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BIG BUDGET OF FIRST-CLASS SCHOOL AND ADVENTURE TALES INSIDE!

WHEN JAMES II. WAS ON THE THRONE!

A Striking Article dealing with the Stirring Times of the Unpopular James, and the Famous Monmouth Rebellion.

THERE have been plenty of widely-varying opinions regarding the rights and wrongs of the Monmouth Rebellion, but there is a pretty general agreement as to the gallantry and sincerity of the leader of the rising against King James the Second.

As is well known, James was not popular; he had not the makings of popularity; he was narrow-minded, a bigot, and he had imbibed far too many of the old, time-expired notions regarding the divine right of kings.

The Duke of Monmouth was a son of King Charles the Second. He was born during Charles' exile in Rotterdam, the year of his birth being 1649. That was the year his grandfather, King Charles the First, the Martyr King, went to the scaffold in Whitehall. As Cardinal Mazarin, the adviser of Anne of Austria, the Regent of France, said, it was a bad year for kings.

The Duke of Monmouth won the esteem of a lot of people during the reign of his father, Charles the Second. Charles came back to his throne in 1660, amidst wild rejoicings, for everybody wanted to see Old England Merry England once again. And if James, who succeeded Charles in 1685, had been of the same easygoing temperament as his brother, it is more than likely we should never have heard of the Monmouth rising, and of the disastrous defeat of Sedgemoor.

But James was well hated, though in the mid-period of his reign he had a well-drilled army at his back. The Duke of Monmouth, when he landed in the country and sounded the clarion to his many adherents, just made the mistake so common,

namely, he under-estimated the power of James, and the automatic loyalty of a large section of the people, who wanted peace.

Order had been restored to the land, but James, by tyrannical exactions, was upsetting the spell of prosperity which had prevailed under Charles. James the Second had learned little from the astounding events of the past three decades. He had much the same notion of kingship as his porridge-eating, witch-hunting grandfather, James the First, the man who hanged a man during his triumphal march to London, in order to test his powers.

Certain it is that if Monmouth had delayed his rising until the country had more fully realised the mistakes and arbitrariness of James, this young prince, with his Stuart ancestry, might have swept through from the west at the head of his legions recruited from the tough fellows of Dorset and Somerset, and reached London as a king. For very shortly after James was unseated, and had to fly in ignominy, finding himself adrift at Rochester with hardly a man to stand by and save him from harsh treatment.

But it was William of Orange, another nephew of James, who accomplished the Revolution of 1688—with the aid of the best thinkers of the day. Monmouth was before his time, as stated. Monmouth dashed in with the old cavalier haste, and his raw levies were beaten hopelessly at Sedgemoor, the leader being taken, brought to London, and beheaded at Tower Hill.

Nobody can read of this chapter in history without being thrilled. Legend after legend was built up over the wit and personality of the Duke of Monmouth. In

many respects he was like his father, King Charles—headstrong, brave to a fault, foolhardy, imbued with heaps of the old notions of the Stuarts, but a winning character all the time. In the early days of his rising men flocked to his standard. Monmouth represented the ancient days of music and fete, and sword-thrust, and he stood for the fighting spirit. King James was a gloomy-minded fanatic; moreover, he lacked generosity and knowledge of the world.

But, all the same, the Duke of Monmouth's cause was soon seen to be hopeless. Monmouth found enthusiasm in the west country, but he had no generals worth the name; he was outclassed in military strategy; the King's army stood firm; that proved the end.

The Duke lost his head at Tower Hill, and three hundred and fifty of his followers were hanged. Judge Jeffreys, the most relentless judge of whom there is any chronicle, showed himself merciless in his treatment of the prisoners captured, and the supporters of the rebel leader. Jeffreys was James' man; he was so enthusiastic about his mission of vengeance, during which his "court" was stripped of all judicial semblance by reason of the utter savagery of the presiding judge, that he did more to sap the foundations of his royal master's throne than anyone.

Very swiftly came the toll. King James was sent packing; his despotic methods could no longer be tolerated. James reached France, and settled down at the Palace of St. Germain-en-Laye, a pensioner of his Most Christian Majesty, King Louis the Fourteenth of France, and, as we all know, his son and grandson, the Old and Young Pretenders, carried on the struggle to regain the English Throne, but without success. The last attempt was made in 1760 at the succession of King George the Third. Sir Walter Scott, describes this pseudo rising in his story, "Redgauntlet." Nothing came of it. Nothing could come of it. The old cause was as dead as Queen Anne.

SIMPLE! YES, HAVE YOU TRIED IT?

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What You Have To Do.

Here is a splendid Cricket Competition which I am sure will interest you. On this page you will find the history of the Leicestershire C.C. What you are invited to do is to solve this picture, and when you have done so, write your solution on a sheet of paper. Then sign the coupon which appears below, pin it to your solution, and post it to "Leicestershire" Competition, POPULAR Office, Gough House, Gough Square, E.C. 4, so as to reach that address not later than THURSDAY, July 19th, 1923.

THE FIRST PRIZE of £5 will be awarded to the reader who submits a solution which is exactly the same, as, or nearest to, the solution now in the possession of the Editor. In the event of ties the prize will be divided. The other prizes will be awarded in order of merit. The Editor reserves the right to add together and divide the value of all, or any, of the prizes, but the full amount will be awarded. It is a distinct condition of entry that the decision of the Editor must be regarded as final. Employees of the proprietors of this journal are not eligible to compete.

This competition is run in conjunction with the "Boys' Friend," "Magnet," and "Gem," and readers of those journals are invited to compete.

I enter the "LEICESTERSHIRE" Competition, and agree to accept the Editor's decision as final.

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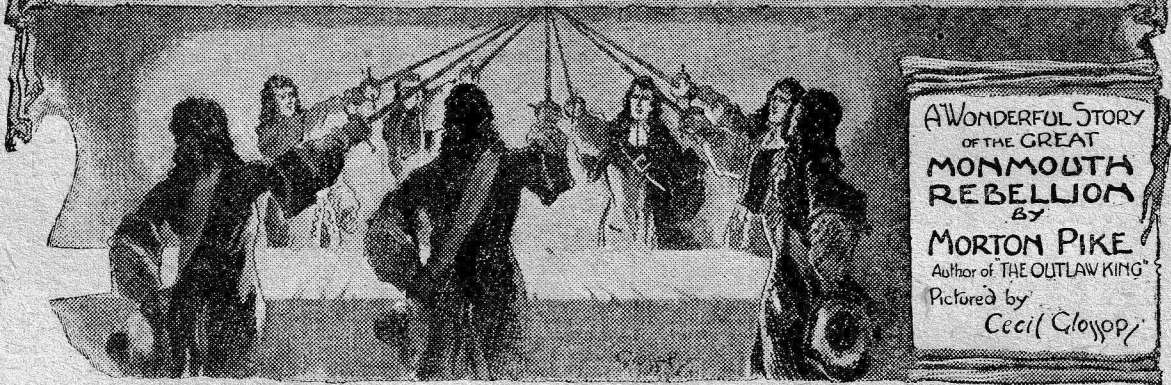
P.

THE MONMOUTH REBELLION!

A TALE OF MYSTERY AND AMAZING ADVENTURE!

Across the rugged, lonely country rode seven horsemen, leaving in their wake excitement, dread, and the grim realisation of a war to come. Then back to London Town. The League of Seven had done their work. The seeds of revolution had been sown, and the surging mass awaited their leader, THE DUKE OF MONMOUTH!

THE LEAGUE OF SEVEN!



A BID FOR THE THRONE OF ENGLAND.—The First Instalment.

Master Richard Trevor sets forth to seek his fortune, and meets with an adventure by the way!

THERE were four horsemen on Windy Heath. One, a well-looking, soldierly man, with a riding-cloak about his shoulders, rode at a hand-gallop from the direction of London, and his stout roan showed, by the flecks of foam upon his chest, that he had been ridden fast and far.

Windy Heath stretched itself five miles over a rugged country, and in the very centre of it was the Dog-Fox Spinney.

The clump of ancient firs could be seen for many miles around, and commanded an extensive view of the white road, winding among the furze-bushes.

Two men sat in their saddles in Dog-Fox Spinney, and so still and silent were they that one might have ridden past at twenty paces and not have seen them.

Each wore a band of black crape stitched inside the lining of his hat, falling over his face to the tip of the nose; both had shabby coats of dark cloth; and each held a loaded horse-pistol in his right hand.

"Mat," said the taller of the pair, breaking the silence—a red-headed rogue, with a voice like the growl of an angry hound—"dust rises yonder, straightaway in a line with those birches. Someone is coming."

"Ay, and comes fast," replied his companion, standing in his stirrups. "'Tis a man, and alone!"

The afternoon sun threw the shadow of the spinney far over the heath, and above in the blue sky the larks trilled joyously.

Each man had shortened his reins, and looked to the priming of his pistol, and Mat turned his hatchet face over his shoulder to scan the road behind them.

"Anything?" asked his companion hoarsely.

"Nothing," said Mat.

"Then luck is with us; and none too soon," growled the red-headed rogue. "I mislike this daylight work, partner. Give me Hounslow, when the moon is down. But beggars may not be choosers; and if yonder rider were the King himself, I would flay him of every coin in his pouch!"

They crouched forward upon their horses' necks, and watched the unconscious stranger coming nearer and nearer—sometimes lost for a moment, where a thicket obscured the road; sometimes dipping into a little hollow; but the wind ever bringing the gallop of his steed louder and louder to the ear.

So intent were they that they gave no further thought to the road behind them,

and so saw nothing of the fourth horseman who had come from the west.

The fourth horseman upon Windy Heath that afternoon was a youth of seventeen years.

He was dressed in a blue riding-suit, with buttons of cut steel, and long, yellow riding-boots up to mid-thigh.

His brown hair fell in thick ringlets on to his shoulders, framing a handsome, open face, whose strong, square chin gave promise of decided character.

A small valise strapped to the saddle showed him to be upon a journey; and the pistols in his holsters, and the long sword at his hip, together with a certain muscular outline of his entire figure, proclaimed him one whom it would be unsafe to meddle with, in spite of his youth.

"So ho, Beauty," said Dick Trevor, vaulting out of his saddle half-way up the sandy rise, "neither your back nor my legs will be the worse for it if they part company as far as the hilltop!"

The mare shook her head as if she agreed with him, and the two companions trudged side by side up the loose track.

The sun was behind them, and it lit up the glories of that wild heath.

Golden gorse and purple heather flamed in the light, and already the blue sky beyond the spinney was turning rosy.

Dick Trevor, though light of heart, had a thoughtful contraction of the brows as he looked upward at the road that disappeared above him.

It was the road to fortune and adventure, he hoped, and yet the nearer he drew to London town the more serious did he become.

"If my uncle, Sir Anthony, has played me false, I know not well what to do," he muttered. "'Tis six months since he promised me an ensign's command in the King's Army, and no word have I had all the time. Yet cool my heels longer in sleepy Somerset will I not, but seek service somehow, for a soldier must I be, even as my father before me, and all the Trevors for ages. And if King James wants not a strong arm and a straight sword, perhaps King Louis may."

He shrugged his slim shoulders.

"Now, could one only chance upon an adventure, such as the knights of old did," went on Master Richard. "Could one rescue a duke's daughter in dire distress, or pull an archbishop out of a pond, one's fortune would be made. At least"—and he checked himself—"twould be the starting-point, for I would never wear what I had not won."

Suddenly the brown mare tossed her head, and her nostrils were dilated. She stopped.

"What, are you weary, lass?" said Dick, fondling the glossy neck. "Nay, is it that

you hear something?" And he noticed her quiver of excitement at last.

He put his toe in the stirrup, threw his leg over the saddle, and turned the mare on to the springy turf of the heath, to gain the top at an angle.

The hill's crest was not thirty feet above them; Dog-Fox Spinney grew taller and taller; but, as Dick's eye began to take in the growth of fern and broom on the level, the mare swerved away with a bound.

Two loud reports echoed on the stillness, and a hoarse shout rang upon the heels of the echo.

Dick's spurs touched the mare's side, and, like an arrow from a bow, she shot up through the bushes, and Trevor found himself in a very stirring adventure in full progress.

A gentleman, in a blue roquebeure, was struggling with his rearing horse, and vainly trying to draw a pistol from his holsters.

His cloak, falling back, showed a scarlet uniform coat and a fine lace cravat.

Two other men—rogues, every inch of them, from the masks that hid their faces to the heels of their lean, wiry mounts—were replacing the weapons they had just fired, and hastening to pull forth a second pistol, their backs turned towards the newcomer.

Dick's eyes flashed over the group, and his eye went instantly to Beauty's withers.

"Hands up, my gay popinjay!" cried the man with the red hair. "We have pills to cure all melancholy for the officers of the Guards if they show fight. Yet would we rather have thy guineas than thy blood!"

"And you shall have neither, you scoundrels!" said the officer, whipping out his rapier. "I know you, Reuben Galleywood, and you shall hang for this day's work!"

"Take him on the other side, Mat!" said the red-headed highwayman, with a coarse laugh. "Shoot the horse, and give the captain's pride a fall!"

Dick's approach, muffled by the velvet of the heath, had been unheard. If the officer saw him, it was only to mistake him for another rascal of the road. The others were unconscious of his coming until he was within ten paces.

"Hanging afterward, if you like!" cried Dick Trevor, covering Galleywood with his pistol. "We'll talk about shooting first, my beauties!"

Galleywood sprang round in his saddle with a fearful yell.

His weapon gleamed in the sunshine as he levelled it at Dick; but his finger had pressed trigger for the last time.

Swift as lightning Trevor swung his horse

THE POPULAR.—No. 234.

On the Eve of the Great Monmouth Rebellion! See Next Week!

4 You can search the whole world through but you will not find better!



DICK TREVOR, adventurer. The finest swordsman in the Kingdom.

round, and at the same time pulled the trigger of his pistol. The man sank over his holsters, shot through the head.

Dick instantly flung down his weapon, and drew a second.

The second highwayman, seeing his companion sink to the ground, jammed his spurs into his horse's sides and turned and set off across the heath at a pace that placed him out of range before Dick could fire again.

"Young sir," cried the gentleman in the blue cloak and scarlet regimentals, when he had subdued his roan with difficulty, "if ever man were grateful in this world, I am he! Give me your hand, boy, for without your timely aid I should not have lived another day."

"I did but do what you would have done for me, sir, or for any other traveller in like misfortune," said Dick modestly.

"No matter what you did, my friend, you did it!" cried the gentleman; "else should I not be here. And, by my boots, if you act as promptly in all the emergencies of life, you'll die Lord Chancellor, at the very least."

"I should be quite content, sir, to die a cornet in the King's service," replied Dick, smiling.

"Then are you modest as you are brave," said his new acquaintance. "But, first, Harry Lavender never forgets an obligation, so tell me, young gentleman, to whom am I indebted for the continuance of my somewhat useless existence?"

"I am Richard Trevor, sir, of Trevor Court, in Somerset." And he was about to add, "Seeking my fortune," when he saw a shade of displeasure cross the other's face.

"And I am Captain Lavender, of the King's regiment of Footguards," he said, a faint colour glowing on his cheek, and his eyes growing gloomy. "You are related to Sir Anthony Trevor, then—one of his Majesty's gentlemen of the bedchamber?"

"His nephew, sir," replied Dick, as they both dismounted. "I take it, Captain Lavender, that you are as little fond of him as I myself?"

The captain looked at him sharply.

"I did not say aught to make you think so."

"No, sir; but your face told what you had in your mind."

"Then I must wear a mask," said the captain; "for I have much in my mind that I would fain keep there. Yet, stay; I recall me that your name was first upon the list for the ensigncy when young Seymour was slain in a duel by Mr. Willoughby. How came it that you obtained it not? Sir Anthony has the King's ear."

Dick frowned and bit his lips.

"Nay, lad," cried the captain, clapping him upon the shoulder; "if Sir Anthony is unmindful of his kin, you have found a friend in Harry Lavender, and come you to my lodging on my return to town, which will be to-morrow. 'Tis in the Spring Gardens, whither any will direct you. But are you indeed set upon a soldier's life?"

The face Dick turned to the captain was answer sufficient.

"'Tis a bargain, then? You will come to me, and what poor influence I have

is yours to command. By my boots, Master Richard, but this is a strange meeting, and may have still stranger results than you rot of."

And Captain Lavender whistled a low tune between his teeth, looking far away towards the sinking sun, as though he saw some mysterious future known only to himself.

"For my share in this matter I wish you to keep to yourself, for reasons you shall learn later on. In the meantime, it is not necessary that you tell anyone that you have met Harry Lavender on Windy Heath. Do not forget this, Master Trevor. I trust to your discretion. Trust me a little longer, and believe that I will always stand your friend."

The captain held out his hand as he spoke, and Dick took it without hesitation.

There was that indescribable something in Lavender's face that wins confidence at once—a handsome, striking face, graye in repose, very kindly when a smile passed over it; a soldierly face in every line—one that men would follow under a storm of musketry—and did!

"And now I have far to ride, and if I am to be in London town to greet you to-morrow I must lose no more time. Four miles will bring you to a village where there is a good inn; and if you rise with the lark in the morning you should see the towers of Westminster by high noon."

He mounted his horse, repeated his warning as he pulled the blue cloak about him, and, with a wave of his gauntlet, set the roan down the hill at a great speed, leaving Dick to continue his journey on Fortune's road.

Dick Takes a Night Walk into Old London, Falls in with Strange Company, and Finds Himself in a Position of Extreme Peril.

DICK TREVOR followed the advice given to him by the mysterious captain next morning, and rose very early.

He stood beside Beauty while she had her corn, to the great disgust of the ostler, saddled her with his own hands, and, after paying his reckoning, rode out of the little village as the wood fires were sending their curling smoke in blue columns above the red-tiled roofs.

For ten miles he did not meet a living soul; and, riding easily onwards, came in sight of the abbey church of Westminster about midday.

To a stranger entering London for the first time there was much to note, and, when Dick had stabled the mare hard by the Cross of Charing, and had donned fresh linen after his journey, he set forth to view the sights, his rapier ready to his hand, and his bright eyes sparkling at the novelty of it all.

Everything was of interest to the country-bred lad—the fine houses of the nobility; the palace of Whitehall, where the King dwelt; the chariots that jostled each other in the narrow ways; and the great folks, still wearing mourning for Charles II., who was not long dead.

The passage of a file of Guards, with their officer carrying a half-pike under his arm, recalled the appointment with Captain Harry Lavender, and a private sentinel directed him to that gentleman's quarters. The captain had not returned.

Dick debated long whether he should present himself at the house of his uncle, which was in the Mall, but decided that he would consult his new friend first, not caring to rouse Sir Anthony's ire too soon. And so, as evening drew near, he visited Beauty at the inn stable, and set his face eastward.

St. Paul's he found surrounded with scaffolding, rebuilding after the Great Fire; and when he had walked until he was weary, speaking to no one, and a little saddened at his own loneliness, he retraced his steps, thinking to seek Harry Lavender again when he should reach Spring Gardens.

But Dick soon found that London streets were very different to the open Somerset lanes, and darkness, falling suddenly, made his progress slow.

Narrow ways, lined on either hand by tall houses, whose projecting gables and heavy eaves threw them into deeper gloom,

led one out of another in a most bewildering fashion.

Here and there a crazy lantern danced on a cord stretched over the street, giving but a little light, and rendering the darkness the more profound.

Once or twice he found himself close to the river, gurgling blackly by wharves and warehouses, where rats squeaked, and sometimes a chained dog within barked furiously at his footfall.

No one was abroad. It might have been a city of the dead, save for an occasional burst of laughter from some tavern window.

Heaps of garbage lay in the kennel, and the pavement was full of holes.

"My way certainly lies west," he thought, pausing by a garden wall. "If I can strike into the main thoroughfare, then can I step out the better. I like not these narrow lanes and cut-throat passages!"

Accordingly he set his back to the river, and mounted a steep hill, which would have brought him near to Ludgate, but for a strange circumstance.

As he neared a corner where a lantern, brighter than its fellows, hung its wavering gleam overhead, he stopped, and laid his hand upon his rapier.

Someone approached, running hard, though by which of the three lanes that met there he could not distinguish.

He had no time for lengthy speculation, as, round the angle of the street upon the left dashed a man, bareheaded and breathless, who, hurling Dick against a shutter in his blind flight, muttered something and fled down the hill.

Dick saved himself from falling by clutching the shutter's hinge, and, recovering, struck the toe of his boot against a heavy object on the pavement, which the fugitive had evidently dropped.

He picked it up, saw by the light that it was a bulging purse, and shouted loudly:

"Stay, sir, whoever you be—stay, stay!" he cried, staring after him.

And, as the man fell upon all-fours not twenty yards off, Dick, in his good-nature, ran on in the hopes of restoring the purse to its owner.

The man, however, scrambling to his feet, continued at a break-neck speed, and, darting into some mysterious court, disappeared.

Dick, the hill being very steep, was unable to pull up at once, and, while he was still running, there came round the corner behind him a tremendous babel of angry voices, shouting a dozen fierce threats and blood-curdling cries.

"Stop, thief!" cried a loud voice above the rest. "Ha, there he is! We have him, boys! Stop, you scoundrel!"

The street resounded with the tumult, and the flare of torches lit up the house-fronts.

Windows opened, and night-capped citizens joined in the cry.



The soldier for whom men fought and died. The Duke of Monmouth.

Dick Finds Himself in Great Peril with the Mysterious Conspirators I

A THRILLING ADVENTURE ON THE ROAD TO LONDON.



Dick Trevor charged across the road at the two highwaymen. Galleywood swung round with a fearful yell and levelled his pistol at the newcomer. But Dick was the first to pull the trigger. Crack! The man sank back over his holsters. (See page 4.)

One old gentleman discharged a blunderbuss wildly, to the serious detriment of the house of his neighbour opposite, who threatened to have him before the justices on the morrow, and the entire quarter, which an instant before had been as silent as the grave, now rang with noise indescribable.

Dick realised his peril in a moment. The purse had evidently been stolen, and he would be mistaken for the thief.

His first feeling was one of indignation, but he realised that it would be impossible to explain the situation to the mob of ruffians bearing down upon him. They would not wait, and Dick knew what would happen to him if he was caught. He must fly. There was nothing else for it. Death would reward him if he waited.

The mob was not fifty yards away; and, making up his mind quickly, he sped on, holding his sword-sheath in his left hand, and still clutching the purse in his right.

The hue-and-cry redoubled when his pursuers saw him outdistancing them, and Dick laughed as he turned a corner and ran.

In the country, even clad as he was in heavy riding-boots and spurs, he would have scorned the idea of capture, but he had not gone far before he saw that this was not going to be an easy task.

He was a complete stranger in London, with not the vaguest idea of his whereabouts.

His feet echoed terribly on the cobblestones. It was very dark, and, though he turned first to the left and then to the right, he seemed to be traversing a square of streets, with the cry of "Stop, thief!" ever behind him.

Twice he was nearly overthrown by the same post, three times he leaped the same huge garbage-heap—or, at least, so it appeared to him; and at last, breathless, he staggered for the entrance to a narrow alley, over which a sickly lantern flickered.

Whipping out his rapier, he extinguished the light, and, panting heavily, stole into the friendly shelter.

There was the smell of a garden somewhere, and his hopes rose.

Here seemed a chance of escaping from his pursuers.

If he could clamber over the wall and lie there until the pursuit was abandoned, all would be well. To face the mob now would mean death at their hands.

He was creeping cautiously forward after sheathing his sword, feeling along the wall with his left hand, and trying in vain to penetrate the darkness, when the roar of voices broke on his ear again, and simultaneously a strong hand closed upon his throat, his assailant pinning his wrist at the same moment.

"Ho, what have we here—a spy or cut-throat?" whispered a voice strangely familiar to Dick.

"You are the first that dared to term a Trevor such!" cried the captive, struggling to wrench his hand free.

He felt the grip close convulsively, and then slacken.

"What said you? A Trevor?" whispered the man. "Explain, and without delay!"

Dick gave a violent start. He recognised that fierce voice now. Where had he heard it before? Yes, Winkly Heath!

It was Harry Lavender!

"I saved your life yesterday, Captain Lavender. 'Tis for you to do the like for me, it seems!"

"Hush, boy! No names in this place!" said the mysterious man. "Yet am I truly him you mention. By my boots, young gentleman, this is the strangest meeting under heaven! But here come your pursuers!"

The surge of feet went by the mouth of the alley, but a link-boy, whose flare showed him the opening, cried:

"Hold, my masters, maybe he is in here! Someone has just put out the lamp; it smoulders even now."

Instantly there was a halt, and a dozen voices cried:

"The gentleman with the sword! Where is the gentleman with the sword? Let him

go first, for the rogue is a stout rogue, and a violent!"

Captain Harry Lavender took Dick Trevor by the sleeve and breathed into his ear:

"'Tis death if your sheath should jar against the woodwork, and there are two steps!"

And, pressing his hand upon a heavy door in a recess beside him, the captain drew Dick into a dark passage, and closed the portal without a sound.

Dick stood stock-still, and the captain slid back a small grating in one of the door panels.

Through the tiny square orifice, a ray of torchlight filtered, showing the captain bending with his eye to the peephole.

In a few minutes Harry Lavender closed the grate, and, taking Dick by the hand, said:

"Follow me, but say not a word unless addressed. I doubt me how you will be received."

Dick's heart beat strangely, and it needed all his confidence in Harry Lavender's honest face to set him at his ease.

What did he mean by that? Who were they going to see?

They mounted a staircase.

Dick's hand upon the balustrade told him that it was very old and splendidly carved.

On the first landing they paused, and his companion said something to some unseen personage in the darkness in a low tone, and bid Dick stand there until he returned.

A door opened. A bright light shone out upon the landing for an instant, showing a man two paces away with a naked weapon. Then the captain passed in, and the door closed. Dick was left in absolute darkness, hearing nothing but the breathing of his unknown companion.

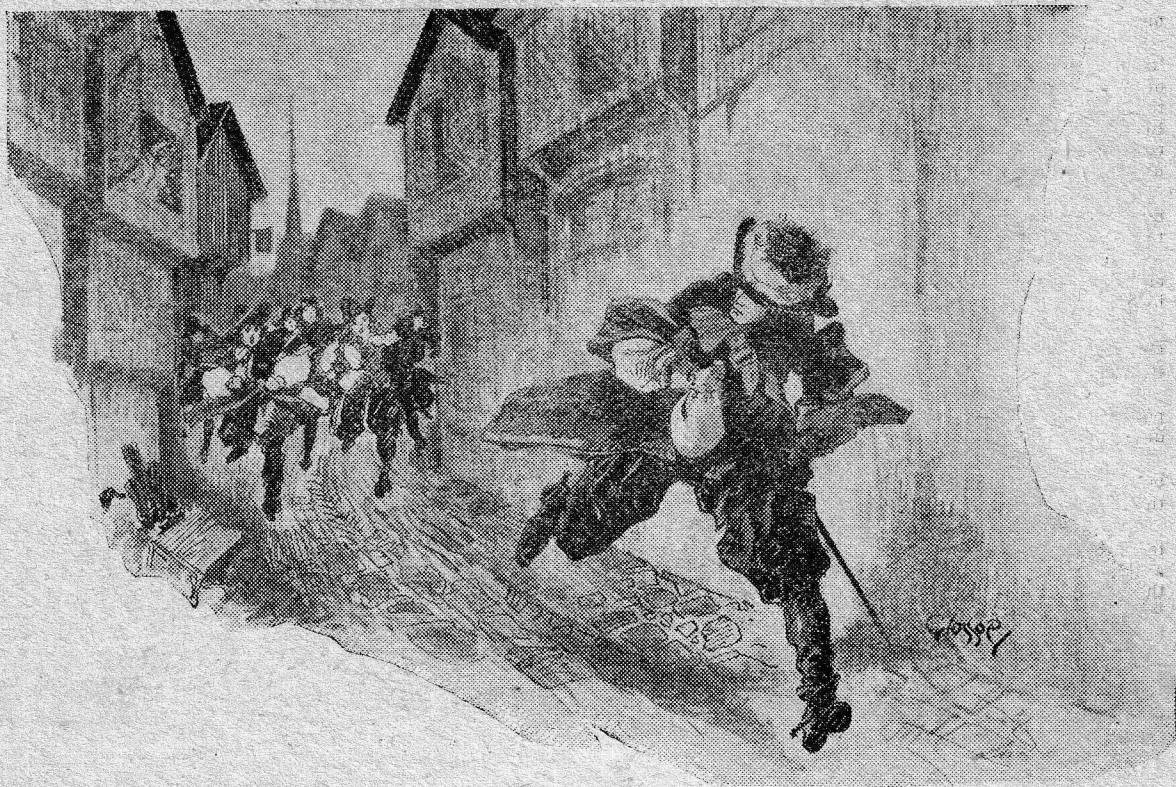
Try as he would he could not suppress his heavy panting and the wild beating of his heart against his ribs. Where was he?

A deep, mysterious silence reigned.

THE POPULAR.—No. 234.

This is Morton Pike's Latest! What Do You Think of it?

MISTAKEN FOR A THIEF—DICK TREVOR'S PERIL IN LONDON!



The mob was not fifty yards away, and making up his mind swiftly, Dick sped on, holding his sword-sheath in his left hand, and still clutching the purse in his right. They had mistaken him for the thief. (See page 5.)

Suddenly the door was pulled ajar, and there came from within the voice of Harry Lavender, speaking earnestly in a low tone.

"There is no need to be alarmed," he was saying, "I promise to answer for him with my life."

Dick guessed instinctively that the officer's words referred to himself, but the next moment Harry Lavender came out.

"Remove your hat, young gentleman," said he. "Follow me, and look neither to right nor left until I tell you."

Dick Trevor did as he was bid, and the captain preceded him into a fine apartment, panelled to the ceiling, and lit by several wax candles on a table in its centre.

Several figures stood in a group at the far end of the long room, but the shadows covered their features. From out of the corner of his brown eye Dick saw the chins of the mysterious company, catching the candle-glare, all the rest being in shadow.

The captain passed quickly through the room, opened the door of a closet at the far end, and, when Dick had entered on his heels, closed the door carefully, and took up the solitary candle that stood upon the table there.

"Now, my friend," he said briefly, yet without any trace of doubt, "how came you to be running before the hue-and-cry in this quarter; and, by my boots, with a purse actually in your hand?"

Captain Lavender took the embroidered bag from Dick and held it between his fingers, holding the candle that it might shine upon his face.

Dick Trevor smiled, and his brown eyes danced with merriment as he told his story in a few words.

He saw belief in his new friend's face from the commencement, and, as he finished, his gaze fell upon the purse itself.

"Boy," said the captain, raising his eyebrows, "if I were at liberty to tell you why you find us here to-night, and what I

did in the alley below when you walked into my arms, you would say 'twas more wonderful still."

"I know why you are here," said Dick, still looking at the purse.

Lavender started.

"How? What mean you?"

His voice rang sharp in the stillness of the little room.

"Those gentlemen who were so careful to cover up their noses as I passed them were conspirators!" replied Dick, very quietly, raising his eyes to Harry Lavender's.

The captain drew in his breath, and held the candle closer to Dick's face.

"Nay," said the latter, with perfect composure, "You do not think to find me a fool, surely, else why did you not bind my eyes?"

Harry Lavender stood like a figure carved in stone.

"And that is not all," went on the boy, with an extraordinary expression coming into his face. "A more wonderful thing has happened"—and he laid a forefinger on the velvet bag in Harry Lavender's left hand. "That bag, which so nearly came to cause my death to-night, bears the two fighting lions and the battleaxe of my own family. That purse belongs to my uncle, Sir Anthony Trevor!"

The League is Betrayed—Trapped in the House!

HARRY LAVENDER'S favourite reference to his "boots" failed him on this occasion, and he swore a deep oath.

"The man for whose coming I waited without," he muttered, yet not so low but that Dick heard him.

"Ah, then Uncle Anthony is a conspirator, is he?" said Dick, breaking

into a peal of laughter, which the captain as instantly checked.

"Boy," he whispered, pointing to the outer room, "those gentlemen yonder would have had your mouth sealed for ever, and I saved it with difficulty. Truth to tell, we are in some doubt about Sir Anthony, who was sworn to be with us an hour since. And 'tis not surprising that they took alarm at your coming in his stead, thinking treachery in it; though I, trusting you, saw only strange coincidence."

Dick was silent for a moment.

"There are papers in that purse," he said. "I love not my uncle, having cause rather to fear him, yet might it not be well to search there? I like not that a Trevor should come under shadow of mistrust in any of his undertakings."

"You say well, friend Richard!" cried the captain, grasping his shoulder with a terrific pressure. "Stay here a while, and blame me not if I leave you in darkness, for this window gives upon the alley beneath. I will be back anon."

Then Lavender left the room.

Dick folded his arms, and leaned against a carved cabinet, thinking deeply of the events of the past two days, while Captain Lavender rejoined his fellow-plotters, who awaited his return with considerable impatience.

They had drawn to the table again, but their hats still concealed their features.

An air of distrust had taken possession of them at the non-arrival of Sir Anthony Trevor.

The Most Thrilling Romance of Old Times Ever Written!

"Well, Lavender?" snapped one of the men.

"Well, my friend, I know not whether 'tis well or ill as yet," said the captain of the footguards, advancing to the table. "Strange things have happened to-night; and 'tis possible that the coming of this young gentleman may aid us in a marked degree."

He told them what he had heard, and flung the purse on the table, where it rang heavily of gold.

They gazed at the armoinal bearings embroidered upon it, and passed it from hand to hand.

"I still hold to it—that the young man should die!" said the first speaker sternly.

Several others also muttered their support of this view; and one of them, drawing out his watch, said:

"Odds fish! 'tis an hour and a half beyond the meeting-time. My friends, the position is passing serious."

"Patience—a moment longer," protested Harry Lavender; and addressing a tall, thin man, who was the last of them to receive the purse into his hands. "Will you be so good as to open those folded papers and glance at them?"

The man did as he was desired; read one, and tossed it aside; took out another, and treated it in the same fashion; and, unfolding the last, held it near to one of the candles, and instantly gave vent to a low cry.

"How now?" he said. "This is indiscretion most unpardonable in Sir Anthony—a complete list of us all, set forth in a clear hand—And what have we here?—some words in French, written—yes, by heaven! Are my eyes failing me, or—Whose is this screed?"

"An earldom!" He translated the word slowly. "An earldom when these traitors shall be taken, red-handed and brought to the block.—Signed, James R.' Just heavens, my friends, 'tis the King's writing! Sir Anthony Trevors has betrayed us!"

Every hand flew to its sword-hilt, every lip burst forth with a muttered curse.

The men looked at each other, to find no comfort in the answering glance.

IN THE HOUSE OF THE LEAGUE!



"Those gentlemen I passed in that room were conspirators!" said Dick. The captain started and held the candle closer to Dick Trevor's face. (See page 6.)

"Let us, at any rate, kill the whelp in the next room as a retribution!" cried one of the officers, drawing his rapier—the hilt of which, like those of all the rest, was covered with a grip of scarlet velvet. "He is a spy, and shall die!"

(Dick Trevor finds himself in a very perilous position next week! You must not miss next week's long instalment of our powerful New Serial, "The League of Seven!")

A WORD WITH YOUR EDITOR!

"Hazeldene's Foolishness!"

HAZELDENE is in trouble again in next week's admirable yarn of Greyfriars. Marjorie's brother is often in the cart; he might be called a regular passenger, and if it were not for the splendid comradeship of Harry Wharton & Co., with the Boulder thrown in, there is no telling what might not happen. Peter finds himself landed in big trouble during his trip to France. The Famous Five chip in, while the coolness and audacity of Vernon-Smith assist matters wonderfully. It is a very noteworthy tale for next Tuesday, full of grit—but the grit does not appertain to Peter Hazeldene.

"Keeping the Peace!"

Gunten is a craven and despicable person. He shows up no better in the new story. The yarn will fascinate you for a lot of reasons. It just shows how far out and out meanness will go when a chap of the Gunten cut feels he is safe. Frank Richards & Co. keep the peace no end of a time, despite the taunts of Gunten, for they are honour bound to do so. Of course, Gunten is downright eager to fight when he knows there is nothing doing. You recognise that sort. And then there is a sweeping change in the tide of affairs, and a whole avalanche of strange events upset Gunten's calculations.

"True Blue!"

You will say of next week's story that it is real Rookwood, and there could be no greater compliment. It has got all the swing and grand spirit of the old school, and it reveals Jimmy Silver & Co. at the top of their form in a series of very surprising events.

"Chums in Captivity!"

The great mill mystery at St. Jim's captivated everybody. It left you wondering last week as to what could possibly be at the bottom of it all. The new story will satisfy all expectations with its crop of weird discoveries, and startling wind-up. The tale will add whole chunks to the fame of St. Jim's and the prestige of Martin Clifford.

A Picnic Supplement.

"Bunter's Weekly" is always seasonable. Next week it is even more so than usual. For this is the time of year when the blithe picnicer, glad of heart, and equipped with a hamper of useful sustenance, betakes himself to the river or the sea on pleasure bent. The whole subject has been handled in masterly fashion. If anybody knows aught of how to control a merry picnic, it is Bunter. He can edit the edible, and is an expert on a menu. You may not be able to swallow all his statements, but we must give the porpoise his due, and admit that he is supremely well qualified to deal with the commissariat department at a smart little bivouac. Anyhow, this Picnic Supplement provides plenty of rattling fine fare.

"The League of Seven!"

There is a brilliant instalment next week of Morton Pike's arresting romance of the mysterious League. We are swept up to the frontier of really big events. Trevor finds himself caught up in a positive network of intrigue, and thanks to an amazing chain of circumstances, manages to escape the deadly peril with which he is confronted. The presence of the League and the undercurrent of its working are sensed by the young fellow, but he is, as yet, far from realising the whole truth concerning the organised conspiracy which has England by the throat. It is as if you were on the edge of a yawning chasm. The story goes with a bang, and you are left asking yourself what is the mystery that lies behind.

Your Editor.

THE POPULAR.—No. 234.

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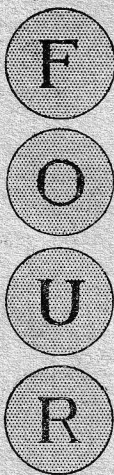
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A splendid long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars.

By
FRANK RICHARDS.

(Author of the tales of Greyfriars appearing in the "MAGNET.")

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Hazel's Loss!

THERE was jubilation in the Remove Form at Greyfriars. Harry Wharton's eleven had met and defeated Redclyffe—thanks to the Bounder, otherwise Herbert Vernon-Smith.

Hazeldene's sister, Marjorie, had come over from Cliff House to see her brother score at least fifty—but as soon as Hazel had gone to the wicket, it was quite obvious that he had something on his mind. He never looked at the first ball, which just missed his wicket. He never looked at the second ball—which scattered his balls. Hazeldene was out for a duck, just when the Remove were wanting runs.

But the Bounder came to the rescue, and played a wonderful game which was heartily cheered by Miss Clara Trevlyn, Marjorie's friend at Cliff House, Marjorie herself being too thoughtful to notice what was going on.

Immediately the match was over, and Redclyffe had been "seen off" in their brake, Hazeldene disappeared. But only Marjorie noticed that, for he was back again in a few minutes, his face flushed and his eyes gleaming.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the matter now?" asked Bob Cherry cheerily. "Coming to Study 1 to tea, Hazel?"

"Somebody's been meddling with my things," he said, in a suppressed voice. "I suppose it's a rotten joke. Something's been taken out of my pocket—in the jacket I left in the pavilion!"

"Not money?" asked Nugent quickly.

Hazel shook his head irritably.

"No; I hadn't any money there. A book—pocket-book!"

"The one you were doing figures in, when I came for you?" asked Wharton.

"Yes."

"I don't see why anybody should take that," said Harry, in surprise. "Are you sure?"

"I know which pocket I put it in, and, besides, I've felt in all the pockets," said Hazel. "It's been taken away by some meddling ass. You didn't—" He paused, as Wharton's eyes fixed on him grimly.

"I?" said Harry.

"Well, somebody has—I don't mean it's stolen; it wasn't worth stealing, a shilling pocket-book. It was for what's in it, I suppose!"

"What was in it?"

THE POPULAR.—No. 234.

"Some—some calculations I was making!" "All the winners!" murmured Skinner, and there was a chuckle from some of the juniors who heard the remark.

"It wasn't anything to do with races," said Hazel. "Nothing of that kind. Some figures I was doing, that's all. But it's important to me. I want to know who's taken that pocket-book?"

"It must have been taken for a joke," said Harry. "I don't see why your figures should interest anybody but yourself. Better inquire for it."

Hazel gave him a dark and suspicious glance.

"Look here," said Wharton bluntly. "I don't know anything about your silly pocket-book, and I shouldn't play that kind of trick, anyway, on anybody."

"If you knew what was in it—you're always preaching to me," said Hazel sullenly; "it would be just like some of you to take it away, from some of your rotten sermonising motives."

"That means that your precious calculations are something shady," said Bob Cherry. "In that case, the sooner they're lost the better. It'll turn up, though—come in to tea now!"

"I'm not coming in to tea till I've found my pocket-book," snapped Hazel, and he turned away. The suspicion was very evident in his mind that some of the Famous Five might have deprived him of his calculations, whatever they were.

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"Let's get in to tea!" he said.

And the chums left the cricket ground.

No. 1 Study presented a bright and cheery aspect when Marjorie and Clara came in. The table was spread with a spotless cloth, and crockery of all patterns gleamed upon it. There were fresh flowers in jam-jars on the mantelpiece, giving quite an artistic touch of colour to the room. And the "spread" was really first-class. All the members of the Co. were in funds. Founders' Day, a whole holiday at Greyfriars, was near at hand, and the Famous Five had all intimated to their people that a whole holiday was an expensive occasion, and their people had risen to the occasion. So for the time, cash was quite plentiful, and the result was that a very handsome spread had been prepared for the guests from Cliff House.

The study was considerably crowded; Marjorie and Clara, and the Famous Five, made seven; and there were Vernon-Smith, and Tom Brown, the New Zealander, and Bulstrode, and Mark Linley. But the juniors

found room somehow; the principal concern was the feed, and as that was all right, everything was all serene.

Hazel did not appear. He was apparently still searching for the pocket-book that had been abstracted from his jacket in the pavilion. Marjorie missed her brother; and, though she was cheery and smiling, every now and then a little cloud came over her brow. Bob Cherry, who never lost an expression on Marjorie's face, understood that she was thinking of her absent brother, and when tea was in full progress, Bob slipped quietly out of the study to look for Hazel. He would have been willing to drag him in to tea by his ears, if that had been feasible. It was a matter of perpetual wonder to Bob that even a "rotter" like Hazel could be so indifferent to a stunning sister like Marjorie.

He found Hazel in the Close, tramping moodily in the dusk, with a savage expression on his face. He clapped him on the shoulder, and Hazel looked round at him angrily.

"Coming in to tea, old chap?" asked Bob, with forced affability.

"No!" snapped Hazel.

"But you want some tea, don't you?"

"Hang tea!"

"Still looking for the pocket-book?"

"Yes. Look here!" Hazel set his teeth, and his eyes glittered at Bob. "Do you know what's become of it?"

"How on earth should I know—" said Bob, in amazement.

"Somebody's taken it—to meddle with me. I thought I'd kept it dark—but somebody's got on to it," said Hazel, between his teeth. "I can't possibly replace those figures—"

"What figures?"

"The list I had in that book. I was working them out—and someone must have seen me doing it. It would be like one of you meddling busybodies to take away the book, to keep me out of mischief, as you would call it."

Bob looked at him steadily.

"You say those figures hadn't anything to do with horse-racing, Hazel?"

"Nothing at all!"

"With gambling of any sort?"

Hazel did not reply.

"Then they had something to do with gambling?" asked Bob.

"That's my business!"

"It's the business of your friends, too, if you're getting up some silly scheme for getting yourself expelled from the school," said Bob very quietly.

"Hazeldene's Foolishness!"—Next Week's Grand Tale of Greyfriars!

"I don't call anybody my friend who meddles with me."

"You're glad enough to be meddled with when your foolery has got you into trouble," said Bob sharply. "I should like to know what you'd have done last time, if Wharton hadn't chipped in and helped you."

"Well, you didn't find any of the money," said Hazel sullenly. "No need for you to rub it in. I'm going to square up with Wharton, too—soon. I shall have plenty of money next week, after Founders' Day."

"After Founders' Day! What difference does that make?"

"That's my business."

"Well," said Bob, after a pause, "I don't know what's become of your book; but if that's what's in it, I hope you won't find it. And if I come across it, I'll pitch it into the fire. I tell you that! You ought to be ashamed of yourself. Even if gambling wasn't a rotten, blackguardly thing to do, you ought to have sense enough to keep clear of it, considering the kind of luck you have."

"This isn't a matter of luck; it's a certainty, if I find my book."

"Another of your dead certs?" growled Bob.

"It's different. It requires a little capital, and then I can make as much money as I like."

Bob stared at him blankly.

"That sounds like one of Fisher T. Fish's schemes for getting rich quick," he said.

"What is the little game, anyway?"

"You wouldn't understand!"

"Well, come in to tea now," said Bob, as good-temperedly as he could. "Marjorie wants you. She's worried about you."

"I suppose you've been putting it into her head to worry about me," said Hazel.

"Well, I won't be worried about; and I won't be looked after, and I won't be guided. I'm old enough to know my own business, I suppose, without a girl setting up to take care of me."

And Hazel strode angrily away, leaving Bob Cherry with his hands clenched hard, and his eyes gleaming.

"If that chap wasn't Marjorie's brother I'd—!" Bob murmured.

But he was Marjorie's brother; so Bob unclenched his hands, and returned to No. 1 Study. Marjorie glanced at him as he came in.

"Have you seen Hazel?" she asked.

"He's looking for his pocket-book," said Bob cheerily. "He's going to have tea later."

Marjorie nodded; but it was with difficulty that she kept up her cheerfulness during the rest of the meal. And the chums of the Remove, who knew very well what was in her mind, told themselves what they would like to do to Hazel—if only he wasn't Marjorie's brother.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Bouncer's Idea!

AFTER tea, the cheery little party in No. 1 Study broke up, and the Famous Five prepared for the walk over to Cliff House, to see their guests home. Vernon-Smith was about to follow Bulstrode and Brown and Linley down the passage, when Wharton tapped him on the arm.

"Coming over with us?"

The Bouncer brightened up.

"Can I come?" he said.

"Certainly!"

"I'll be glad to!" The Bouncer lowered his voice; they were speaking in the passage. "I know Miss Hazeldene thinks I've got something to do with Hazel being like this now. I suppose the silly duffer is getting into some more of his silly troubles. But I don't know anything about it. I haven't anything to do with it; I give you my word."

Wharton nodded.

"I believe you," he said quietly. "Only—it's only natural that Marjorie should suppose something of the sort, after—"

"I know that," said the Bouncer glumly. "It's not quite so easy as I thought to live down a bad reputation. But Hazel's the kind of chap to get into trouble; he's born for it. As soon as he's yanked out of one scrape, he's bound to fall into another."

"Well, to be quite plain, you helped him into some of his troubles," said Wharton. "If he's at it again, don't you think it's up to you, perhaps, to help him out?"

"I was thinking of that. I'm going to

speak to him, and if there's anything I can do, I'll do it."

"Good! It's really up to you, you know, considering the past."

They looked for Hazel as they crossed the Close towards the gates. He came towards them with the same sullen expression on his face.

"I suppose you haven't heard anything of my pocket-book?" he asked.

"No," said Harry.

"It's queer what's become of it."

"Was it very important?" asked Marjorie. "Of course it was," said Hazel, with an irritable gesture; "awfully important. I'm going to find it."

"You're coming along with us now?" asked Bob.

"Do come!" whispered Marjorie, slipping her arm through her brother's.

Hazel gave an ungracious and reluctant assent. They left Greyfriars, and walked down the lane to Cliff House. Hazel spoke hardly a word, in spite of Marjorie's efforts to make him cheer up. The loss of his precious pocket-book weighed on his mind. But Vernon-Smith had plenty to say. The Bouncer had been thinking out a little plan; and the cordiality of Harry Wharton and Co., and the unusually good terms he was on with their girl chums, encouraged him to propound it.

"You know it's Founders' Day on Friday," he remarked.

"Yes, rather; and a whole giddy holiday," said Bob Cherry. "If you could get a holiday, too, Marjorie—"

"It isn't a holiday at Cliff House, you know," said Marjorie, with a smile.

"That's what I was thinking of," said the Bouncer eagerly. "Miss Primrose might give you two leave, you know, for the day, or part of the day. I've got a little plan for the holiday—if you would all chip in to make it a success. I want you all to let me stand treat for an excursion."

"H'm!"

"Leave me out," said Hazel, speaking for the first time. "I've got an engagement for Founders' Day."

Marjorie gave him a quick look.

"I didn't know, Hazel," she murmured.

"Because I haven't told you," said Hazel ungraciously.

"Are you going home?"

"Home! What the dickens should I go home for?"

"Oh, Hazel will come, if the rest do!" said Vernon-Smith. "You can put your engagement off, surely, Hazel."

"I can't; it's not to be put off."

Marjorie's face, in the dusk, looked utterly depressed. She thought she could guess the nature of Hazel's engagement. It was only too clear that the wayward lad was looking for trouble again. Vernon-Smith noted her expression, and he understood that if he could induce Hazel to give up that mysterious engagement, whatever it was, he would have no difficulty in getting Marjorie to join in his excursion.

"My idea is to take a really good run," he said. "My pater has stood me something really handsome for Founders' Day. He's sent me thirty pounds—three tenners. Excuse my mentioning it," added the Bouncer, a little hastily. There had been a time when Vernon-Smith's money had been the chief topic of his conversation, and when he had had a way of displaying fivers and tenners before the admiring and envious eyes of the other fellows, whose fathers were not millionaire financiers. But Vernon-Smith was changing in that respect as in many others. His money was kept very much in the background of late.

"My hat!" said Bob. "Your pater's a brick!"

"Thirty pounds!" said Hazel, with a gleam in his eyes. "That's splendid! I wish my pater would do it! All I get is a quid."

"Well," said the Bouncer, "as I'm in funds, I want you all to let me stand a really long run for the whole holiday. What do you say to Boulogne?"

"Across the Channel!" exclaimed Miss Clara. "How topping!"

"My word!" said Nugent. "You're going it, Smithy!"

"The whole giddy unicorn, and no mistake!" said Bob Cherry.

"It would be a pleasant enough excursion," said Smithy. "Easy enough, too, as we're so near the South Coast here. Train to Folkestone, steamer to Boulogne, and there you are! We get all the afternoon in

Boulogne; talk French to the natives and puzzle 'em!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Miss Primrose would give you leave, I'm sure," said Vernon-Smith to the two girls. "She knows we'll look after you all right. And in this ripping weather there's no danger of sea-sickness."

"You are very kind," said Marjorie. "Would you come, Hazel?"

"Oh, Hazel'll come!" said the Bouncer. "If you'll come, your sister will come, Hazel. You can't stand out now."

"I'll come with pleasure, then," said Hazel, with quite a sudden change of manner. "I didn't know that was the idea."

Marjorie pressed his arm gratefully.

"And you'll give up your engagement, whatever it was," she whispered.

"Oh, never mind that!" said Hazel shamefacedly.

"It's a jolly good idea," said Wharton. "I can't know about letting you stand treat for the crowd, though, Smithy. That's rather too thick."

"Founder of the feast, you know," said Vernon-Smith. "I claim the right, as the originator of the idea. Leave it to me."

"Leave it to Smithy," said Hazel.

"That's all right. Why shouldn't he stand treat sometimes, now that we're all such jolly good friends?" There was a slightly sarcastic inflection in Hazel's voice, of which the others affected to take no notice.

"I think Vernon-Smith is very kind," said Marjorie quietly; "and we shall certainly ask Miss Primrose for leave."

"What-ho!" said Miss Clara emphatically. And they parted at the gate of Cliff House.

As the juniors walked back to Greyfriars, Vernon-Smith dropped behind with Hazeldene. Harry Wharton and Co. walked on ahead, understanding that the Bouncer had something to say to Hazel.

"What's the matter with you, kid?" the Bouncer asked abruptly. "Are you in debt again?"

"No!"

"Not in debt?" exclaimed the Bouncer, elevating his eyebrows a little.

"No!" said Hazel irritably. "Why should you think I'm in debt?"

"Well, the last two or three days—"

"I've been thinking something out—a scheme for Founders' Day," said Hazel. "I've been saving up money to try it. I haven't got enough, but I'm going to have a try, all the same. And if I succeed—but there's no if—only I must have my pocket-book; I can't do it without that. Look here, Smithy—he lowered his voice—"are you game to go in with me? There's a fortune in it!"

"A fortune in what?" asked Vernon-Smith blankly.

"In my idea. You've got the capital, and I've got the system."

"System!" repeated the Bouncer.

"Yes, that's it. Don't jaw to those other fellows; they wouldn't understand. But you are a different sort. You like a little game now and then—"

"I've chucked all that, as you know."

"Nonsense! Look here, if I find my pocket-book again, it's all right. Will you let me explain it to you, and then you can decide for yourself whether to go in for it or not?" said Hazel eagerly. "I tell you it's a dead cert. It was through you I first got on to it, too, so I'm willing to whack it out with you."

"Through me?" said the Bouncer, in rather a depressed voice.

"Yes, I'll put you up to the whole thing, and you can take it or leave it. But, if you leave it, remember it's in confidence—that's all."

"Very well," said Vernon-Smith quietly. And nothing more was said on the subject as they returned to the school.

THE THIRD CHAPTER!

Of Use Only to the Owner!

BLESSED if I can make head or tail of it!"

Thus William George Bunter. The Owl of the Remove was seated in the armchair in his study, No. 7 in the Remove passage. Billy Bunter shared that study with Tom Dutton and Peter and Alonzo Todd; but his three study-mates were absent just now, and he had the room to himself.

Bunter had a pocket-book open on his fat knees, and was blinking over the pages through his big spectacles. His fat face was deeply perplexed. It was Hazel's pocket-book, and Bunter was determined to penetrate its secret. He had expected to understand what it was all about as soon as he saw the interior of the mysterious book. It had been in his possession for some hours now, and he was as far as ever from understanding it.

The contents of the pages might have puzzled a sager head than William George Bunter's. On several pages there were nothing but figures, and the figures did not represent any meaning to Bunter's mind. Inside the cover of the book the name of the shop where it had been bought was stamped, and Bunter had been surprised to read, "F. Daquin, Lausanne, Suisse."

Hazel-dene had evidently purchased that pocket-book in the Swiss town, and Bunter remembered that Hazel had once spent a vacation in Switzerland with Vernon-Smith. There he had bought this cheap pocket-book, apparently for no purpose but to fill up the pages with meaningless figures. Some of the figures were in ink, and some in pencil, and they were all old entries. They had been written there, doubtless, during Hazel's vacation in Switzerland. But what did they mean? What was a fellow to make, for instance, of the following:

"7. 7. 9. 1. 1. 8. 3. 5. 5. 7. 2. 2. 4. 6. 8. 9. 7. 5. 5. 3. 6. 8. 6. 8. 3. 3. 5. 7. 9. 8. 8. 6. 7. 8. 9. 4. 4. 5. 6. 2. 3. 5. 5. 6. 7. 9. 9."

And so on, and so on, for whole pages? Billy Bunter blinked at the meaningless arrays of figures, page after page. There was no higher number than nine—tens or elevens or higher numbers did not apparently enter into the scheme. There was not a single nought. Only a weird arrangement of the numbers from one to nine, in every kind of order, or disorder.

"The chap must be dotty!" murmured Bunter, in utter perplexity. "I thought it was something to do with races, but this can't have anything to do with races. It isn't mathematics, that's jolly certain. Can't be arithmetic. He doesn't add up or subtract or divide or multiply anything. Just those blessed figures!"

Further on in the book there were entries in words, but equally puzzling and mysterious to the fat junior:

"L.500 fr. W.650 fr. 200 times, av. 50 W. total W.350 fr. L.150 fr. net 200 fr."

It was evidently a calculation of some abstruse kind, but it entered into no system of arithmetic known to William George Bunter.

There were more entries of the same sort, with all kinds of variations, all equally mysterious to look at.

Billy Bunter pressed a fat hand to his forehead in the mental effort to make head or tail of Hazel-dene's remarkable collection of figures.

But he could make nothing of it. Try as he would, the collection of figures represented no meaning whatever to his mind.

"He must be off his rocker—right off his silly rocker!" Bunter exclaimed aloud at last. "Or else it's some idiotic joke. I can't understand it."

The study door opened, and Peter Todd looked in in time to hear that exclamation. Todd glanced at the book of figures.

"Hallo! Swotting?" he asked.

Bunter started, and closed the book hastily.

"No—yes!" he stammered.

"Very lucid, I must say!" said Peter, with a yawn.

"I say, take a look at this, and see if you can understand it," said Bunter, opening the book again. His first impulse was to conceal it, but he was intensely curious to know what it was all about. "You're awfully good at figures, Toddy; you've got that kind of a headpiece. Look at that! Do you think it means anything?"

Todd glanced at the pages of figures, and looked amazed.

"Doesn't mean anything that I can see," he replied.

"Can't you work it out somehow?"

"Of course I can't! Those figures don't mean anything—nothing that I know anything about. What did you write them down for, you fat duffer?"

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"I didn't write them—"

"Oho!" exclaimed Peter, looking at the pocket-book more attentively. "Hazel-dene has been inquiring all over the place for a pocket-book. He says there are calculations in it. Is this it?"

"Ahem! You see—Ow! Leggo my collar!" roared Bunter.

Peter Todd did not let go his collar. He ground his knuckles into the back of Billy Bunter's fat neck.

"You fat cad!" he said. "So it was you that took it out of Hazel's jacket in the pavilion and caused all that fuss, was it?"

"Ow! Leggo! I—I was acting from a sense of duty!" Bunter tried to explain.

"Groo! Don't dig your beastly knuckles into my neck! Ow! You—you see, Hazel is getting up some rotten scheme for races, or something, and I felt it my duty to look into the matter. Ow, ow, ow!"

Shake! Shake! Shake!

"Gerroogh! D-d-don't shake me like that, you silly owl!" roared Bunter. "If you make my gig-gig-glasses fall off—yarrooh!—and they get broken—yow-ow!—you'll have to pip-pip-pip-pay for them—yarrooooooh!"

"You fat rotter!" said Peter, still shaking him. "Haven't I told you I'm going to cure you of spying and prying—eh?"

Shake! Shake! Shake! Shake!

"Groooh!"

"Have I?" roared Peter. "Yes or no?"

"Groo-hoo! Yes!"

"And now you've taken Hazel's pocket-book to pry into it? Yes or no?"

"N-n-unno! From a sense of d-d-d-duty!"

"Yes or no?" yelled Peter, shaking away with all the force of his powerful arm.

"Groooh! Yes! Leggo! Yes, yes!" shrieked Bunter.

"Good! Hazel's just come in, and you'll just come and give him back his pocket-book and beg his pardon for meddling with it," said Peter. "You're not going to disgrace this study with your spying, you disgraceful loafer! Come on!"

"I—I—I intended to leave it s-s-some-where where Hazel could fuf-fuf-find it!"

"You're going to take it to him, and I'm going to take you!" said Peter, tightening his grip on Bunter's collar and digging his knuckles—very sharp knuckles—a little deeper into the fat neck. "Kim on!"

"Ow, ow!" wailed Bunter. "Leggo! I'll go!"

"You'll come!" said Peter.

He pulled open the door with his left hand, and marched Billy Bunter out of the study. Bunter gasped and wriggled as he was impelled along the passage to Hazel-dene's study. There were several Remove fellows chatting in the passage, and they stared at the peculiar scene in surprise.

"What on earth's the matter?" asked Harry Wharton.

"The matterfulness appears to be terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The esteemed Bunter seems to be chokefully short of breath."

"Groogh! Make him leggo! Ow!"

"Bunter's got Hazel's pocket-book," explained Peter. "He sneaked it out of Hazel's pocket. I'm going to make him deliver up the stolen goods to the owner."

"Grooh! Tain't stolen! I just looked at it—"

"Kim on!"

Bunter was whirled along to No. 2 Study, and Peter opened the door by the simple process of thumping the fat junior against it. The door flew open, and Bulstrode and Tom Brown, who were doing their preparation in the study, started to their feet. Hazel was sitting, silent and sullen, in the armchair, and he only looked round with a scowl.

"What the dickens—!" began Bulstrode.

"Hazel!" rapped out Peter Todd.

"What do you want?" growled Hazel-dene.

"Is this your pocket-book?"

Hazel jumped up.

"Have you found it?"

"Bunter found it."

"Oh, good!" Hazel snatched the pocket-book from Bunter's hand. "Much obliged, Bunter!"

"He found it in your pocket," Peter Todd explained.

"I—I— It was only a j-joke!" wailed Bunter. "I was g-g-going to leave it for you in your study, Hazel, old chap! I was really!"

"If you want to kick him, here he is!" said Peter generously.

"Yow-ow! I won't be kicked!" yelled Bunter. "I—I— Yarooooop!"

Hazel-dene kicked him with hearty vigour, and, Peter Todd letting go his collar, the fat junior flew through the doorway and sprawled in the passage outside. He sat up, and set his spectacles straight, and blinked.

"Grooh! You rotters! I won't stand this! I—I—yah! Oh!"

Peter Todd was kicking now. It seemed to be his object to dribble Bunter along the passage as if he had been a football. Bunter bounced up a good deal like a football and fled, and Peter went to his study, with a satisfied feeling of duty well done.

Hazel-dene gave one look at his precious pocket-book, and then, slipping it into his pocket, he hurried away to Vernon-Smith's study.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Hazel's Great Scheme!

HERE was a scent of tobacco in Vernon-Smith's study when Hazel-dene entered. The Bounder was alone there, and he flushed a little as he met Hazel's eyes.

A cigarette which he had concealed in the hollow of his hand came into view again as he saw that it was only Hazel-dene.

"Don't mind me," said Hazel, with a sneering smile. "I am not one of the Models. You can go on smoking."

The Bounder threw down the cigarette and ground it under his foot. It was not easy for the Bounder of Greyfriars to get out of all his old bad habits at once, though he was honestly doing his best. But it was annoying to be caught by Hazel, who had all along taken the view that Vernon-Smith's reformation was humbug.

"I've found the pocket-book," said Hazel, who had watched Smithy's disposal of the cigarette with a satirical smile. "That cad Bunter had taken it. I suppose he's been looking at it; but he hasn't brains enough to understand what it meant. Now we'll go into it."

The Bounder nodded shortly.

"Mind, I'm only doing this because you ask me," he said. "I've done with gambling and playing the fool generally; and, if I wanted to take it up again, I certainly shouldn't take up any of your schemes. You're too unlucky. You never spotted a horse that came in nearer than fifth or sixth; and if you backed a League club in a footer match it was sure to be beaten by four or five to nil. You're the last fellow in the world to gamble."

"What if I've got a system?"

"On horses?"

"Not on horses."

"On League footer? What's the good of that at this time of the year?"

"Who's talking about League footer?" growled Hazel.

"I don't see quite what else there is to gamble on," said the Bounder, perplexed.

"Are you going to play nap or banker with Loder of the Sixth and his set? They'll skin you right down to the bones if you do."

"Hang nap and banker—kid's games," said Hazel contemptuously.

"Cricket, then—bets on cricket matches?" asked Vernon-Smith. "There isn't much of it done. Nothing for you to do there."

"Blow cricket!"

"Then what on earth is it?" asked Vernon-Smith, really curious now. "Not a system for introducing pitch-and-toss into the Remove, is it?"

"I'm not a baby!" grunted Hazel. "I'll tell you, if you'll give me a chance to open my mouth, and keep yours shut a little."

Vernon-Smith laughed.

"You remember the time we had a vacation in Switzerland?" began Hazel.

"I remember; but I don't see what that's got to do with it."

"They have public casinos in Switzerland, where they play a game called petits chevaux, or la boule—it's the same thing and—"

"Yes, and we tried it," said the Bounder, with a gloomy look. "We were a pair of fools—not to say sweeps! It's not a thing decent people do. And we lost money, too. It's a mug's game. Somebody—Bernard Shaw, wasn't it?—said that Switzerland was the

best-governed country in Europe. I wonder if he'd been there?"

"Blow all that!" said Hazel. "I didn't come here to discuss ethics and that rot. I'm on the make."

"You generally are!" agreed the Bouncer. "And you generally make a muck of it. However, pile in!"

"After all my money was gone that time I used to take down the numbers," said Hazel. "I have got them here. I kept the book."

"People generally do—after all their money is gone," agreed the Bouncer. "Then they work out a system for winning if they had some more money. If they get some more, they lose that, too; and then work out a fresh system. I was soon fed up with chucking my money away in that style. But what are you driving at? Have you invented a system for the 'little horses'?"

"Yes." "You're thinking of going to Switzerland—in the middle of the term? Saturday to Monday, perhaps?" the Bouncer asked sarcastically.

"Don't be an ass! They play the same game much nearer home—only across the Channel, in all the French coast towns, in the summer," said Hazeldene.

"Yes, I've seen 'em—seen the boatloads of silly duffers come over from Dover or Folkestone," said Vernon-Smith, with a sarcastic grin. "Awfully respectable people at home; but the minute they set foot in Boulogne they make a bee-line for the casino, and stand there being swindled till it's time to catch the boat back. Those foreign thieves must make thousands and thousands out of English mugs."

"People win sometimes!"

"Yes, I believe they have a dodge of letting beginners win, to encourage 'em," yawned the Bouncer. "Ever heard of anybody who won in the long run?"

Hazel did not reply.

"You never did—and nobody ever did," said Vernon-Smith, with a laugh. "And they don't let all beginners win, either—only those who look as if they have a good bit of money, and are likely to come back again."

"That's all rot!" said Hazel. "How can they let this, or let that? They pitch a ball, and if it falls into your number you win."

"And do you think the man can't make it fall into any number he chooses?" asked Vernon-Smith impatiently. "Don't be an ass!"

"When there's a lot playing, they can't skin everybody, anyway."

"No; then they generally satisfy themselves with roping in the biggest stakes," said Vernon-Smith, "unless they spot some mug with a system. Then they lead him on with letting him win a bit—and afterwards clean him out. I tell you I've watched 'em."

"You know all about it, of course," said Hazel sullenly. "I don't see why you should set them all down as dishonest."

Vernon-Smith laughed. "When I'm looking for honesty, I shan't go among a crew of professional gamblers to find it," he said.

"It's licensed by the French Government." "Yes, they get a percentage. The old proverb says, 'The smell of all money is sweet,'" said the Bouncer, with a scornful curl of the lip.

"I don't believe a word of what you say," said Hazel, who was evidently determined, like all gamblers, not to believe anything that told against his precious "system." "I've worked out this system on hundreds of numbers that I took at Montreux, in Switzerland. It looks to me like a dead cert."

"Well," said the Bouncer, in measured tones, "I always thought you were an ass, Hazel, old man. I thought you had some silly scheme on. But I admit I never thought it was quite so idiotic as that. I've heard of people going for wool and coming back shorn; but to think of going among wolves to shear them, that takes the giddy biscuit. The best thing you can do with that system is to shove it in the fire, and keep your money in your trousers-pocket. If you want to chuck it away, there's a river close handy—no need to cross the Channel."

Hazel bit his lip. "Besides, you can't go abroad gambling, if that's the wheeze," said Vernon-Smith. "How are you going to do anything of the sort?"

"I'm thinking of Founders' Day."

The Bouncer whistled.

"O-ho! That was your engagement, was it?"

"Yes."

"And that's why you're willing to come to Boulogne with the little party?"

"Yes," said Hazel again.

The Bouncer's face set grimly.

"Then you've got to understand, once for all, that it's no go," he said. "It's no good, and no go! There's going to be no gambling on this excursion. My hat! I wonder you're not ashamed to think of it, with your sister in the party!"

"I'm not thinking of Boulogne; there's another place along the coast—you get there by the tram from Boulogne," said Hazel. "It's call Le Coin. A quiet place, where there's no risk of being spotted—a casino in the woods. Ripping place for a little run and a little flutter."

"And a little scalping!" grinned the Bouncer. "If you'll go in with me, I'll go halves." "In the losses?"

"In the winnings," said Hazel. "You say you've got thirty quid. I've been saving—and my pater sent me a quid for Founders' Day, too, and I had another from my uncle—and I've borrowed two quid from—from er—"

"From your sister?"

"That's my business!" said Hazel sullenly. "I shall be able to square afterwards."

"Did you tell her what it was for?"

"Of course I didn't," said Hazel irritably. "Do you think I'm a fool. Women don't understand these things."

"And you do—your silly goat?"

"I've sold my bike," went on Hazel, unheeding, "and—and some other things. Altogether, I've raised ten pounds. It isn't much, but it's enough to try the system. But what's needed is capital. If you pool your money with mine—"

"It will all go the same way," said the Bouncer.

"Let me show you the system. Taking

these figures as they stand, it's a dead cert—and if it wins on one set of figures, it will win on another."

"Nonsense!"

The Bouncer changed his tone suddenly.

"Look here, Hazel, old man, don't be a duffer. If there were a chance, I don't say that I wouldn't have a little flutter. But you know I've got a business head. I tell you I've watched them playing—watched them skinning the mugs. Chuck up the idea, and let's have a holiday—not on the make!"

Hazeldene rose.

"I suppose I might have expected all this!" he said bitterly. "Now you're in with Wharton and his set, I shan't get anything but sermons from you. But you'll remember that you've given your word not to say anything about this!"

"Hazel, old chap—"

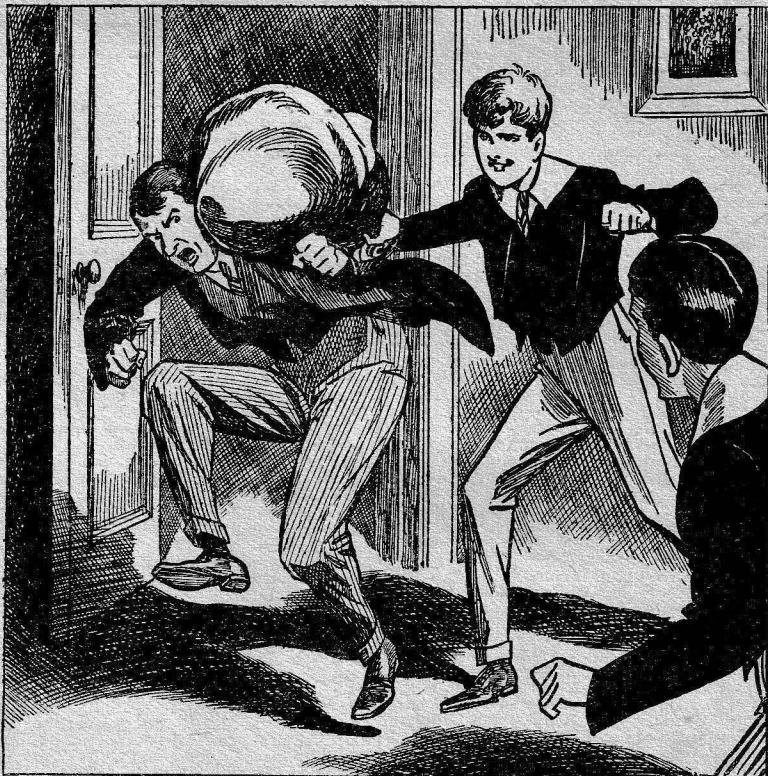
Slam!

The door closed violently behind Hazel, and he was gone. Vernon-Smith was left in a most uncomfortable frame of mind.

"The ass!" he said angrily. "The silly, silly ass! A silly, green, innocent mug like that setting out to skin the sharpest swindlers on the Continent. And—and it's partly my fault, too—hang it!"

It was an unpleasant reflection. The Bouncer could not forget that it was he, on that Swiss vacation, who had first led Hazel into the haunts of gaming. The thirst for gambling and its uncertain gains was deep in Hazel's breast, certainly; but the Bouncer had helped to develop it. Vernon-Smith had always known when to stop; but Hazel did not know when to stop. He was a true gambler in that he had no self-command—that when he lost, his only thought was the foolish one of playing on to regain his losses, throwing good money after bad.

The Bouncer had a sense of guilt. If he had asked, like Cain of old, "Am I my brother's keeper?" he knew what his conscience must answer. And he was helpless in the matter; if Hazel did not go with the party, he would go alone. To betray him was impossible; to stop him from carrying



OFFERS REJECTED! The handle turned, and as the door opened, Bob brought down the cushion forcibly on the head of the junior who entered. "Take that, you bouncer!" roared Bob Cherry. "Yaroooo!" yelled Bolsover Major. "What's that for?" (See Chapter 4.)

out his mad scheme seemed equally hopeless. But, at all events, if he came in the party it would be possible to keep an eye on him, and his sister's presence might be a restraining influence. And the Bounder reflected grimly, too, that if Hazel gambled, he would need somebody with him to pay his expenses home. For that he would not leave off playing while he had a franc left was quite certain.

The Bounder would gladly have taken Harry Wharton & Co.'s advice upon the matter; but he had given Hazel his word. And he could hardly begin his new career of "going straight" by breaking his word. He had to keep the matter to himself, but it was with an uneasy heart and an anxious brow; and when he thought of Marjorie his uneasiness and his anxiety deepened.

Needless to say, the Bounder had many offers to accompany his party to France. They came in their dozens, and at last Bob Cherry picked up a cushion. Billy Bunter had been in three times to offer his services as an interpreter, and Bob rather suspected that he would return.

The door handle turned, and as the door opened, Bob brought down the cushion forcibly on the head of the junior who entered.

"Take that, you fat bounder!" roared Bob.

"Yaroch!" roared Bolsover major.

"What's that?"

"Sorry!" grinned Bob. "Thought it was Bunter. You might buzz, Bolsy, and tell the fellow's what's coming to them if they enter here!"

"Yow!"

"The party is made up—and that's all there is to it," said Smithy bluntly.

And Bolsover went. Whether he told the juniors that Bob Cherry was waiting for them was not known to the Famous Five. But there were no more callers with offers!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. Across the Channel!

QUITE a little crowd gathered to see the trippers off the following morning.

Mr. Quelch, the Remove-master, spoke to Harry Wharton seriously before they started. The Remove-master had hesitated a little before giving his consent to the trip, but, upon the whole, he knew that he could rely upon Wharton.

"Of course, it is understood that you come back by the early boat, and that while you are in Boulogne you enter no places that you would not be allowed to enter were there a master with you," said Mr. Quelch. "I am referring especially to the gambling establishments which are permitted in that country. I can rely upon you, Wharton, to see that there is nothing of that kind?"

Wharton flushed a little.

"Quite, sir," he said. "If any silly ass proposed to play a rotten game there, I'd punch his head! I—I mean I'd stop him, sir."

Mr. Quelch smiled.

"Very well; I have reliance upon you—and upon the others. Of Vernon-Smith and Hazeldene I do not feel so sure, but I leave them to your guidance."

"Hazel's sister will be with us, sir. It will be all right."

"Very well; I rely upon you."

Wharton rejoined his chums after that little talk with the Form-master, and they started.

A crowd of fellows saw them off at the gates, some of them cheering, and some of them chipping.

"Good old Trippers!"

"You 'aven't got fevers in your 'ats!"

"Mind you break the bank at the Casino, Smithy!"

Vernon-Smith smiled a little bitterly as they walked down the road to Courtfield. They were to meet the Cliff House girls at Courtfield Junction, where the express for Folkestone stopped. The Bounder had no intention of transgressing upon that little trip; but the Remove fellows were well acquainted with his old manners and customs.

Bolsover major and Skinner, and several more, were quite convinced that he was going to try his luck at the Casino—indeed, that that was his purpose in going at all. Bolsover major had, indeed, asked him to put on a "francino cinq" for him.

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—a request that Vernon Smith politely declined to accede to.

"Maintenant nous avong startay, anyway," Bob Cherry remarked cheerfully.

"Vous lookez tres thoughtful, Smithy!"

"Goutez-vous a pain anywhere?"

"No," said the Bounder smiling.

Hazeldene looked sharply at the Bounder. He guessed what he was thinking of—the precious system in Hazel's pocket-book in the inside-pocket of his coat. But the Bounder had said nothing to the others. The Famous Five knew nothing of it, and Harry Wharton had made his promise to the Remove-master in all good faith.

At Courtfield station they had to wait a quarter of an hour for the express, being in good time; and Marjorie and Clara had not yet arrived.

Hazeldene grunted as he looked round for them.

"Missing the train, most likely," he remarked. "Girls all over! Well, I'm jolly well not going to miss the train, I know that!"

"Lots of time yet," said Nugent cheerfully; and Hurrey Jamset Ram Singh said amicably that the loftiness of the esteemed time was terrific.

In good time after all, a trap drove up with the two Cliff House girls in it, looking very cheerful and very charming. Vernon-Smith had the tickets; the train was in, and Wharton had secured the seats. The Bounder had taken first-class tickets; he was doing the thing in style, as Bob admiringly remarked. If they were trippers, they were first-class trippers, at any rate.

Two compartments held the party, and the train rolled out of the station, and they started in great spirits. Only Hazeldene and Vernon-Smith looked a little thoughtful, but in general hilarity it was hardly noticed. Marjorie noted the shade on her brother's brow, and she noted, too, that he was very busy coining over weird-looking arrangements of figures in his pocket-book. But his expression did not invite inquiry, and she did not ask him what the figures meant.

The express glided on swiftly through pleasant meadow and woodland, through old towns, and past sunny villages. It was a glorious summer's day, and the trippers fully enjoyed the run down to the coast.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What have you got there, Hazel?" asked Bob Cherry, observing Hazel after a time—his attention hitherto having been devoted to Hazel's sister. "Not mugging up blessed arithmetic now, surely?"

"Only looking over some figures," said Hazel.

Bob glanced at the page, and read out a cryptic line:

"£500 fr. W500 fr. 200 times, av.50 W.—I. Great Christopher Columbus! What does it mean? New system of algebra, all on your own?"

"Oh, don't bother!" snapped Hazel.

Bob reddened a little.

Vernon-Smith glanced at the page; he understood well what it meant: "Lose 500 francs. Win 650 francs. 200 times, or turns of the ball—average 50 wins." He smiled grimly. Hazeldene was working out the profits of his system—counting his chickens a very long time before they were hatched.

Fortunately for Hazel, the others did not understand what Vernon-Smith knew. But he put the book hastily and ill-temperedly into his pocket now that it had attracted attention. He did not want trouble. He had more than a suspicion that if the Famous Five had known of his intended adventure, they would have prevented him, by force if necessary, from going to Boulogne at all, and Marjorie would certainly not have disapproved of their action. Only the fact that Smithy was paying the expenses, and, therefore, saved the necessity of diminishing his little capital in any way, had caused Hazel to attach himself to the party at all. He was with them in body, but not in spirit. He was not bound upon a holiday, but upon business—as he regarded it. Their merry talk and laughter jarred upon him with his brain busy upon calculations of chances—as if the reckless and foolish fellow had any chance at all

of shearing the shearers, as the Bounder expressed it.

In spite of Hazel's preoccupation and evident bad temper, the railway journey was very cheery and pleasant, and the trippers arrived at Folkestone in great feather.

Vernon-Smith conducted his little army from the train to the boat.

"Lunch on the boat," he suggested. "It will save time when we get ashore. We shan't have any too much time on land, anyway."

"Good idea," said Bob. "I mean, tres bong idee. Allong-nous lunchy."

Half an hour on deck, after their journey by train, had given the party good appetites. Fare on the boat was limited, perhaps, as to variety; but Vernon-Smith gave orders regardless of expense, and they contrived to make a very good lunch.

"Let's have something decent to drink," Hazel suggested suddenly. "I think you can get fizz on these boats."

"Champagne do you mean?"

"Yes. It's a holiday, you know."

"It wouldn't feel much like a holiday after you've been drinking fizz, ass," said Bob. "You put sham-pagne into your mouth, and get real pain in your head."

"I've drunk fizz before," said Hazel sullenly. "So has Smithy, for that matter—heaps of it."

"You don't want any now," said the Bounder uneasily.

"Stuff! We're free to-day. You had plenty of it the last time I was on a trip with you. Why, it was you that taught me to drink it, first of all."

Vernon-Smith turned crimson, and dared not meet Marjorie's eyes. It was true enough, and he deserved it; but he knew that Hazel had purposely brought it out before Marjorie and Clara in return for his having refused to have anything to do with the precious "system." The other fellows all looked extremely uncomfortable. Hazel was not improving the spirits of the party.

"Well, I was a silly ass, and you were another," said the Bounder at last.

"Miss Hazeldene, what your brother's just said is quite true, and I'm sorry for it. I know I ought to have been kicked."

Marjorie nodded.

"Well, let's have some," said Hazel impatiently. "I want bucking up."

"Not with my consent," said the Bounder coldly.

"Well, you're not the only fellow with money in his pocket," said Hazel, with a sneer. "Here, waiter!"

Wharton fixed his eyes upon Hazeldene.

"Hazel!" murmured Marjorie in distress.

"Don't play the giddy goat, kid," said Miss Clara. "It don't suit you. If you order champagne, I'll box your silly ears—so, there!"

"There won't be any champagne ordered," said Harry Wharton, very determinedly. "Come, Hazel, don't play the giddy ox, old chap!"

Hazel looked sulky, but he did not order the champagne. When the waiter came, harmless ginger-beer was ordered instead.

Hazel was the first to go on deck again. When the others came up, he kept at a little distance from the party, and did not seem to see Marjorie's imploring looks.

"Hallo—hallo—hallo! Here we are!" Bob Cherry exclaimed.

And Hazel's sulkeness was forgotten as the juniors watched Boulogne growing larger. The shabby town stood out clearly in the bright sunshine.

In the stream of passengers making for the landing, Hazeldene was separated from the Greyniars party, and Marjorie called to him.

"All right," said Bob. "He's gone ahead. We'll find him on the quay!"

And they followed the crowd ashore, and streamed through the Custom-house; but there was nothing to be seen of Hazel. He had disappeared as soon as he had set foot on the French shore.

"There's going to be trouble with Hazeldene," said Bob Cherry grimly.

The others nodded morosely and were silent as they made their way to their hotel. Lucky for them they could not read the future.

THE END.

(Don't miss next week's top-hole tale of the Greyniars chums.)

The Fight Outside the Casino! See Next Week!



Supplement No. 132.

Week Ending July 14th, 1923.

MORE SORROWS OF SAMMY!

Described by the Fat Fag
Himself.

PAGET of the Third had a big box-kite. One of his numerous uncles sent it to him for a birthday present.

Paget only tried to fly the kite once. And after that he wouldn't touch it; but he didn't tell us why.

One gusty afternoon in July, I rolled up to Paget in the Close.

"Be a sport, and lend me your kite!" I said.

Paget grinned from here to here when he heard my request.

"Certainly, old chap!" he said. "You'll find the kite in the box-room."

So I scuttled away in quest of the big kite. It was a hansom affair—quite the biggest I had ever seen. Paget told me it was a man-kite, and would carry yewman beings through the air. But I thought he was pulling my lower lim.

There was a stout rope attached to the kite.

"I'll help you to get the thing going, Sammy," said Paget.

And he did. But as soon as the kite rose up in the air, he hopped out of the way, leaving me clutching the rope.

The kite soared gracefully into space, until it was level with the school tower. That was as high as it would go, bekwase the rope became taught.

Then, to my horror, I felt myself being lifted clean off my feet.

There was a shrill burst of laughter from Paget.

"Ha, ha, ha! Good-bye, Sammy! That's just what happened to me the other day! Hope you have a good voyage, and come down in one peace!"

I clung to the rope like grim death. My legs were wildly thrashing the air (though what the air had done to deserve a thrashing, I don't know).

I suppose I was about four feet from the ground—not a perillous height, but it made me feel jolly uncomfortable.

I was carried clean across the Close, and wafted away towards the cricket-ground.

Where do you think I landed, dear readers? Bang in the middle of the table, at which the cricketers were having tea.

I don't know how much crockery I broke. I know I knocked the teapot into old Wingate's lap, and upset a jug of hot water over Lodger.

As soon as I hit the table, I let go of the rope, and Paget's kite went soaring away out of sight. At the time of writing it has not yet been recovered!

IN YOUR EDITOR'S DEN!

By Billy Bunter.

My dear Readers,—I prommist you last week that you should have something really egg-siting this week. And what could be more egg-siting than a Special Flying Number?

The science of Aviation—sometimes called Aironotticks—is one in which I am very keenly interested. If I don't become a tinker, tailor, soldier, or sailor when I grow up, I shall become a pilot in the Air Force.

Bob Cherry roodly remarks that no aeroplane would be capable of carrying my weight; but this is just a nasty, spiteful statement, so you may take it for what it is worth. I have already flowed in an aeroplane, and I shall flow again. I like the sensation, awfully. It makes some fellows tremble at the neeze, but in my case I didn't turn a hare. Even when my pilot nearly ran into a comet, I was as cool as a cucumber.

I've got an uncle who is a barber in the Royal Hair Force, so you see, aviation runs in the famby. I beleeve I was specially cut out by Nature to be a pilot; and one of the days you will read of the dashing eggsploits of Flying-Officer W. G. Bunter, V.C., D.S.O., D.F.C. (These letter mean Very Cool, Dashed Smart Officer, and Doesn't Funk Collisions.)

My four fat subs have also had egg-sperience of flying, and they relate their advencers in this issew. They don't always tell the trooth, so you mustn't beleeve every word they say. Instead of sticking to facts, like I do, they let their imaginations run riot.

You will read this issew with baited breath, and enjoy every word of it. I feel certain of that. Don't forget to say to your pals: "Old Bunter's got out a Special Flying Number this week!" Then they will rush round to their noose-agents in hot haste to bag a copy of the POPULAR.

By the way, why hasn't Harry Wharton ever published a Special Flying Number of the "Greyfriars Herald?" Bewkase he hasn't the branes!

Yours Sincerely,
YOUR EDITOR.

THE JOY-RIDE!

By Dick Penfold.

I knew a chap on Salisbury Plain Who owned a private aeroplane. "Wilt take me for a trip?" I cried. "Hop in, young fellow!" he replied.

He swung the "prop." and off we went, Flashing above the firmament. I'll own I felt extremely nervous. And loudly cried, "The Fates preserve us!"

"It's quite all right," the pilot said. "Sit tight, my son; don't lose your head." "I wonder," I began to bleat, "If, when we fall, I'll find my feet!"

The good brown earth lay far beneath, I gazed at it, and clenched my teeth. "If we should fall," I groaned, "yarooooo!" I'm bound to bust a rib or two."

The pilot started doing tricks, And I was in a ghastly fix. I felt about as gay and frisky As seasick sailors on the Biscay!

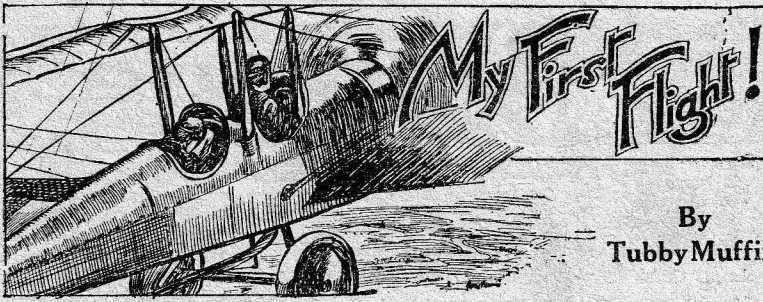
We dodged and dived and ducked and turned, Till I confess my spirit yearned To be on Mother Earth again And tread the turf of Salisbury Plain.

Swift as an arrow we descended Towards the ground; our flight was ended. We landed with a jolt and jar, The pilot chortled, "There you are!"

Two minutes passed—perhaps 'twas three, Before my breath came back to me. That chap I knew on Salisbury Plain I never wish to know again! THE POPULAR.—No. 234.

Supplement I.]

Look Out for a "Special Picnic Number" of the "Weekly" Next Week!



By
Tubby Muffin.

I SHALL never forget my first flight in an aeroplane, as long as I live!

My first bicycle ride was bad enough. My first ride in a motor-car was even worse. But my first trip in an aeroplane almost beggars description!

There was a fellow over at Latham who took people up for five-minute flights, at a quid a time. I badly wanted to go up, but my total resources only amounted to a bob. I offered the pilot this, and told him I would pay the rest in weekly instalments of a tanner.

"I don't do business on those terms, my lad!" he said. "My fee is one pound, payable in advance."

"But I haven't got it—"

"Then there's nothing doing."

I was walking away with a very rueful countenance, when I bumped into Jimmy Silver & Co. I poured my tail of trouble into their simperthick ears.

"Do you seriously want to go up in an aeroplane, Tubby?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"Of course! It has been the dream of my life."

"Then we'll have a whip-round for your bennyfit."

"Oh, good!"

The fellows turned out their pockets, and succeeded in raising a quid. I thanked them very profusely, and went back to the pilot of the aeroplane.

"Here's your filthy looker!" I said, putting the munny into his hand. "Now, p'raps you'll take me up?"

"Oh, certainly! Hop in!"

I scrambled into the passenger's seat. Somebody swung the propeller, and the aeroplane bumped along the ground. I waved my hand to Jimmy Silver & Co., and then we shot up into the air with startling suddenness.

"Hellup!" I shouted to the pilot. "Hold on! I—I've lost my breath!"

"No time to look for it now," said the pilot curtly.

We were shooting upwards at such a pace that I thought we should hit the sky, and come down in peaces.

I ventured to take a peep over the side. The little town of Latham lay far below. There were tiny blobs, which I took to be houses, and tinier blobs still, which I suppose were people.

I haven't got much of a head for heights, and I began to feel awfully queer inside, and to wish that I had refused that seventh helping of roly-poly pudding at dinner-time.

The flight was supposed to last five minutes. It seemed to me like an eternity.

Then the pilot started doing spectacular stunts, such as looping the loop, banking, gliding, and so fourth. I screamed aloud in sheer terror.

"Yaroooooh! Chuckitt, you beest! I've had enough! Take me down!"

I was mightily relieved, I can tell you, when we landed on terror firmer.

Jimmy Silver & Co. had to help me out of my seat, for I was too paralysed to move.

"Did you enjoy it, Tubby?" asked Lovell.

"Yes, rather!" I said, trying to mask my true feelings. "There was only one drawback."

"What was that?"

"Five minutes isn't nearly long enough. I'm looking forward to the time when aeroplane trips will be tuppence an hour."

But between you and me, dear readers, five minutes was more than enough.



By **FATTY WYNN.**

BERNARD GLYN is a great inventive genius, but he found the task of inventing an aeroplane rather too much for him. For weeks he has been busy in the large open space at the back of the woodshed. He managed to secure the body of an aeroplane, and he fitted it up with an engine, and constructed the wings and propeller himself. He completed the job this morning, and decided to fly over to Wayland. Crowds of fellows turned out to see the fun. The aeroplane, which had a rather top-heavy appearance, "taxied" through the quadrangle, but it flatly refused to rise off the ground. Peals of laughter rang out as the aeroplane floundered across the quad. Bernard Glyn struggled desperately with the control lever; but the aeroplane had made up its mind not to fly. The engine worked all right, but it made such a deafening row that it brought the Head to his study window. The old gent nearly had a fit when he saw what was happening. He sent for Glyn, and forbade him to imperil his life and limb by going in for such "stunts." The school-boy inventor has reluctantly decided to

sell the engine, and to consign the rest of the machine to the scrap heap.

We had no idea that Mr. Horace Ratcliff was a skilled aviator, until Figgins informed us the other day that Ratty was always losing his temper.

During the summer vacation the Terrible Three (lucky dogs!) flew over to France, and spent a day in Paris. The pilot was a distant cousin of Tom Merry's, who was formerly in the Air Force, and who now possesses a machine of his own. He bought it at an auction sale, for a ridiculously low figure. The Terrible Three thoroughly enjoyed their trip. When soaring over the Channel they developed engine trouble, and there was a thrilling moment; but the trouble righted itself, and they reached their destination without mishap.

Baggy Trimble ought to make an excellent "observer." He is always peeping through study keyholes!

Another astonishing fact! Taggles, the porter, is a wonderful pilot. At least,

Monty Lowther says so, and a Lowther does not lie. "Whenever old Taggy gets a touch of gout," declares the humorous Monty, "he always flies round to the doctor!"

We are looking forward to the day when each St. Jim's fellow will have an aeroplane of his own. When that happy day arrives we can picture a conversation on the following lines:

Taggles: "Where are you off to, Master Merry?"

Tom Merry: "Just going for a 'flip' over to France, Taggy. I'll be back in time for locking-up."

Taggles: "Oh, you needn't worry about that, Master Merry. The 'Ead 'appens to be away. 'E flew over to Australia this mornin', for the week-end!"

PRISONER AT THE BAR!

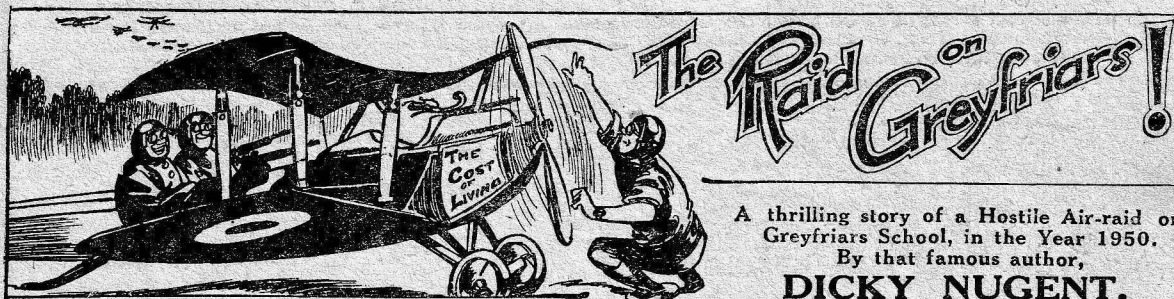
How do you think a man feels standing in the dock on trial for murder when he knows all the time that he is guilty? Perhaps you have often wondered what are the sensations of the guilty man. You can find out in the "Detective Magazine" by reading the article by J. A. R. Cairns, the celebrated London magistrate, entitled "The Drama of a Murder Trial."

Mr. Cairns, writing from his long experience in dealing with criminals, gives an enthralling description of the sensations of the murderer undergoing his trial.

This issue of the "Detective Magazine" also contains nineteen splendid detective stories and articles on the romance of crime detection. Price 7d. at any newsagent or bookseller.

[Supplement II.]

A Feast of Fun and Laughter Next Week!



A thrilling story of a Hostile Air-raid on Greyfriars School, in the Year 1950.
By that famous author,
DICKY NUGENT.

DICK DAUNTLESS, of the Remove, stood at his studdy window. A long tellyscope was glued to his eye.

Prezzantly a number of black specks appeared on the distant horizon. "They're hear!" cried Dick.

Tommy Tucker and Billy Briggs, who shared Study No. 1 with Dick Dauntless, looked up quickly.

"Eh? Who's hear?" they asked, in cours.

"A fleet of hostile airoplanes, from the Cannibal Islands!" said Dick, trembling from head to foot with egg-sitement. "I can tell they are savvidges, bekwase their masheens are painted all the cullers of the rainbow. They are coming to raid Greyfriars!"

"My hat!"

The little black specks had grown bigger. Dick Dauntless could count twenty of them, and they were now the sighs of big birds.

"They're carrying bombs on board," said Dick. "They mean to blow Greyfriars to glory. But they little dream that we have an Air Force of our own. They'll get a nasty shock when they see our airoplanes coming up to tackle them."

"Yes, rather!"

"Better give the alarm, you fellows," said Dick.

Tommy Tucker and Billy Briggs rushed out into the passidge.

"An air-raid!" they shouted at the top of their lungs. "The Cannibal Islanders are hear! Turn out, everybody!"

The news spread through the school like wildfire. The Head, who was rather a funk, went and berried himself in the coal-seller. Two of the masters, Mr. Nervuss and Mr. Wind-upp, dodged down into the crypt.

But the fellows were not afraid. They were glad at the prospect of getting to grips with the hostile masheens.

Dick Dauntless and his chums rushed round to the airoplane-sheds. Being in the Remove, they had one masheen between the three of them. The fellows in the higher Forms had a masheen each.

Dick's airoplane had been crissened "The Cost of Living," bekwase it never came down. That is to say, it never made a forced landing.

Tommy Tucker and Billy Briggs hopped into the airoplane, and Dick Dauntless rolled up his sleeves and started swinging the propeller.

"Now 'we're off!" cried Tommy Tucker.

The airoplane rushed along the ground, and Dick Dauntless hooped in, and grabbed hold of the handlebars. Then the masheen went soaring into space like a bird.

Meanwhile, the hostile airoplanes had reeched their destination. They

hovered over Greyfriars like big birds of brite plomage.

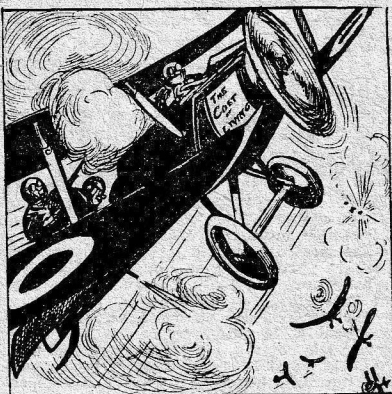
Bing! Bang! Bong!

Boms started falling like hail. The first bounced on the roof of the porter's lodge. Gosling, the porter, who was 110 years old, and who had been at Greyfriars for generations, was dozing off to sleep in his parlor. He was stone deff, and failed to hear the crash of the bom overhead.

Another bom dropped into the school fountain, and promptly sizzled out. And the third bom was a "dud." It dropped on to the head of a Sixth-Former without eggsplooding.

But the Cannibal Islanders had lots more boms on board. They intended to smash Greyfriars to a pulp.

Before they could hurl any more of their deadly missils overboard, however, Dick Dauntless' airoplane rushed right



Dick Dauntless' airoplane rushed right into the mist of the raiders, hitting out right and left.

into the mist of them, hitting out left and right.

"Sock it into them!" cried Dick.

"Show the rotters no quarter!"

"Not half!" said Tommy Tucker.

While Dick steered the masheen, his two chums manned the guns.

Crack, crack, crack!

There was a spatter of bullets, and one of the painted masheens suddenly turned a summersault, and went down out of control.

"First blud to us!" cried Billy Briggs. "Keep it up, boys!"

Another, and yet another, of the hostile masheens went crashing to earth. But the savvidges were returning the fire, and the Greyfriars airoplane was badly peppered. Dick Dauntless had the tip of his nose shot off, and Tommy Tucker's right ear was chipped by a bullet.

The three chums did not allow themselves to be put off their stroke by these misfortunes. But prezzantly their

engine was put out of action, and one of the wings fell off. It dropped with a sickening thud into the Close.

"Oh crums!" groaned Dick Dauntless. "Looks as if we shall have to make a forced landing."

"Let's put a few more of these pests out of action first!" muttered Billy Briggs.

They continued to fire, until six more of the painted masheens were put out of action. Then the other wing of their airoplane fell off, and they were in a terribul plite.

Down they shot—down, down, down, through an affinity of space.

Dick Dauntless let go of the handlebars.

"It's all up!" he cried hoarsely. "We are hurtling to destruction!"

But a number of Removites were waiting underneath, holding out a blanket. And the wrecked airoplane landed right in the middle of it.

"Thanks awfully for breaking our fall, you fellows!" said Dick Dauntless gratefully. "If we had fallen on to the flagstoanes we shouldn't be alive to tell the tale!"

"I say, Dauntless, how many enemy airoplanes have you put out of action?"

"Nine!" said Dick proudly.

"And the others are doing a bunk!" cried Tommy Tucker, pointing towards the sky. "Look! They're wizzing away over the sea, with a crowd of our fellows in hot pursoot!"

"Hooray!"

It was a sad day for the Cannibal Islanders. Their masheens were only 20 bird-power, whereas the swift Greyfriars airoplanes were 200 bird-power. The long and short of it was that not a single enemy masheen survived; and the raid on Greyfriars proved a dismal failure.

When the Head bobbed up out of the coal-seller, eggspeting to find the school in ruins, he had the serprize of his life.

"Bless my sole!" he ejaculated. "Is it possibul that we have won the day?"

"Yes, rather, sir!" said Dick Dauntless.

"Splendid!" said the Head. "I would have taken part in the battle myself, only my airoplane happens to be out of order. I got a slow puncture in the front tire the other day."

The juniors larfed. They knew very well that it was only blew funk that had prevented the Head from taking part in the scrap.

Of corse, Dick Dauntless and his chums were promptly promoted to the Sixth Form, and made prefects. And there we will leave them, baring their their blushing onners thick upon them!

THE END.

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Supplement III.]

The Humorous Supplement That Makes the World Laugh!

GUNTEN ON THE WAR-PATH!

When Frank Richards & Co. made the promise to Miss Meadows that they would not fight with Kern Gunten for one week, they did not realise what they were letting themselves in for. They regret the promise too late, and Gunten glories in the fact.

FRANK RICHARDS & CO'S. PREDICAMENT.



BOUND by a PROMISE!

The amazing schooldays of
FRANK RICHARDS & Co.
in the Backwoods Lumber
School.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Called Over the Coals.

"SHE'S as mad as a hornet!" said Chunky Todgers impressively. "Miss Meadows?" exclaimed Frank Richards.

"You bet!"

"What on earth do you mean?"

Frank stared at the podgy schoolboy of Cedar Creek in astonishment.

He had forgotten for the moment that "mad" in Western parlance does not imply insanity, its English equivalent being "waxy."

Bob Lawless indulged in a chuckle.

"I reckoned she would be mad," he remarked. "Franky, you fathead, haven't you learned our language yet?"

"Wrathly, you know," said Vere Beauliere, with a laugh.

"Oh!" said Frank. "I—I see! So Miss Meadows is waxy, is she, Chunky!"

"Mad as a hornet!" repeated Chunky Todgers. "You fellows are booked. I guess I'm glad I didn't come over to Hillcrest with you yesterday afternoon. Old Peckover has sent Miss Meadows a note about it. I heard her say so to Mr. Slimmey. You've been kicking up a shindy at Hillcrest School!" added Chunky, wagging a podgy forefinger at Frank Richards and Co.

"Oh, gum!" groaned Bob Lawless. "We're in for it again! All through that rotter, Gunten!"

"I can't see that we were to blame," said Frank.

"We never are!" remarked Beauliere. "But schoolmasters never take the same view that schoolboys do. I've noticed that."

"A regular riot!" said Chunky Todgers. "That's what Peckover called it. I heard Miss Meadows say so. She said it was that thundering young rascal, Lawless, who was the worst of the lot."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Co. "What's the snigger about!" demanded Chunky.

"I think I can hear Miss Meadows calling a chap a thundering rascal!" chortled Bob Lawless. "Go it, Chunky!"

"Well, perhaps she didn't use those words," admitted Chunky. "She said that unruly boy, now I come to think of it."

"That sounds more like Miss Meadows," remarked Frank. "As a matter of fact, Bob, you were a bit of an ass."

"What else could I do than what I did?" demanded Bob. "I suppose I couldn't hear Gunten claiming that he'd done what you did, could I, without putting in a word?"

"You put in such a thumping lot of words, you know, and such jolly emphatic ones!"

"Well—Hullo, Molly!"

THE POPULAR.—No. 234.

Molly Lawrence came up, looking rather serious.

It still wanted some minutes to the time for morning lessons, and most of Cedar Creek were in the playground.

"Miss Meadows wants you," said Molly. "I'm afraid it's about the trouble at Hillcrest yesterday afternoon."

"How many does she want?" asked Frank, with a smile.

"You three."

"Three merry martyrs!" said Frank. "Well, come on, let's go in to execution and get it over!"

"It's really not quite fair," said Molly. "There were others there as well."

"But we're the worst—we always are!" said Bob, with a deep sigh. "But I'm jolly well going to let Miss Meadows know the facts! She can't possibly blame us when she knows the facts!"

"H'm!" murmured Molly.

She seemed rather doubtful on that point. Frank Richards and Co. went into the schoolhouse, and Frank knocked at the door of Miss Meadows' sitting-room.

The schoolmistress's voice was stern, as she bade them enter.

The trio entered, looking as meek and mild as they possibly could, and certainly they did not look like fellows who had recently kicked up a terrific shindy at the new school down the creek.

But Miss Meadows' face did not relax.

"Richards, Lawless, Beauliere." Her voice was very stern. "I have received a very serious complaint from Mr. Peckover, the headmaster of Hillcrest School."

"Not about us, ma'am!" ventured Bob.

"About you, and several other boys, Lawless; you most of all."

"Oh, Miss Meadows!"

"I am ashamed of you, Lawless!"

"Oh!"

"You seem to have acted very badly indeed."

"B-b-but, ma'am—" stammered Bob, his cheeks crimsoning.

"There seems to be no excuse for your conduct," resumed Miss Meadows, her eyes sparkling, and a pink spot glowing in her cheeks. "It was an occasion that called for very special good behaviour. Mr. Peckover sent a special invitation to this school for some of my boys to visit Hillcrest and witness a public ceremony, in recognition of an act of great courage performed by a Hillcrest boy."

"But, ma'am—"

"Silence, Lawless! The boy concerned was Kern Gunten, who used to be at Cedar Creek, and I had no doubt that you would be pleased to join the Hillcrest School in honouring one who had formerly been your schoolfellow!"

"Yes, but—"

"And what did you do?" exclaimed Miss

Meadows angrily. "You, Lawless, actually interrupted Mr. Peckover's speech rudely, and denied the truth of his statements! There was a disturbance, in which you were all concerned. I am more shocked than I can say."

The Co. exchanged very uncomfortable looks.

Certainly the matter seemed rather serious, and a little shocking, as it had been presented to Miss Meadows.

"May we explain, Miss Meadows?" asked Beauliere.

"I do not see how you can explain anything, but I am willing to listen to any excuse you have to offer."

"Well," said Bob Lawless, "it's true what Mr. Peckover says—I did interrupt him, and—"

"You admit that?"

"I felt bound to, Miss Meadows," said Bob undauntedly. "Mr. Peckover thought he was stating the facts, but he wasn't. Gunten had deceived him, and everybody, with a pack of lies! He hadn't done anything courageous at all, and he was getting all that limelight on false pretences!"

"Indeed!" said Miss Meadows. "Are you sure of that, Lawless?"

"I guess—I mean, quite, ma'am."

"But that is no excuse for your action. If Mr. Peckover was satisfied, that was his business, not yours."

"But it was our business, ma'am!" said Bob eagerly. "If you'll let me tell you all of—"

Miss Meadows interrupted him.

"I really do not see how you can know anything about Gunten's action, or supposed action, Lawless. Mr. Peckover has informed me what it was. Gunten, who was driving the post-waggon from Cedar Camp to Silver Creek, was stopped on the trail by two masked men, who attempted to rob the post-sacks. By great courage and resource he defeated their object, and brought the post-waggon safe to Silver Creek. This happened on Wednesday afternoon, when you were in school here, so I fail to see how you can know anything about it."

"Franky wasn't in school that afternoon, ma'am. You sent him home for getting a black eye in a fight with Dicky Bird of Hillcrest."

Frank Richards rubbed his eye.

"I remember that, Lawless. Do you mean to say that Richards was on the scene when the post-waggon was stopped?"

"Yes, ma'am!" said Frank.

"And it was Frank who chipped in and scared off the robbers, making them believe that he had the cowboys from the ranch with him!" exclaimed Bob. "It was Frank who did the whole business, while Gunten was cowering in the trail with his hands up!"

"What?" exclaimed Miss Meadows in

amazement.

How Long Will the Chums of the Backwoods Be Able to Stand Gunten's "Swank" ?

Frank coloured.
"It's true, Miss Meadows," he said quietly. "After the two robbers had cleared off I went nearly as far as Silver Creek with the waggon, to see Gunten safe through. I never dreamed that he would spin the yarn he did. I was simply knocked over when I heard it at Hillcrest yesterday."

"Bless my soul!"
Miss Meadows was silent for a moment.
"Was anyone else present, Richards?"
"Only the two robbers, who cleared off, ma'am."

"Then there were no witnesses?"
"No."

"It is, then, your statement against Gunten's as to whom the credit is due."

Frank Richards flushed.
"I'm not claiming any credit!" he exclaimed. "I never said a word about it, except to Bob and Vere, and to my uncle at the ranch. I shouldn't have said anything at Hillcrest, either, though I was surprised to hear that Gunten had told such awful whoppers. But—"

"But I did!" exclaimed Bob warmly. "It made me wild to hear that Swiss cad claiming to do what Frank had done. Besides, it was only fair to tell the truth. Gunten was getting a prize given to him for acting bravely, and all he did was to cower when the road-agents were on him. It was a rotten swindle, ma'am, and I thought it ought to be shown up!"

"In the circumstances, there is great excuse for your action, Lawless. But I am sure Mr. Peckover will take the view that Richards is claiming the credit due to Gunten."

"Let him!" said Frank contemptuously.
"And the fact remains that there was a disturbance at Hillcrest," said Miss Meadows. "Mr. Peckover has requested me to use my influence to stop these incessant troubles. I have told him I shall do so. It appears to me that this dispute between Gunten and Richards is likely to lead to further trouble, however."

The Co. were silent.
They thought that very probable themselves.

"Now," said Miss Meadows, with a return of severity in her manner, "I cannot permit this. According to your statements, Gunten is not a courageous lad."

"A pesky funk!" grunted Bob.

"Ahem! If your description of him is correct, Lawless, he is not likely to seek trouble with you. If there is trouble, therefore, it is likely to come from your side."

"Oh!"
"I require you three boys, therefore, to make me a promise," said Miss Meadows. "For a week from this date—I will not make it longer than that—you are to avoid Kern Gunten as much as possible."

"Willingly, ma'am."
"And if you meet him you are not to quarrel with him."

"Very well."
"And, above all, you are not to fight with him," said Miss Meadows. "You will all three make me a solemn promise to that effect. If you do so I will be satisfied to let the matter drop."

Frank Richards and Co. brightened up.
They could not help looking on that as a rather cheap way of extricating themselves from an affair which looked rather serious.

"We promise, Miss Meadows," said the three, with one voice.

"Very well! I know you will keep your word," said Miss Meadows. "You may go now."

Frank Richards and Co. looked much more cheery when they went in to morning lessons.

The trouble had blown over after all. They were bound by their word not to fight Kern Gunten, certainly; and perhaps they had been thinking of giving the impostor a licking, which he well deserved.

But they could well afford to dispense with that satisfaction.

"After all, the pesky coyote don't matter," said Bob Lawless. "Let him tell all the crammers he likes, and be blowed! We won't fight him; and he's not likely to want to fight us. I'm glad it's all over!"

"Hear hear!" said Frank.
And the other fellows, when they heard what had happened, agreed that the chums of Cedar Creek were well out of their scrape.

But were they?
There was an unexpected development to

follow, which Frank Richards and Co. did not foresee, and which certainly Miss Meadows never dreamed of.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Gunten—the Hero.

"GREAT Scott!"
"What the merry dickens—"
Frank Richards and Bob Lawless uttered those exclamations simultaneously in tones of astonishment.

It was after lessons, and the cousins were riding away from Cedar Creek.

Vere Beauclerc had gone home, but Bob had some purchases to make for his father at the store in Thompson, and Frank was riding up the trail to the town with him.

Near the town the trail branched off which led to Hillcrest School.

Frank and Bob halted at the fork, and looked up the Hillcrest trail, as a din of shouting and laughter reached their ears.

A startling sight met their gaze.

"Gunten!" exclaimed Bob.

There were six or seven Hillcrest fellows in the trail, and among them the chums recognised Dicky Bird and Fisher and Blumpy.

But the centre of attraction was Kern Gunten, who on the previous day had been the hero of Hillcrest—more or less.

Probably, even before his story had been denied, the Hillcrest fellows had had their doubts about the heroism of Gunten.

If the heroism was there, it was certain that he had never displayed it when witnesses were present, and some fellows opined that Gunten was drawing the long bow in his description of the affair with the road-agents.

Then the truth had come out, and though it was only Frank Richards' word against Gunten's, there was not a fellow at Hillcrest who doubted.

They knew Frank—and they knew Gunten even more thoroughly.

Even Gunten's own chum, Keller, no longer affected to believe that there was a word of truth in Gunten's story.

The Hillcrest fellows were now, apparently, making it unmistakable what they thought of the impostor.

Gunten was standing in the trail, his heavy face white with passion, and his eyes burning under his thick brows.

Fisher and Blumpy were holding his arms, and Dicky Bird was busy with a paint-brush, while the other fellows stood round grinning.

Frank and Bob rode nearer, wondering what was going on. They soon discovered.

Dicky Bird was giving the finishing touches. Large letters, in red paint, formed a word across Gunten's face, beginning at his right ear and finishing at his left.

The letters were rather irregular, as Gunten's features were in the way, as it were, they were quite plain to read:

"H E R O."

That was the word, and it was evidently not bestowed in admiration.

"Now, that's truly artistic," Dicky Bird remarked. "Gunten being a merry hero, ought to be announced as one for all the section to see. You agree to that, Gunten?"

The Swiss ground his teeth.

"He'll rub it off, you know," remarked Watson.

"Not before he gets into Thompson," answered Dicky Bird coolly. "He's going to have his paws tied so that he can't."

"Let me go!" yelled Gunten.

"No fear! You've got to have a lesson about lying and bragging," said Dicky Bird. "Mr. Peckover can believe your yarns if he likes, as you're his favourite; but we don't want braggarts and liars at Hillcrest!"

"I told the truth!" muttered Gunten.

"Oh, come off, old man! You told whoppers, you know. We know now that it was Richards who cleared off the road-agents."

"I—I— If Frank Richards' claims to have done it, I'm ready to drive it back down his throat!" said Gunten.

"Easy enough to say, as he's not here!" grinned Dick Bird.

There was a jingle as Frank Richards rode forward.

"But I am here!" he called out.

The Hillcrest fellows had been too interested in their own business to observe the two riders on the trail.

But they looked round now, and Kern

Gunten's eyes burned at the sight of the chums of Cedar Creek.

"Hallo, you galoots!" exclaimed Dicky Bird. "Here's our hero!"

"He looks it!" grinned Bob Lawless.
"We'll take five cents for him!" chuckled Fisher.

"Too dear at the price, old scout!"

"You've moseyed along just in the nick of time!" chuckled Dick Bird. "Gunten is sticking to his yarn, and he's ready to mop up the earth with Frank Richards if he contradicts it—he says so, at least."

"Well, I do contradict it—every word!" said Frank. "Gunten was covering like a rabbit when the road-agents were there, and he knows it. I don't blame him for not tackling them, of course; but there's no excuse for pretending that he did. It's spook from beginning to end."

"Oh, we know that old chap! But I'll tell you what, Gunten! Here's Frank Richards! Stand up to him the same as you did to the road-agents, and we'll believe your yarn—lock, stock, and barrel, and let you off."

Gunten bit his lip hard.

He had tried his fortune with Frank Richards before, with disastrous results to himself.

He was the bigger and older of the two; but the courage was lacking.

There was a loud laugh from the Hillcrest fellows.

"Go it, Gunten!"

"Get down, Richards! Give him a chance."

Frank laughed, and shook his head.

"Can't be done," he answered. "Miss Meadows has made us promise not to fight Gunten for a week to come. But I don't think Gunten minds."

"Ha, ha! No."

Gunten started.

"What's that?" he exclaimed. "You've promised Miss Meadows—"

"Yes, three of us; Beauclerc as well," said Bob Lawless. "You will have to bottle up your precious valour for a bit, Gunten. Next Friday is the earliest we can oblige you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gunten drew a quick breath.

"I don't believe that!" he said.

"What?"

"I'm ready to tackle Frank Richards, or you, either, Bob Lawless, and I believe you're putting up a lying excuse because you're afraid!" said Gunten deliberately.

Bob's face was a study.

"Why, you—you—you—" he stuttered.

"You cad!" shouted Frank Richards. "If I hadn't promised Miss Meadows, I'd get down and wipe up the trail with you!"

Gunten sneered.

"Any excuse is better than none!" he remarked.

"Why, I—"

"I say, is it straight goods about that promise?" asked Dicky Bird, eying the two chums, cautiously.

"Of course it is!" said Bob angrily. "Do you think we tell lies like Gunten?"

"Let me go!" exclaimed Gunten. "Let me get at them—either of them; I don't care which!"

"Jolly plucky, all of a sudden!" grinned Dicky Bird. "You galoots were duffers to make that promise. Suppose you break it?"

"We should get into jolly bad trouble, I guess; but we're not going to break it," said Bob. "As for Gunten, we'll attend to him at the end of next week!"

"You'll attend to me before then!" answered Gunten. And he broke away from the Hillcrest fellows, and rushed at the two riders.

It was evidently his intention to attack. Frank and Bob wheeled their horses away from him.

"Cowards!" yelled Gunten. "Stop!"

Rob set his teeth hard.

"We've got to stand that, Frank! Come on! My word, I'll make the rotter sit up for it later! Come on!"

Gunten was dashing at them again, as brave as a lion now.

There was no help for it, and the two chums set their horses to a gallop, leaving the Swiss panting in the trail.

If they were not to fight Gunten, it certainly would not have done to let Gunten fight them; and retreat was the only resource.

But it was a bitter pill to swallow.

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"Cowards!" yelled Gunten after them. Bob Lawless slacked down.
 "Franky! I—I guess I'm not going to stand that—"
 "Come on, fathead!" answered Frank.
 "But—"
 "We've given our word, Bob."
 Bob Lawless seemed to swallow something with difficulty. But he nodded, and the chums rode on to Thompson together, in a white heat.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Dodging Gunten.

BILLY COOK, the foreman of the Lawless Ranch, rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

It was the following day—Saturday—and as there was no school that day, Frank and his Canadian cousin were making themselves useful on the ranch.

There was always plenty of work to be done by willing hands, and the hands of Frank and Bob were willing enough; and they generally found plenty to do on Saturdays.

They had been in the saddle most of the morning, and were riding back to the ranch for a late lunch, when they met Billy Cook on the plains.

Billy Cook was coming from Thompson, and his expression became very thoughtful at the sight of his boss' son and nephew.

The two schoolboys came trotting out of the grass into the trail, and joined the ranchman, to ride on with him.

"Been on the ranges," asked Billy.

"Yep! You've been up to town?" asked Bob.

Billy Cook nodded.

"Anything on in Thompson?" asked Frank Richards, noticing the ranchman's rather peculiar expression.

"Nope! But—"

"But what?" asked Bob. "I can see you've got something on your chest, Billy. Get it off!"

"I met young Gunten at the store."

"Oh!" grunted Bob.

"He gave me a message for you," said Billy Cook. "I'd have laid my rope round him, only—"

"He hesitated. 'I reckon Bob Lawless, you ain't afared of that chunk of foreign trash!'"

Bob coloured.

"I guess not," he replied. "What are you getting at, Billy?"

"Well," said the foreman, "Gunten told me you lit out yesterday from him, and that he'll wait for you in Thompson this afternoon, if you care to go. He'll be on the waste ground behind the store at four o'clock."

"Oh! Will he?"

"Tain't my business to carry his dashed messages," said Billy Cook. "But I reckoned I'd tell you, Bob, so that you could ride over and smash the impudent young jackanape."

Bob Lawless did not answer.

He gave Frank a look, and Frank shrugged his shoulders in a hopeless sort of way.

Neither of the chums had expected this result from the promise they had made to Miss Meadows.

It never occurred to them that Gunten would take advantage of it in this extraordinary way.

They knew the Swiss pretty well; but they were not prepared for such an exhibition of unscrupulous cunning.

Gunten knew very well that their word was their bond, and that if they had made a promise to their schoolmistress, they would keep it at all costs.

He knew, too, that if the promise was broken, the penalty would be very severe; Miss Meadows was not likely to listen to any excuse.

Probably the Swiss would have been willing to take a licking, to be assured that Frank and Bob would be shown up to their schoolmistress as promise-breakers.

Whether they keep their promise or broke it, the Swiss stood to score under the peculiar circumstances.

The chums rode on in silence in a worried frame of mind.

Billy Cook glanced at them once or twice, manifestly in a state of surprise.

The ranch came in sight at last.

"Waal, I told Gunten I'd give you his message," said Billy Cook, breaking the silence.

"I told him, too, that I reckoned

you'd take him at his word, Bob, and give him what he was asking for."

Bob's cheeks crimsoned.

"I can't, Billy!" he answered.

"Hay?"

Bob Lawless explained how the matter stood, and Billy Cook nodded thoughtfully.

"I reckon you shouldn't have let Gunten know you'd passed your word to the school-marm," he remarked.

"Perhaps not; but he would have heard of it sooner or later; he meets lots of the Cedar Creek chaps at the store. Anyway, he knows now."

Billy Cook grinned a little.

"I guess you're in for a high old time, Bob!" he said. "If I know Gunten, he won't let you rest now. And though I take your word, of course, lots of folks will think you're only dodging the galoot. I guess you're going to have a lively time with that critter!"

The ranch foreman rode away to the corrals; and Frank and Bob went into the house with rather glum faces.

They realised that Billy Cook was right, and that Gunten would not let his opportunity pass, now that for a time he held the upper hand.

"We've got to avoid the cad, that's all, Bob," Frank remarked.

Bob made a restless movement.

"That means dodging him—with the bragging rotter making out all the time that we're afraid of him!" he muttered.

"We shall look precious cowards. And Billy's right; lots of folk will think that promise is only a yarn. Gunten himself does, or pretends to. Why, the rotter will be fairly trailing us down, Franky, and we shall have to fight him, or run away from him."

"Or else let him thrash us!" said Frank, with a grimace. "My hat! Miss Meadows didn't mean it, but she has landed us in a precious scrape!"

"You're late for lunch," said Mr. Lawless, meeting them inside the ranch-house.

"Your mother's had it kept hot for you, Bob. Go in."

"Yes, dad."

Frank and Bob went into the dining-room, thinking more about their peculiar predicament than about their dinner, though they were hungry.

They ate in silence for some time.

Before the end of the meal, however, Bob Lawless started up, with a sudden exclamation.

"Frank, look!"

He pointed to the window.

From the window there was a wide view of the plains and the corrals in the distance, and the trail had run across the grassland towards the timber.

Two riders had appeared on the trail, and Frank gave a start as he recognised Gunten and Keller, the two Swiss of Hillcrest.

Gunten was grinning as he rode towards the ranch.

Keller seemed to be rather amused, too.

"My hat!" exclaimed Frank, agast.

"Bob, they can't be coming here to kick up a row, surely!"

Bob set his teeth.

"What are they coming for, then?"

"But your father—"

"Well, I guess the poppa will shift Gunten fast enough if he makes himself unpleasant. But the cad wants to insult us before our people. Frank and we can't touch him!"

Bob clenched his hands. "Fancy the worm playing such a game as that, because we've promised—"

The two Swiss disappeared from sight from the windows, riding on towards the big door of the ranch-house.

Bob caught his chum by the arm.

"Come on, Frank!"

"Where?" asked Frank.

"We can't let him see us. Can't you see his game? He's going to ask to see us, and start on us when he's shown in. He's got no idea of decency. We can't stand up and be punched, I suppose. Let's get out before he comes in, and we'll ride over and see the Cherub. Gunten won't stay long."

Frank Richards drew a deep breath.

It was humiliating and exasperating to be dodging a fellow like Gunten, whom he heartily despised, but there really seemed nothing else to be done.

The chums left the dining-room, and hurried out at the back of the house, and they heard Gunten dismounting at the front as they went.

Their unfinished meal remained on the table.

They ran out their horses hurriedly, and mounted and rode away from the ranch house at a good speed.

"This way. We've got to get cover," said Bob, jerking his whip towards a belt of willows.

"Cover," murmured Frank. "Cover—from Gunten! My word!"

"We don't want him to spot us, and give the whole ranch the sight of him chasing us, and us running away," said Bob bitterly.

Frank nodded.

They were soon on the farther side of the willows, screened from the ranch-house, and there they let out their horses to a gallop, heading for the distant timber.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Enough for Keller!

CHOP, chop!

Vere Beaulerc was splitting logs outside the shack by the creek when Frank and Bob rode up.

The Cherub glanced up, and nodded and smiled to his chums.

"Hallo, you fellows!" he said cheerily.

"You're just in time. I was just going to brew some coffee."

"Good man!" said Bob. "We'll help you get rid of it. Like some help with the logs?"

"Nearly finished, old chap. But what are you doing here? I thought you were busy on the ranch to-day."

"Gunten's after us, on the war-path," explained Frank Richards. "We just dodged him at the ranch."

Beaulerc stared at them.

"What are you driving at? You're not running away from that cad!"

"We are!"

"But—"

"He knows about our promising Miss Meadows, and so he's started in life as a ferocious fighting-man," said Bob ruefully.

"You'll be in the same boat, Cherub, if the rotter comes across you!"

"My hat!"

"Poppa at home?" asked Bob.

"No; father's gone down to Kamloops," said Beaulerc. "I'm not expecting him back before dark. Come in and have some coffee. By the way, is Gunten likely to follow you here?"

"We didn't let him see us sneaking off."

"But he may guess—"

"I shouldn't wonder! We shall have to travel again if he mooseys along," groaned Bob.

Beaulerc led the way in to the shack, and the coffee was brewed.

The three chums chatted cheerily round the fire, while the wind sang without in the pine trees, and a few flakes of snow rustled round the building.

Bob Lawless kept one eye on the open doorway.

It was likely enough that, baffled at the ranch, Gunten would come on to the shack to see Beaulerc.

The Swiss was evidently on the war-path. It was half an hour later that hoof-beats echoed in the timber, and two riders came out on the trail near the shack.

"Here they are!" said Bob, with a grunt.

Beaulerc rose to his feet.

"Are we going to run for it?" asked Frank, half laughing and half exasperated.

"We'd better," said Bob. "I'm not going to break my word to Miss Meadows, and I can't sit down and be licked by Gunten. Come on!"

They ran out to the horses, and Beaulerc, with a flush in his face, went to the shed for his own steed.

He brought his black horse out, and the three chums mounted.

Gunten touched his horse with the whip, and came on at a gallop.

"Stop, you cowards!" he shouted.

"Stop!" roared Keller. "Funks! Stop!"

The three rode out on the plain, with Gunten and Keller in hot pursuit.

Bob Lawless' eyes gleamed.

"We can't touch Gunten," he said. "But we can touch Keller—hard! I guess I'll make him sorry he's called."

He wheeled his horse.

"Charge them!" he said.

"Right-ho, Bob!"

The three riders, in a line, rode back at the pursuers, at full gallop.

They were all aware that the two Swiss would not have the nerve to stand against the charge.

As they came rushing on, Gunten dragged his horse to one side, and Keller to the other, leaving them room to pass.

They did not mean to risk being ridden down.

Bob Lawless spun round after Keller, his riding-whip in his hand.

The whip came across Keller's shoulders with a terrific slash, and there was a wild yell from the Swiss.

"Yaroooh! Oh! Yoop!"

Lash, lash!

Keller, yelling with pain, put spurs to his horse, and dashed away in full flight, Bob riding as close as he could, easily keeping pace, and lashing out with the whip with great vigour.

Frank Richards and Beaulere, laughing, rode behind Bob, and after them came Kern Gunten.

It was not till Keller had been soundly thrashed and was shrieking for mercy that Bob Lawless "let up."

Then the Swiss rode away, still howling with anguish, and Frank Richards and Co. galloped on across the prairie.

Gunten shouted to his comrade, but Keller, who had plainly had enough, did not even answer him.

He rode away towards Thompson, howling and gasping, leaving Kern Gunten to his own devices.

Bob Lawless looked back, and waved his hand to Gunten.

The Swiss shook his fist furiously in response, and wheeled his horse to ride after Keller.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Yen Chin Takes a Hand.

FRANK RICHARDS AND CO. were looking—and feeling—unusually thoughtful as they rode to school on Monday morning.

They wondered whether they would see anything of Kern Gunten that day.

It seemed only too probable.

Their week of probation was not half over yet. For seven days their promise to Miss Meadows held good, and the cunning Swiss was well aware of it.

The advantage he was taking of their predicament nonplussed the chums of Cedar Creek. They simply did not know how to deal with the rascal.

As they came within sight of the lumber school they found a horseman waiting in the trail.

It was Gunten.

He grinned at the sight of the trio.

He was waiting in the middle of the trail, and they had to pass him to get to school—or be late for lessons.

Gunten, apparently, was risking being late at Hillcrest.

Frank Richards and Co. slackened speed.

"Well, there he is!" grunted Bob Lawless. "I reckoned we'd see him to-day. And he's started early. What's the programme?"

"We can't stand much more of this!" growled Beaulere angrily. "And there's Chunky and Yen Chin grinning like a pair of Cheshire cats!"

"Blow them!"

Chunky Todgers and Yen Chin, the Chinese, were leaning against a big tree near Gunten, looking on. And certainly they were grinning.

They seemed to find something entertaining in Frank Richards and Co.'s predicament.

"Come on, you fellows!" shouted Chunky.

"Are you going to be late?"

Gunten gripped his riding-whip.

"Yep! Come on!" he called out mockingly.

"Hang him!" said Bob savagely. "Jevver hear of such a mean, pesky cad? He's going to lay into us with that whip. And what are we going to do?"

"Gallop, and chance it!" said Frank. "He can't follow us into Cedar Creek, anyway. Plenty of fellows there to mop him up."

Yen Chin detached himself from the tree, still grinning, and moved out into the trail behind Gunten.

The Swiss did not heed the little Celestial; his eyes were fixed upon Frank Richards and Co.

Frank drew a quick breath.



THE "PENNY" HERO! As Frank Richards & Co. rode up the trail, they saw a horseman waiting for them under the timbers. It was Gunten. The Swiss gripped his riding-whip as he saw the chums coming along. "Hang him!" growled Bob Lawless. "He's going to lay into us with that whip. And what are we going to do?" (See Chapter 5.)

"Look, you chaps! Yen Chin— My hat!"

The little Chinese made a sudden spring, and reached Gunten, and gripped his foot.

Before Gunten knew what was happening he was jerked up and over, and rolled off his horse on the other side.

Bump!

There was a fearful yell from the Swiss as he landed in the trail.

The fall had bruised him considerably, and dazed him, and he lay in the grass yelling. His startled horse reared and dashed aside.

With a leap like a lynx, Yen Chin landed on the fallen Swiss, and his knee was planted on Gunten's chest.

"Me gottee!" grinned Yen Chin.

Gunten began to struggle.

He was a good deal more powerful than the little Chinese, but he was at a hopeless disadvantage, and he could not throw Yen Chin off.

"Let up, you heathen!" he yelled. "I'll scalp you for this! Let up, I say."

"Gunttee velly bad boy!"

"I'll smash you!"

"No smashee pool lill' Ven Chin!" said the Chinese cheerfully. "Me killee Gunttee! Me gottee knife!"

The heathen's hand disappeared under his loose garments, and reappeared with a huge clasp-knife in it.

Yen Chin's eyes glittered down at Gunten, as he proceeded to open the knife with his teeth.

Gunten's face became as white as chalk. Whether Yen Chin intended his threat seriously or not, he certainly looked as if he did.

"Let up!" shrieked Gunten.

"You waitee one minute," chirruped Yen Chin. "Me cuttee off ugly ole head—oh, yes!"

"Help!" roared Gunten. "Frank Richards—Lawless! Help!"

The chums of Cedar Creek jumped down from their horses.

Yen Chin was such a queer fellow that there was no telling what he might or might not do, and they did not mean to run any risk of seeing him "killee" Gunten.

Frank Richards caught him by the arm.

"Lettee go!" shouted Yen Chin.

"Come off, you young ass!"

"Me wantee killee Gunttee!"

"You young ass! Come off, I tell you!"

Frank dragged the Chinese up, and shouted to Gunten:

"Hook it while you've got the chance!"

Kern Gunten did not need telling twice. He was not thinking of his object in coming there now. He scrambled to his feet and rushed for his horse.

"Lettee go!" shrieked Yen Chin. "Flanky, you lettee me go! Me killee Gunttee—cuttee off ugly ole head, you bet! Oh, yes!"

Clatter, clatter!

Hardly waiting to get his leg over the saddle, Gunten dashed away on his horse, and vanished up the trail to Thompson.

Yen Chin grinned, and closed his knife, which disappeared into his garments again.

"Flighten ole Gunten one time, you bet!" he remarked. "Sillee ole duffee tinkee me killee—oh, yes! Velly blave ole 'possum, Gunttee! What you tinkee?"

Frank Richards laughed.

"Gunttee velly bad boy," said Yen Chin.

"Wantee fightee because sillee ole Flanke make sillee promise—oh, yes! Me lookkee after Flanke. Me velly good boy."

And the Chinese toddled on to school with Frank Richards and Co., evidently extremely well pleased with himself.

THE END.

(You will all enjoy next week's roaring Backwoods yarn. It's entitled: "Keeping the Peace!" and is Martin Clifford's best story.)

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THE OLD MAN OF THE MILL.

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By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Night Adventure!

"**T**UMBLE out, you fellows!" Tom Merry visited three beds in turn, and gave their occupants a hearty shake.

The hour was midnight, and the scene was the Shell dormitory at St. Jim's. Manners gave a grunt, and sat up in bed, rubbing his eyes. Monty Lowther and Talbot followed suit.

"Time for the fun to start!" said Tom Merry cheerily. "Get a move on! The other fellows will be along in a jiffy."

Monty Lowther yawned drowsily.

"I say, Tommy, wouldn't it be better to put off this stunt of yours till another night?" he murmured.

"No jolly fear!" said Tom, laughing. "We all agreed upon to-night, and to-night it's going to be!"

"Well, I'll just take another forty winks, until the other fellows come along—"

"You'll do nothing of the sort, you lazy slacker! Come along! Out of it!"

Tom Merry whisked the bedclothes off his chum. Then he seized Monty Lowther by his ankles and heaved him out on to the floor. Monty alighted on the hard boards with a bump and a roar.

Manners and Talbot, not wishing to share Monty Lowther's tragic fate, promptly turned out. A couple of candles were lighted, and the juniors proceeded to don their running shorts, vests, and canvas shoes.

Presently the door of the Shell dormitory opened softly, admitting Jack Blake and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth. Both were clad in their running attire.

"Are you weedy, deah boys?" inquired the Swell of St. Jim's.

"Almost," said Tom Merry. "We're waiting for Figgins and Redfern now. Hope they don't get collared by some prowling prefect on their way over from the New House."

Tom Merry's tears were groundless, for Figgins and Redfern arrived a moment later. They, too, were in running togs, and they carried lighted lanterns.

"Sorry we're late," said Figgins, "but

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Grundy gave a prodigious yawn, and laid down again.

"Fancy sacrificing your sleep to play a fools' game like that!" he said. "You must be potty!"

"Wats! It's goin' to be gweat sport," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"All I hope is that the two hares give us a good run for our money," said Manners. "We don't want to capture them just outside the school gates."

"There won't be any fear of that," said Figgins. "We shall be over a mile away in a quarter of an hour. And you fellows will have all your work cut out to track us down. We're going to sprint like fury."

"Yes, rather!" said Dick Redfern.

Tom Merry glanced at his watch. "Off you go, then!" he said. "It's ten past twelve now. We'll follow at five-and-twenty past."

The two New House fellows hurried out of the dormitory. Their lanterns lighted them down the wide staircase.

They were running a big risk, but this only added spice to the adventure.

The grand old game of Jack-o'-Lantern, though relished by the St. Jim's juniors, would not have found favour in the sight of the masters. It was necessary to break bounds in order to play such a game; and breaking bounds was regarded as a very serious offence.

But the care-free Figgins, and the light-hearted Redfern had no qualms. Their hearts certainly beat a little faster as they made their way to the box-room; and they had expected a master or a prefect to spring out at them from the shadows.

The long corridor was deserted, however, and the box-room was reached in safety.

Figgins threw up the lower part of the window, and the two juniors clambered through into the darkened quadrangle, still carrying their lighted lanterns.

"It's a fearfully dark night, by Jove!" muttered Figgins.

"All the better for us," rejoined his companion. "The hounds won't have any lanterns, and they'll find it a bit difficult to pick their way. But we shall be able to see where we're going, and we shall get along first-rate."

old Ratty's been on the prowl, and we had to wait till the coast was clear."

There was a stir from one of the beds. George Alfred Grundy opened his eyes and sat up. He was astonished to see eight juniors, two of them carrying lanterns, up and doing at that hour of the night.

"I say! What's the little game?" ejaculated Grundy.

"We're going to play Jack-o'-Lantern, or a variation of it," explained Tom Merry. "Figgins and Reddy are the hares, and the rest of us are the hounds. We're going to give them a quarter of an hour's start, and then set off in pursuit. They've got to carry lighted lanterns, so that we shall be able to follow the trail. It's a sort of midnight paper-chase."

The two New House fellows crossed the quad, and clambered over the school wall.

Had any master been watching from his bedroom window, he could not have failed to notice the swinging lanterns. But no alarm was given, and the juniors concluded—quite rightly, as it happened—that they were safe.

They dropped down on the far side of the wall, and paused, panting a little, in the roadway.

"Where shall we make for, Figgy?" asked Dick Redfern.

"Across country—due south," answered Figgins briefly. "Come on!"

Conversation ceased after this. The hares were bent upon putting as much distance as possible between themselves and St. Jim's.

Away they went over meadow and ploughed field—vaulting stiles, clearing ditches, and scrambling through gaps in hedges. Their lighted lanterns helped them enormously. Tom Merry & Co., when they started off in pursuit, would have no such help. Still, there were six of them, all fleet runners. Guided by the glimmering lanterns, they hoped to run the hares to earth.

At the appointed time the hounds set off in chase. Their luck was in, for they got clear of the school building without detection.

"I wonderah which direction the beggahs have taken?" murmured Arthur Augustus.

"We'll jolly soon see," said Jack Blake. He took a flying leap at the school wall, drew himself up, and stood poised on the top, his white figure standing out in bold relief against a dark background.

Like Moses of old, Blake looked this way and that way. And presently he gave a shout.

"I can see them! There are two faint lights in the distance."

"Which direction?" asked Tom Merry.

"Due south. Come on!"

The hounds set about their task with commendable enterprise. They were handicapped by the darkness, and their progress was naturally less swift than that of the hares. But they plunged fearlessly into the night.

They raced across a couple of fields in splendid style. And then came a mishap.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, attempting to leap across a ditch, overstepped the mark. He had misjudged the distance, and he went floundering into the ditch, sprawling on all-fours in a miniature sea of mud.

"Hallo, hallo! Man overboard!" panted Monty Lowther. "Are you hurt, Gussy?"

"No, but I'm dweadfully muddy!" gasped the Swell of St. Jim's. "My wunnin' togs are uttally ruined, bai Jove!"

"Well, you won't improve them by staying where you are," said Talbot. "Out you get, you silly chump!"

"Weally, Talbot—"

"Back up, Gussy!" urged Tom Merry, with a snort. "Can't you see we're wasting valuable time?"

With a great effort, Arthur Augustus heaved himself out of the ditch. He was furious with the darkness for having caused him to come a cropper; but at the same time he was grateful to the darkness for hiding his appearance from his schoolfellows. He was smothered with mud from head to foot. Valuable time had certainly been lost whilst Arthur Augustus was floundering in the ditch. But the hounds took up the running once more. Tom Merry and Talbot were in front. They strained their eyes into the black pall of darkness ahead of them, hoping to catch a glimpse of the twinkling lights which had been visible from

Who is the Mysterious Old Man of the Mill? See Next Week!

the top of the school wall. But the lights had vanished.

"We shall spot them presently," said Tom Merry. "We're going in the right direction, anyhow."

Splash!

Tom Merry was evidently going in the wrong direction, for he failed to notice that he was bang on the brink of a ditch, with the result that he took a far from graceful nose-dive into it.

"Gug-gug-gug!" he spluttered. "Give me a hand, Talbot, for goodness' sake! I'm stuck in a blessed quagmire!"

Talbot had saved himself from disaster by drawing back in the nick of time. He now stooped down and assisted his chum out of the muddy morass. He also sang out a warning to the others, lest they should share Tom Merry's fate.

More valuable time was lost, and it began to look as if the hares would never be captured.

"Wish we hadn't given them such a good start," grumbled Tom Merry, as he was hauled out of the ditch. "Afraid they're miles away by now."

"But we won't give up," said Jack Blake. "As soon as we come to a piece of high ground, we'll take stock of our surroundings, and see if we can see the lights."

Undaunted by the difficulties which beset them, the hounds threw themselves into the chase with renewed zest.

Many miles were covered before they came to a piece of high ground—sufficiently high to take observations from. But at last they reached a grass-covered hill which rose to a considerable altitude, and they manfully toiled up the slope.

"What hill is this?" asked Jack Blake.

"Ask me another," said Tom Merry. "I don't remember ever having seen it before. We're a long, long way from St. Jim's now, you know."

At last the summit was gained, and the juniors halted in order to reconnoitre.

They were now in the very heart of Sussex. Undulating country stretched away in front of them.

There was only one light to be seen. It was a stationary light, far below them.

"The hares!" exclaimed Manners and Lowther, in chorus.

"But why only one light?" asked Talbot. "And why isn't it moving?"

"I think I can guess what has happened, dear boys," said Arthur Augustus. "Figins and Wedfern are farged out, an' they're takin' a west down in the valley. The two lanterns are standing close together, makin' it look like one light. Or perhaps one of them has blown out."

"Very likely," said Tom Merry. "Let's make towards the light. It's an easy downhill stretch now, thank goodness."

The hounds, now within sight of their quarry—as they thought—went racing down the hillside.

As they drew nearer to the glimmering light their hearts sank, and they realised that they were on the wrong track.

The light was gleaming from the tiny window of a building—apparently an old mill, which had not been visible from the hill-top.

"What a giddy sell!" groaned Jack Blake. "That light's burning in an old mill."

"But the hares may be inside," said Tom Merry, hopefully. "If not, how do you account for the light? It's not usual for lights to be burning in old mills at two o'clock in the morning. Let's push on, and investigate."

The juniors approached the mill, which had a very uncanny appearance in the darkness. It was a larger mill than most, and it was built of solid stone. It was very wide at the base, but it tapered towards the top. Evidently the mill had fallen into disuse, for there was no sign of a millhouse in the vicinity.

At one of the small windows, which were of very thick glass, the light glimmered. What was it doing there at such an hour? That was the question that the St. Jim's juniors asked themselves and each other; and they were bent upon finding out.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Trapped!

TOM MERRY cautiously tried the door of the old building, but it refused to budge. It was a curious shaped door, of great strength and thickness. And it seemed to be locked and bolted on the inside.

Yet there was someone inside the old mill, else why should a light be gleaming in the window overhead?

In trying the door Tom Merry had made as little noise as possible. The occupant of the mill, whoever he might be, had not been disturbed.

"I'll take a peep through that window," murmured Tom Merry. "Give me a bunk up, two of you."

Talbot and Jack Blake promptly hoisted their leader up, until he stood poised with a foot on each of their shoulders.

Tom Merry's face was level with the window. Although the glass was thick, it was transparent, and the junior had a fairly clear view of the interior of the mill.

Standing at a small table was the figure of an old man. He had his back to Tom Merry, but Tom could guess that he was old, for his hair was long and white.

The old man was in his shirtsleeves, and he wore a leather apron. A lamp was burning on the table, and the man stood in the circle of light which it shed. He was very busy. So far as Tom Merry could make out, he was engaged in polishing silver coins.

"Can you see anything, dear boy?" It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy who spoke, and he raised his voice rather more than necessary.

"Shush!" muttered Tom Merry, in alarm. But Gussy's shrill voice had been heard by the occupant of the mill. He spun round swiftly from the table, and saw the face of Tom Merry peering in at the window.

The old man gave a violent start. But he quickly recovered himself. He promptly slipped the coins he had been polishing into his pocket; then he picked up the lantern and crossed to the door.

Tom Merry jumped down from his perch.

"There's a weird old jesser in there," he said. "He heard Gussy's voice, and he's coming to open the door."

"My hat!" There was a sound of bolts being shot back, and then the massive, heavy door was swung open.

The six juniors drew back, startled. The figure of the old man stood framed in the doorway of the mill. In one hand he carried the lantern, and in his other hand glittered what appeared to be a revolver. And it was cocked at the juniors. That was why they had drawn back into the shadows, with exclamations of alarm.

To be confronted at two o'clock in the morning by a bearded old man who was armed was not a pleasant experience.

The old man looked long and searchingly at the faces of the juniors. Then he spoke:

"What are you doing here?"

It was a harsh voice, but a remarkably youthful one—not the croak which the juniors had expected from such an old man.

"We saw a light in the mill, so we came along to investigate," answered Tom Merry. "Lower that pop-gun, man! Are you potty?"

"I'll lower the revolver at my pleasure," retorted the old man. "You will, first of all, step inside."

"We'd wathah not, thanks," said Arthur Augustus, hastily. "To be quite frank, we don't like the look of you."

"Well, you're coming in, whether you like it or not. One at a time, please, with your hands above your heads!"

The St. Jim's juniors began to wonder whether they were dreaming. Their weird surroundings, and the strange old man glaring at them from the doorway of the mill, seemed like a scene from some hair-raising drama.

But it was no dream. It was a stern reality.

To defy the orders of an armed man would have been sheer folly. So the juniors stepped into the old mill one at a time.

Tom Merry went first, holding his hands above his head. He found himself on a stone-paved floor, over which the old man's lantern cast strange shadows.

The rest of the juniors followed, till all were inside. Then the old man shot the bolts and locked the door, slipping the key into his pocket. He stood the lantern on the table during this manoeuvre.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus, in dismay. "We're locked in, dear boys!"

"Quite so," said the old man, nodding his head grimly. "You are my prisoners."

"What were you doing when I looked in at you through the window?" demanded Tom Merry.

The old man looked hard at the junior. He was wondering exactly how much Tom Merry had seen.

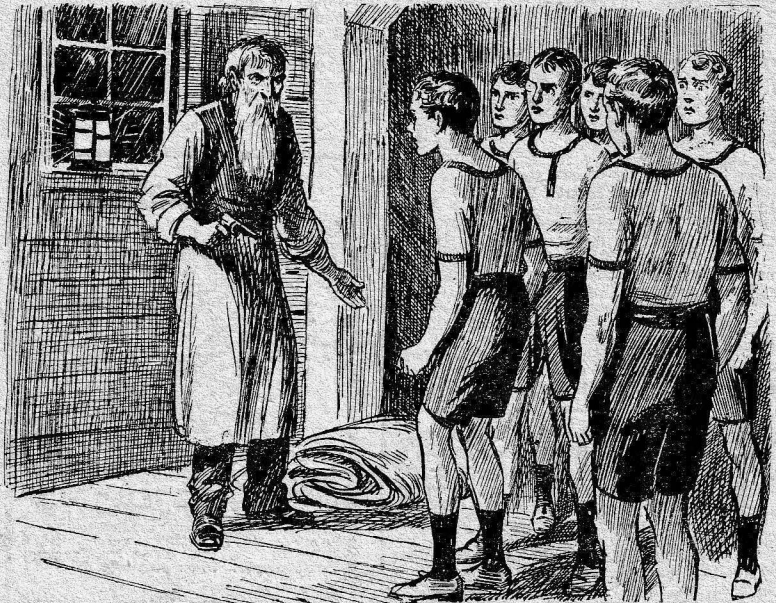
"Supposing I told you that I was polishing-up some medallions?" he said, after a pause.

"I shouldn't believe you!"

"Ah! It seems that you have seen a little too much, young man. I shall therefore find it necessary to keep you and your companions in custody for a week. At the end of that time I shall be leaving this place, and you will then be released."

"But you—you aren't keep us shut up in this mill for a week!" stammered Arthur Augustus, in dismay.

"You need not look so taken aback," said



PRISONERS OF THE OLD MAN OF THE MILL! "Look here," said Tom Merry, glaring at the man, "there will be a dickens of a row about this! Search will be made for us, and if the police come here—" The man laughed. "The police will not come here, and they will never find you!" (See Chapter 2.)

the old man. "I shall do you no injury, so long as you behave yourselves. You shall have blankets to sleep in, and plenty of good, wholesome fare."

He pointed to an iron ladder which reached up to the next floor of the mill.

"Up you go!" he said. "And no nonsense, mind. You are in my power, and so long as you submit quietly all will be well. But should you give any trouble the consequences may be serious."

The juniors glanced round wildly. But there was no way of escape. They were fairly trapped—prisoners in the old mill. There was nothing for it but to obey the old man's orders.

Tom Merry mounted the iron ladder, and the others followed. They found themselves in the room which formed the upper portion of the mill.

It was a bare apartment, with two small windows, one on each side. Both were of thick glass, and there were iron bars on the outside.

"We can't do the Charles the First stunt, and try to escape through one of those," said Monty Lowther. "We're caught like rats in a giddy trap!"

The juniors looked at one another rather sheepishly. The prospect of remaining in close confinement for a whole week was anything but pleasant.

The old man followed them up the ladder, and came through the trap-door into the apartment. He carried a big bundle of blankets under his arm.

"You are scantily attired," he said, dumping the blankets on to the floor. "Even on a midsummer night you will need some warmth. Make yourselves as comfortable as possible. There is a lighted lantern on the window-sill, as you will see. I shall be obliged if you will extinguish it before you settle down for the night, or, rather, what is left of it. I will bring you some food later."

"Look here," said Tom Merry, "there will be the dickens of a row about this! Search will be made for us, you know, and if the police come here—"

The old man laughed scornfully. "The police won't worry me," he said. "They regard me as a harmless lunatic, living in a disused mill, and they leave me alone. There hasn't been a policeman around here for weeks. It's no use kicking against your fate, my young friends. You are here, and you are going to remain here. As I remarked before, you will be all right, so long as you behave yourselves. To-morrow I will bring you up a gramophone I have here, also a plentiful supply of food. Then you will be able to enjoy 'dance by night, and feast by day,' as the poet Chatterton says."

Tom Merry & Co. saw that further argument would be futile. They were at the mercy of the Old Man of the Mill. If they rebelled against him, he could make things mightily unpleasant for them. If they knuckled under things would go smoothly.

The juniors were very weary. They had dashed across country for many miles, and were in various stages of exhaustion.

Tom Merry rolled himself up in a couple of blankets, and his companions followed suit.

Talbot, the last to lay down, extinguished the lantern before doing so.

Dimly through the darkness the juniors could distinguish the figure of the strange old man gazing down at them.

"I wish you a good night, and pleasant dreams," he said, with a touch of irony in his tone.

And then he gradually disappeared from view, and descended the iron ladder to the more spacious room beneath.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Alarums and Excursions!

"I FANCY we've shaken them off!"

It was George Figgins who spoke. He and Dick Redfern were resting in a wooded glade many miles from St. Jim's.

The two hares had never been in serious danger of capture. With a quarter of an hour's start, and with a couple of lanterns to light their way, they had made rapid progress. Fleet of foot, they had covered the country in great style, and there had been no patter of pursuing feet behind them.

"Better be getting back to the school, Figgys," remarked Dick Redfern. "We'll make a wide detour and take things easily."

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"All serene."

Figgins and Redfern set off on their homeward journey. They took their time about it, running a mile, and then walking a mile, alternately.

The old clock in the tower was striking three when they extinguished their lanterns and climbed over the school wall. They imagined that the hounds, having given up the chase, were back in their beds.

They entered the building with infinite caution, and made their way to the Shell dormitory.

To their surprise, four beds were vacant—the beds of the Terrible Three and Talbot.

"They don't seem to be back yet," said Figgins. "Let's pop across to the other dorm., and see if Blake and Gussy are there."

But the beds of Jack Blake and Arthur Augustus, in the Fourth Form dormitory, were unoccupied.

Figgins and Redfern began to feel rather alarmed. It was strange that the hounds had not yet returned.

They went back to the Shell dormitory and seated themselves on Tom Merry's bed, and waited.

It was a long and dreary vigil.

An hour passed, and the absentees failed to put in an appearance.

The first grey gleams of dawn came stealing in at the high windows. And the two New House juniors were now very gravely alarmed.

"Dawn!" exclaimed Dick Redfern. "And those fellows are still out. What shall we do?"

"There's only one thing to be done," said Figgins. "We must wake old Raitlon, and tell him the facts."

"He'll be furious with us for playing Jack-o'-Lantern—"

"We must risk that."

Haggard and heavy-eyed—for the strain of that anxious night had told upon them—the two juniors proceeded to the room where Mr. Raitlon slept.

The Housemaster was a light sleeper, and he awoke instantly when Figgins rapped on the door with his knuckles.

"Who is there?" called Mr. Raitlon.

"Figgins, sir—and Redfern."

"Good gracious! Why are you not in your own House? Is anything the matter?"

"Yes, sir."

There was a movement inside the room. After a brief interval Mr. Raitlon appeared, clad in his dressing-gown. He stared in astonishment at the two juniors who stood in the corridor, in the half-light of the early morning.

"What is wrong?" he asked quickly.

"Six School House fellows are out, sir," said Figgins. "The fact is, we've been playing a game called Jack-o'-Lantern. Reddy and I were the hares. We got back to the school at three o'clock, without being cap-

tured. We expected to find the others in their dormitories, but they haven't come in."

Mr. Raitlon looked grave.

"You have broken bounds," he said sternly, "and are liable to severe punishment. I shall have to report the matter to your own Housemaster. But I appreciate your action in rousing me and making a clean breast of the matter. Tell me the names of the boys who are out."

"Merry, Manners, Lowther, Talbot, Blake, and D'Arcy, sir," said Figgins.

"Can you suggest what has happened to them, Figgins?"

The New House junior shook his head.

"I haven't the faintest notion, sir," he said.

"Did you see anything of them while you were out?"

"No, sir."

"Then you cannot say which direction they took?"

"If they followed the trail, sir, they would have gone due south. But I think they must have gone on the wrong track."

Mr. Raitlon stood silent and thoughtful. At last he spoke.

"You will return to your dormitory at once," he said. "I will arrange for a search-party of prefects to be sent out immediately. I fear that some calamity may have befallen those foolish boys."

Figgins and Redfern retired to their own quarters. They went to bed, but not to sleep. Exhausted though they were, they had too much on their minds to be able to woo slumber.

Mr. Raitlon roused Kildare and Darrel and Rusden, of the Sixth, and explained the situation to them.

"I cannot give you any clue as to the direction the six absentees took," he said.

"But you might make inquiries in the various villages. It is just possible that the boys became exhausted, and had to put up somewhere for the night."

Kildare nodded.

"We'll do our best to find the young rascals, sir," he said. "With luck, we hope to bring them back by breakfast-time."

But the captain of St. Jim's was an optimist.

With no clue to guide them, the searchers soon realised that they had as much chance of finding a needle in a haystack as of finding the missing juniors.

It was now broad daylight, and the seniors cycled from village to village, making inquiries of the few people who happened to be abroad. Had they seen anything of six St. Jim's juniors in running garb? In every case the answer was a shake of the head, or a terse negative.

Tom Merry & Co. seemed to have vanished into thin air. No information could be gleaned as to their possible whereabouts. They had left St. Jim's twenty-five minutes after midnight, after which time their movements were wrought in mystery.

It was ten o'clock when the members of the search-party returned, tired and crestfallen. They reported to Mr. Raitlon that they had drawn blank, and the Housemaster, now greatly agitated, conveyed the tidings to the Head.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Dr. Holmes. "This is a most serious matter, Raitlon. A fresh search-party must be organised immediately, and in the meanwhile I will communicate with the police. I cannot help thinking that a disaster of some kind has overtaken those reckless boys."

Mr. Raitlon hurried away to form a fresh search-party.

Another band of prefects set out into the highways and byways, in the hope of finding some trace of the missing juniors. But in the afternoon the searchers returned, baffled and empty-handed, to St. Jim's.

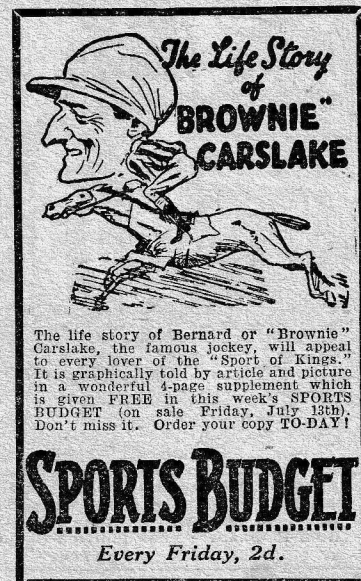
The afternoon merged into twilight, and twilight into dusk. But no news came to hand concerning the six School House fellows who had been reported missing.

Exhaustive inquiries were made by telegraph and telephone, and the countryside was ransacked. But in vain.

None of the searchers went so far afield as the old mill. And even had they done so, they would not have dreamed that Tom Merry & Co. were imprisoned in that old-fashioned structure of stone—the unwilling guests for a whole week of the Old Man of the Mill!

THE END.

(Next week: "Chums in Captivity!" Don't miss it!)



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THE NEW SKIPPER ON THE WAR-PATH!

An Extra-Special Tale of the Chums of Rookwood School,

By OWEN CONQUEST,

(Author of the stories of Jimmy Silver & Co. appearing in the "Boys' Friend.")

THE FIRST CHAPTER.**A Very Pressing Invitation!**

"S TEP in, Morny!"
 "Trot in, old scout!"
 "We want to speak to you, Morny!"

Lattrey, Peele, and Gower, of the Classical Fourth at Rookwood, spoke together.

Mornington was going towards the stairs with Jimmy Silver, when the trio called to him from the doorway of the first study.

Morny and Jimmy Silver had their bats under their arms, and were evidently bound for the cricket-field. Mornington, the new junior captain, and Jimmy Silver, who had formerly held that position, seemed to be on the best of terms with one another—a circumstance that was not at all a pleasing one to Lattrey & Co.

Morny paused a moment.
 "Can't stop!" he said. "I'm goin' down to the cricket!"

"Shan't keep you a few minutes," said Lattrey.

"Well, what is it?"
 "Step into the study!"

"Oh, rot! You can speak to me here, I suppose?" answered Mornington impatiently.
 "You coming, Jimmy?" bawled Arthur Edward Lovell from the stairs. Lovell and Raby and Newcome were waiting below.

"I'm coming!" answered Jimmy.
 And he went on. Mornington made a move to follow him, but Lattrey caught him by the sleeve.

"Look here, Morny—" he began.
 "Oh, let me go—I've no time to waste!" said Mornington. "If you've got anything to say, say it, and have done!"

"Can't let it out in the passage," said Lattrey sulkily. "Why can't you step into the study for a minute?"

Valentine Mornington made an impatient gesture.

"Oh, all right!"
 He came into the study, and Lattrey closed the door. Mornington stood with his hand resting on his bat, looking at the trio with impatient inquiry. There had been a time when Morny had been on good terms with the three black sheep of the Fourth, but that time was quite past. And since he had become junior captain, Morny had hardly spoken to the trio.

"Well, go ahead!" he said. "What is it? You three slackers thinkin' of takin' up cricket?"

"Ahem! No!"

"Well, I knew that!" grunted Morny. "Too much like work—what?"

"You haven't always been so jolly keen on cricket yourself!" said Peele tartly.

"Not unless there was a bet on the game," added Gower.
 Morny flushed.

He did not like being reminded of the time when he had been one of the blackest of the black sheep. That time was past, and Morny would have been glad for it to be forgotten.

"Is that what you brought me in here to listen to?" he snapped.

Lattrey gave his comrades a warning glance.

"Not at all," he said. "Nothing of the kind. Won't you sit down, Morny?"

"No time!"

"This isn't chummy, you know—" "Well, I'm not chummy with this study," said Mornington coolly. "What's the good of beatin' about the bush?"

"We used to be pally," said Peele.

"We will be again, if you like—if you give up playin' the goat, an' take to playin' the game," said Mornington with a laugh.

"Oh, draw it mild! You can't spoof us!" growled Gower.

"Spoof you?" repeated Mornington.

"What do you mean, Gower?"

"Shut up, Gower!" said Lattrey hastily.

Cuthbert Gower gave a grunt.

"Well, look here, Morny," said Lattrey, in a conciliatory tone. "You're junior captain now. You've got Jimmy Silver's job, and you're head of the Lower School."

"That's no news!"

"I mean, you're in a different position from what you used to be in. You've got power in your hands now," said Lattrey.

"Junior captain has a lot of influence, and can do pretty well as he likes, so long as he has a backing among the fellows, and doesn't kick over the rules too much. You've been on the Good Little Georgie stunt for a long time now, haven't you?"

Morny's eyes gleamed a little.

"You must be getting fed up with it," pursued Lattrey. "Now, why not chuck it?"

"Chuck it?" repeated Morny.

"Yes; and have a good time like you used to. You can do it now, without fear of anybody, now you're junior captain. Jimmy Silver & Co. don't count now—they can be as goody-goody as they like by themselves in the end study. Let 'em rip! They can't interfere with you, and you can have a jolly good time! See?"

"I see!"

"You haven't realised what a difference it makes, being junior captain," continued Lattrey, encouraged by Morny's placid tone. "You're really monarch of all you survey in the Fourth, you know. Jimmy Silver couldn't keep his end up against you now, if he chipped in. Why, with you as leader, we could have no end of a good time. And you must be feeling the want of a little excitement by this time!"

Morny nodded.
 "Such as breakin' bounds at night, and goin' to the little parties at the Bird in Hand?" he suggested.

"That's it!"

"Backin' gee-gees, and handin' over my pocket-money to a boozy bookie?"

"Ahem!"

"Spoilin' my wind by smokin' cigarettes—"

"Oh, rot!"

"And occasionally makin' myself sick with a cigar?"

"Look here, Morny—"

"It's a delightful prospect," said Mornington. "Especially the cigar. I remember seein' Gower tackle a big cheroot once. It doubled him up, an' he was groanin' with anguish for hour afterwards. Weren't you, Gower?"

"Oh, rats!" muttered Gower.

"It must have been a happy experience," said Mornington, "and the time a bookie was chasin' you, Peele, for money you owed him, an' threatenin' to call on the Head! That's a merry recollection, isn't it?"

"Oh, rot!"

"Thanks for the offer!" said Morny.

"Declined with thanks! Anythin' more to say?"

Lattrey & Co. looked at one another.

"Oh, don't talk out of your neck, Morny, old man!" said Lattrey uneasily. "I'll tell you what: we've got a little smoking-party on after tea."

"Ass!"

"Towny an' Toppy are comin', and Smythe and Tracy of the Shell," said Lattrey. "We invite you, Morny."

"Do come, old scout!" murmured Peele.

"Banker afterwards, if you like," said Lattrey. "But, anyhow, come to the smokin'-party, Morny. It will buck you up no end!"

Mornington looked curiously at the black sheep of the Fourth. There was no doubt about the eagerness of the Giddy Goats of Rookwood to welcome him back into the fold. With the junior captain of the school at the head of their select fraternity, the Rookwood Goats felt that they would be able to "spread" themselves with much more

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The Story to Look Out For—"True Blue!"—Next Week!

freedom. While Jimmy Silver was junior captain they had been under a cloud, and had been subject to raggings.

As Mornington seemed to hesitate, the looks of the black sheep became brighter and more confident.

Not one of them believed for a moment in the genuineness of Valentine Mornington's reform. Their view of it was that it was pure humbug, and now that Morny was captain of the Lower School, they did not see any further usefulness in the humbug. It had been useful, no doubt, in helping Morny into the coveted position. Now it was time to "chuck it," and they felt that Morny, as a sensible fellow, ought to see that.

"Some jolly good smokes, Morny," said Peele temptingly. "Really good Turkish cigarettes—your favourite old brand, you remember."

"And plenty of them," added Gower. "We're doin' it in good style, Morny."

Morny grinned.

"Regardless of expense?" he asked.

"That's it!"

"You'll enjoy yourself, old chap," murmured Lattrey.

Mornington reflected, and the shady three watched him eagerly.

"Could I bring a friend or two?" asked Morny at last.

"Certainly, old top!"

"I don't suppose Erroll would care to come," remarked Peele, with a grin.

"Oh, he'll come if I ask him!"

The trio looked doubtful. Kit Erroll of the Fourth certainly was not a fellow in their line at all.

"Oh, bring him, if he cares for it!" said Lattrey.

"And Jimmy Silver?" asked Morny.

Lattrey started.

"Silver wouldn't—"

"Well, can I ask him? I'll tell him it's a smokin'-party, of course, an' he can suit himself."

"That's a go!" said Lattrey. "If Silver likes to come to a smokin'-party, he's welcome."

"Done, then!" said Mornington. "What time?"

"Six!"

"I'll be here!"

And Mornington, with a genial nod, left the study, and sauntered away down the passage to the stairs, whistling cheerily.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Nice for the Nuts!

"OUR win!" chuckled Mark Lattrey, in great satisfaction, when the junior was gone.

"Good!"

"Rippin'!"

Lattrey laughed.

"Of course, I knew he was only spoofin', with his blessed reform, an' all that!" he remarked. "It puzzled me a bit at first, but I soon spotted the little game. He was aiming at the captaincy all along. There's too many goody-goody fellows at Rookwood for a Giddy Goat to set up for the captaincy; he couldn't have got elected. So Morny lay low—till he bagged the place away from Silver. That was the game."

"Plain enough," assented Gower.

"He's kept the spoof up longer than was necessary," said Lattrey. "But I was pretty sure he was tirlin' of it. Well, we've got Morny back."

"Bravo!"

"This means that Jimmy Silver & Co. take a back seat for good. As for Silver comin' here to a smokin'-party—that's all rot! He won't!"

"Morny's goin' to ask him."

"And he'll refuse—and that may mean trouble between them, which is all the better. That solemn old fogey, Erroll, won't come, either. And if he gives Morny lectures, Morny may get fed up with him, too. I'm surprised that they've been pally so long."

"Morny's rather a swankin' 'cad," remarked Peele. "But he will be jolly useful to us—that's a cert! And if he loses money in this study—"

"And he will!" said Lattrey.

"He ain't so rich as he used to be, but he can always borrow money from that scrubby cousin of his in the Second Form. But it will be a big thing for us to have the junior captain one of our set."

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"Yes, rather! Let's go and tell the chaps!"

Lattrey & Co. left the study, and walked along cheerily to Study No. 5. Townsend and Topham, the dandies of the Fourth, were there at tea, with Tom Rawson, the scholarship junior. Towny and Toppo were chatting to one another—without addressing any remarks to Rawson. Rawson was not sufficiently "class" for Towny and Toppo to have anything to say to him. Besides, Rawson had put a very firm foot down on smoking in the study. And he was so "hefty" a youth that Towny and Toppo, after having had their heads knocked together once or twice, loftily and disdainfully let him have his way.

Townsend was telling his chum about what his aunt, the countess, had said to his elder brother, the baronet; it was quite a high-class conversation, and intended to impress Rawson with a proper sense of his study-mates' superiority. Unfortunately, it failed of its effect, as Rawson was "sapping" Virgil over his tea, and was too deep in Latin verses to heed what his lofty study-mates were saying.

"Trot in, old scouts!" said Townsend, as Lattrey & Co. appeared in the doorway.

The black sheep came in.

Lattrey lighted a cigarette.

"Have a fag?" he asked.

"Ahem! No, thanks!" said Townsend hastily.

"Not just now!" murmured Topham.

Lattrey blew out a cloud of smoke. Tom Rawson coughed and looked up from P. Virgilius Maro.

"Chuck that!" he said tersely.

Lattrey appeared to be deaf. Although by no means so aristocratic as Towny and Toppo, Lattrey made it a point to be "down" on Rawson, and to ignore his existence.

"You fellows—" he began.

"Did you hear me?" asked Rawson.

"You fellows will trot along at six?" said Lattrey, still unheeding. "Morny's comin'."

"Oh, good!"

"If you've got fags about, you might bring them along—it's goin' to be a regular orgy, old tops," said Peele.

"Rely on us!" smiled Townsend.

Rawson rose to his feet.

"I can't stand smoke in the study," he said. "You've no right to smoke here, Lattrey!"

"Did you address me?" asked Lattrey disdainfully, becoming conscious of Rawson's existence at last.

"Yes; put that smoke out, or take it out of the study!"

Lattrey's reply was to blow out a cloud of smoke, which made Rawson cough again.

There was a chuckle from the nuts in the study.

"That's enough!" growled Rawson.

He came towards Lattrey, with his hands up.

"Get out!" he said.

"Look here! You leave Lattrey alone!" said Townsend. "Shut up, an' behave yourself, Rawson. You're not in your pater's workshop now!"

"Mop up the cad!" suggested Peele.

"Yaas, so we will, if he don't behave!" said Towny, feeling strong in numbers. "Sit down, Rawson!"

"Are you going, Lattrey?"

"No, fear!"

"Will you put that smoke out?"

"No!"

"Then, here goes!" said Rawson.

He collared Lattrey promptly, and spun him towards the open doorway.

"Back up!" shouted Lattrey.

Peele and Gower seized Rawson at once, and Towny and Toppo jumped up to help.

Rawson went spinning back across the room.

"Now come on again, you cad!" panted Gower.

Rawson did not answer; he picked up a big cushion, and came on again with a rush. The cushion swiped right and left, and Gower went spinning in one direction, Peele in another. Then Lattrey caught it with his face, and went bumping into the passage.

The cushion swept round, and Townsend and Topham captured it together and tottered back.

There were five of the nuts; but the burly Rawson seemed to have it all his own way with the cushion to help.

Lattrey was gasping in the passage, showing no inclination whatever to come in again.

He was also in difficulties with his cigarette, which had slipped into his mouth, and felt warm there.

Peele and Gower, dodging the swiping cushion, scrambled into the passage after him.

Rawson devoted his attention to his study-mates then. Towny and Toppo dodged and twisted round the study, yelling, as Rawson chased them with the whirling cushion.

"Stoppit!" yelled Townsend. "You horrid ruffian—stoppit!"

"Get out, then!"

"Do you think we're goin' to get out of our own study to please you?" shrieked Topham.

"Yes, unless you want some more," said Rawson coolly.

Swipe, swipe, swipe!

Townsend sprawled on the carpet and Topham jumped over him, and dodged into the passage, with the cushion behind.

Four furious faces glared in at Rawson—but they stayed in the passage.

Rawson turned round to Townsend.

That breathless youth was staggering to his feet when the cushion caught him again, and he sprawled downwards.

"Yow-ow! Stoppit! I'm goin', ain't I?" wailed Towny.

And he went.

Slam!

Tom Rawson returned to his tea, and P. Virgilius Maro, keeping the cushion handy in case it was wanted again.

But it was not wanted.

Outside the study five breathless and furious nuts uttered blood-curdling threats, but there seemed a general disinclination to put them into effect.

"Let's rush the rotter, an' smash him up!" gasped Peele.

"Let's rag him black-and-blue!" hissed Gower.

"After all, we don't want to be in the study with that cad!" said Cecil Townsend loftily. "I'm really ashamed of havin' laid hands on the low rotter! Let's go an' see Smythe."

"Yaas, let's!" gasped Topham.

"Oh, come on!" growled Lattrey.

"He, he, he! He, he, he!"

That offensive cacination came from Tubby Muffin, who was watching the dusty and breathless nuts from the door of Study No. 2.

Lattrey gave the fat Classical a savage look.

He feared Rawson; but he did not fear Tubby Muffin—which was rather unfortunate for the fat Tubby.

"Collar that fat owl!" snarled Lattrey.

"Yaas, give the fat cad a lesson!" said Towny.

"He, he, he! Oh, my hat! I say—Yaroooooh!" roared Tubby Muffin, as the nuts rushed on him and collared him, sending him spinning into his study.

Crash!

There was a sound of a table that went whirling over and a crash of crockery.

"Yooooop! Wow-ow-woop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lattrey.

"Let's go in and give him another!" exclaimed Gower.

Gower made a step towards the doorway; but he suddenly halted as Putty of the Fourth, Jones Minor, and Higgs looked out. Tubby's study-mates were at home.

"What are you up to?" roared Higgs.

"You've upset our tea! Come on, you chaps, and wipe up the passage with them!"

Lattrey & Co. fled.

Higgs and his comrades chased them to the head of the stairs, down which they ran; Gower, unfortunately last, being rolled down after the rest.

It was rather a breathless party that arrived at Adolphus Smythe's study, in the Shell quarters.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Call of Duty!

"NOT finished, Morny?"

Jimmy Silver & Co. were at the nets, improving the shining hour with cricket practice.

The match with Bagshot School was coming along; and the Rookwood cricketers were very keen on beating Bagshot, their old rivals. Morny was giving a great deal of attention to his team, getting them into shape, in which he had the hearty support of Jimmy Silver.

Whether Jimmy Silver was exactly pleased by his fall from the junior captaincy was a question; but certainly he owed no grudge to the new skipper. Morny's career as captain, so far, had not been an unqualified success; but he was doing his best, and Jimmy Silver was backing him up. For which Morny was duly grateful, for he was well aware that his position would have been extremely uncomfortable if Jimmy had gone into opposition.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome, though they "groused" at the change of skipper, followed Jimmy's lead; and in addition to Morny's own chum, Erroll, the Fistical Four were the new captain's chief supporters.

Morny had come away from the wicket, when Jimmy called to him. He nodded in reply.

"Yes, I've got an engagement for six," answered.

"Oh, bother your engagements!" said Arthur Edward Lovell. "Stick to cricket!"

"But it's rather important," said Mornington. "And I want you four to come, and Erroll, too."

"Well, I was going to do some more bowling," said Jimmy Silver. "Tommy Dodd wants me to bowl to him."

"You can bowl to Dodd some other time, old scout."

"Well, what's on, anyway?" asked Raby. "A little party in Lattrey's study."

Lovell glared.

"Blow Lattrey! Bother Lattrey! Bless Lattrey! I wouldn't be found dead in Lattrey's study!" he snorted.

"I don't want you to be found dead there, old top. I want you to come to the party."

"I don't quite catch on," said Jimmy Silver. "You're not pally with Lattrey and his set, Morny."

"Lattrey's extended the olive-branch," explained Mornington. "His idea is that now I've bagged the captaincy, I can give up playing the ox, and take to my merry old manners and customs. I'm offered the distinguished rank of great chief an' leader of the Giddy Goats of Rookwood."

"Morny!" exclaimed Erroll.

"Lattrey's laid in supplies of expensive smokes, and I'm asked to the party," said Mornington, while his companions stared at him blankly. "I've got leave to bring my friends, so it's all right."

"You're asking us to a smoking-party?" ejaculated Newcome.

"Yaas!"

"You cheeky ass—"

"My dear man, it's a great occasion. I tell you Lattrey's got no end of expensive smokes, and there's to be banker afterwards, if we care for it."

"Look here, Morny—" began Jimmy Silver.

"A very distinguished company, too," went on Mornington. "Smythe of the Shell—the nobby Adolphus; the glass of fashion an' the mould of form, you know—arbitrator of elegance to the Lower School. Tracy, too—very entertainin' chap Tracy; knows all about the races—"

"Are you pulling our legs?" demanded Jimmy Silver restively.

"Not at all. There'll be Towny and Toppo, too—to give the party a tone. Towny will tell us about his aunt, the countess."

"We know all about Towny's giddy aunt," said Jimmy Silver. "And I'm not coming!"

"Same here!" said Lovell emphatically.

"Oh, do come!" urged Mornington. "I want you to bring your bats, too."

"Our bats!" yelled Raby.

"Certainly! They may be needed."

"What on earth for?"

"In case the merry smokers cut up rusty at what I'm goin' to do."

"Oh!" said Erroll. "You mean—"

Mornington laughed.

"I mean that I think it's high time the junior captain took a hand in this smokin' and card-playing and so on," he said.

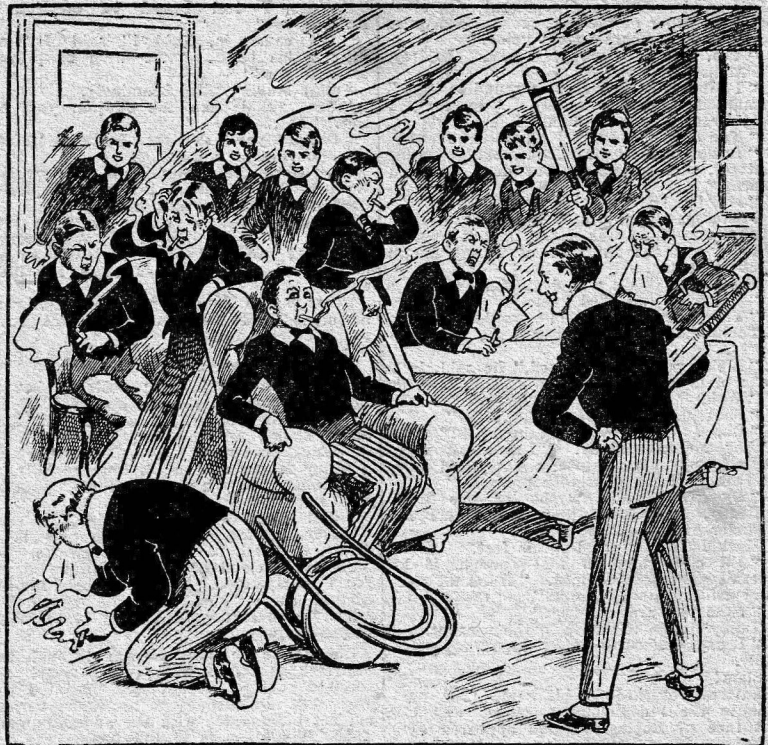
"That kind of merry-making was under the weather when Silver was captain. Now it seems to be flourishin' again no end. I think it's time it was sat upon. Are you fellows comin' to help?"

"Oh, that's all right!" said Lovell. "I didn't catch on—"

"You seldom do, old top."

"Look here, you ass—"

"Come on!" said Mornington. "It's nearly six, and it's bad manners to keep a party waitin'. Adolphus won't be able to



TOO MUCH SMOKE FOR THE NUTS! "You are not going out of this study until you have smoked all the cigarettes," said Mornington. "If any of you stop for one moment we'll set about you with these bats!" Knowing Mornington as they did, the nuts of Rookwood expected no mercy. Never had there been such a smoking party as the present one. The Giddy Goats were going through it. (See Chapter 6.)

keep away from the smokes, and there won't be any left for us."

Jimmy Silver chuckled as he followed Mornington from the cricket-field. Six juniors headed for the School House, with their bats under their arms. Bulkeley of the Sixth, the captain of Rookwood, was heading for Big Side, and he stopped to speak to Mornington.

"Mornington!"

"Hallo, Bulkeley!"

"I've got a bone to pick with you," said Bulkeley quietly. "It seems that you're junior captain now. It's not my business to interfere in the arrangements of the juniors, but it may have occurred to you, possibly, that the junior captain has some duties to perform, as well as the senior captain."

"What's up, then?" asked Morny.

"I'm afraid that there's several things up that will have to be put down," answered Bulkeley grimly. "There's been fag-ends of cigarettes picked up in the Fourth Form passage. A playing-card was swept up by one of the maids, and Mr. Bootles has spoken to me about it."

"Oh, gad!" murmured Mornington.

The other juniors stood silent.

They were well aware that since Jimmy Silver had ceased to be captain the Giddy Goats of Rookwood had become more reckless and impudent. The restraining hand was gone. It looked now as if they had been a little too reckless.

"So far as possible," went on Bulkeley, in the same quiet tone, "I think it's a good idea to let the junior captain keep order. Silver always seemed to manage fairly well. If I have to chip in officially, it will lead to some trouble—serious trouble. You don't seem to have realised, Mornington, what it's up to you to do. That's all, for the present."

And Bulkeley of the Sixth walked on, leaving Morny with a rather dismayed look on his face.

"Bulkeley's got on to it," said Lovell.

"It's about time you made up your mind to take a hand, Morny."

Mornington nodded.

"High time, it seems," he remarked. "Well, let's go ahead with our giddy duty. After we've done there will be a scarcity of cigarette-ends in the Fourth Form passage, I really think."

Morny & Co. entered the School House, and proceeded upstairs to the Fourth Form passage. They met Tom Rawson at the top of the stairs, and Morny called to him.

"Join up, Rawson," he said.

"What's up?" asked Rawson.

"Smokin'-party in Lattrey's study."

"Go and eat coke!" retorted Rawson.

"No time for such rot, or inclination, either."

"There seems to be a lot of misunderstanding," said Mornington, laughing.

"We're going in as executioners, dear boy, and we may want help."

"Oh, I see! I'll come, if that's the case."

"Follow your leader."

There were seven sturdy juniors now heading for Lattrey's study. There were an equal number of the noble fraternity known as the Giddy Goats in that select apartment, waiting for Morny. Mornington had said that he would bring his friends. But it was certain that Lattrey & Co. would be surprised, and anything but pleased, when Morny arrived with his friends.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Doggish!

"SO Morny's comin'?" Adolphus Smythe leaned back in the armchair in Lattrey's study and blew out a little cloud of smoke.

The smoking-party had gathered.

Smythe and Tracy of the Shell were there, and Towny and Toppo, as well as the three owners of the study.

Lattrey, Peele, and Gower, as a matter of fact, were a good deal keener on banker and nap than on the smokes. They had an eye to business. The three young rascals were black sheep of a rather deeper dye than

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their guests. But, for the present, cigarettes were the order of the day. It was not quite six, but the smokes were "going."

"Yes, he's coming," said Lattrey.

"Promised to come."

"I fancied he would come round in time," remarked Adolphus sagely. "In fact, I told Tracy as much—didn't I, Tracy?"

"You did, old sport," answered Tracy.

"Hallo! I hear footsteps!" smiled Lattrey. "Here comes our dear reformed Morny."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Footsteps approached the door of the study, and there was a tap, and it opened. But it was the fat face of Tubby Muffin that looked in.

The Giddy Goats stared at him.

"Get out!" snapped Peele.

"Travel, you fat rotter!" growled Lattrey. Tubby Muffin blinked at the smoking-party.

"I thought it was a feed," he said, in a tone of deep disappointment.

"Well, it isn't. Get out!"

"Shut the door after you, Fatty!"

"Oh, I don't mind joining you!" said Tubby Muffin genially. "I'm a bit rorty myself, you know—quite a rorty old dog, in fact. I'll come in, with pleasure."

"By gad!" said Smythe of the Shell.

"Really, Lattrey, if you inflict that fat bouncer on us—"

Mark Lattrey started to his feet.

"I'll clear him off fast enough, if he doesn't go!" he exclaimed. "Hand me over that cricket-stump, Gower!"

"Here you are, old top!"

Tubby Muffin backed into the passage.

"I say, Lattrey—" he began reproachfully.

Slam!

Lattrey returned to his seat. The next minute the study door reopened, and the fat face of Reginald Muffin appeared once more.

"Get out!" roared Lattrey.

"You don't want me to join you?" asked Tubby.

"No, you fat porpoise!"

"Oh, very well! I suppose you fellows know that you are breaking the rules," said Tubby Muffin loftily. "I'm sorry, but I feel bound to mention it to Bulkeley—"

"Wha-a-at?" ejaculated Adolphus Smythe.

"You fat sneak!" shouted Lattrey furiously.

"I'm not a sneak," said Tubby Muffin warmly. "I've got a sense of duty, that's all. Some fellows have. I'm shocked at you, Lattrey—surprised and shocked! Smoking in the study, like a gang of toppers in a tap-room! This isn't good enough for Rookwood, I can tell you!"

And Tubby Muffin shook a fat forefinger accusingly at the merry blades of Rookwood, who gave him Hunnish looks.

"I heard Mr. Bootles speaking to Bulkeley this morning," continued Tubby. "Old Bootles suspects that smoking goes on in the Fourth Form studies. He told Bulkeley so. Now, I really think it's my duty, having caught you in the act, to mention it to Bulkeley. What do you think?"

"You fat rotter!"

"If you treated me as a pal," said Tubby, "I should be bound to keep it dark, out of friendship. But you're not treating me as a pal. Now, I put it to you, Lattrey—are you treating me as a pal?"

Lattrey grasped a stump.

Tubby Muffin eyed him very warily.

"Hold on, Lattrey," said Gower hastily. "We don't want Bulkeley of the Sixth brought here."

"By gad, no!" concurred Smythe of the Shell. "If that fat little beast is going to sneak—"

"Some fellows have a sense of duty," said Tubby Muffin loftily. "I'm ashamed of you chaps! I can't let this go on."

Lattrey laid down the stump with a savage look. The fat Classical had the upper hand. Lattrey & Co. dared not let a Sixth Form prefect be brought to the study, already reeking with smoke.

"Let the fat brute come in!" muttered Peele.

"You can come in, Muffin," said Lattrey, between his teeth.

Tubby Muffin shook his head loftily. Having gained an advantage, he meant to make the most of it.

"I'm afraid I couldn't accept the invitation put like that, Lattrey," he said.

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"Besides, I feel bound to mention to Bulkeley—"

"Do come in, Tubby!" said Lattrey, gritting his teeth. "We—we'll be pleased to have you!"

Tubby Muffin smiled beamingly.

"Sure you'd like me to join you, old tops?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, yes!" stuttered Lattrey. "Here, help yourself to a tag!"

He pushed the cheapest box of cigarettes towards Tubby, with a far from hospitable expression upon his thin, hard face.

Tubby selected a smoke with a very doggish air. He lighted it at Smythe's cigarette; and Adolphus contrived to let his lighted end touch Tubby's fat little nose.

There was a fiendish yell from Tubby as he jumped back, and a roar of laughter from the Rookwood Goats.

"Yaroooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow! You rotter!" howled Tubby. "You did that on purpose!"

"Quite an accident, I assure you, dear boy!" smiled Adolphus.

"Wow-wow-wow!"

Tubby Muffin rubbed his nose ruefully.

"Let me give you a light, Muffin," grinned Lattrey.

"Ow! Yow! I'll have a match."

Tubby, having finished with his nose, struck a match to light his cigarette. He blew out a cloud of smoke with an air of great enjoyment. Tubby rather fancied himself as a "dog," and he was determined to be as doggish as any other fellow in the study.

But before he was half-way through the cigarette he was smoking very slowly. He coughed several times and grunted expressively. Doggishness of the smoky variety did not quite agree with the ample supplies Tubby had taken in at tea-time.

"Time Morny was here," remarked Peele, with a glance at the clock.

"Here comes somebody."

There were footsteps in the passage again—a good many footsteps. Then there came a rap at the door.

"Trot in, old sport!" called out Lattrey.

The door opened, and Mornington's smiling face was seen. The nuts of Rookwood gave him a cheery grin of welcome, and Tubby Muffin bestowed a genial nod upon him.

But the grin died away a little as Erroll and Jimmy Silver were seen behind Morny.

The junior captain entered the study. Jimmy Silver and Kit Erroll followed him in. And Lattrey & Co. looked quite grave as Lovell and Raby and Newcome and Rawson followed.

Rawson was the last, and he closed the door.

The study was pretty well crowded now.

"Well, here we are!" smiled Mornington.

"Ya-a-as, here you are!" stammered Adolphus Smythe.

"You said I might bring my friends, Lattrey."

"Ye-e-es."

"Well, I've brought them."

"Squat down somewhere, old tops," said Tubby Muffin. "Join us in a smoke—no end ripping. I assure you! Pass 'em the cigarettes, Smythe. Try these, Morny—you'll like 'em!"

"So Tubby's joined the Goats, has he?" ejaculated Arthur Edward Lovell, in astonishment.

Reginald Muffin gave a fat chuckle.

"What do you think?" he answered jauntily. "I'm a bit of a rorty dog, you know! A short life and a merry one! He, he, he!"

"Well, your life as a Giddy Goat is going to be a short one, Tubby," said Jimmy Silver. "I don't think it will be a very merry one, though."

"Not very!" grinned Raby.

"May as well lock the door," said Mornington. "We don't want to be interrupted; and we don't want any of our rorty friends to bolt."

"Turn the key, Rawson!"

Rawson turned the key, and put it in his pocket. The Giddy Goats viewed that proceeding with growing alarm. Mark Lattrey's face was dark and apprehensive.

"If you fellows have come here to kick up a row—" he began.

Mornington nodded.

"Exactly!" he answered. "We've come to kick up quite a shindy! But don't mind

us—get on with the smoking! We'll watch you."

"Look here—"

"Keep on with the smoking! So long as you're smoking, we won't touch you."

"Morny—" began Lovell.

"Leave it to me, Lovell, please. We'd better open the window and sit round it—I'm not used to tap-rooms. Don't mind us, my nutty friends—go on smoking."

The Giddy Goats blinked at Mornington in astonishment, and went on mechanically puffing at their cigarettes. Mornington opened the study window, and he and his companions sat round it, keeping as close to the fresh air as possible. Then, with smiling faces, they watched the smoking Goats of Rookwood.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Peculiar Punishment.

MARK LATTREY'S teeth closed hard on his cigarette.

The cad of the Fourth understood well enough now that Mornington had not come there to join the smoking-party.

It was evident that Morny had been pulling the Giddy Goat's leg when he accepted the invitation.

Whether Valentine Mornington's reform was genuine or not, he was still "keeping it up."

The fact that Erroll and Jimmy Silver were with him was a pretty plain proof that Morny had not come there to be "rorty."

All the nuts realised that, and they were puzzled and alarmed. Even Tubby Muffin realised that there was something wrong, and he blinked at Morny & Co. uneasily.

Exactly what Mornington intended was rather a puzzle.

In the days when Jimmy Silver was junior captain the Fistical Four would have thought nothing of raiding and ragging a study where a "smoking-party" was going on.

But Morny was leader now, and the Fistical Four were following his lead, as well as Erroll and Rawson.

And it seemed clear that Mornington was not intending a ragging.

He sat by the open window, with a smile on his face, watching the Giddy Goats; but the smile was a rather wicked one, and did not reassure the Goats.

The atmosphere of the study was rather thick by this time, and Jimmy Silver & Co. were glad to be by the open window. If the door had been unlocked there would probably have been a rush of the Giddy Goats to get away; but the door was locked, and the key was in Rawson's pocket. There was a long silence, while the Rookwood Goats smoked, and the unwelcome visitors watched them smoking.

Lattrey broke the silence at last.

"Look here, Morny! What's this game?" he asked, in a low voice of concentrated anger.

"Game?" repeated Mornington.

"Yes. You haven't come here to join us?"

"Not exactly."

"What do you want, then?"

"To watch you."

"You silly fool!" broke out Lattrey savagely. "What do you want to watch us for, you idiot?"

"I find you rather amusing."

"Look here—" began Adolphus Smythe.

"I'm lookin', dear old Smythey."

"I—I think we'd better be goin'," murmured Tracy. "I'd be obliged if you'd unlock the door, Rawson."

"Oh, yaas!" murmured Townsend.

Tom Rawson looked at Mornington for orders.

"Keep the key in your pocket," said Morny.

"Right you are!"

"Look here, Rawson!" broke out Topham. "You just unlock that door! We don't care for your company, and we're goin'!"

"I don't care for yours," said Rawson cheerfully. "But you're not going till Morny gives the word."

"Morny's skipper, you know," remarked Jimmy Silver. "There's such a thing as discipline, Toppo."

"What have you planted yourselves in this study for, you rotters?" muttered Lattrey, his eyes burning.

"I—I say, have a smoke, Morny, an'

let's be pally," said Peele, extending a box of cigarettes to the junior captain.

Valentine Mornington shook his head. "Thanks, I've given up smokin' long ago!" he answered.

"Oh, put on a smoke!" urged Gower uneasily.

"My dear man, you'll want all those smokes before you're through."

"Not a bit of it! We sha'n't be smokin' half this lot!"

"You will!" answered Mornington coolly.

"Eh?"

"Tubby, your smoke's gone out," said Mornington, with a stern look at the fat Classical.

"That's all right, old chap!" said Tubby. "I don't believe in overdoing it, you know. Fact is, I've been smoking an awful lot to-day."

"You're going to smoke an awful lot more, too. Light another cigarette!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Do you hear me?"

"Ye-es, but—"

"Do as you're told!"

"I—I don't want to, Morny," said Tubby in alarm. "I—I—I'm feeling a bit queer inside now, I am really."

"You'll feel a bit queerer before this smokin'-party is over," answered Mornington. "Put on another fag at once."

"Wha-a-at for?"

"Because you're told. Rawson, you're nearest the fat boulder. Give him a dig with your bat, will you?"

"Certainly!" said Rawson.

"I—I say—Yaroo! Stop it!" yelled Tubby Muffin, as he duly received the dig—rather an energetic one. "Yow-ow! Chuck it. I—I—I'll smoke another fag, if you like, Morny! I—I want to."

"Whether you want to or not, you're going to!" said Mornington. "Now, then, sharp's the word!"

Slowly and unwillingly Reginald Muffin lighted another cigarette. He smoked it slowly—very slowly indeed. But he smoked it.

Rawson was ready with his bat; and the cigarette seemed the lesser evil—at present. The time was soon to come when a thousand bats would seem a lesser evil than a cigarette to the hapless Tubby.

Lattrey & Co. looked at one another. They understood now.

Mornington's little game was not a ragging. It was something more severe than a ragging. The Giddy Goats of Rookwood had gathered there to smoke—and Mornington was going to make them smoke—till all the smokes were gone. It was the junior captain's idea of making the punishment fit the crime—quite in keeping with Morny's whimsical character. Jimmy Silver & Co. chortled as they watched the expressions of the nuts.

"You have stopped smokin', Smythey," remarked Morny, a few minutes later.

"I've finished," said Adolphus.

"Not quite! Light up!"

"I—I—I'm not going to."

"Will you give Smythe a dig with your bat, Lovell?"

"Won't I?" grinned Arthur Edward. And he did.

There was a howl from Adolphus.

"Have another smoke, Smythey?"

"I—I—I don't mind if I do!" gasped Smythe.

"Go it!"

And Adolphus Smythe went it, with a face that was a picture of fury and horror—and that was gradually assuming a complexion of various colours, in which a sickly green predominated.

"Muffin!" rapped out Mornington.

"Grooooh!"

"You're not smokin'!"

"Ow! I—I can't! I—I'm not one of this lot, really, Morny," pleaded Tubby.

"I—I just looked in to—to speak to them about—about cricket, you know, and—"

"Give him your bat, Rawson!"

"Ow! I—I'm just going to begin!" howled Tubby.

"Back up, then!"

Two cigarettes had had a most alarming effect upon the inward regions of Reginald Muffin. But he started on a third.

"You're not smokin', Gower!"

"I—I—I'm just going to—"

With a face like a demon, Cuthbert Gower lighted up again. In a dismal crowd the unhappy Giddy Goats of Rookwood smoked, and smoked—and the ready bats kept them

at it. There came an interruption at last, from Tubby Muffin. That plump youth rolled suddenly from his chair, and collapsed on the hearthrug, with his head in the fender. And the sounds that followed from the hapless Tubby resembled the weird sounds heard on a Channel steamer on a stormy day.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. A Win!

"LATTREY!"

"Hang you!"

"You're not smokin'!"

"I won't!" hissed Lattrey between clenched teeth. "Hang you! I won't!"

"Oh, what a falling off was there!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "You giddy blades gathered here to smoke. That was your special object. Now you say you won't, just as if you didn't like it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Give him your bat, Erroll!"

Erroll laughed, and gave Lattrey the business end of his bat. Lattrey uttered a peculiar gurgle as he tried to dodge. Then he sat very still.

"Leave off, you rotter!" he panted. "I—I—I'll smoke!"

"Go it!" said Mornington, encouragingly.

Lattrey, with a flemish face, lighted another cigarette. He was more hardened to smoking than his comrades, and he was standing it better; but he was feeling threats of upheaval within.

Tracy of the Shell had joined Tubby Muffin with his head in the fender. The rest kept their places, smoking slowly.

But they had to smoke.

There had been many a smoking-party held in Mark Lattrey's study; but certainly there had never been such a dismal one as the present party. The Giddy Goats of Rookwood were going through it; and never had they so sincerely repented of their giddy goatishness. A licking or a ragging would have been a joke to this.

Mornington watched them implacably.

It was high time the smart set of Rookwood had a lesson; and they were getting a lesson now, and a severe one.

Adolphus Smythe dropped a half-smoked cigarette to the floor, and leaned his head upon his hands, groaning deeply. The inward Adolphus was in a state of Bolshevism. Adolphus was feeling that a sentence of death would be a pleasure, compared with finishing that cigarette.

"You're not smokin', Smythey!" said Mornington.

"Groan!"

"You hear me, Adolphus?"

"Groan!"

Adolphus couldn't answer; he could only groan, and the groans were both loud and deep.

"Fancy Smythey getting fed up with smoking!" grinned Lovell. "Who'd have thought it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Are you enjoying yourself down there, Tubby?"

"Grooooh!"

"Having a good time, Tracy?"

"Gug-gug-gug!"

Groan from Adolphus Smythe. Townsend and Topham had their heads on the table now, groaning in chorus with Adolphus.

Lattrey, Peele, and Gower were still smoking feebly; they were the toughest of the Giddy Goats of Rookwood. But it was not long now before Cyril Peele collapsed. He rested his hands on his knees, groaned, and rocked himself in anguish.

Lattrey staggered to his feet. His face was white from rage and the influence of the cigarettes.

"You rotters!" he muttered huskily.

"You rotters! Ow! I—I won't touch another—I—I won't!"

"Prod him, Erroll!"

"Don't you think he's had enough, Morny?" murmured Erroll.

"Not till he collapses."

"Let him keep it up," chuckled Lovell.

"It may be quite a long time before Lattrey gives another smoking-party in his study."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mornington started operations with his bat. Lattrey dodged and twisted—and the quick motion completed the work of many cigarettes. He collapsed into a chair, over-

come.

Gower was the last. There was still a cigarette between his pallid lips; but he had ceased to smoke. He sat quite still, his glassy gaze fixed before him stonily.

"Go it, Gower!" said Morny.

Gower did not answer, or look at him. He seemed to have been turned to stone, as if by the glance of the fabled Gorgon.

Mornington looked round at the unhappy crew. The cigarettes were not finished yet—there were plenty more. But it was pretty evident that they would never be smoked by Lattrey's smoking-party.

"Have they had enough, you fellows?" queried Mornington.

"Grooooh!"

"Ow, ow! Grooooh!"

"Gug-gug-gug!"

"Well, they sound as if they've had enough," said Jimmy Silver, laughing.

"We'll give them a larger dose next time they have a smoking-party."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's a good idea. We'll clear off now—it's a bit thick in here. I hope you fellows have been enjoying yourselves," said Mornington, looking at the hapless Goats.

"You've had a really good time—a really rorty time. You ought to have enjoyed yourselves no end. Come on, you chaps!"

Tom Rawson unlocked the door, and Mornington & Co. walked out of the study. They were followed by a dismal chorus.

"Grooooh!"

"Oooooooh!"

"Oooo-er!"

"Gug-gug!"

And the door closed upon the sufferings of the Giddy Goats.

That night there were pallid faces among the Giddy Goats of Rookwood when they went to bed. In the dormitory of the Classical Fourth, Lattrey and Peele and Gower, Townsend and Topham, looked as if they were not finding life quite worth living. In the Shell quarters, Smythe and Tracy gloomed upon the dormitory, from the deepest depths of pessimism.

And the sufferers received no sympathy. Their pallid looks only excited the irrepressible merriment of the other Rookwood fellows. Lattrey did not answer when several juniors inquired when he was giving another smoking-party. It was very probable that while Mornington remained captain the smoking-parties of the Giddy Goats of Rookwood would be few and far between. For the junior skipper had shown his hand at last.

THE END.

(A fine long story of Jimmy Silver & Co. next week, entitled "True Blue!")

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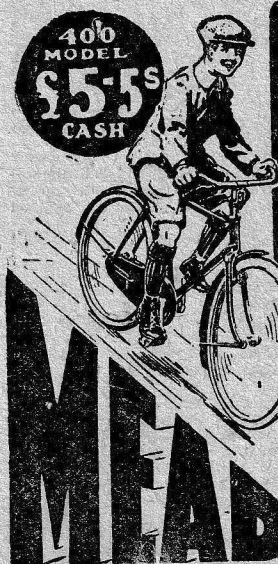
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