistle blows.*)
There goes the train—don't care !
A car would get me there
If only Quelch would go away.
(*The train puffs out.*)
This seems to be my lucky day !
BUNTER :
You've cut detention ! Hee, hee, hee !
I'll help you ! Leave it all to me !
If you go there by car, old bean,
I'll travel with you—all serene.
(*They have their backs to the door and do not see* MR. QUELCH *walk in.*)



VERNON-SMITH : I suppose he's waiting for a train. Here, Bunter, go on—look again. BUNTER (looking out of the door) : Still there, old chap !

VERNON-SMITH :
Get that old fool away from here !
I'll hop it while the coast is clear.
MR. QUELCH :
Vernon-Smith !
(*They spin round in horror.*)
You need not add
To your offences, which are bad,
Inducement of this foolish lad
To help you in your plot.
I leave you in detention, yet
I see you here, and don't forget
I warned you plainly you would get
A flogging, did I not ?
BUNTER :
I—I say, it wasn't me, you know !
MR. QUELCH :
I know that, Bunter. You may go.
(BUNTER *does, thankfully.*)
VERNON-SMITH :
Look here, sir, now I know
I'm bound to get the worst,
What matters if I go
And play for Greyfriars first ?
MR. QUELCH :
You are the most audacious boy
That ever I beheld.
Your disposition to annoy
Is quite unparalleled !
On no account will I allow
Your joining in the cricket now !
(*A train comes into the station.*)
PORTER (*outside*) :
Friardale train, Friardale train !
If the engine stands the strain !
MR. QUELCH :
Come ! I'll take you back with me !
I dare not let you wander free.
(*He grasps* VERNON-SMITH *by the shoulder and, menacing him with*

his umbrella, marches him to the door, where they meet the PORTER.)

PORTER :

Now just a tick before you go,
D'ye want some pepperments, sir?

MR. QUELCH :

NO!

(*They all go out.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT 2.

SCENE : *Inside the St. Jim's pavilion. The Greyfriars dressing-room. There are lockers round the walls, and blazers hanging on coat-pegs. A mound of cricket tackle is on the floor.* BULL, OGILVY, HURREE SINGH *and* PENFOLD *are at the door, looking out into the sunset-tinted field of play.* BROWN *is putting on some pads.* WHARTON *is walking grimly up and down. From the field outside come a roar and a volume of clapping.*)

BULL :

Another two for Toddy—fine!
(*A sharp crack and a roar.*)
A single—that makes ninety-nine!
(*Another crack, and a great roar of applause.*)
Hooray! The hundred up at last!
(*The juniors are all clapping.*)

OGILVY :

I say, they're scoring pretty fast!

PENFOLD :

Phew! That was a rather nasty ball!
Twenty to win! Two wickets to fall!

BROWN (grunting) :

Three wickets! But Smithy isn't here!

PENFOLD :

Well, that makes two, you ass!

BROWN (*cordially*) :

Hear, hear!

BULL :

Old Blake is going to try a lob——
(*A sharp crack and a yell.*)
Oh, shot, sir——
(*A bigger yell—"'Zat?"*)

HURREE SINGH :

Out!



The two juniors had their backs to the door and did not see Mr. Quelch walk in.
VERNON-SMITH : Get that old fool away from here! I'll hop it while the coast is clear.

PENFOLD :

Well caught!

OGILVY :

Oh, Bob!

WHARTON :

You're in, Browney! Best of luck!

BROWN :

I'm sure I'm going to get a duck.

WHARTON :

Stick there, old chap, for mercy's sake!
Just see how many you can make.
I'd give my ears, and all my scalp,

To win without
old Smithy's
help.

BROWN :

Whatever made
him miss the
train ?

WHARTON (*wryly*) :

Don't let's start
all that again.
The silly ass has
let us down,
That's all that
matters.
(*A burst of
clapping as*
CHERRY *comes
in, bat in hand.*)

CHERRY :

Now then,
Brown !
There's only
twenty runs to get,
Show 'em they've not licked us yet.
(BROWN *nods, takes a bat, and goes
out.*)

WHARTON (*as* CHERRY *takes his pads
off*) :

Well played, old man ! That's
great !

OGILVY (*as the score goes up*) :

Old Bob scored thirty-eight !
And Toddy's ten, not out.

WHARTON :

That's grand !
You made a jolly useful stand.
Get your pads on, Inky, quick !
Your turn will come in half-a-tick !

HURREE SINGH :

The tickfulness will be terrific,
The bowlfulness is also great,
The runfulness is not prolific,
The duckfulness will be my fate !

WHARTON :

And Smithy's still not come.

CHERRY :

The whole affair is rum.
He said he'd come in any case.



MR. QUELCH (grasping Vernon-Smith by the shoulder and raising his umbrella menacingly) : Come ! I'll take you back with me ! I dare not let you wander free !

Whatever could have taken place ?

WHARTON :

When we heard the porter call,
We crowded out in such a fuss,
I didn't notice him at all,
I took it he had come with us !
At Rylcombe he could not be
found,
Though I inquired of everybody,
And no one's seen him on the
ground——
(*A click and a loud yell.*)

BULL :

Clean bowled, by gum !

WHARTON :

Who's out ?

PENFOLD :

Old Toddy !

WHARTON :

Now, old black bean, be very
downy,
Stonewall, and leave the runs to
Browney.
We still want twenty runs to win,
And no last batsman to go in.
So keep your pecker up, old scout,

Just watch the ball and don't get out !

(HURREE SINGH *grins, nods, takes a bat and goes out. There is applause as* TODD *returns.*)

CHERRY :

What happened, ass ?

TODD :

A slight mistake !
Played back to Wynn and out to Blake.
The chap who's keen on keeping in,
Plays back to Blake and out to Wynn.

(BOB CHERRY *threatens him with a bat.*)

CHERRY :

Of all the silly footling chumps——

WHARTON :

How long before they pull up stumps ?
Ten minutes more. H'm ! Well, perhaps,
We'll make a draw of it, old chaps.
Our chance of beating them is small,
Old Inky's deadly with the ball,
But as a bat he's not so good——

(BUNTER *pushes his way in through the door.*)

BUNTER :

I say, you fellows, where's the food ?

TODD :

Great Christopher Columbus ! You !

BUNTER :

I say, you fellows, listen—do !
I took a taxi-cab, you see,
And owe the driver one pound three !
So you can pay the man for me
While I go in and have some tea !

(*A crack outside and a roar.*)

OGILVY :

By Jingo ! That's a four !
Now only sixteen more !

CHERRY (*like the Bull of Bashan*) :

Good old Browney ! Ripping shot !

(*Another crack, and a yell.*)

Good, that's another !

BULL :

No, it's not !
Old Gussy's stopped it on the line
They've run a two for it.

WHARTON :

That's fine !

BUNTER (*roaring*) :

I say, you fellows, who will pay
My taxi fare ? You chaps, I say——

WHARTON :

You bloated barrel ! I can see
You dishing me for one pound three !

BUNTER :

I—I've only got a penny——

TODD :

Well, we shan't lend you any.

BUNTER :

You beast ! The driver must be paid !

(*A loud crack and a shout.*)

CHERRY :

Good shot ! Oh, Browney ! Oh, well played !

FIELD :

A boundary ! We'll beat them yet !

PENFOLD (*desperately*) :

We'll never do it ! Ten to get !
If only Vernon-Smith had played——

BUNTER :

Hee, hee, hee ! I'm much afraid
That poor old Smithy's gone to see
A private flogging. Hee, hee, hee !

WHARTON (*spinning round*) :

What ? What was that you said ?

BUNTER :

He's got a flogging from the Head.

TODD :

Got a flogging ? Smithy ? Why ?

BUNTER :

He cut detention on the sly.

WHARTON (*choking*) :

Then what he told us was a lie !

BUNTER :

You bet it was. When Quelchy came

He spoiled old Smithy's little game.
He found him in the waiting-room
And marched him off to meet his doom.

CHERRY :
Of all the dirty tricks, that takes
A whole dashed basketful of cakes !

WHARTON :
He'll answer for this trick to me !

BUNTER :
Now what about my one pound three ?
(*A crack outside.*)

OGILVY :
Good old Inky ! Run, man, run !
(*A loud appeal, " 'Zat ? "*)
Not out ! Good, that's another one !

WHARTON :
If you say one pound three again
I'll bounce this bat upon your brain.
(*Another sharp crack, and a loud roar.*)

CHERRY (*yelling*) :
Well shot, Browney ! That's the style !

TODD (*grinning*) :
That one's gone about a mile.

PENFOLD :
Good old Browney, that's a four !
Come on, now ! Just five runs more !

OGILVY :
It's an "over" now.

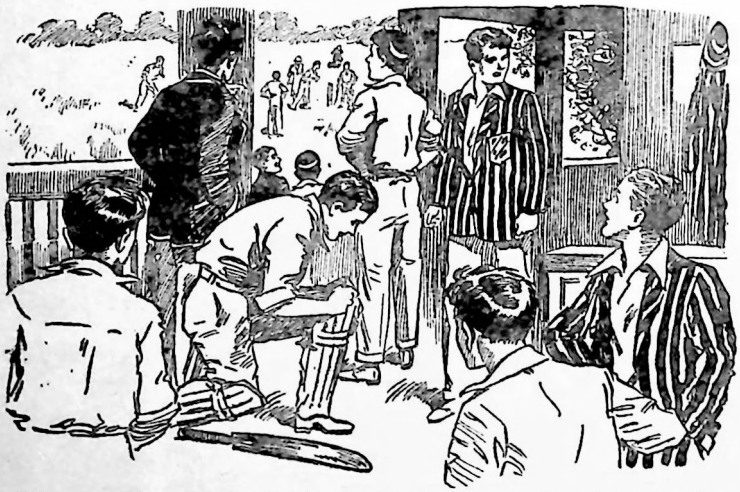
CHERRY :
Last over, too !
Oh, Inky, please hit something, do !
Here goes Fatty ! Wait, don't shout !
(*A dead silence outside ; a sharp click and a roar.*)
No, umpire, no !

PENFOLD :
Yes, Inky's out !
Caught wicket ! And they win the game
In the last over. What a shame !

CHERRY :
No, stay, I've got a great idea !
That silly fathead Bunter's here !

TODD (*yelling*) :
Yes, he's a Greyfriars man, you know.
Here, Wharton, let's make Bunter go !
It might just make a draw for us——

WHARTON :
He bats just like an octopus.
If he can last the over out,
We'll make a draw of it, no doubt !
Come on, Bunter, fair and fat,
You've got to go out there and bat !



BULL : Another two for Toddy—fine ! (A sharp crack and a roar from outside.) A single—that makes ninety-nine !



The juniors applauded Todd as he came out. CHERRY : What happened, ass? TODD : A slight mistake ! Played back to Wynn and out to Blake. The chap who's keen on keeping in, plays back to Blake and out to Wynn !

(*They surround* BUNTER, *and force pads and gloves on him. He yells wildly.*)

BUNTER :

I say, what's up ? You lemme be !
You hand me out that one pound three !
Leggo, you beasts ! I want my tea !
Here, help ! Yaroop ! You're choking me !

(BUNTER *goes down with the rest on top of him. When they yank him to his feet, he is padded and gloved.* BOB CHERRY *puts a bat in his hand.*)

CHERRY :

Now bat, you bloated buzzard, bat !
Go out and stay there—savvy that ?

WHARTON :

Don't swipe or swing about,
Just stick there, don't get out !

BUNTER :

Leggo, you beasts ! Ow-wow !
All right ! I'm going now !

(BUNTER *is hustled out of the room.*)

TODD :

He's bound to swipe, the chump !
He'll lose his middle stump !

(HURREE-SINGH *comes in apologetically.*)

HURREE SINGH :

I'm sorry, my disgusted chum !

WHARTON :

All right, old bean ! Don't look so glum !

PENFOLD :

There he waddles ! What a figure !

BULL :

Gussy's trying not to snigger !

TODD (*sarcastically*) :

Then Greyfriars had the heavy roller !

CHERRY :

I'm sorry Fatty Wynn's the bowler.
He's deadly straight with every ball,
We'll soon see Bunter's wicket fall.

TODD :

I know he's going to swipe,
I see it in advance !
The ass is just that type.
Crumbs ! What a graceful stance !

(*They all laugh.*)

PENFOLD (*weakly*) :

He ought to bat—he's batty !

FIELD :

Shurrup ! There goes Fatty !

(*A dead silence, then a sharp crack and a roar.*)

CHERRY (*shrieking*) :
Oh, what a swipe ! It's gone !
TODD (*dancing*) :
Run, Bunter, run—go on !
OGILVY (*howling*) :
Go on, you ass ! You ought
To get a three——
WHARTON (*wailing*) :
He's caught !
PENFOLD :
No, no, he's not !
Go on, ass—run !
CHERRY (*hysterically*) :
It's SIX ! Great Scott !
We've won ! WE'VE WON !
(*They grasp each other and dance like dervishes. Some of them dash out of the room, leaving* CHERRY *and* WHARTON *sobbing weakly on each other's necks.*)
WHARTON :
That barrel's done it, after all !
I'll fill him full of tuck !
He actually hit the ball—
Oh, what a bit of luck !
CHERRY :
What a wallop !
What a hit !
I think I'm going to have a fit !
We've beaten them at last !
Well played !
Without that duffer Smithy's aid !
WHARTON :
The Hero of the Hour, he said !
To think that Bunter's that, instead !
(*A mob of juniors enters, carrying* BUNTER *shoulder-high. They march him round the room.* BUNTER *yells.*)
BUNTER :
You rotters ! Put me down !
Stop prodding me, Tom Brown !
Yah ! Beasts ! You lemme be !
And where's that one pound three ?
WHARTON :
You shall have it, never fear !
Now, you fellows, come on—cheer !
Three cheers with all our power
For the Hero of the Hour !
(*The juniors burst into cheers, with* BUNTER *still yelling to be put down.*)
Hip-pip-pip——
HOORAY !
CURTAIN.

STAGE EFFECTS

WITH a little ingenuity, quite surprisingly good "off-stage" effects can be produced for next to nothing. The "trains" want a little practice before the performance. For those who have a gramophone and



CHERRY (hysterically) : It's SIX ! Great Scott ! We've WON ! WE'VE WON !
WHARTON : That Barrel's done it after all ! He actually hit the ball !

money to spare, there is a realistic sound record of trains, etc., issued by His Master's Voice, No. E583, price 4s. If you don't care to spend this money, make the effects as follows: For the "puffs," fill a thick cardboard box half-full of rice, and give an energetic shake for each puff. For the noise made by the train coming in, vibrate a wooden plank on an empty wooden case, adding "clanking" sounds with pieces of pipe, etc. Get a table lamp and an old sixpenny shade. Cut slots in the shade, and put it on the lamp with the top cap off. If you rotate this shade with your finger, the light will throw the glint of carriage windows across the wall of the stage—make them rush in quickly, slow down and stop. For the engine's steam noises, use a siphon of soda-water, with assistance from your own lips. An old tin can trundled on the floor makes good "milk-churn" noises. The engine whistle can be produced on the lowest note of a twopenny tin-whistle. Use an ordinary football whistle for the guard. Add any other "station sounds" you fancy; and if you get a group of fellows working these effects, and rehearse them well beforehand, you will be astonished how realistic they become.

In Act 2 you also want to rehearse the shouts and applause following the crack of ball and bat, or the click of ball and wicket. (These may be produced quite easily with a mallet, a bat and a stump.) Get your off-stage effects well-drilled and timed, and it will add quite 50 per cent to the enjoyment of the performance.

Here's wishing you luck with it, anyway!

AU REVOIR!

YOU'VE reached the only dismal stage,
Which is, of course, my final page.
We've had enjoyment, you and I,
And now it's time to say good-bye!

But let's be cheerful while we may;
We'll meet again some other day.
Next year you'll find me on the stall,
All ready when you pay your call.

Yes, I'll be waiting for you, chum,
And hoping you'll be sure to come;
You would not purposely desert me,
For that would disappoint and hurt me!

Meanwhile, the lads of whom I speak
Are waiting for you every week
In rattling yarns of school and sport,
All stories of the finest sort.

If you have twopence you can pay,
The MAGNET every Saturday
Will give you all the Greyfriars news;
What finer value could you choose?

St. Jim's, of course, I could not miss!
The GEM, each Wednesday, sees to this.
The price of this is twopence, too.
My chums delight in it—do you?

And if you'd purchase (for a song)
A host of stories extra-long,
Then buy each month the SCHOOLBOYS' OWN.
For fourpence—well, it stands alone!

So, as you see, if you're about
When all these ripping books come out,
And buy them at your nearest stall,
We need not say Good-bye at all!

THE EDITOR.

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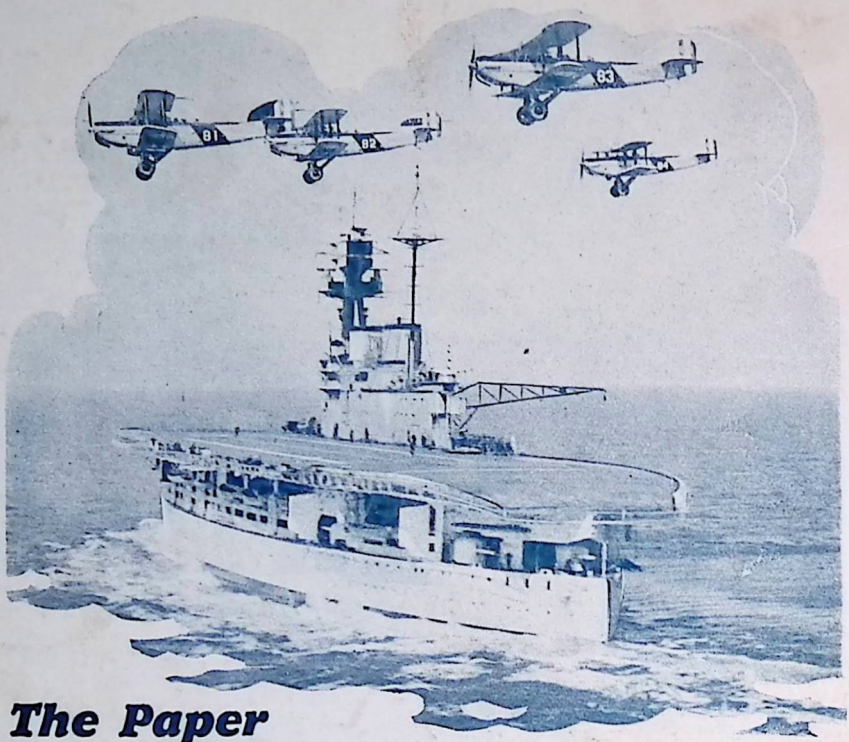

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