

The BOYS' FRIEND 1^{1d} 1^{1d} 2

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED THE "PENNY POPULAR." WAR TIME PRICE

No. 913. Vol. XVIII. New Series.]

THREE HALFPENCE.

[Week Ending December 7th, 1918.]

Tubby Muffin-Musician!

The 1st Chapter.

Nothing Doing!

"Bunk!"
 "Hop it!"
 "Absquatulate!"
 "Buzz off, porpoise!"
 Such were the remarks uttered by the Fistical Four, as the round, fat head of Tubby Muffin appeared round the door of the end study.
 Jimmy Silver, Lovell, Raby, and Newcome were busily engaged on greasing their footer boots.
 At the best of times they were not anxious for Tubby Muffin's company, but at the present moment they were less keen than ever.
 But although they gave the fat junior killing looks, there was certainly no sign of Tubby expiring.
 In fact, the fat junior looked very much alive as he stepped into the study. He smiled in a beaming manner at the Fistical Four.
 "I'm sorry to trouble you fellows—" he began.
 "You're not going to trouble us, porpoise," said Lovell, reaching for a cushion. "You're going to hop it, or I'll—"
 "Don't be beastly unreasonable, Lovell," said Tubby Muffin. "I've got an idea."
 "An idea?"
 "Yes."
 "Well, you'd better go and bury it," said Lovell. "We don't want it. None of your ideas are ever much use, and this—"
 "But this is a really ripping idea," insisted Tubby Muffin. "Of course, it wouldn't appeal to you, Lovell. You haven't got an ear for music."
 "You fat duffer!" exclaimed Lovell wrathfully. "I'll jolly well show you whether I've got an ear for music. If you don't buzz off—"
 Lovell held the cushion over his shoulder in a menacing manner.
 Tubby Muffin observed the action, and promptly dodged behind Jimmy Silver for the sake of safety.
 "Move away, Jimmy!" said Lovell wrathfully. "Let me get at that porpoise!"
 Jimmy Silver endeavoured to move aside, but Tubby Muffin held on to him and kept in the rear.
 Lovell advanced, and, seeing his opportunity, hurled the cushion through the air.
 Next moment there was a piercing shriek.
 "Ow! Yow! You silly ass! Yoooop!" But the shriek did not come from the fat junior; Tubby was grinning ecstatically.
 It was Jimmy Silver who shrieked, for the cushion had caught him behind the ear, almost bowling him over.
 He recovered himself quickly, however, and gave Lovell a savage glare.
 "You burbling chump!" he exclaimed. "What do you mean by biffing that cushion at me?"
 "I didn't biff it at you."
 "Why, you hit me full in the head!"
 "It was meant for that fat duffer," said Lovell. "How was I to know you were going to put your napper in the way?"
 "Why, I—"
 "I say, hadn't you chaps better listen to my idea?" said Tubby Muffin, stepping forward. "It's a really topping—"
 "I'll give you idea!" snorted Lovell fiercely. "You lemme get at you! I'll smash—"
 Once again Tubby dodged behind Jimmy Silver.
 Lovell advanced, but Jimmy pushed him back.
 "Knock off, Lovell, old son," he said cheerily. "You'll probably have another accident."
 "No, I won't," declared Lovell. "I'm going to punch that fat duffer's nose!"
 "Well, I'm not going to run the risk of your hitting my nose in mistake," said Jimmy Silver promptly. "Just stand back, old son, and we'll listen to what Muffin's got to say."

A Magnificent New Long Complete Story of JIMMY SILVER & CO., the Chums of Rookwood. By OWEN CONQUEST.



"It's bound to be a lot of rot," said Lovell disdainfully.
 "Quite likely," agreed Jimmy Silver. "But we may as well hear him out; we shall get rid of him quicker that way."
 "I say, Jimmy—" began Muffin protestingly.
 "Now, don't waste time," said Jimmy Silver. "We'll give you two minutes. You'd better say what you've got to say in that time, because when it's up we're going to boot you out!"
 Tubby Muffin drew himself up.
 "I suppose you'd be only too glad of a chance to score off those Modern asses?" he said.
 "Well, I must say Tommy Dodd & Co. have been coming it a bit just lately," said Jimmy Silver reminiscently. "The way they mucked up our concert the other day, for instance."
 "That's just what I was thinking of," said Tubby Muffin, encouraged by Jimmy's remark. "I'm not suggesting that we rag them. I was merely thinking that we might start something, you know, that would make them want to kick themselves for not thinking of it first."
 Lovell gave Jimmy Silver a meaningful look.
 "How's the two minutes going?" he asked.
 "One left," said Jimmy, smiling. "You'd better buck up and come to the point, Tubby!"
 "Well, you admit you want to score off the Moderns?"
 "Oh, if you like!"
 "Good!" said Tubby, with satisfaction. "It's easily done if you adopt my suggestion. I've come to you, Jimmy, because I consider you'd make the best bandmaster."
 "The what?" demanded Jimmy Silver incredulously.
 "The bandmaster," said Tubby confidently.
 "But what the merry dickens has that got to do with your scheme for scoring off the Moderns?"
 "Everything."
 "But—"
 "My idea is for the Classics to form a band," said Tubby coolly. "In your hands, Jimmy, it would be a great success, and— Whatever's the matter with you chaps?"
 The Fistical Four had burst into a roar of laughter.
 "My giddy aunt!" chuckled Raby. "Is that your wheeze?"
 Tubby glared at the hilarious Raby.
 "It's a jolly good wheeze, and you couldn't think of one like it!" said the fat junior, with emphasis. "What do you think of it, Jimmy?"
 "Rotten!" was Jimmy Silver's opinion. "Oh, I say—" began Tubby, looking offended.
 "If that is all that's in the idea, you can jolly well take it elsewhere," said Jimmy Silver. "A band—why, there isn't a fellow on the Classical side who can play anything more than a piano!"
 "There is!" snapped Tubby. "I know a chap who can play jolly well."
 "Who is he?" demanded Lovell.
 "Me, of course!"
 "You?"
 "Yes," said Tubby Muffin conceitedly. "I'm a regular dab at playing a concertina, and I should be only too pleased to assist you fellows in getting the band together."
 "Oh, hold me up, somebody!" muttered Lovell, pretending to faint.
 "It might be a good thing for us financially, too," said Tubby fervently. "We could play at concerts and places, and raise no end of money."
 "Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Jimmy Silver. "I guessed Tubby had got some ulterior motive in making the suggestion."
 "Really, Jimmy—"
 "Buzz off, you silly duffer!" exclaimed Jimmy. "You're dead off the mark this time, fatty, and—"
 "But, I say, Jimmy!" persisted Tubby Muffin. "You haven't heard me play the concertina. I'm jolly hot stuff at it."
 "Why, you fat ass, you don't possess a concertina!"

WAIT UNTIL THE WHITEWASH DROPS!

(Continued on the next page.)



Tubby Muffin-Musician!

(Continued from the previous page.)

"I do," said the fat junior. "I bought one yesterday, and—"

"Well, you take my advice, and sell it again!" said Jimmy Silver. "At any rate, you'd better not play it near this study, or—"

"I shall please myself where I play it, so there!"

"My hat!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "Give me that cushion, Lovell, old son!"

"Certainly," said Lovell, handing the cushion to his chum.

But Jimmy Silver was not able to carry out his intention of hurling the cushion at Tubby Muffin.

The fat junior thought it inadvisable to argue the matter further.

He made a dart for the door of the study, and tore down the passage as fast as his fat legs would carry him.

The 2nd Chapter.

The Noise That Annoyed.

Rah-h-h! Rah-rah-rah! Ooon-rah!
"Great pip!" exclaimed Arthur Edward Lovell. "What the—"

Oo-oo-rah! Eee-ooo-oooon!
Arthur Edward dropped the footstool he was greasing and gasped.

"My giddy aunt!" he muttered. "Where the dickens is that row coming from?"

The Fistical Four listened, and again came that unmelodious:
Rah-h-h-h-h! Ooon-rah!
"Oh, scissors!" groaned Jimmy Silver, putting his fingers to his ears to lessen the noise. "I've never heard such a beastly row in my life! It—"

"What the dickens can it be?" demanded Raby, nonplussed.

"Goodness knows!" sighed Lovell. "It—"

"Oh, my hat! There it goes again!"
Eee-ooo-oooon! Rah-rah-rah! Ooon-rah!

The weird noise was worse than ever now.

The Fistical Four stared at one another, thoroughly bewildered.

Suddenly Arthur Edward Lovell gave an exclamation.

"I've got it!" he cried. "It's Tubby Muffin and his rotten concertina!"

"Oh!"

"The fat ass must be off his chump to kick up a row like that!" remarked Newcome. "It's enough to wake the giddy dead!"

"Well, we're not going to put up with much of this," said Jimmy Silver firmly. "Come on, you fellows! We'll bury Tubby's concertina, and him, too, if necessary!"

"What-ho!"

The Fistical Four trooped out of the end study and entered the passage, to find that the noise was worse there than in their study.

They strode along to Study No. 2, the apartment which Tubby Muffin shared with Higgs and Jones minor.

Jimmy Silver turned the handle of the door, but the door refused to open.

Thump, thump!

The angry juniors knocked on the door. But no answer came from within, save a very weird and noisy:
Oon-rah-rah! Eee-ooon!
"Tubby, you burbling idiot!" shrieked Jimmy Silver desperately. "Stop that beastly row!"

Eee-ooon-oooon! Rah-rah-rah!
"Shut up, Tubby, you jabberwock!" yelled Lovell furiously. "Shut up that noise, d'you hear?"

Whether the fat junior heard or not, he made no reply to the angry juniors' demands.

But the wheezy groans from inside the room continued, and showed no sign of abating.

"What the dickens is that row?"
Conroy and Pons and Van Ryn, the Colonial Co., came dashing along the passage, eager for information.

"It's that fat fool, Muffin!" explained Lovell wrathfully. "He's got some rotten old concertina in there, and he's grinding away for all he's worth!"

"Oh, my only hat!" gasped Conroy. "The chap must be off his dot to kick up a row like that! Can't you get inside and stop him?"

"I jolly well wish I could!" said Lovell fiercely. "I'd scalp him! I'd slaughter him! I'd—"

Lovell did not have a chance of saying what else he would do to Tubby Muffin, for at that moment Mornington and Erroll stroled up, followed by Townsend and Topham and Higgs.

"By gad!" drawled Mornington. "You chaps are kickin' up a frightful din—what?"

"It isn't us, fathead!" growled Lovell. "Then who is it?"

"It's Muffin!"

"Muffin?"

"Yes; can't you hear him?" demanded Lovell. "He's in this blessed study, and—"

There it goes again!
Oon-rah-rah-rah! Squeak! Eee-ooo-oooon!

Tubby Muffin was evidently getting somewhat excited, for the din was becoming more frightful than ever.

Thump! Bang! Thump!

The juniors banged on the door for all they were worth, in the hope of attracting Tubby Muffin's attention.

But the fat junior remained oblivious to all that was going on outside the study.

Possibly the knowledge that the key

was turned in the lock gave Tubby a sense of security.

"We shall have to do something," said Jimmy Silver at length. "We can't allow this shindy to go on."

"Well, what are we going to do?" demanded Lovell impatiently. "You're the leader of the Form, and it's up to you to—"

"Didn't there used to be an old form at the end of the passage?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"It's there now, I believe," replied Conroy.

"Good!" said Jimmy Silver at once. "We'll get that, and barge the door down with it."

"Jolly good wheeze!" said Lovell praisingly. "Come on, you fellows! I'll take several of us to manage that form."

The juniors were willing enough to devote their services to the task of "barging" down the door of Tubby Muffin's study.

They ran along the passage, and returned in less than a minute with a heavy form.

"Stand away there!" sang out Lovell. Townsend and Topham, and one or two others, stood aside, and Jimmy Silver & Co. dashed up with the form.

"Now then," said Jimmy Silver, "when I say 'heave,' mind you all shove at once!"

"Right-ho!" said Lovell impatiently. "Buck up! I can't stand that row much longer!"

Ooo-ooon-rah!
Still there was no sign of the noise abating.

"Heave!" sang out Jimmy Silver. And the juniors promptly heaved.

Bump!

There was a terrific concussion as the form collided with the stout oaken door. The door shivered perceptibly, but the lock still held.

"Heave again!" cried Jimmy Silver. Bump!

Strong as the door was, it could not stand such another blow.

The lock was shattered, and the door flew open.

The wrathful juniors tore into the study in a body.

Tubby Muffin stood in the centre of the room, holding his concertina in one hand, looking thoroughly amazed.

"You fatheads!" he exclaimed, backing towards the fireplace. "What do you mean—"

"You burbling idiot!" roared Jimmy Silver. "Didn't you hear us knocking at the door?"

"I was playing 'Home, Sweet Home' on my concertina," said Tubby feebly.

"My giddy aunt!" exclaimed Raby. "If that was 'Home, Sweet Home,' I reckon I'd sooner be miles away!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed unearthly row!" grunted Lovell. "Have you gone potty, or—"

"You don't understand, Lovell!" said Tubby Muffin tauntingly. "You haven't an ear for music. Now, if you fellows like, I'll play you—"

"You jolly well won't!" roared Lovell

furiously. "Give me that blessed concertina!"

Lovell made a snatch at the instrument, and tore it from the fat junior's hand.

Next instant Tubby's concertina sailed through the open window, and landed with a bump in the quadrangle below.

Muffin gave a dismal howl.

"What do you mean by throwing my concertina out of the window?" he demanded. "It cost me two pounds, and I—"

"Collar him, you fellows!" shouted Lovell, making a rush at the fat junior. "He deserves a jolly good bumping for kicking up such an unearthly row!"

Tubby was promptly collared and borne to the floor.

The fat junior uttered frantic shrieks, but it was very little use Tubby asking for or expecting sympathy.

The juniors were too incensed to show him any mercy.

Bump, bump, bump!

Again and again Tubby was bumped on the hard and unsympathetic floor.

Not until they were tired did the Classical juniors desist.

Then they allowed the dusty and dishevelled Tubby to rise to his feet.

Muffin shook his fist at the juniors.

"You wait!" he muttered between his teeth. "If that concertina is damaged I'll make you buy me a new one! I'll—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There came a burst of laughter from the juniors, and Tubby, seeing how hopeless it was to discuss the possibility of his concertina being damaged, made a dart for the door of his study, with the intention of rescuing his instrument before somebody else captured it.

The 3rd Chapter.

The Wrong Party.

"Go for 'em, Classics!"

"Sock it to 'em, Moderns!"

During the last few days snow had fallen heavily at Rookwood.

It was only natural, therefore, that after dinner that afternoon, the Fourth Form juniors should troop into the quadrangle for the purpose of indulging in a snowball fight.

Tommy Dodd, of the Modern side, had issued the challenge to Jimmy Silver.

Jimmy had accepted it with alacrity, and had rallied the Classical juniors together.

The Classics were now striving their hardest to force their rivals out of the gates.

But the Moderns were holding their own.

Snowballs flew swiftly through the air, and every now and then there came a grunt and a splutter from some unfortunate junior who had received one full in the face.

Shouts from the Classics and yells from the Moderns mingled together, and it was not long before there was a terrific din going on.

But all of a sudden the noise was added to by a weird sound that came from the lane outside the school.

Tommy Dodd had caught Jimmy Silver on the nose with a really hefty snowball, and Jimmy had forthwith drawn aside for the purpose of scraping the snow from his face.

Thus it happened that he was the first to hear the unmelodious sound that emanated from outside the school gates.

Jimmy pricked up his ears, and listened.

Gradually the sound became louder, and a very serious frown spread over Jimmy Silver's face.

Oo-rah! Rah-rah-rah! Squeak!

It was the same sound as that which Jimmy had gone to such pains to stop in Tubby Muffin's study.

The Classical captain did not wait to listen to any more.

He dashed across to the snowballers, and held up his hand.

"Pax, you fellows!" he shouted.

"Pax, be hanged!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd. "If you've had enough, say so, and we'll stop; but—"

"Don't be an ass, Dodd!" said Jimmy Silver. "Have you got a fatheaded porpoise over on your side?"

"No, we haven't; but—"

"You haven't got a fellow who's mad enough to play a concertina?"

"No; but—"

"Well, we have!" said Jimmy Silver. "That burbling idiot, Muffin, has bought a concertina, and we had to break into his study before we could stop him playing it."

"What the dickens has that got to do with me?" demanded Tommy Dodd. "You can have a thousand Tubby Muffins and a thousand concertinas, for all I care! Snowballing is a bit more in my line, and—"

"Oh, you Modern chump!" said Jimmy Silver irritably. "Why the dickens don't you listen?"

"Why don't you get on with the snowballing?" demanded the Modern junior.

"Because we might just as well biff our snowballs at Tubby Muffin," said Jimmy Silver. "Listen! Can't you hear that unearthly row that's going on outside?"

Tommy Dodd promptly listened.

Eee-ooo-ooon! Rah-rah-rah!

"Great Caesar!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd, in surprise. "What the merry dickens is making that row?"

"It's Tubby Muffin and his blessed concertina!" explained Jimmy Silver.

"My hat!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd, moving towards the gates. "I can't stand that row! I— Here, leggo, Jimmy Silver!"

"Come back!" said Jimmy Silver, pulling the Modern junior towards him. "You don't want to scare him!"

"Scare him?"

"Yes, fathead!" snapped Jimmy Silver. "But—"

"Gather up some snowballs, and don't argue!" said Jimmy Silver. "And when Tubby Muffin passes the gate—"

"Oh, I see now!" said Tommy Dodd, grabbing up handfuls of snow.

"About time you did!" said Jimmy Silver, somewhat disdainfully. "You fellows stand by, and when I give the order biff your snowballs at Tubby Muffin as he enters the gate!"

"Right-ho!"

The juniors waited eagerly, armed with dozens of snowballs.

The unmelodious, squeaking sound came nearer and nearer.

Suddenly Jimmy Silver, who was peering through the gates, caught sight of a concertina, held by two hands.

"Here he comes!" he whispered to the juniors. "Mind you aim straight!"

The juniors kept their gaze fixed on the gates, and when the concertina came in view, followed by a short, fat figure, they prepared to take aim.

"Fire!" commanded Jimmy Silver.

Whiz!

Fully two dozen large-sized snowballs sailed swiftly through the air.

Biff!

Some of those snowballs missed their mark, but the majority got home on that rotund figure outside the gates.

"Got him!" shouted the juniors, in chorus.

They had, there was no doubt about that.

The unfortunate musician was smothered in snow from head to foot, and his face was entirely hidden from view as he stood in a helpless position, his concertina hanging full length from one hand.

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Lovell exuberantly. "I reckon this will teach Muffin a

lesson! What have you stopped playing for, Tubby?"

"Ow! Yow! Grooooooh!" spluttered the unfortunate musician, gouging the snow from his eyes and neck.

The juniors held their sides with laughter.

They felt that they had got even with Tubby Muffin for the noise he had made in his study.

Jimmy Silver & Co. strode towards the gates.

"Why don't you play another tune, Tubby?" asked Lovell tauntingly.

"Yes, have another go at 'Home, Sweet Home,'" urged Newcome. "I fairly dote on that tune, Tubby, and—"

"Oh, don't he look a sight!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow-w-w-w-w!" gurgled the juniors' victim. "I'll make you—yooop!—pay—groooh!—for this! Oh!"

"Serves you right, Tubby!" said Jimmy Silver. "We told you you weren't to play that blessed instrument!"

"Ow! My name ain't Tubby! I— Ow! Yaroooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chortled Lovell. "Since when have you changed your name? I— Oh, my giddy aunt!"

Lovell ended his remark with a startled ejaculation, for suddenly a peculiar sound came from down the lane—a sound that caused the surprised junior to turn round quickly.

The other juniors heard the sound, too, and promptly imitated Lovell's action.

Next moment there came a chorus of exclamations.

"My hat!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, in amazement. "We—we've m-m-made a mistake!"

"Oh, dear!"

There was no doubt that they had made an error, for the sound which had startled them was the squeaky, discordant sound of a concertina.

What was more important still was the fact that the concertina was being played by Tubby Muffin.

Tubby was smiling gleefully as he walked towards the gates. Evidently the startled looks on the juniors' faces amused him.

"My giddy aunt!" gasped Jimmy Silver, jerking his finger in the direction of the snowballed person. "I—I thought this chap was Muffin!"

"So did I!" muttered Lovell. "But—but who the dickens is he?"

It was still impossible to recognise the juniors' victim, for the latter was in a crouching position, trying to shake the snow from his neck.

Eee-ooon-ooon! Rah-rah-rah!

"Oh, shut up that blessed row!" growled Lovell, as Tubby Muffin approached with his concertina.

"He, he, he!" chuckled Tubby Muffin. "I guessed you'd make that mistake!"

"Go and eat coke, you fat idiot!" snorted Newcome.

"Fancy you taking that chap for me!" grinned the fat junior. "I saw you biff those snowballs at him, and—"

"Buzz off!"

"No fear!" said Tubby, swinging his instrument to and fro, and making a really most frightful noise. "I want to see what this chap's got to say. I think—"

"Will you hop it?" shrieked Lovell, picking up some handfuls of snow.

The discords suddenly ceased as Tubby backed to the side of the lane.

"Don't get your rag out, Lovell!" he said. "If you take my advice you'll give that chap five bob to square him. I— Yow! Yoooooop!"

A deftly aimed snowball landed full in the fat junior's face, almost bowling him over.

"Now we've settled with Tubby, we'll deal with the other duffer," said Lovell irritably.

"Don't you call me a duffer!" cried the snowballed person, advancing quickly towards Lovell, his fist held out in a threatening manner.

Lovell backed away quickly.

"Gerraway, you idiot!" he yelled. "Don't you dare— Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

Lovell missed his footing, and fell full length in the snow.

"Now, if any more of you 'ave got anything to say," said the man, with great dignity, "Smiler Snooze will deal with yer!"

"We're very sorry, Mr. Snooze," said Jimmy Silver, endeavouring to pour oil on the troubled waters. "We—"

"What's the good o' being sorry?" broke in Mr. Snooze. "I've never been ill-treated like this before. It's shameful, and—and look at my concertina!"

"It looks rather shabby, doesn't it?" grinned Mornington, surveying the dilapidated instrument.

"Shabby? Course it is!" said Mr. Snooze, with a sigh. "But—but it's been a jolly good friend to me. It's kept me out o' the workhouse."

"That's ripping!" said Morny blandly. "You ought to be jolly thankful for that, Mr. Snooze!"

"Yus," said Mr. Snooze. "But—but 'ow the dickens can I earn my livin' with it now? It's all busted up, and you young humps—"

"Oh, no, not at all!" said Mornington, picking up the instrument. "It ain't busted. You listen."

Eee-ooon-rah! Squeak! Rah-rah! Grm-nnnnnh!

"Knock off, Morny, you silly ass!" cried Jimmy Silver, as once again the air was filled with unmelodious discords.

"Don't you like it?" asked Mornington mildly. "I'll give you 'There's no Place Like Home.' I—"

"You jolly well won't!" declared Tommy Dodd firmly. "I'll shove a handful of snow down your neck if you do."

"Oh, all right!" said Mornington, and he handed the instrument to the man. "It's all right, Mr. Snooze, really it is!"

"Oh, it's shameful!" sighed Mr. Snooze. "It's absolutely busted! I—I shall have to go into the workhouse, I know I shall, Oh, dear!"

IN YOUR EDITOR'S DEN

Write to me whenever you are in doubt or difficulty. Tell me about yourself; let me know what you think of the BOYS' FRIEND. All readers who write to me, and enclose a stamped envelope or postcard, may be sure of receiving a prompt and kindly reply by post. All letters should be addressed: "The Editor, the BOYS' FRIEND, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4."

A DAY TO BE REMEMBERED!

At the time of writing the news of the signing of the armistice has just come to hand. It is news which we have waited patiently for during the last four years, news that has thrilled every one of us.

Germany has been compelled to acknowledge defeat; the Allies have emerged triumphant from the terrible conflict that has engulfed Europe—nay, the whole world. And now hostilities are at an end.

We have every reason to feel thankful to rejoice that the German military machine has been crushed to dust. The Mailed Fist, which has been held threateningly before the Allies, has received the fate it so richly deserved. It has been shattered by our gallant Tommies, by the sons of our Empire, who so readily flocked to the Flag at the beginning of the war, by the heroes of France, the men of the United States, the gallant Italians and Serbians, and the men of other countries who have fought so pluckily in the great cause.

Peace has not yet been proclaimed, but there cannot be any more fighting; the terms of the armistice prevent that. The world has changed considerably during the last four years. Conditions are very different now from what they were in 1914.

We all long to get back to where we were four years ago, but we must be patient.

The BOYS' FRIEND has changed during the war, although I am proud to say that in spite of the trials with which we have to contend, the quality of our stories has in no wise deteriorated.

They have remained at a high standard of merit, and instead of losing readers, the BOYS' FRIEND has increased in popularity, and is, without doubt, the premier boys' paper.

No doubt many of you are wondering whether the BOYS' FRIEND will ever return to its old size and price. Only the future can decide this point. It must not be thought that because the submarine war is at an end, ships are available for bringing paper to this country. Ships will be put to a greater use for some considerable time. The gallant soldiers of our own country, our Dominions, and of America must be transported to their homes, food has to be brought across the seas for the starving peoples of Germany and her one-time allies. All this will take time. But the position will be bound to ease up some day, and then will be the time to discuss the possibility of increasing the size of the BOYS' FRIEND.

I feel I must take this opportunity of thanking all those loyal readers who have remained staunch to the BOYS' FRIEND during the War. It is wonderful how the boys of Britain have rallied round the good old paper during these last few years. I am grateful to every one of you, and I assure you I shall never forget your kindness. It will always be my earnest endeavour to keep the BOYS' FRIEND at the top of the tree, to publish only the very best stories, and to do all I can to please my readers.

FOR NEXT MONDAY.

Space will not permit of my saying much about the stories due to appear

in our next issue. The magnificent long, complete tale of the Rookwood chums will be entitled:

"THE MYSTERY OF TOMMY DODD!"

By Owen Conquest.

This is a story that will set you thinking. The Rookwood fellows suspect Tommy Dodd of acting like a young blackguard, and are considerably puzzled. And so will you be.

Our next long, complete tale of Frank Richards & Co. is entitled:

"THE STUNT OF THE SEASON!"

By Martin Clifford.

Mr. Snooze sighed diamally, and eyed the juniors in a miserable manner. "Won't you young gentlemen 'elp me to get this mended?" he begged. "It'll want mendin' I know, and—"

"Right-ho!" said Mornington cheerfully, as he took off his cap. "Come on, you fellows, dub up! Must help Mr. Snooze, you know. We've had our bit of fun."

"Good!" said Jimmy Silver, as he dropped a few coins into Mornington's cap.

The other juniors helped willingly to assist the unfortunate Mr. Snooze.

By the time Morny had finished the cap was almost half full with coppers.

Mr. Snooze beamed as Mornington held the cap before him.

"You young gents are awfully kind," he said.

"Not at all," said Jimmy Silver at once.

"But you'll promise not to play that blessed thing within a mile of here, won't you?"

"I will, young sir," promised the man; "and thank you all once again!"

"Don't mench!"

Mr. Snooze did not mention the matter again.

He bowed before the juniors, and ambled along the road away from the school, leaving the juniors roaring with laughter.

They were thus engaged when Tubby Muffin strode up, a very serious frown on his face.

"I say, you chaps," he said, "would you have passed the hat round for me if you had hit me instead of that man?"

"Oh, rather!" chuckled Mornington. "We'd have passed round a dozen hats for you!"

"W-w-would you really?" stammered the fat junior. "Supposing I pass by the gates, then, and you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Jimmy Silver. "There's nothing doing, Tubby. We're not quite so green."

"But—"

"Oh, buzz off, you idiot!" snorted Lovell, reaching to the ground.

And Tubby promptly "buzzed off."

The look on Lovell's face was too warlike for Tubby's liking, and he thought it best to retreat, which he did at top speed.

**The 4th Chapter.
The Scheme That Failed.**

Tubby Muffin left the juniors convulsed with laughter.

They thought they had seen the last of Muffin's concertina.

But the fat junior was not done with yet.

Tubby had heard of men who had earned huge sums of money on the stage by playing the concertina to large audiences.

He therefore, in his ignorance, saw a possibility of rising to the same heights of success himself.

Tubby was about the densest fellow in the Fourth, but in some respects he was very astute.

For the moment Tubby's visions of commanding a huge salary by playing on a music-hall stage were left in the background.

But other visions came before the fat junior's mind—visions of making a few shillings in a short space of time.

Grinning to himself, he waited at the side of the snow-covered lane until he saw the snowball-fight between the Moderns and Classicals recommence.

Fortunately for Muffin, the fight was re-started in the lane, and the Classicals were soon forcing their rivals in the direction of Coombe.

To make his way back to the school, and enter the gates unnoticed, was quite an easy task for Tubby Muffin.

The juniors were too engrossed on their snowballing to keep an eye open for him.

Once inside the gates, Tubby streaked for the School House, and scudded upstairs to the Fourth Form dormitory.

A little later he was busily engaged in turning over his stock of clothes.

Most of them were pretty old, but the fat junior was hunting for his oldest.

He found an old pair of trousers, an old slouch-hat, an overcoat that looked decidedly the worse for wear, and a pair of boots that were very much down at heel.

It took the fat junior a very short space of time to don these things.

Then, looking extremely disreputable, he made his way into the quadrangle once more, taking the precaution to pull his hat down over his forehead, and to turn his collar up.

This done, there was only a very small portion of his face showing, and Tubby felt confident of escaping detection.

But the fat junior did not intend to run any risk.

Once outside the gates, he picked up a handful of dirt and rubbed it across his face.

Then, thoroughly satisfied with his disguise, he took his concertina in both hands, and sent forth squeaks and discords by the thousand.

Tubby Muffin paced backwards and forwards outside the gates, playing for all he was worth.

It was not long before Old Mack, the school porter, was aroused from his afternoon slumber by the noise.

Mack came rushing out of his lodge in a towering rage.

"Ere, wodger making that row for?" he demanded.

"Oon-ah-oon-ah! Squeak! Rah-rah!"

"Shurrup, can't yer?" shouted the old porter wrathfully. "Ow d'yer expect a 'ard-worked cove to sleep when you're makin' that beastly row?"

Tubby Muffin did not reply, save to back away slightly from the indignant porter.

The squeaks and discords still continued, and Mack stamped his feet in his rage.

"Go away, d'yer 'ear?" he yelled. "I'll 'ave the p'lice on yer! I'll—"

"Buzz off, Mack!" grunted Tubby Muffin. "I mean—"

"Who yer calling Mack?" exclaimed the old porter. "Who told yer my name was Mack? Imperence I calls it! I—"

"'Elp the poor," mumbled Tubby Muffin. "I'm hungry, kind sir."

"I'll 'ungry yer!" roared Mack. "You wait there a minnut whiles I fetch my dog. I'll soon see whether you'll hop it then!"

Mack strutted off in quest of his dog. Tubby Muffin did not wait to make the acquaintance of the old porter's dog.

He had felt the strength of the dog's teeth in his trousers on a previous occasion, and did not want a repetition of the incident.

By the time Mack returned Muffin was conspicuous by his absence.

The old porter grunted disagreeably, and returned to his lodge.

Five minutes later Tubby Muffin emerged from his place of hiding, and proceeded to send forth more squeaks and jerks.

This time, however, he did not approach too near the gates.

He was hoping that some kind, benevolent person would come along soon and take pity on him.

Tubby did not have to wait long.

Mr. Bootles, the Fourth Form master, came striding out of the gates, and pulled up short at sight of the disreputable-looking figure that barred his way.

"Bless my soul!" he muttered. "What—what—"

"Eee-oon-oon! Rah-rah! Squeak! Squeak!"

"Dear me!" said the Fourth Form master. "What an unpleasant noise to be sure!"

"'Elp the poor!" mumbled Tubby Muffin weakly.

"I—I—" faltered Mr. Bootles. "Oh, dear! I cannot stop now. I am in a hurry."

Tubby Muffin barred the Fourth Form master's way.

"'Elp the hungry, kind sir!" grunted the junior. "'Elp me to buy a crust of bread, for 'eving's sake!"

"'Elp the poor!" came in a muffled grunt from Tubby Muffin.

"Oh, rats!" snapped Lovell. "We've had enough of concertinas for one day! Where the dickens have you come from?"

"'Elp the poor!"

"I'll be hanged if I will!" declared Lovell wrathfully. "We've already— Oh, stop that blessed row, for goodness' sake!"

"Yes, shut up, old bean!" said Jimmy Silver. "You'd better go to Bedlam. You can make as much noise as you like there!"

"'Elp the poor!"

"Oh, scissors!" groaned Lovell in despair. "If you don't stop that blessed row—"

Ooo-oon-rah! Squeak! Rah-rah!

"By gad!" drawled Mornington. "This is beyond a joke. What do you fellows say to biffing a few snowballs at this old josser's hat? It's confounded sauce on his part to come worrying us like this!"

"Good idea!" cried the juniors in chorus.

Tubby Muffin started, and the discords ceased like magic.

"Don't you dare—" began the fat junior.

"Hallo!" cried Lovell at once, as he recognised the fat junior's voice. "What the dickens—"

"'Elp the poor! 'Elp the hungry!"

"I—I—" Lovell paused and winked at his chums. But there was really no need for Lovell to wink; he was not the only one who had recognised Muffin's voice.

Jimmy Silver made a sign to the juniors, and stood in front of Tubby Muffin.

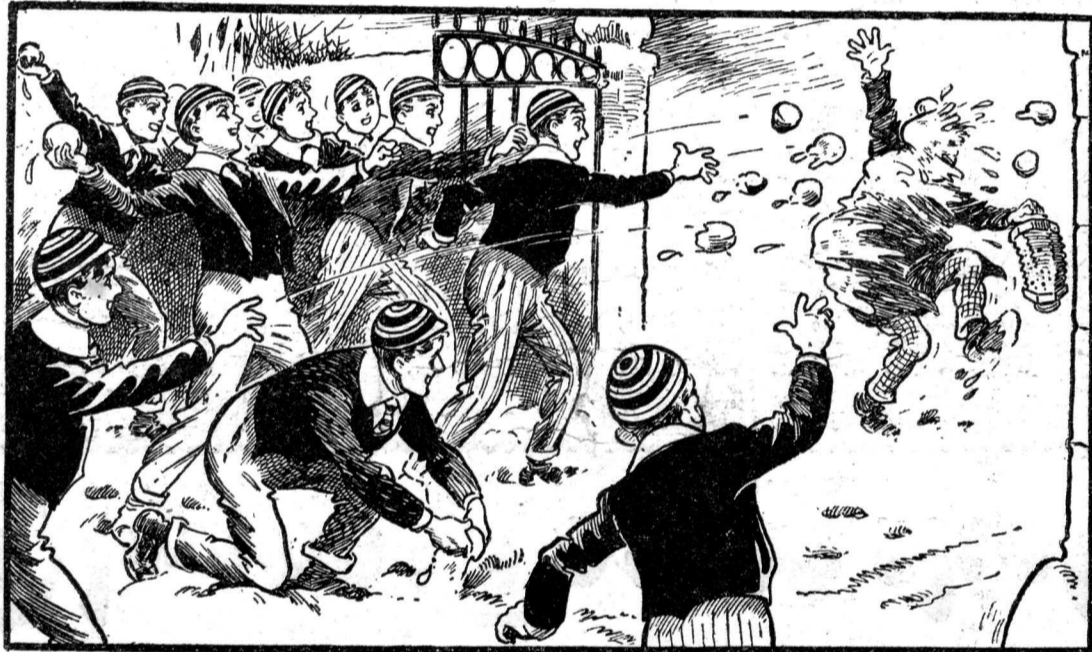
"You look very down in the world, old man!" he said in a kindly voice.

Tubby Muffin nodded.

"Would you like us to give you a lift up?"

Tubby's head wagged quicker than ever.

"You're sure you would?"



PUTTING AN END TO THE NOISE THAT ANNOYED!

Mr. Bootles gasped, and eyed the disreputable person before him in a scrutinising manner.

There was by no means a hungry look about the beggar—in fact, to the master's way of thinking he appeared to be decidedly overfed.

But Mr. Bootles had not the time—or, rather, the inclination—to argue on that point.

He quickly slipped his hand into his pocket, and, withdrawing a coin, slipped it into Tubby Muffin's hand.

"Thank you, kind sir!" muttered Tubby, giving Mr. Bootles a beaming smile.

But the Form-master did not want that smile; he wanted to get away in the least possible time.

He shot past Tubby Muffin, and strode quickly down the lane.

The fat junior gazed at the coin in his hand, and then uttered an indignant exclamation.

"Beast—stingy beast!"

The coin Mr. Bootles had given him was a halfpenny.

Tubby had expected a sixpence at least, and for a few moments he was too surprised and disgusted to send forth those unmelodious strains.

But suddenly there came a series of shouts from up the lane.

The Classical and Modern juniors were returning.

Tubby Muffin clutched his concertina in both hands, and, throwing himself into a crouching posture, commenced to play once more.

The Fourth Formers came up with a run, and nearly charged into Tubby Muffin.

Lovell was in the lead, and he caught sight of the disreputable-looking tramp in the nick of time.

He dodged aside, and pulled up with a jerk.

"My sainted aunt!" he exclaimed. "This is the giddy limit! I thought we had finished with these concertina merchants!"

Nod.

"Right-ho!" said Jimmy Silver, giving the juniors a meaning look. "We'll give you one!"

But Tubby Muffin was not prepared for the lift that was given to him.

Quite half a dozen juniors rushed at the fat junior with outstretched feet.

With a yell Tubby Muffin shot into the air, and landed full length in the snow.

"Yow-ow-ow! Yooooooop!" he shrieked. "Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled the juniors.

"That'll teach you not to play those sort of tricks again!" said Lovell, wagging a warning finger at the fat junior.

"Ow! Beasts! Yarooooogh!"

"If you want to raise the wind you'd better try some other method," said Jimmy Silver. "I've a jolly good mind to smash up that concertina!"

"You jolly well won't!" snapped Tubby Muffin, grabbing his instrument.

"Won't I?" said Jimmy Silver. And he advanced towards the fat junior.

Tubby Muffin did not intend to run the risk of losing his instrument.

He scrambled quickly to his feet and tore down the road.

"Beasts!" he shouted back over his shoulder. "You're a lot of low-down rotters! Yah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was quite a good time before the juniors recovered sufficiently from their attack of laughing to make their way into the quadrangle.

The 5th Chapter.

Tubby Muffin Has Another Idea.

"Buried that concertina yet, Tubby?" Jimmy Silver asked the question as the Classical juniors emerged from the classroom the next afternoon.

Muffin's instrument had not been seen or heard since the previous afternoon, and the juniors were wondering whether the fat junior had given up all hopes of becoming a capable concertinaist.

Tubby gave the chums a savage look. "That's my business!" he snapped.

Mr. Snooze had his concertina under his arm, and was looking extremely dismal when he caught sight of Tubby Muffin and his concertina.

"Look 'ere!" he exclaimed angrily. "Where yer goin'?"

"Oh, only for a stroll," replied Muffin slowly.

"I don't think!" snapped Mr. Snooze. "I can see yer game. You're going to try and queer my pitch!"

"N-n-n-no!"

"I say yes!" roared Mr. Snooze wrathfully. "And I'm not going to put up with it! Now hop it, before I dot yer one on the nose!"

Tubby Muffin moved aside. He was rather afraid of Mr. Snooze at that moment.

"I—I—I say," he muttered, "you needn't get angry! I haven't done you any harm yet. In fact, I might be able to do you some good."

A bright idea had occurred to the fat junior.

"'Eh? What's that?" demanded Mr. Snooze.

Tubby Muffin grinned affably.

"You're hungry, I suppose?" he remarked.

"Course I am!" snapped Mr. Snooze. "Tuppence I've earned to-day, that's all. 'Ow can I feed myself on tuppence?"

"Impossible," said the fat junior, with a shake of the head. "But, I say, I can get you a good feed, if you like."

"Hoh!"

"But you'll have to do something for me in return."

"Hoh!"

"I'm jolly keen on learning to play the concertina, you know," said Tubby confidentially. "If you'll promise to give me some lessons, I'll get you a feed."

"That's good enough, matey," said Mr. Snooze, licking his lips. "Where's this 'ere food to be got?"

"You follow me," said Tubby, leading the way towards the gates. "You'll have to be pretty careful not to get spotted.

The fellows will rag you if they see you hanging about Rookwood."

"That's easily done," said Mr. Snooze. "It's getting dark, and I guess I know 'ow to make myself scarce. Where d'yer want me to wait for you?"

"Come inside the gates."

Mr. Snooze did as he was bid.

Then the fat junior pointed towards the old elms, now very dim in the fading light.

"You wait over there," said Muffin. "I sha'n't be more than two or three minutes."

In eager anticipation of a gorgeous feed, Mr. Snooze did as he was bid, and Tubby Muffin made a bolt for the School House.

He went straight up to the end study, which was shared by the Fistical Four.

In raiding Jimmy Silver & Co.'s grub, the fat junior saw an excellent chance of getting even with the chums.

Luckily for Muffin the door of the cupboard was open.

It was the work of an instant to transfer a large quantity of the food from the cupboard to his own arms.

Then, having taken as much as he could carry, the fat junior left the study, and crept cautiously downstairs.

Muffin's heart beat quickly at the fear of meeting the Fistical Four, returning from Coombe.

But Tubby was fortunate.

He did not meet a single fellow, and was able to make his way into the quad unmolested.

Mr. Snooze was waiting eagerly by the old elms.

His face lit up with surprise at sight of the fat junior.

"By gum!" he muttered. "You've got some grub there, matey."

"I can always get plenty when I want it," said Muffin loftily. "Personally, I'm a very small eater."

"Good 'evings!" gasped Mr. Snooze. "You don't look it."

Tubby gave the man a sharp look. "If you're going to insult me—"

"Not at all," interposed Mr. Snooze. "I wouldn't think o' doing it. What's this you've got here—am? I ain't tasted 'am for years."

And so it seemed by the manner in which he devoured the food.

But Mr. Snooze had a good partner in Muffin.

The fat junior's jaws worked rapidly, quite as rapidly as those of Mr. Snooze.

Muffin had brought sufficient food for five or six, but it soon went.

Mr. Snooze was the first to give in. He leaned back against a tree with a contented sigh.

"That was good, matey," he said—"jolly good! I must come and see you again some day."

"Do, by all means," said Muffin. "Now, about that lesson."

"What lesson?" demanded Mr. Snooze forgetfully.

Tubby Muffin pointed to his concertina.

"You know," he said. "You promised to give me some lessons in return for my giving you a feed."

"Hoh!"

"Let's get on with it," said Tubby impatiently. "I—"

The fat junior paused, as another brilliant idea crossed his mind. "Look here," he added quickly. "You remember those fellows who biffed snowballs at you?"

"Do I not?" replied Mr. Snooze.

"Well, they're a set of rotters!" said Muffin, with emphasis. "They don't like me playing the concertina."

"Hoh!"

"It's jealousy on their part, you know," said the fat junior. "But I tell you what; we'll go and practise underneath the window of their study. It will annoy them a bit, and—"

"S-s-suppose they go for me?" muttered Mr. Snooze nervously.

"They won't," said Muffin. "But if they do, I'll get you another feed."

"Good!" said Mr. Snooze. "I'll do anything for a feed, matey."

"Come on, then."

Tubby Muffin led the way across the dark and deserted quadrangle, and pulled up underneath the Fistical Four's study.

The two stood side by side, their concertinas held out before them.

"Before we start, matey," said Mr. Snooze, "let's hear what you can play."

"Certainly," said Tubby Muffin promptly. "I'm rather keen on 'Home, Sweet Home,' you know. In fact, I'm hot stuff on that tune."

"Go ahead, then."

And Tubby Muffin went ahead, but there was no sweetness in what he played, and neither did the tune savour of home.

It was one horrible discord right from the start.

Mr. Snooze pulled a wry face, but Muffin did not see the expression.

One thing, it was too dark, and for another, he was too engrossed with his concertina to pay any attention to his companion.

Mr. Snooze was not the only one who pulled a face.

The Fistical Four were in their study above, hunting for their missing food.

The expressions on their faces were angry and warlike, but they became worse than ever as those discordant strains from Muffin's concertina floated to their ears.

"My giddy aunt!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "That idiot Muffin is at it again."

"Hang Muffin!" growled Lovell, exasperated. "Where's our grub? That's more important."

"Quite so; but— Oh, scissors!"

groaned Jimmy Silver. "I can't stand this blessed row any longer. I'll smash that ass Muffin! I'll—"

"Blow Muffin! About the grub—"

"Bother the grub!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "I'm going to settle that porpoise first. Do you fellows know if that bucket of whitewash is still out in the passage?"

TUBBY MUFFIN—MUSICIAN!

(Continued from the previous page.)

A moment later he returned, carrying a bucket full of whitewash. Some time back portions of Rookwood had been destroyed in an air-raid. The work of reconstruction had been going on ever since, and the workmen's materials were lying all over the school. That bucket of whitewash, however, was fated never to be used for plastering on ceilings.

"What the dickens—" began Lovell incredulously, as Jimmy Silver entered the study.

"Listen to that row!" said Jimmy Silver, moving towards the window. "It sounds as though Muffin is standing underneath our window."

"I know," said Lovell; "but—"

"Well, Muffin won't stay there much longer," said Jimmy Silver. "Open the window, Lovell."

"But—"

"Open the window, fathead!" shrieked Jimmy Silver. "Can't you see? I'm going to pour this muck on Muffin's head!"

"My hat!"

Next moment Lovell & Co. burst into a roar of laughter.

Jimmy Silver's idea had become apparent to them, and the expressions on their faces told that they approved of the scheme.

Lovell opened the window very quietly. Ee-ooon-rah! Rah-rah-rah!

"I'll soon put an end to that row!" said Jimmy Silver, placing the bucket on the window-ledge.

"Buck up, then!" said Newcome.

Swoooosh!

Jimmy Silver upended the bucket. The discordant noise stopped at once, and the next moment fiendish yells filled the air.

"Ow! Yow! Yoooooopp! Grooooooh!" spluttered Tubby Muffin, as the whitewash streamed over his head.

But Muffin had not suffered as much as Mr. Snooze.

That gentleman was covered from head to foot in whitewash.

"Yow-ow-ow! Murder! Yooooop! Thieves! Grooooooh!"

Mr. Snooze was in a frantic state. He spluttered and shrieked, and gouged handfuls of whitewash from his face and neck.

A chorus of chuckles came from above.

"Play us a tune, Tubby!" sang out Lovell, not guessing that the fat junior had a companion. "Let's have 'Home, Sweet Home.' I dote on that tune, you know!"

"Yaroooooh!" roared Tubby. "I'll make you beasts suffer for this. I'll—"

"Oh, will you?" exclaimed Lovell. "I must see about that! I'd better get some more whitewash!"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" shrieked Tubby Muffin, taking to his heels.

The fat junior had had all the whitewash he wanted.

He darted for the gates, yelling at the top of his voice. Mr. Snooze, shrieking just as loudly, followed at his heels. He had had quite enough, too.

The 6th Chapter.

No Luck!

"Ow! I feel awful! Yooop! Oooooh!" Mr. Snooze did not stop running until he was well away from the school.

He pulled up beside a hedge, and breathed heavily.

Tubby Muffin had been left in the rear. But as he plodded along in the wake of Mr. Snooze his brain was working rapidly.

The desire to get his revenge on the Fistical Four was fixed in his mind, and already a scheme was revealing itself to him.

He stopped in front of Mr. Snooze. "I hope you're not hurt, old man," he said, with unusual politeness.

"You! I'll make those himps suffer!" mumbled Mr. Snooze. "I'll tell the p'lice! I'll—"

"That's all right, old man!" said Muffin, patting Mr. Snooze on the shoulder. "You leave it to me. I'll make them sit up for this!"

"You?" gasped Mr. Snooze. "What can you do?"

"Lots!" said the fat junior confidently. "Would you like to get those rotters a jolly good hiding?"

"Would I not?"

"Would you like to get a couple of quid damages?"

"Eh?"

"I can get you a couple of quid easily," said Muffin. "But you must lend me your clothes."

"Yes, I should have to change togs with you," said the fat junior. "If I dressed in your things I could go up to the Head and kick up a very dickens of a row. He'd have to shell out, or make those rotters shell out, to prevent the school getting a bad name."

"Hoh!" Mr. Snooze gasped. He was fairly taken back by Tubby Muffin's daring scheme.

"Well, what do you say?" asked the fat junior eagerly, seeing a possibility of making money for himself out of his latest scheme.

Mr. Snooze looked thoughtful.

"Look here!" he said. "Why can't I go up to your old 'Ead? I can complain as well as you."

"Quite so," said Muffin hastily. "But—but you don't know the ropes, old man. I know the old boy better than you do, and—"

"Oh, all right!" said Mr. Snooze resignedly. "But it's jolly cold 'ere! Can't we go indoors and change?"

"That's impossible," said Tubby Muffin.

"There's no place where we can go to. Come on; don't waste time!"

If the scheme was to meet with success Mr. Snooze realised that it was not wise to delay.

He immediately commenced undressing, Muffin following suit.

There was a very cold nip in the air, but neither of them worried much about this.

They were too engrossed upon their plot to trouble about the cold.

In less than five minutes the change was made.

Mr. Snooze, being short and fat, had very little difficulty in getting into Muffin's clothes.

The man's clothes were wet, and covered with whitewash, but the fat junior raised no objection.

After turning up his collar, and ruffling his hair, he slipped on the man's battered bowler-hat, and set off in the direction of the school, promising to bring the two pounds to Mr. Snooze when secured.

Tubby Muffin managed to sneak into the school unnoticed.

He made his way to the Head's study, and knocked at the door.

"Come in!" sang out Dr. Chisholm.

Tubby Muffin opened the door, and slouched in.

The Head jumped to his feet in alarm at sight of that disreputable, white-washed figure.

"Bless my soul!" he gasped. "What—what ever is the meaning of this?"

"I—I've come to make a little complaint to you, sir," mumbled Muffin, in a deep voice. "I have been treated in a most abominable manner!"

The fat junior turned his head away from the Head as he spoke, in fear of being recognised.

Dr. Chisholm stamped his feet in his anger at being interrupted.

"How dare you enter my study in that disgraceful state?" he demanded. "Who are you, sir? How did you get into this school?"

"I—I was shown here, guv'nor!" faltered Tubby Muffin, somewhat nervously.

"Who directed you?"

"I—I don't know!" stammered the fat junior. "I d-d-didn't recognise the chap. But now I'm here I want to tell you that four of your boys chucked a pail of whitewash over me."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Dr. Chisholm, astounded. "This is disgraceful! What were you doing in the vicinity of the school?"

"I was playing my concertina, guv'nor," stammered Muffin. "No harm meant, you know. A bloke must earn a living somehow."

The Head paced restlessly up and down the room.

"But how do you know that some of my boys threw the whitewash over you?" he asked.

"I saw them, guv'nor," grunted Tubby Muffin. "I can tell you their names, too. They were Silver, Lovell, Raby, and Newcome."

"Bless my soul!" said Dr. Chisholm. "But—but how do you know their names?"

Tubby Muffin moved uneasily on his feet. He had not expected a question like this, but all the same he proved equal to the occasion.

"Oh, I heard them talking to one another," he said. "I'd swear I've got the names right! Beasty young himps they were, too! I'm going to see that they're thrashed for it, and I want two pounds to pay me for the damage they've done to my concertina!"

"But—but—"

The Head paused, and pressed a button on his desk.

A moment later the page-boy entered the room.

"Bring Silver, Lovell, Raby, and Newcome to me!" he ordered.

The page-boy departed, and very soon the Fistical Four made their appearance.

They muttered exclamations of surprise at sight of the figure covered in whitewash standing before the Head's desk.

All of a sudden it occurred to them that Mr. Snooze must have been standing beside Tubby Muffin when the bucket of whitewash had been upended.

Moreover, they realised that Mr. Snooze had got most of the whitewash.

Dr. Chisholm gave them a grim look as they formed up before his desk.

"I am given to understand that you boys threw a bucket of whitewash over this individual?" he said.

"Ahem!"

"Answer me at once!" exclaimed the Head sternly. "Did you do as this man asserts?"

"Y-y-yes, sir!" faltered the juniors in chorus.

Dr. Chisholm gave the chums a severe look.

"Then you are guilty of a disgraceful act," he said coldly. "I will deal with you in a minute." He turned to the disreputable individual at his side. "You may go!" he said sharply. "You can leave this matter in my hands."

"Wh-what about my two quid?" grunted Tubby Muffin. "Those young himps busted my concertina, and—"

"Where is the instrument?" asked the Head.

"I—I left it outside," faltered the fat junior.

"Then bring it to me!" ordered the Head. "If the instrument is damaged, I will see that you are recompensed."

"But—"

"That is sufficient," said Dr. Chisholm tersely. "If you do not depart at once, I shall have to send for somebody to put you out!"

With a low grunt he left the Head's study, and tramped disconsolately in the direction of the quadrangle.

Somehow his scheme had not worked out exactly as he had expected.

"Yow! Lemme go! Yooop! Ow-ow-ow-ow!"

Frantic shrieks were coming from the direction of the quadrangle.

The Fistical Four had received a severe

thrashing from the Head for the way in which they had treated Mr. Snooze, and had sauntered into the hall before commencing their prep.

The sound of voices outside caused them to open the door and look into the dark quad.

Two figures were struggling on the steps, one the disreputable figure they had seen in the Head's study, the other a short, fat figure dressed in Etons.

"What the dickens—" began Jimmy Silver, in bewilderment.

"I'll break his head!" thundered Mr. Snooze, making a clutch at Tubby Muffin.

"Yow! Leggo! Pull him off!" shrieked Tubby Muffin frantically.

Jimmy Silver pulled the enraged Mr. Snooze away, and pushed him backwards.

"What's the meaning of this?" he demanded. "You've got Muffin's clothes on, and—"

"Ow! Hold the brute! Yow-ow-ow!" yelled the fat junior furiously.

"Shut up, porpoise!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, and then he turned to Mr. Snooze once again. "What have you changed clobber with this chap for?" he demanded.

"I'll tell you, sir," said Mr. Snooze, and he explained to the juniors the scheme Tubby Muffin had concocted for getting money out of them.

"H'm!" Jimmy Silver pursed his lips. "It seems to me that you're both a pair of rogues," he said.

"Oh, no, sir!" said Mr. Snooze promptly. "That chap there is. I'm not. I'm—"

"Yes, you are," said Jimmy Silver promptly. "But you'll get nothing out of us. You'd better buzz off before we roll you in the snow."

"But—"

"Buzz off!" shouted the juniors, in chorus, and Mr. Snooze evidently thought it wise to do so.

He tore for the gates as fast as he could run.

"Stop him!" yelled Tubby Muffin. "He's got my suit! Fetch him back, I've got nothing to wear! I—"

"Well you'd better go and get it yourself," said Jimmy Silver. "But before you go, we're going to roll you in the snow. Collar him, you fellows!"

Tubby Muffin was promptly collared, and dumped in the snow.

It was a very hapless Tubby who eventually made his way to the dormitory and changed his clothes. Never again did he see that suit of Etons which he had persuaded Mr. Snooze to don, and neither did he find his concertina. Mr. Snooze had taken that. Needless to say, the juniors were not sorry. They had had quite enough experience of Tubby Muffin as a musician!

THE END.

NEXT MONDAY.

THE MYSTERY OF TOMMY DODD!
By OWEN CONQUEST.
DON'T MISS IT!

The Boys Who Beat the Kaiser!

An Amazing New Story of the Boys of the Bombay Castle. By DUNCAN STORM.

FOR NEW READERS.

THE KAISER is determined to obtain possession of the Mahdi's huge treasure which is hidden in the heart of the continent of Africa, and, to do so, he employs three desperate Germans named BARON VON SLYDEN, CAPTAIN STOOM, and VON SNEEK.

The papers, however, containing the secret of the whereabouts of the treasure are in the possession of CAPTAIN HANDYMAN and CY SPRAGUE, who decide to go in quest of the treasure, and to take with them the boys of the Bombay Castle, chief among whom are DICK DORRINGTON, CHIP, ARTY DOVE, SKELETON, PORKIS, and PONGO WALKER.

LAL TATA, a cheery Hindu, TOOKUM EL KOOS, a native wrestler, FLINT PASHA, a member of the Sudan Police, are also amongst the party, as well as the boys' pets, CECIL, the orang-outang, HORACE, the goat, and GUS, the crocodile.

So far Baron von Slyden and his confederates have made several endeavours to secure the papers containing the secret of the Mahdi's treasure, and on each occasion have met with defeat.

In recent instalments it was described how, after Artzy Dove had defeated a native king named Obob el Mook in a boxing match, the latter's palace caught fire. The king was rescued, and then the little party of adventurers discovered that Baron von Slyden had taken possession of Obob's fortress. Realising that they would be attacked by the Germans, Captain Handyman decided to steer the launch in the direction of the Hongo Whirlpool, this being part of his scheme for getting the better of his rivals.

(Read on from here.)

The Hongo Whirlpool.

In the sternmost whaler the boys were all merry and bright, thoroughly enjoying the excitement of the chase.

Astern of them they could hear the deep boom, boom, boom of the drums, by which the paddles of their pursuers were kept in time.

By laying their ears close to the dark water, as the whaler wished past the tall, dark walls of reed, they could plainly

hear the swash of the paddles and the deep-breathed "Ha!" of the paddlers, as they finished every stroke.

The niggers in chase of them were paddling hard, for they were being driven German fashion.

An Askari had been told off in each war-canoe to whip up the laggard paddlers with the cutting lash of a whip of raw rhinoceros-hide.

The niggers did not like this sort of boatacing, and they were already beginning to regret the comparatively lax rule of the king they supposed to be dead.

Obob had been a tyrant.

But Obob at his worst was a mild ruler compared to these Germans who, dropping, as it were, out of the skies, had taken them in hand in this brutal fashion.

They would have mutilated, and refused to have paddled after that will-o'-the-wisp engine that chugged in the darkness, leading them to their destruction.

They were all swamphen, and they knew very well that the flying launch, with its trail of towing-boats, was heading in a line towards the dreaded Hongo.

But Baron von Slyden had taken them in hand in true German fashion.

On the platforms at each end of the war-canoes were stationed Askari riflemen, with strict instructions to shoot the first nigger who stopped paddling.

The baron was in command of the leading canoe.

Von Sneek was a sort of vice-admiral of this branch of the German Navy. He was ganger of the second canoe.

And the rear of the long procession of labouring war-canoes was brought up by Captain von Stoom, ready to fire a volley into any canoe that fell out of the line of battle.

It was a proper German show from beginning to end of that straggling line. It was in vain that the paddlers in the leading craft tried to explain that they were paddling to destruction.

Baron von Slyden had never heard of the Hongo Whirlpool.

The word "Hongo," in the native dialect all over Central Africa, means "tribute." Hongo is paid by travellers for passing through a king's country.

Hongo is paid by merchants who are allowed to trade.

And every time the unhappy niggers called out "Hongo!" in tones of warning, Baron von Slyden thought that they were asking for a present.

They got it in the form of a welt from the busy whip.

And after a while they gave up shouting their warning, and paddled on in sullen silence.

They decided that the Germans and their Askari followers were mad, and intended to make a suicide club of the whole of the fleet of Booboo.

And, in the sternmost whaler, the boys could hear the crack of the whips as the Askaris belted their pursuers.

"My hat!" exclaimed Porkis. "I'm glad I'm not in one of those canoes! I wonder where the captain is heading us?"

Chip knew the game that was on.

"He's steering for a big whirlpool that's hidden away in these swamps," he explained.

"Then Von Slyden and his niggers will follow us till they are led into the whirlpool. We can climb out of the whirlpool with the engine-power of the launch, and the power of our own oars, but once that string of canoes gets into it they'll have to go on flying round, playing, 'Here we go round the Mulberry Bush,' till the water slackens. What's the time, Pongo?" he added, addressing that worthy, who was squatting in the bottom of the whaler alongside Cecil and Horace.

Pongo looked at the luminous face of his wrist-watch.

"Three forty-seven," he replied. "What a night we are having! Got any grub, Skeleton? I begin to feel hungry again."

"Rather!" replied Skeleton, with readiness. "That's just what I was thinking myself. What do you say to a tin of salmon and some bloater-paste, and a few of Pieface's raspberry puffs?"

"Now you're talking," said Pongo, with great approval. "But keep your head down, Skeleton. Those nuts are firing astern!"

Sure enough, a quarter of a mile astern there sounded the phutt-phutt of the native gaspige guns, and a bullet or two whistled overhead.

"Old Sausage has told his lads to fire on the off-chance of hitting some of us," said Tom Morton.

"Wow! They couldn't hit a haystack,"

replied Skeleton, as he groped about for his pantry on the floor of the whaler.

"That was a bob-tailed slug!" he added, as a bullet whined through the darkness away to starboard.

Plunk!

A bullet flattened on the steel plate that protected the stern of the whaler.

"Anyone hurt?" shouted Captain Handyman from the launch, as she spun round a bend in the bewildering labyrinth of waterways.

"Not a bit, sir," replied Dick Dorrington. "We're as safe as a tin of sardines behind these plates!"

"All right!" shouted Captain Handyman from the darkness.

The launch was travelling fast now, clipping round bends, swerving first to the right, then to the left, dodging up forking water-alleys which opened unexpectedly in the dark reeds, and cutting across open lagoons and ponds.

The current in this part of the swamp was increasing.

The boys could hear the tide gurgling amongst the great stems of the reeds, which bowed and nodded all in one direction as their huge plumes moved against the dark sky.

There was a dismal aspect about these plumes, and they all seemed to be nodding in the direction of the ill-omened Hongo Whirlpool, which lay hidden away in the labyrinth ahead.

But the gloomy night-view of the swamp, and the prospect before them, did not disturb Skeleton in his preparations for sup-fast, as he called the feast he was preparing.

Skeleton sat on the floor, cutting shavings from the ham in the darkness.

He opened a tin of salmon and a box of sardines, which he lay temptingly on biscuits.

Mr. Lal Tata was nervous.

He did not like the prospect that lay before them, and he was irritated by Skeleton's calm preparations for a night-feast.

"What are you going to have, sir?" asked the hospitable Skeleton. "A sardine on a biscuit, or a biscuit on a bit of salmon?"

"I don't want any sardines or salmons," said Lal miserably. "I cannot imagine, Skeletons, how you can make feasts in

cold blood when we are in great peril of our lives. It seems foolsome to eat sardine on biscuits when we are in great danger of being devoured by horridsome crocodiles!"

There was a snap in the darkness on the floor of the boat, and a stifled exclamation from Skeleton.

"Jimmy!" he muttered. "I'm being eaten by crocodiles already!"

Gus, the crocodile, his head and legs sticking out of the battered cricket-bag, had scented the delicious odour of sardines in oil, and had snapped a sardine and biscuit out of Skeleton's fingers.

There was also a thump in the darkness, and Skeleton promptly kicked Gus and the cricket-bag over to the other side of the boat.

breech of his rifle, greased the slides of the bolt with sardine-oil.

Lal nearly jumped out of the boat as a bullet hit the steel plate behind which he was sitting, and whined away up in the air with a wailing note.

"Ha, boys, I am shot!" he exclaimed. "I am shot in the little of my back!"

It was a rifle-bullet this time, but it had not penetrated the powerful steel plate.

Neither had it hit Lal in the small of the back.

The boys laughed to cheer Lal up, but Lal was not going to be cheered up so easily.

He crouched in the bottom of the boat with Horace, who snatched his turban from his head and started to devour it.

"Ho!" groaned Lal. "This is most rotten! I take covers to avoid rifle-shots, and bestial goat eats my hat! I wish we had never come on this foolsome expedition!"

The launch, with her string of boats, was now crossing a wider lagoon than any she had encountered.

Up in her bows, in fear of his life, crouched Obob, peering into the darkness ahead, and conning the passage through the swamp.

She was half-way across the wide lake, which lay gloomy and black under the sky, when the leading war-canoe broke through the wall of the reeds.

Though it wanted nearly an hour to dawn, there was more light here, and it was plain that the sharpshooters in the canoe could see the white shapes of the launch and whalers across the lagoon.

Flashes of fire, and the whistling of bullets round the boats, told them that their enemies had sighted them.

Captain Handyman had given them instructions that they were not to fire until he gave the order.

He had no desire to kill any of Obob's fat niggers, who, after all, were only acting under the iron driving of the Germans.

But now the order came quick and sharp in response to the harsh shouting of Von Slyden, who was urging his Askaris to fire low and take good aim.

"Give the scoundrels a volley, boys!" shouted Captain Handyman from the launch. "They can see us, and you can see those Askari hooligans by their white robes. Plug one or two of them. That'll soon stop their game, and I don't care if you hit Von Slyden, either!"

Skeleton crouched in the stern of the whaler, and carefully laid down his third sardine-biscuit, where Gus could not take it.

The other boys sighted at the dim shape of the great war-canoe as she laboured in their wake, her war-drum booming, and the group of Askaris showing a faint flutter of white on the fore platform.

"Ready, boys?" asked Skeleton, his mouth full of biscuit.

"All ready!" replied Dick Dorrington. "Fire!"

A rattling volley sped from the whaler, and Lal, who was quite a different person when he was allowed to be in action, rattled off five shots in quick succession.

There was a yell and a splash. The great canoe swung round as one of the Askari assassins pitched heavily into the water.

"There!" said Lal, beaming all over his face. "I hit that scoundrel fellow! I shall have pint of nuts or a good cigar!"

"I thought I hit him, sir!" answered Skeleton, blowing into the breech of his rifle and taking another snack of sardine-biscuit. "But it's put the kybosh on 'em, anyway!"

There was a lot of shouting and confusion aboard the German flagship as she slid out of the line, the following canoe bumping into her as her paddlers ceased to paddle.

Then they could hear Von Slyden's snarling voice urging on his followers to whip up the niggers.

And this was followed by the cracking of whips.

There was no chance for another shot. The launch, guided by Obob, raced up to the wall of reeds.

A channel opened before her, and away they went again, racing through a narrow channel which wound in and out in quick, serpentine bends.

The Germans had taken up the chase again, and the sound of the paddles and the threatening yells of the Askaris seemed to be growing nearer.

In the launch the fat king was staring ahead through the gloom, his eyes rolling in his fat head.

By his side crouched Flint Pasha, revolver in hand.

Obob was afraid of the whirlpool, but he was more afraid of this white man who crouched beside him.

The fat king had not recognised Flint Pasha in the darkness.

But Flint Pasha had introduced himself when he had crept forward and made himself comfortable by the huge black shape.

"Are you afraid, king?" the white man asked him.

"Me plenty 'fraid," the king had answered, his teeth chattering.

"You'll be more afraid if you play us false!" the white man had replied, speaking fluently in Obob's own language. "I am Flint Pasha!"

"Ho!" gasped Obob, rolling his eyes till they seemed in danger of falling out of his head altogether.

"Guide us into the Hongo Whirlpool faithfully, and there shall be a king again in Booloo this day!" said Flint Pasha, digging Obob's fat ribs with his revolver.

"Play us false, and thou shalt be food for the crocodiles!"

Obob cowered in the eyes of the launch. The boys in the whaler astern noticed that the tall walls of rushes were flying past the boat as they followed the narrow, winding waterway.

The first light of dawn was paling the sky.

And behind them they could hear the mad chinking of the paddles as the war-canoes raced after them round bend after bend.

"Jiminy!" said Porkis, as he watched the reeds fly past. "We're travelling like a train! The river must be running like a mill-race through the swamp!"

Once the excitement of the brush with their pursuers was over, Lal Tata had relapsed again into a limp rag.

"We are travelling to Jericho, boys!" he said. "Soon we shall arrive in the Great Whirlpool. Then we shall get suction of water, and we shall go down the drain. Ho!"

"Cheer up, sir!" exclaimed Dick Dorrington, with his sunny smile. "Try to look at the bright side of things! You know Captain Handyman well enough to be sure that he would not put us in the cart. He won't get us into a tight corner if he sees some way out of it."

"Dick, my dear fellow," protested Lal, "what's the good of trying to make comfort for me when in five minutes' time we shall be going down the sinks? Captain Handyman is a desperatose man. He not only puts us in the carts, he puts us in the hearse. We shall have some cheap funerals."

"Well," said Skeleton with magnificent sangroid, "I don't know what you fellows feel like, but I'm going to have another sardine and a biscuit before I'm drowned. It's no good being drowned on an empty stomach."

And Skeleton beamed round on his companions.

"Empty stomach!" scoffed Porkis. "You have got a nerve, Skeleton! You've done nothing but stuff all night! You won't drown—you'll bust!"

Skeleton laughed. "It's the excitement. It always makes me hungry," he said. "And I say, you chaps, don't you think we ought to let

rocky formation, many thousands of feet deep, and through this narrow channel was squirting the full force of the Nile, swollen by the rains of Central Africa.

It was like a rush down a rapid, save that there were no rocks to break the water, but one swift current, which bore them forward with irresistible force.

Captain Handyman had slowed the engine of the launch, and the great war-canoes of Booloo were overhauling them fast.

But the Askaris on the fighting platforms had no heart to fire on the whalers and the launch.

They were river men themselves, and they were scared by this water-chute, which was rushing them on towards the great Hongo Whirlpool.

It came at last.

As though they were being shot out of the mouth of a hose, the launch and her tow of boats shot diagonally into a huge pond, fringed by tall rushes.

The water was blood-red in the light of an angry dawn, and a yell of fear went up from their pursuers as they, too, shot out on the bosom of this wide lake.

For the blood-red water was on the stir and the boil, and from the centre of the pool, where the spinning water seemed to dip, rose a great pillar of steam.

"Crumps!" exclaimed Chip. "We must be skating round the mouth of a volcano!"

Skeleton laughed recklessly. "I'd better finish the sardines before we go down the pipe!" he said cheerfully.

Perhaps Chip was not far from the truth.

It was possible that at this point in the centre of the whirlpool, where hot springs surged up from an immense depth of water, lay the crater of some extinct volcano, which gave rise to the tremendous whirlpool, which went sweep-

him to keep steerage way on his string of boats, and he kept close up to the edge of the pool where the rock face was cut smooth, and polished on the water-line.

He could see how things worked now. His sailor's eye told him the speed of the current, and he realised that the war-canoes, with their large crews of men, were safe enough.

The little captain waited his opportunity.

Four times he raced round the outer ring of the pool, taking his marks by the shapes of the reed clumps.

He marked the entrance by which they had burst into the Hongo, and he marked another entrance where a great stream of water was pouring in, but not with such volume as the main stream by which they had come.

"That's where I'm going to pop out of this merry-go-round," he said. "Hi, Obob! Do you want to get your kingdom back?"

Obob looked round.

His black face had turned a dirty grey with fear, but he nodded assent to the captain's question.

"Me wantee be king again," he said. "All right!" said Captain Handyman, with a grin. "Show yourself to your loving people. They all think you are dead—burned up in that old rat-walk of a palace. Stand up, Obob! Hail them while I work the miracle-box!"

He turned the launch as he spoke, and headed her with her swaying tow of whalers dead for the pillar of steam that rose from the centre of the whirlpool.

He grinned as he passed right across the bows of the great war-canoe, in which Baron von Slyden was crouching, white with fear.

And what a yell went up when the niggers saw their old fat king standing up in the bows of the launch, waving his arms, and shouting.

"Behold, it is I, Obob, King of Booloo,

of sulphur, burst over their backs as they bent to their oars, the blades of which seemed to be torn and plucked at by the bubbling, boiling springs which rolled up from the bottom of the whirlpool.

Strange bumpings, too, sounded against the bottom of the boats as though they were running over a string of rocks.

Lal crouched in the bottom of the whaler, his face a greasy green.

Horace, the goat, had eaten half his turban. The other half was cocked rakishly over Lal's left eye.

"Ha!" he mumbled. "Now we are in carts for keeps. What-ho! How she bumps!"

The bumps were really caused by the columns of boiling water, which, rising from vast depths, lifted and bounced the whalers as their labouring crews snatched them across the centre of the whirling maelstrom.

A small boat would have been pulled down and swamped.

But the whalers were staunch craft, and the powerful tow-ropes of the launch snatched them through the boiling waters in a cloud of spray and steam, which blinded them.

They had a glimpse of the great circle of war-canoes, with the Germans crouching and quailing in their sterns, and the Askaris hanging on for dear life on their fighting platforms.

Then the launch shot up to the wall of the tall papyrus reeds, and forced her way out through a narrow channel where the water of the great stream which fed the whirlpool did not run so strongly.

But it was all that the launch could do to hold her own against the current, whilst the crews of the whalers laboured hard at their oars to take the strain of the tow-ropes.

Behind them they could hear the yells of the niggers who paddled the war-canoes of Booloo.

There was a triumphant ring in these yells.

The niggers were no longer frightened. They had seen their king restored to them as though by a miracle.

They had seen him, in the white men's boat, pass unharmed through the very centre of the boiling lake, and they had discovered that, by padding in relays, they could keep the fleet of war-canoes clear of the broken water in the centre of the whirlpool.

The niggers had infinite faith in their king now.

They knew that Obob would return to Booloo. There he would do magic which would release them from the grip of the whirlpool.

This was why the boys, as they tugged at their oars, heard the yells of the niggers in the whirlpool turn to a song of triumph, in which they magnified Obob and his English deliverers, and jeered at the frightened Germans who had been led into such a trap.

As the sun came up the work of rowing grew hotter and hotter.

The boys were fagged by their eventful night.

The only cool members of the crew of the whaler were Horace, the goat, and Gus, the crocodile.

If Horace had been able to row the boys would have made him take an oar.

Porkis, who was rather fat, felt the heat acutely, and it was not long before the mosquitoes of the swamp came dancing in swarms to add to his troubles.

"Poof!" puffed Porkis. "This is about the limit! If we have to go on rowing much longer, there will be nothing left of me but a spot of grease and a collar-stud!"

Mr. Lal Tata had taken an oar, and was rowing with the best of them.

Lal's spirits had gone up with a bump from the moment that the launch had fought her way out of the whirlpool, leaving their enemies careering round on the huge swirl of water like a roundabout of war-canoes.

"Never say perish, boys!" said Lal, "so long as there is a cannon-ball in the cupboard! It seems to me that the boat now does not pull so hard."

"You don't mean cannon-balls in the cupboard, sir," put in Dick Dorrington, "you mean—"

"Shots in the knocker!" replied Lal, beaming. "See, the current is easing now that we are leaving that awesome whirlpool behind us. Soon we shall be able to take our rests."

And it turned out as Lal promised.

In another ten minutes the engines of the launch began to tell against the current, and, greatly to their relief, the boys were able to lay in their oars and rest.

The resourceful Skeleton lifted the floorboards of the boat, and revealed the one thing which the boys were sighing for—ginger-beer.

There lay the bottles neatly stacked as ballast, cool and fresh, and soon a merry popping of corks and a deep gurgling told of the relief which had come to a parched crew.

Horace was not long in getting a bottle between his heels.

He chewed patiently at it till he found that he had at last tackled something that he could not eat.

A stone-inger was beyond Horace; but he found the cork, and he nibbled the string.

There was a loud pop, and a fountain of spuming ginger-beer.

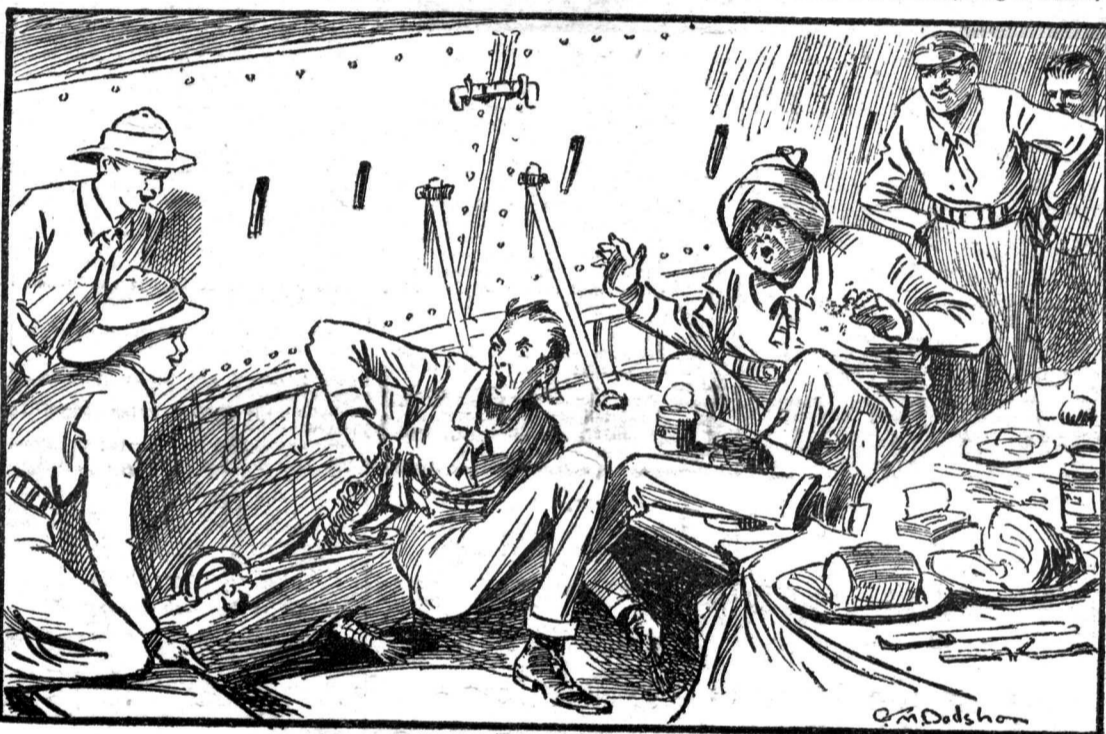
Then Horace began to make the most alarming noises, squinting horribly, for the bottle, heated by the sun, had blown the cork down his throat.

"Honk, honk, honk!" coughed Horace. It was a terrible cough.

The boys had never heard such a cough before, and their hearts sank at the sound of it.

"It's the cork!" said Pongo, in an awed whisper. "It's stuck across Horace's neck! He's choking!"

(Another magnificent long instalment of this amazing new serial in next Monday's issue of THE BOYS' FRIEND. I should be glad if readers would write and let me know what they think of this new story.)



GUS, THE CROCODILE, TAKES A FREE BITE!

old Gus out of his cricket-bag, if there is any chance of us doing a capsize in this old whirlpool? It ain't quite fair on Gus to expect him to swim with his legs fixed up in a cricket-bag!"

"He'll get drowned," said Porkis. "Why, you silly ass," retorted Pongo, "how can a crocodile get drowned?"

"Of course he'll get drowned!" argued Porky. "How do you expect any crocodile to swim with a carpet-bag wrapped round his stomach? Could you swim if you just had your head and legs sticking out of a bag, like the Count of Monte Cristo?"

"I'm not a crocodile!" replied Pongo hotly.

"No; you're an ass!" responded Porky with spirit. "Look here—"

The argument was broken off short, for the whaler swung violently behind the launch, which was tearing down a straight channel between the reeds.

The light was growing fast now.

In the pallid dawn they saw the first big war-canoe shoot round the last bend in the waterway and follow them up.

She, like the launch and whalers, was travelling like a train, though her paddlers had ceased to paddle.

With one accord they had tossed the blades of their paddles in the air, and raised a dismal howling and chanting.

They were singing their death-song to the water-god, who presided, as they supposed, over the Hongo Whirlpool.

The string of war-canoes came racing round the bend and into the straight channel, all their crews yelling and wailing.

It was too late for them to go back now.

The great Nile had taken them into its grip.

The miles of reed which grew around them were growing on mud, which the rising of the river deposited on beds of solid rock.

The waterway down which they were travelling was a huge crevasse in this

ing round the circle of a mile and a half at a tremendous speed.

This was the famous and dread Hongo Whirlpool, and as soon as he found himself fairly in the lake, Captain Handyman set his engines running for all they were worth, the launch, with her string of boats, racing round the circle, followed by the string of war-canoes, whose crews of niggers yelled with fear.

"It's like a roundabout water-chute!" exclaimed Porky, gazing with awed eyes across the surging, oily waters of the spinning pool. "It's just as though we were being stirred round in an enormous basin."

The Askaris, yelling with fear, were hanging on to the fighting platforms as the canoes and the little flotilla raced round the circle of the great pool.

Huge clouds, reddened by the sunrise, floated over the great sheet of spinning water, giving it a sinister aspect by their reflection.

The blackness of the water showed its depth.

It did not break, but it churned in great patches of malachite green, which deepened down to a dead black under the keels of the racing craft.

The niggers had recovered their heads now.

They were paddling like grim death to keep their crank craft well up under the shores of the circular lake, and to keep away from that grim depression in the centre, which was puffing a pillar of rosy steam.

It was down there in the hollow that the water broke.

There was a sort of spray mist over the whole face of the lake, and the sunrise caught this with a hue of red.

Air and water seemed tinged with blood.

All the craft in this stir were travelling round and round at the speed of the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race.

Captain Handyman had the advantage of the great war-canoes.

The power of his racing engine allowed

who speaks!" cried the king, in a bellow that could be heard all over the great pool. "I, Obob of the Iron Hand! I have leaped the King's Leap, and have lived! I have trapped mine enemies in the Hongo! Great is Obob el Mook the Manslayer!"

"Great is Obob the Manslayer!" yelled all the niggers.

They were no longer scared out of their wits by the Hongo when they found that they could keep clear of the centre.

And the presence of their fat king had put new life in them.

"Ye shall stay here with the Evil Ones for forty hours!" yelled the artful old Obob, who knew well enough that in this space of time the river flood would take off so that the canoes could get out of the pool. "I will go and do magic," he added, "to compass your release!"

Then a terrific yell of wonderment and admiration went up from the niggers.

They saw the launch and the towing-boats race across the centre of the whirlpool, passing through the deadly centre in a cloud of spray, then shooting up the hill of smooth, running water, and passing out of the pool through a wall of rustling reeds.

The white men and the king were gone! They had escaped the pool.

But Baron von Slyden and the discomfited Askaris had to stay where they were, washing round the vast pool in circles of deadly monotony, beaten by the magic of Obob, assisted by Captain Handyman and a forty horse-power motor engine.

Horace's Plight!

The boys bent to their oars, and rowed for their lives as Captain Handyman headed the launch straight across the centre of the Hongo Whirlpool.

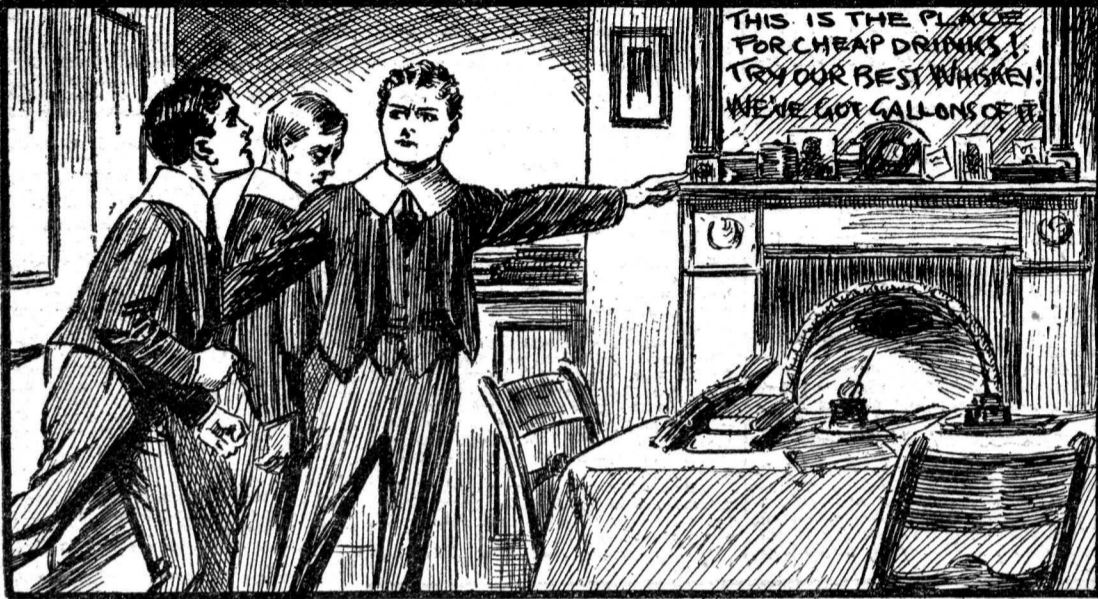
For the space of a hundred yards the water was troubled, broken, and steaming.

Sheets of hot spray, smelling strongly

BARKER, THE BOUNDER!

A Splendid New Serial, introducing Bob Travers & Co., the Chums of Redclyffe.

By HERBERT BRITTON.



THE CHIEF CHARACTERS IN THIS STORY ARE:

BOB TRAVERS, DICKY TURNER, JACK JACKSON, and BUNNY, the chums of Study No. 5.
MASON and HARRIS, the bullies of the Fourth, who share Study No. 2 with BARKER, the bounder.
MR. CHAMBERS, the master of the Fourth Form.
JIMMY WREN & CO., the chums of the New House.

In recent instalments it was told how Barker, the bounder, having been defeated in a fight with Jack Jackson, resolved to make the latter's life a misery, and disgrace him in the eyes of his schoolfellows. Barker discovered that Jackson's father was employed by his own father, and threatened to secure Jack's father's discharge if he did not obey his—Barker's—orders.

In last week's instalment Jack Jackson was forced to accompany Barker to an inn in the village. There the bounder contrived to drug Jackson, and on the way back to the school he poured some whisky over his victim's coat. Upon reaching Redclyffe Jack Jackson was accused of being the worse for drink, and in the dormitory the same night Mason and his followers made a rush at Jack Jackson, with the intention of making him run the gauntlet.

(Read on from here.)

Running the Gauntlet!

At Mason's command his supporters lunged themselves on Jack Jackson, and dragged him to the floor of the dormitory.

Mason promptly sat on Jackson's chest, whilst Wilson held on to the junior's feet.

"I've got the rotter all right, you fellows!" said Mason exultantly. "Get your towels ready, and we'll make him run the gauntlet!"

"What-ho!"

The bully's supporters promptly possessed themselves of a towel each, and proceeded to tie one end into a large knot.

They returned to Jack Jackson's bedside, eager to make the latter suffer for his supposed misdeeds.

Jack Jackson was struggling furiously, but Mason and Harris held on to him like a leech, and he was unable to thrust them aside.

"Ready, you fellows?" asked Mason, looking up at his followers.

"Ready and willing!" sang out Wilson. "Good!" said Mason, rising to his feet. "Come on, you cad!" he added, dragging Jack Jackson to a standing position.

"We're going to make you suffer for disgracing the Form. Spread out, you chaps, and when I say 'Go!' lam him for all you're worth!"

"Let me go!" shouted Jack Jackson savagely.

"No jolly fear!" said Mason, holding on tight to one of Jack Jackson's wrists, whilst Harris gripped the other. "Chaps who soak themselves with whisky, as you've done, have to be punished. You've got to run the gauntlet as a punishment for coming back to Redclyffe in an incapable state, and, if you take my advice, you will run. You'll get it jolly hot if you don't."

Jack Jackson caught sight of Bob Travers and Dicky Turner and several other juniors standing in a group aside, in a state of hesitancy.

Jack Jackson gave them a pleading look as he was dragged away from the beds.

"Bob—Dicky!" he muttered. "For goodness' sake pile into these cads! Back me up for—"

"Shut up, you cad!" growled Mason. "Travers and Turner have found you out at last as a whisky-drinking rotter. They're done with you; you can see that by their faces."

"Bob, you don't think—" began Jackson earnestly.

"Of course he does!" chuckled Mason. "He thinks you're the biggest rotter in the Fourth, and—"

"Be quiet, Mason, you cad!" exclaimed Bob Travers.

"Shan't!" cried Mason defiantly. "I shall say just what I like! Jackson's an absolute rotter! We've bowled him out as a pub-haunter and a whisky-drinking cad! You've admitted it yourself!"

"I haven't!"

"Well, why don't you back the rotter up? Why don't you—"

"Stop arguing, Mason, you silly chump!" exclaimed Harris impatiently.

"Let's get on with the ragging!"

"Oh, all right!" said Mason; and he pushed Jack Jackson forward. "Run, you rotter!" he exclaimed.

Jack Jackson did not run at first.

He gripped his fists tight and faced his enemies.

Next instant the knotted ends of quite half a dozen towels landed on his back, forcing him to move forward.

"Run, you rotter!" shouted Mason excitedly. "Pile into him, you fellows!"

The bully's supporters swung their towels in the air, and brought them down with terrific force on Jack Jackson's back.

Jack Jackson hit out fiercely at his tormentors, but he could not hold his ground.

He was one against many, and he was compelled to run to avoid the swinging towels.

At sight of Jack Jackson's discomfiture Mason & Co. roared with laughter.

But there were quite half a dozen fellows in the dormitory who were not enjoying the ragging.

Bob Travers stood aside with Dicky Turner and Bunny, and three or four other fellows, and there were expressions of pity on their faces for Jack Jackson as he was driven from end to end of the dormitory.

Barker, the bounder, was standing next to Bob Travers, and even he was looking sympathetic.

At any other time Barker would have taken a leading part in ragging Jack Jackson, but on the present occasion it suited his plans better to leave the ragging to others.

He turned to Dicky Turner, who was frowning portentously.

"I'm surprised at you, Turner!" he said.

"Eh?" ejaculated Dicky in surprise.

"I thought Jackson's chums would have stood by him!" continued the bounder.

"Fancy allowing those rotters to rag him like this! If he deserved it—"

"Well, doesn't he?" returned Dicky Turner. "He practically admitted going to the Plough and Harrow."

"He might have gone in for a drink of lemonade," said the bounder coolly.

"D'you mean to say you think—"

"What I think I keep to myself," said Barker. "I'm merely suggesting what might have happened."

"Well, how do you account for Jackson reeking with whisky when he returned to the school?" demanded Dicky impatiently.

"I've no intention of trying to account for it," replied the bounder. "Had I considered myself one of his closest chums, as you did, I think I should have asked for further proof before I pronounced him guilty."

Dicky Turner drew the inference from the bounder's remark which the latter meant him to draw.

Barker suggested that he had become convinced of Jackson's guilt rather too soon, and as he thought the matter over Dicky Turner was forced to admit that this was the case.

He turned to Bob Travers and touched him on the arm.

"What do you think about it, Bob?" he asked.

"Goodness knows!" said Bob, with a

shake of the head. "I can't understand it at all! But—but—"

"Well, if you think like that I wonder you don't stand by your chum!" interposed the bounder slowly and meaningly.

"I'd go to his rescue like a shot if only

"You?" ejaculated Bob Travers in amazement.

"Why not?" queried the bounder.

"But—but surely you consider Jackson guilty?"

"Never mind what I consider," said Barker carelessly. "It ain't much good my tackling those rotters alone, and if Jackson's own chums won't help, what can I do?"

"Hurrah!"

At that moment an exultant cheer burst forth from Mason and his supporters.

Jack Jackson had fallen to the floor under a hurricane of blows.

"Drag him out!" shouted Mason. "Make the rotter hoof it again!"

In a state of exhaustion Jack Jackson was pulled to his feet, and forced to run to escape hurt from the swinging towels.

Bob Travers' face became set and grim as he realised his chum's helpless position.

"I—I can't stand this any longer, Dicky," he said. "I'm going for the rotters!"

"But—but—"

Bob Travers did not stop to listen to Dicky's protest. He leaped forward, and drove both his fists in the faces of Mason and Harris.

Dicky Turner hesitated for a moment, but next instant he turned to Hawkins and Appleby and several other fellows at his side.

"Back up, you fellows!" he said. "We mustn't let those rotters rag Travers as well."

The juniors did not need any further urging.

They rushed forward, and hit out right and left. Barker, too, joined in the fray, singling out Wilson, and pommelling him for all he was worth.

"Sock into them, you fellows!" sang out Bob Travers.

Bob's followers did as they were bid. Biff! Bang! Thud!

Very soon a battle royal was taking place in the Fourth Form dormitory.

Mason and his supporters were in the majority, but they were no match for Bob Travers' sturdy followers.

Barker soon sent Wilson to the floor, whilst Dicky Turner dealt successfully with Harris, and Bob Travers sent Mason hurtling backwards to a bed.

The rest of Mason's supporters were treated similarly, and it was not long before Bob Travers & Co. stood victorious in the centre of the dormitory.

Jack Jackson was lying on the floor in a state of exhaustion.

Bob Travers bent over him, and lifted him up gently.

"Poor old chap!" he said sympathetically, as he led Jack Jackson to his bed.

"Oh, dear!" groaned Jack Jackson. "My head aches something frightful, and my back—"

"I dare say it does, old son," said Bob Travers. "But you'll be all right after a good night's rest."

Bob Travers assisted Jackson to undress, Mason & Co. glaring at him savagely the while.

Mason clenched his fists tight, and strode over to Bob, an angry, spiteful look on his face.

"Look here, Travers," he said curtly. "what do you mean by it? What right had you to chip in when—"

"Every right!" said Bob quickly. "You were absolutely torturing Jackson."

"And suppose we were!" snapped Mason disagreeably. "Didn't the cad deserve it? Answer me that!"

Bob Travers did not reply; he was untying the laces of Jackson's boots, whilst

the latter lay back on his bed, thoroughly exhausted.

Mason made a gesture.

"There you are," he said disdainfully. "You can't answer the question! You know he's disgraced the Form, and that he's a whisky-drinking rotter!"

"I know nothing of the kind!" retorted Bob sharply.

"Oh, rot!" ground out Mason. "If it had been anybody else who'd been bowled out, you would have been the first to rag him, but—"

"Shut up, you cad!"

"But because he's your chum," went on Mason fervently, "you take his part against the opinion of the Form. You ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourself, and I bet I'm not the only one who thinks so!"

Bob Travers drew himself up, and held his fist in front of Mason's face.

"If you don't stop it, you cad," he exclaimed hotly, "I'll give you the biggest hiding of your life!"

Mason backed away slightly.

"Why should I—"

"Are you going to shut up, or—"

"I—I—I—"

Smack!

Bob's patience had given out at last. He sent his fist full in the bully's face, bowling him completely over.

Mason went to the floor with a thud, and lay there.

Bob Travers returned to Jack Jackson, and assisted the latter to get into bed.

"Good-night, Jackson, old son!" he said, in a kindly voice.

Jack Jackson looked into Bob's frowning face.

"Bob," he murmured.

"Well, old son?"

"You—you don't think what they've been saying is true, do you?"

"Go to sleep, old son," answered Bob Travers. "Don't worry yourself! You are—"

"But—but answer me, Bob," urged Jack Jackson earnestly. "Do you believe that I—I've been drinking whisky?"

"I—I— Oh, hang! Of course, I don't believe it, old son," replied Bob. "I know you a jolly sight better than that! I ought to be ashamed of myself for not believing you from the first!"

A faint smile spread over Jack Jackson's face, and he gripped Bob Travers' hand tightly.

"I'm glad to hear you say that, Bob," he said simply. "I know there have been a lot of strange happenings to-day. There's a lot I can't remember, but there's a lot I can't, but—"

"Don't you worry, old son," said Bob. "We'll settle things to-morrow. It's no good worrying over the matter now. You'd better buck up, and get to sleep! I guess you need it. Good-night!"

"Good-night, Bob!"

A few moments later every junior was in bed. Some were soon fast asleep, but some remained awake for a long time, thinking deeply over the strange happenings of that day.

Barker, the bounder, was not one of the latter.

He was one of the first to fall asleep, and had anybody peered at him they would have observed a cynical grin on his face—a grin that probably bore evidence to the fact that he was well satisfied with the success of his scheme for disgracing Jack Jackson in the eyes of his Form-fellows.

A Surprise for Bob Travers & Co.

When Bob Travers & Co. awoke the next morning, Mason was already dressing.

It was unlike Mason to rise early.

"By gad!" exclaimed Barker, in surprise. "What ever has made you get up so early?"

"Do you think I want to dress with that whisky-drinking rotter?" said Mason, pointing an accusing finger at Jack Jackson, who was just getting out of bed.

Jack Jackson flushed, and clenched his hands.

"You cad!" he cried hotly. "If you don't stop talking such utter rot, I'll hit—"

"I don't think you will," said Mason, with a sniff, edging towards the door.

"Let those who want your company have it. I ain't exactly keen on mixing with a—"

Mason did not stop to finish his remark. Jack Jackson was advancing quickly towards him, and he just managed to slip out of the dormitory before Jackson could hit out at him.

The door closed with a bang, and red in the face with anger, Jack turned and faced the rest of the Fourth-Formers.

"If anybody else has got anything to say, let him say it at once!" he said determinedly. "I'll thrash any fellow who dares to mention the word whisky!"

But no one mentioned the word.

"That's the way to talk to them, old chap!" said the bounder, with a cheery smile.

Jack Jackson looked hard at the bounder.

"By gad!" drawled Barker. "You needn't look at me like that. Anybody would think I was up against you, to judge by the expression on your face."

"Why, you—you—"

"I'm backing you up, old chap," continued the bounder. "Let those cads say what they like! Let them all shun you. You needn't worry; I'll stand by you."

"You?" gasped Jack Jackson, in amazement.

"Rather!" responded the bounder. "You can rely upon me to stick to you, even if your own chums don't care to."

Barker glanced out of the corner of his eyes at Bob Travers.

Bob was frowning portentously.

"You can stop that, Barker!" he said meaningly.

"No offence meant, Travers," said the bounder carelessly. "I know you believe in Travers as much as I do, but I was thinking that perhaps Turner—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" snapped Dicky irritably.

"H'm!" The bounder pursed his lips, and a disdainful sneer spread over his face. "It doesn't seem as though you're standing by Jackson," he added.

"What's that got to do with you?"

"Oh, nothing much!" replied Barker. "But I'm merely assuring Jackson that he can rely upon me to stick to him if you decide to cut him over this whisky business. I reckon—"

"Rats!" snorted Dicky angrily. "You can reckon what you like. But don't talk to me! I'm not keen on gassing to a rotter like you."

"But—"

"Br-r-r-r!"

Dicky Turner's expressive snort cut the bounder short, and he proceeded to wash and dress.

He continued to pass friendly remarks to Jack Jackson, however, and succeeded in considerably puzzling the latter.

Jack Jackson could not understand Barker's friendly overtures.

Such remarks from the fellow who had been doing his utmost to spoil his life at Redclyffe, and who had been forcing him to follow his own shady pleasures, were very perplexing to Jack Jackson.

Was the bounder relenting?

Jack Jackson cherished the hope, and he was looking much brighter when at length he had finished dressing and was ready to go downstairs.

Barker moved towards him, a pleasant smile upon his face.

"Come on, old son!" he said cheerfully, and he linked his arm with Jack Jackson's. "You coming, Travers?"

"I—I—"

Bob hesitated.

"By gad!" drawled the bounder. "You're going to cut Jackson, after all. Why—"

"I'm not!" declared Bob firmly.

"Then come along downstairs," said Barker, urging Jack Jackson towards the door.

"But—but—" Bob paused once again, and then added: "Look here, Barker, what's your idea in sticking to Jackson?"

"By gad!" exclaimed the bounder. "Haven't I told you? Aren't most of the fellows against him, and didn't I say that I'd stand by him even if his own friends—"

"You can cut that out!" broke in Bob quickly, giving the bounder a bitter look. "I'm standing by Jackson, and you know it, but I'm pretty sure Jackson doesn't want you hanging round him."

Barker started.

"Sure!" he said, raising his eyebrows.

"Positive!" said Bob. "Jackson must be hard up if he wants you for a friend."

"Not at all," drawled the bounder. "Jackson and I are the best of pals. I bet you he's as keen on my company as he is on yours. You ask him."

Jack Jackson was looking very awkward; he was completely baffled by the cunning bounder.

Bob Travers stared at him questioningly.

"You don't want Barker, do you, old son?" he asked.

Jack Jackson did not reply. He lowered his head, and fixed his eyes on the floor.

Of course he did not want the bounder, but nevertheless he was afraid to say so in Barker's presence.

"Answer him, Jackson, old chap," said the bounder. "Don't be afraid to tell him that you've chummed up with me."

"I—I—I—" faltered Jack Jackson, flushing to the roots of his hair. "Oh, let's get downstairs!" he added, moving towards the door of the dormitory.

Thoroughly bewildered by Barker's statements, Bob followed behind Jack Jackson.

Although he was annoyed with Jack Jackson for not snubbing the bounder, his staunch nature prevented him from cutting his chum.

"Coming Dicky?" he asked, as he reached the doorway.

Dicky Turner sniffed.

"Not with that rotter Barker!" he replied promptly. "I'm rather particular what company I keep. I'll follow on presently."

"All right," said Bob resignedly. And he joined Jack Jackson and Barker as they wended their way downstairs.

As they reached the passage leading to the Fourth Form studies Barker broke away.

"I'm just going downstairs to see if there are any letters," he said, moving downstairs. "See you presently."

Jack Jackson did not reply. He walked on with Bob Travers, and the latter was considerably puzzled by the anxious expression on his chum's face.

He was about to question him when they reached Study No. 5.

Bob was the first to enter the room, but he pulled up short just inside the study, and uttered an exclamation of surprise.

Bob had every cause to be surprised, for scrawled on the pier-glass over the mantelshelf were the following words:

"THIS IS THE PLACE FOR CHEAP DRINKS!

TRY OUR BEST WHISKY!

WE'VE GOT GALLONS OF IT!"

"My hat!" cried Bob, in tones of deep annoyance. "This is Mason's doing. I'll—"

Bob broke off short, and turned towards the door of the study.

At the same moment, however, Dicky came rushing into the room, and collided with Bob.

"What the dickens—" began Dicky, rubbing his head ruefully.

"Sorry, Dicky!" said Bob apologetically. "I didn't know you were coming in. I—"

"You hurling chump!" roared Dicky, giving Bob a wrathful look. "Have you gone potty, or—"

"Look!" exclaimed Bob, pointing to the pier-glass. "What do you think of that?"

BARKER, THE BOUNDER!

(Continued from the previous page.)

"My giddy aunt!" gasped Dicky. "This is the limit! I—"

Dicky Turner paused, and fixed his eyes on Jack Jackson.

The latter was looking very miserable, and he flinched under Dicky's steady stare.

"Oh, dear!" he muttered. "This is awful—terrible! I know you blame me, and think—"

"Nothing of the kind!" retorted Bob staunchly. "It's jolly funny how that whisky got on your coat, but I'm jolly sure you haven't taken to pub-haunting. I'll slaughter Mason for this!"

"But supposing Mason's justified in all he says," remarked Dicky Turner.

"Don't talk rot, Dicky!" exclaimed Bob Travers. "You ought to know Jackson better than to think he's capable of behaving so rottenly."

"I thought I did know him; but

there's something jolly fishy about his behaviour, and—"

"There isn't!"

Dicky Turner sniffed disdainfully.

"There must be," he said, "else why doesn't Jackson explain things? What's he hanging on to the bouncer for, and why did he go to the Plough and Harrow yesterday?"

Jack Jackson hung his head miserably.

"He didn't go," answered Bob Travers.

"How do you know, Bob?" asked Dicky.

"Let Jackson answer the question—if he can. I'd bet my top-hat that he went there. Look at him now. He's afraid to deny it."

"He's not," declared Bob. "Buck up, Jackson, old son! Tell Dicky that he's talking a lot of rot."

"I—I—I— Oh, dear!" groaned Jack Jackson, moving towards the door. "I can't stand this any longer. It's awful—unbearable!"

With his eyes turned away from his chums, Jack Jackson left the study.

Dicky Turner snorted angrily, and glared at Bob.

"Now are you satisfied?" he demanded. Bob shook his head.

"I can't understand it," he replied. "There's something jolly mysterious happening, and—"

"Mysterious, be hanged!" exclaimed Dicky emphatically. "It's clear enough to me. Jackson's got tired of being decent, and pulled up with that rotter Barker. He's probably taken to gambling as well as pub-haunting, and—"

"Impossible!" broke in Bob.

"Don't you be so sure," said Dicky. "You're too jolly trusting, Bob! You stuck to Jackson when he first came to Redcliffe, when all the other fellows were against him."

"Well, wasn't I justified?" asked Bob, with a faint smile. "Didn't Jackson turn out to be true blue?"

"H'm! Y-y-y-es," acknowledged Dicky, rather unwillingly. "But that was a different matter," he added quickly.

"Not at all," said Bob. "Everybody

jumped to conclusions far too soon, the same as they've done this time."

"Rot!" snorted Dicky.

Bob grinned.

"Well, I'm not going to quarrel with you, Dicky, old son!" he said, in friendly tones. "We'll drop the matter, and hold our own opinions. But before we go into breakfast, I'm going to smash that cad Mason! Are you going to help me?"

Dicky hesitated.

"Don't come if you don't want to," said Bob. "I dare say I can manage Mason alone."

"Oh, I'll come!" said Dicky. "Mason can say what he likes about Jackson, but he's not going to mess up our pier-glass. Lead on, Macduff!"

Bob Travers led the way out of the study, and strode along to the study shared by Mason and Barker and Harris.

Barker was looting in the easy chair when Bob entered Study No. 2, whilst Mason was leaning lazily against the table.

Before the bully realised what was happening Bob Travers had thrown his arms round his neck, and was dragging him out of the study.

"By gad!" exclaimed Mason, struggling furiously. "What the dickens—"

"You've had the sauce to scrawl on our pier-glass," said Bob Travers. "We're going to show you that it doesn't pay to do that sort of thing!"

"Let me go, you cad!" shouted Mason.

"I'll—"

"Lend a hand, Dicky, old son!" exclaimed Bob.

"What-ho!" cried Dicky eagerly, as he laid his hands on the bully.

A moment later Bob and Dicky had departed from Study No. 2 with their charge, and at the sound of the struggle in the corridor the bouncer leant back in the easy-chair and chuckled.

"By gad!" he remarked to himself. "I had no idea things would work out like this! I guess Travers and Turner are a bit puzzled by Jackson's behaviour. But they'll be more puzzled still presently. I've not done with Jackson yet—not by long chalks!"

(Another magnificent long instalment of this splendid long serial in next Monday's issue of the BOYS' FRIEND. I should be glad if readers would write and let me know what they think of this new story.)

THE REBELS' VICTORY!

A Splendid Long Complete Story, Dealing with the Barring-Out at the School in the Backwoods.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

The 1st Chapter. A Night Attack.

"Franky!"

"Hallo, Bob! You awake?"

Bob Lawless threw aside his blanket and sat up on the floor of the school-room at Cedar Creek.

There were five other fellows rolled in blankets on the floor.

A tallow candle burned on a desk, shedding a dim light through the school-room, casting flickering shadows upon the shuttered windows.

It was midnight.

Frank Richards was pacing to and fro near the sleepers, keeping watch and ward through the night.

The rebels of Cedar Creek were still "holding the fort," "roughing it" with undaunted determination.

Outside the winter darkness lay on the woods and the creek, and the wall of the wind could be heard in the pines.

Frank Richards stopped in his pacing as his Canadian cousin sat up.

"Not your time yet, Bob," he said. "I was going to call you in a few minutes."

"I heard something, Franky!"

"Only the wind."

"I guess not."

Bob Lawless rose to his feet, his face very alert.

Vere Beauclerc opened his eyes and looked up from his blanket.

"Anything up?" he asked.

"I guess so."

Beauclerc rose at once.

The three schoolboys listened.

The wind from the Thompson hills was singing in the pines, but something more than that had come to Bob Lawless' keen ears.

A low, faint sound was audible as Frank listened intently, though he could not tell what it was or whence it came.

"That's not the wind," muttered Bob.

Frank shook his head.

"I guess they're on the war-path again," said Bob in a low voice. "It's a night attack, I reckon."

He listened again.

"Old Man Gunten is getting pretty desperate," went on Bob. "We know that the school superintendent from Kootenay has arrived at Thompson, and he's come up the valley to inquire into this affair, Franky. Mr. Gunten never thought this would happen when he worked it for the board to sack Miss Meadows. He won't dare to let the superintendent find the school like this, if he can help it. I guess he's trying to play a trump on us."

"Likely enough," agreed Frank. "If he could get us downed before the superintendent came on the scene it would be better for him. This state of affairs doesn't reflect much credit on the chairman of the Board of Trustees."

"I guess not!" grinned Bob. "Listen! Creak!"

"Come on!" muttered Bob. "Tread light. Don't let them hear you."

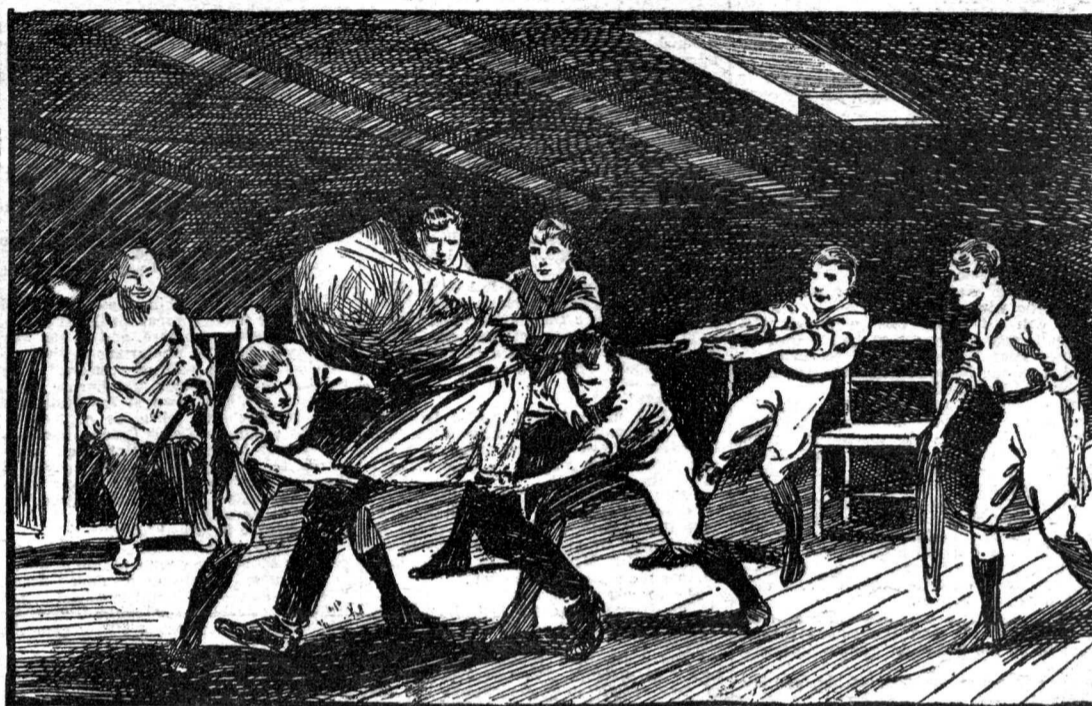
The other fellows were awake now.

Bob muttered a word of caution to them as he trod lightly from the school-room.

In the house adjoining the sounds, faint as they were, were clearer, and they came from above.

Bob and his comrades trod softly up the stairs.

One of the upper windows of the school-house looked over the almost level roof of the big school-room, and it was at that window that the sounds were being made.



ROPING-IN THE RUSTLERS!

The chums of Cedar Creek knew what was happening.

In the silence of midnight the enemy, probably concluding that the schoolboy garrison were asleep, had mounted to the school-room roof, and an attempt was being made to force the upper window without giving the alarm.

Once within the schoolhouse and at close quarters Mr. Gunten's followers had no doubt of being able to deal with Frank Richards & Co.

In the darkness of the room a faint gleam came from the shutter of the window, already pierced from without.

Frank Richards set his lips hard.

He had been keeping watch below, but he had not noted the faint sounds made above, and the garrison had run the risk of being taken by surprise.

Bob Lawless approached the window and looked through the gash in the shutter.

He did not go too close, however, for a saw was working through, enlarging the opening that had been already made.

Outside a burly figure was standing on the school-room roof, his shoulders on a level with the shutter.

Bob dimly made out the figure, but the man outside could see nothing in the blackness within.

The schoolboys made no sound, waiting for some signal from Bob, who was the leader of the barring-out at Cedar Creek School.

Bob did not speak.

He listened quietly to the grinding of the saw as it was plied by the burly man without.

A voice came from outside, a voice the chums knew well—the fat, oily tones of Mr. Gunten.

"Are you through yet, Four Kings?"

"I calkerlate it's only a few minutes now, boss."

"Lose no time!"

Four Kings, the leader of the Red Dog crowd of Thompson, chuckled softly.

"I guess they're fast asleep, boss. It's all O.K."

"They may awake!" muttered Mr. Gunten nervously.

"Waal, I'm close on finished. Tell Euchre Dick to be ready."

"I'm hyer, I guess!" came back another voice.

Then there was silence, save for the grinding of the saw.

Bob Lawless groped for his companions and led them away to the stairs again.

It was impossible to speak in the bedroom without giving the alarm to the enemy outside.

On the stairs Bob whispered softly:

"It's as I reckoned, you chaps! Old Man Gunten is there himself. He's scooted up the ladder after those toughs. I guess he means to get us under before

the superintendent arrives on the scene."

Frank Richards chuckled softly.

"He doesn't know we've seen the superintendent already," he murmured.

"He can't know that!" grinned Bob.

"I guess the man will be along here tomorrow, perhaps with the sheriff. Old Man Gunten wants us down, and his precious new headmaster established before Mr. Superintendent appears. I guess it won't work out like that."

"We can shift them off that roof fast enough," murmured Beauclerc. "What's the game, Bob?"

"Better than that! We're letting them come in!"

"What?"

"They won't be through for some minutes yet. Lots of time. We'll get ready for them."

"But," said Frank Richards doubtfully, "there's only seven of us now, Bob, and there are those two toughs—Four Kings and Euchre Dick—and Old Man Gunten, and I dare say Mr. Peckover is there, perhaps others. We sha'n't have much chance against that crowd at close quarters."

"They're not getting to close quarters," said Bob coolly. "That window is too small for more than one man to get in at a time. We're going to wait inside with some ropes ready."

"Oh!" murmured Frank.

"We shall take them one at a time, and perhaps bag the whole bunch," grinned Bob. "Then when Mr. Superintendent moseys along to-morrow we'll have the whole gang to show him tied up."

Frank suppressed a chuckle.

"Good egg, if we can work it!" he said. "I guess we can work the ruff. You fellows stay here, and I'll be back in two shakes."

Bob Lawless went quietly down the stairs to call up the rest of the garrison.

Frank Richards and Vere Beauclerc remained listening intently to the sounds from the bed-room.

The saw was still grinding steadily, and the critical moment was approaching.

The 2nd Chapter. Bagged!

"Quiet!"

It was a scarcely-audible whisper from Bob Lawless on the staircase.

There was hardly a sound as the garrison of the backwoods school came up; they had removed their boots below.

They reached the landing, and peered in at the open door of the bed-room.

The night was dark, but it was darker within than without, and they could

make out the gap in the shutter, larger now as the saw did its work.

Inside the gap a hand was groping from outside, feeling for the bars.

There was a grunt of satisfaction from Four Kings, as the ruffian found a bar and removed it from the sockets.

"Take this hyer, Mr. Gunten!" the schoolboys heard him mutter, as his hand was withdrawn with the bar in it.

"Good!"

"Don't drop it; I reckon the clatter would wake all the valley."

"Take this, Euchre Dick!" came Mr. Gunten's voice. "Hand it to Mr. Peckover on the ladder."

"Right, boss!"

The schoolboys within grinned.

The enemy had not the faintest suspicion that their stealthy attack was known, and that their whippers were audible to the garrison they intended to take by surprise.

Without a word, for they were too close to the enemy to speak, Bob Lawless made his dispositions in the dark bed-room.

Frank and Bob and Beauclerc drew nearer the window, Bob holding a lasso looped ready in his hand.

The other four fellows were further back, grasping their cudgels in case they should be wanted, and Eben Hacke carrying two or three more ropes.

It was deep silence they waited.

Frank Richards had a sack in his hands, which was to be slipped over the ruffian as he came in, to silence him.

Creak!

Four Kings' brawny arm came through the opening again, his hand groping for the other bar.

He found it, and extracted it, and passed it out to Mr. Gunten on the school-room roof.

Then the shutter creaked as it was cautiously opened.

In the dim square of the open window, from which the glass had been knocked out in a previous attack, the head and shoulders of Four Kings came into sight. The ruffian peered into the room, listening.

But in the blackness within he could see nothing, and the waiting schoolboys made no sound, though their hearts were beating fast.

A hoarse whisper was heard.

"It's all O.K., boss!"

"Lose no time!" muttered Mr. Gunten nervously.

"I guess I'm going in now. You come arter me, Euchre Dick, and then you and Mr. Peckover, sir."

"You—you will want me?" muttered Mr. Gunten.

"I guess there's seven of the young varmint's," said Four Kings. "Every hand will be wanted, I reckon. There'll be a

rumpus, boss. But we four will handle them all right."

"Very well; go on."

The schoolboys within heard every word, and they were somewhat relieved.

It was evident, from Four Kings' words, that there were only four to deal with, and that the rest of the Red Dog crowd were no longer on the scene.

It had been a rather desperate device of Mr. Gunten to employ that gang of ruffians against the schoolboy rebels, but when they had attacked the school, the cowboys from the Lawless Ranch had chipped in and cleared them off.

And Billy Cook, the ranch foreman, had warned them impressively of what would happen to them if they raided the school again.

Evidently the ranchman's threats had been efficacious, for of all the rough gang only Four Kings and Euchre Dick were assisting Mr. Gunten in this last attempt to "down" the schoolboy rebels.

But there were enough of them to deal with seven schoolboys if they came to close quarters.

If Bob Lawless' device succeeded, however, they were not likely to be able to tackle the garrison in a body.

Four Kings put his head and shoulders through the little window, and began to climb in.

He had not the remotest suspicion that the garrison were within a few feet of him in the darkness, waiting.

With a grunt the burly ruffian came through the window, and lowered himself quietly upon the floor within.

He turned back to the window.

"All O.K.!" he muttered. "You next, Euchre Dick!"

Then Four Kings gave a gasp.

From the blackness three pairs of hands suddenly fastened upon him, and before he knew what was happening he was dragged down.

The sack was dragged over his head as he fell, and drawn tight, and the next second the loop of the lasso was round him, tightening.

The surprise had been so complete that the ruffian was reduced to helplessness almost in a twinkling.

His mouth was open to yell, but a rough hand compressed the sack over it, and he only succeeded in gurgling.

He hardly succeeded in struggling for a moment before the lasso secured his arms to his sides, and he was dragged across the room.

There the rest of the garrison seized him and held him fast while the rope was knotted and knotted again.

Frank Richards & Co. stepped back breathlessly to the window.

Euchre Dick's head and shoulders were framed there, against the dim sky.

The ruffian had heard something within, and was listening.

"All O.K., Four Kings?" he whispered.

"All O.K.!" whispered back Bob Lawless.

"Right!" muttered Euchre Dick, little guessing from whom that answering whisper proceeded.

He began to climb in.

Four Kings, on the floor, was still attempting to struggle and yell, but his limbs were grasped in strong hands, and the sack was compressed over his mouth, almost suffocating him.

In the grasp of the four schoolboys, he was whirled out on to the landing, where Eben Hacke stuffed a handkerchief into his mouth to make sure of him.

Meanwhile, Euchre Dick was climbing in.

He dropped lightly upon the floor.

Frank Richards & Co. seized him at once, and bore him down.

Bob Lawless had hoped to secure the rascals one after another in silence, and so make a complete "bag" of the whole party.

But his luck did not hold out.

As Euchre Dick was dragged down, with Bob's hand over his mouth, his boots crashed on the floor, and Mr. Gunten, outside, uttered a sudden exclamation.

"Quiet there! Have you fallen? Quiet, you fool!"

Euchre Dick was struggling.

He had no chance with three pairs of hands on him, down as he was, but he succeeded in getting his mouth free for a moment.

"Look out, boss!" he panted.

Mr. Gunten was peering in at the window.

He started back as Euchre Dick panted out the warning.

"What—what is it?" he exclaimed, in a shrill whisper. "What—"

Euchre Dick was unable to say more.

Vere Beauclerc's handkerchief was stuffed into his mouth and he was reduced to silence.

Frank Richards & Co. quietly knotted a



THE REBELS' VICTORY!

(Continued from the previous page.)

rope about his arms and legs and left him lying on the floor.

But the alarm had been given. Old Man Gunten, instead of following Euchre Dick in at the window, was standing there, staring and peering, in nervous alarm.

"Is it all right?" he whispered. "Answer me! Euchre Dick—Four Kings! Where are you?"

There was no answer. The fat storekeeper's alarm increased; he was certain now that something had gone wrong with the attack.

He could see nothing, but he could guess that the garrison had not, after all, been taken by surprise.

He peered anxiously into the shadowed room.

Bob Lawless waited a few moments, in the hope that the fat Swiss would follow in, but it was pretty clear that Mr. Gunten had no intention of entering until he was reassured.

The silence of Euchre Dick and Four Kings had alarmed him too much, and he could only conclude that they had fallen into the hands of the schoolboy rebels.

Bob Lawless stepped quietly to the window, where the head of the storekeeper was framed against the sky, peering and listening.

Mr. Gunten started back as a black shadow moved before him, but he started back too late.

Bob's sudden grip fell upon his collar, and he was dragged in at the window.

So sudden was the pull that the storekeeper was dragged half-way in, and had been a lighter weight Bob would have landed him inside.

As it was Mr. Gunten's fat circumference landed on the window-sill, and he clung to the window-frame with both hands, gasping wildly.

"Lend a hand!" exclaimed Bob. Frank Richards and Beauclerc did not need telling.

They grasped the storekeeper together and dragged.

Mr. Gunten uttered a fendish yell. Frank Richards' grasp was on his fat ears, and, to judge by his yell, Mr. Gunten was feeling the strain.

"Yooooop!" "Pull away!" gasped Bob. "We've got to have him."

"Xaroooo!" "Wha-a-at is the matter?" came the quavering voice of Mr. Peckover, the new headmaster of Cedar Creek.

Much against his will Mr. Peckover had taken part in the night attack, not having the slightest predilection for that kind of business.

It was only because he dared not displease the chairman of the Board of Trustees, who had appointed him, that he had consented to join in the attempt. "Help!" panted Mr. Gunten. "Peckover, you fool, come and help me!"

"Oh, dear!" "Help!" shrieked the storekeeper. "They are dragging me in!"

"B-but—" "Help me, you fool!" Mr. Peckover picked his way gingerly along the school-room roof to the window and grasped Old Man Gunten by the shoulders behind.

Mr. Gunten clung frenziedly to the window-frame, and Frank Richards & Co. pulled within, and Mr. Peckover pulled without.

The unfortunate storekeeper was in the position of a rope in a tug-of-war, and it was a painful position, to judge by his fendish yells.

Eben Hacke and another fellow got a grip on him now, careless where they dropped, so long as they got a hold.

The odds were against Mr. Peckover on the tug-of-war, and he was quite beaten.

With a gasp of anguish Mr. Gunten was dragged through the window, and landed inside.

His last frantic kick caught Mr. Peckover on the chin, and that gentleman sat down with a loud roar.

He sat on the school-room roof and roared. Inside the room Mr. Gunten was struggling feebly, but he had no chance.

In a couple of minutes a rope was knotted round him, and the fat Swiss lay helpless on the floor, gasping spasmodically.

"Now for Peckover!" exclaimed Bob Lawless.

Mr. Peckover heard the words, and he jumped up and made for the ladder leading to the ground.

He had had enough. "After him!" panted Frank.

Bob Lawless jumped lightly from the window to the school-room roof, only a few yards behind Mr. Peckover, as the new headmaster made for the ladder.

The 3rd Chapter. Prisoners of War.

"Oh, dear! Oh! Ow!" Mr. Peckover gasped and spluttered as he scrambled down the roof to the ladder and clutched at it.

He scrambled wildly down the ladder in the dark, and Bob Lawless, reaching it while he was still in flight, slid down after him.

Mr. Peckover was going down one rung

at a time, and Bob descended with a rush, with his arms and legs round the ladder.

Naturally, he overtook Mr. Peckover at that rate before the schoolmaster reached the ground.

Mr. Peckover was about two yards from the earth when Bob whizzed into him from above with a terrific crash.

The concussion hurled Mr. Peckover off the ladder, and he whirled down, and rolled on the ground, with a howl.

Bob, rather dazed by the collision, rolled after him.

"Yow-ow-woop!" came from Mr. Peckover as he sprawled on the ground. "Help! Oh! Ah! Yah! Oh, dear! Oh, goodness! Yow!"

"Mum-my word!" stuttered Bob.

He scrambled to his feet and blinked round him.

Mr. Peckover, rather bruised and quite winded, lay helpless at his feet, gasping as if for a wagger.

"Franky!" shouted Bob.

Frank Richards' head appeared over the edge of the roof. He was rather anxious for his reckless chum.

"All serene, Bob?" he called out.

"All O.K., Franky! Chuck me a rope!" "Right-ho!"

In half a minute the rope came whizzing down, and Bob Lawless caught it.

He ran a noose round Mr. Peckover, who was too winded and too scared to think of resistance, and fastened it under his arms.

He gave a quick look round into the shadows, wondering whether any more of the Red Dog crowd were hanging about the school.

But there was no sound or movement from the winter night.

A fall of snow had whitened the ground, and perhaps that had helped to induce Four Kings' "pards" to clear off, added to the blood-curdling threats Billy Cook had breathed to them.

Bob scudded up the ladder with the end of the rope over his arm, and joined Frank Richards on the school-room roof.

"Got him!" he said. "Lend me a hand, and we'll land him like a fish! You come and help, Cherub!"

"Coming!" called back Beauclerc.

The three chums dragged on the stout rope, and Mr. Peckover, with a yell of affright, was dragged into the air.

The skinny gentleman was not a heavy weight, and Frank Richards & Co. swung him up easily enough.

He was landed on the roof, a good deal like a fish, and the chums shoved him in at the bed-room window unresistingly.

He bumped on the floor within, and lay there gasping.

There was a loud howl from Old Man Gunten, upon whose legs he had bumped.

The chums followed him in, and Bob closed the shutter.

"I reckon we've got the whole gang," he remarked. "But I'll nail up this shutter. Can't be too careful."

Eben Hacke had lighted a lantern, and Yen Chin ran for the hammer and nails. In a few minutes the shutter was safe again.

Then the rebels of Cedar Creek gave their attention to their prisoners.

Four Kings and Euchre Dick were relieved of their gags, but they were left bound hand and foot, and Bob gave a careful eye to the knots. He did not want to chance the ruffians getting loose within the school.

A torrent of abusive language came from both the "bad men" of Thompson, but a vigorous application of boot-leather soon put a stop to that.

Old Man Gunten sat with his hands tied behind him, glowering at the rebels in speechless fury.

The fat storekeeper was boiling with wrath, and if he had been free he would probably have tried to do some damage.

As for Mr. Peckover, that forlorn gentleman sat silent and apprehensive, and did not offer the slightest resistance, as it was tied.

It was pretty clear, from his looks, that Mr. Ephraim Peckover had had enough of Cedar Creek and its unruly scholars.

Probably he was sorry by this time that he had accepted Mr. Gunten's offer of the post that rightfully belonged to Miss Meadows.

"Nice-looking family, ain't they?" grinned Bob Lawless. "Take 'em downstairs, you galoots! You can kick 'em a little if they give any trouble."

But the prisoners did not give any trouble; they did not want to be kicked even a little.

The four were hustled down the stairs and taken into the schoolroom, where they were disposed on the floor.

"I guess you kids can snooze, if you like," said Bob Lawless. "I'm going to keep watch. It's some hours to dawn yet."

The schoolboy rebels took Bob's advice, and turned in, Bob and Beauclerc keeping watch by turns till dawn.

The 4th Chapter. The Game Up!

"Wake up!" The wintry dawn was whitening the snow in the playground and stealing through the rifts of the schoolhouse shutters.

At Bob Lawless' stentorian call the schoolboy rebels turned out of their blankets, and set about preparing breakfast.

There were ample provisions now, Frank Richards & Co. having smuggled a good supply into the school the previous day from Cedar Camp.

Four Kings and Euchre Dick looked dole-

fully at one another, as they heard the clatter of knives and forks from the dining-room.

The two ruffians were feeling very "down."

Somewhat to the surprise of the prisoners, food was brought to them when the schoolboys had finished breakfast.

"Let a galoot's hands loose, can't you?" growled Four Kings.

"No fear!" answered Frank Richards promptly. "I'll feed you, dear boy, like a baby. Open your mouth and shut your eyes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The prisoners were glad enough to get their breakfast on any terms, and the grinning Co. fed them, with their hands still tied.

Even Gunten, furious as he was, condescended to eat and drink, though with gleaming eyes and a scowling brow.

Mr. Peckover was very meek and mild. The new schoolmaster had intended, in the first place, to reduce Cedar Creek to order by a series of severe punishments; but by this time all the ferocity had been taken out of him, and if one thing was quite certain, it was that Mr. Peckover was "fed up" with his present position.

He was looking very thoughtful and very glum as he sat after breakfast on a bench, and he called to Frank Richards at last.

Frank was looking out into the playground, through a slit in a shutter, when his name was called, and he looked round.

"Hallo!" he said. "What's wanted?"

"I want you to set me free," said Mr. Peckover.

"Can't be did!"

"If you will set me free I will leave this place at once," said Mr. Peckover. "I only want to get clear of all of you."

"Oh!" said Frank, and he looked at Bob.

"Can't trust you!" said Bob decidedly. "I am in earnest!" exclaimed Mr. Peckover. "I tell you that, after what I have been through here, nothing will induce me to accept the position of master of this school! Such a set of young ruffians—"

"What?"

"I—I—I mean that I refuse to come here as headmaster!" stammered Mr. Peckover. "I—I did not mean to make any opprobrious remark. I mean what I say!" Mr. Gunten!

"Well!" snapped the storekeeper. "I resign the post you offered me?" said Mr. Peckover. "In fact, I refuse to take it up! If you do not choose to reinstate Miss Meadows, you must look further for a new headmaster!"

The storekeeper scowled. This desertion was the last straw, as it were, and his rage turned upon his followers.

"You were glad enough to bag the post!" he snorted. "You were turned out of your school in Saskatchewan for ill-treating a pupil. You couldn't have got another post. You wrote and asked me to use my influence to get you appointed here, in Miss Meadows' job. You asked me to turn her out, if I could, and make room for you. Now you round on me, you cur, because you've been roughly handled by a parcel of young rascals! How am I to face the superintendent and tell him I've sacked Miss Meadows, and haven't got a Head for the school?"

"Please yourself! I'm not staying!" Mr. Peckover's temper was rising. "Hang your school, and you, too!"

Old Man Gunten almost foamed with rage. He strode towards Mr. Peckover, and as he could not use his hands, he made a drive at the skinny gentleman with his boot.

Mr. Peckover hopped out of the way just in time.

The enraged storekeeper was following him up, when Bob Lawless jerked him back, and he sat down on the floor, with a yell.

"Naughty!" said Bob chidingly. "Yow-ow!"

"I guess we can let Peckover go!" said Bob, laughing. "I don't wonder he's fed up; and I reckon he wouldn't keep the job here if we'd let him, when the authorities began to inquire into his antecedents. Peckover, my boy, you can go; and if you're not clear of Cedar Creek in five minutes, we'll come after you!"

"I shall be only too glad to go!" said Mr. Peckover, with a gasp.

The grinning schoolboys released Mr. Peckover, and he was allowed to drop out of the window into the playground.

"Five minutes!" said Bob warningly. The five minutes were quite enough for Mr. Ephraim Peckover.

He hurried to the corral for his horse, and rode away from the gates of Cedar Creek, and speedily disappeared on the trail.

Four Kings and Euchre Dick, both in a very subdued mood, begged to be allowed

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to go like the new Head; but their request was refused on the spot.

The two ruffians were not to be trusted, for it was pretty clear that they would back up Mr. Gunten so long as he paid them dollars for it.

As the morning advanced Mr. Gunten grew more and more uneasy and savage in temper.

He seemed to think, at first, that the schoolboys would not venture to keep him a prisoner for long; but he found out his mistake.

At last he made up his mind to speak. "Lawless!" he rapped out.

"Hallo, old jay!" said Bob cheerily.

"I—I—I guess I'm willing to come to terms," said Mr. Gunten, biting his fat lip. "I can't stay here any longer. I've got to attend to business at my store!"

"Will you reinstate Miss Meadows as headmistress of Cedar Creek?" asked Vere Beauclerc.

"No!" roared Mr. Gunten.

"Then you can shut up!"

"I'll agree to anything else!" hissed the storekeeper.

"Nothing else will be of any use."

"I'll make it worth your while to stop this foolery!" exclaimed Mr. Gunten desperately. "What do you say to ten dollars each?"

"Oh, don't play the goat; we don't want your money! And we know why you're so jolly anxious," said Frank.

"We know the school superintendent from Kootenay is at Thompson."

Mr. Gunten started.

"You—you know?" he ejaculated.

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"It's true, said Bob Lawless, laughing.

"We've seen the man—Dr. Macfarlane."

"That's the galoot!" grinned Eben Hacke.

The storekeeper stared at them. He was evidently taken aback.

"How did you know?" he stammered, at last.

"Because we met him yesterday," said Bob. "We made a break to Cedar Camp, to get in some grub here, and on the way back we found Dr. Macfarlane in the grip of that precious pair of rustlers."

He pointed to Four Kings and Euchre Dick. "They'd got him down in the trail, and were robbing him, when we chipped in. He was coming to Cedar Creek when they roped him in, but he went back afterwards to Thompson—to call on you, I guess. And he knows the whole story from our side; we told him before we knew who he was."

Mr. Gunten breathed hard.

This was news to him, and his expression showed how unpalatable it was. "By gum!" murmured Four Kings. "That galoot—was that the school superintendent? We never knewed it, boss! We took him for just a stranger in the section."

"Fool!" roared Mr. Gunten. "You have ruined everything. You—you actually attacked him while in my employ! Fool! Ruffian! What can I say to him now?"

Four Kings shrugged his shoulders.

"We didn't know the galoot!" he said.

Mr. Gunten gritted his teeth with helpless rage. Matters were turning out rather seriously for him.

It was no light matter for the school superintendent to learn that he was employing against the rebels of Cedar Creek a gang of ruffians who were capable of highway robbery.

His seat on the Board of Trustees was not likely to remain his much longer.

"Lawless," he exclaimed desperately, "let those men loose!"

"Rats!"

"They must be gone before Dr. Macfarlane arrives here!" panted the storekeeper.

"My dear man, we're keeping them to show him!" said Frank Richards, laughing.

The unhappy storekeeper breathed wrath.

He was beginning to feel that the game was up, and that it had been won by the rebels of Cedar Creek.

He had planned that night-attack on the rebels, hoping to get the upper hand of the rebellion before the superintendent came on the scene, knowing that Dr. Macfarlane had arrived at Thompson.

He had not been aware that the doctor had visited the precincts of Cedar Creek the previous day to get first-hand information of what was going on there; still less had he dreamed of what had happened during the superintendent's visit.

The worried trustee was still pacing to and fro, with a corrugated brow, when there was a clatter of horses' hoofs in the playground.

Frank Richards looked from a window.

"The merry superintendent!" he exclaimed.

And he threw open the shutter, and saluted Dr. Macfarlane.

The 5th Chapter. Victory!

The superintendent rode up to the window, and looked into the school-room.

He raised his eyebrows at the sight of Mr. Gunten, with his hands tied, and Four Kings and Euchre Dick lying bound on the floor.

"Good-morning, sir!" said Bob Lawless cheerily.

"Admit me to the house, please," said Dr. Macfarlane.

"That depends," said Bob coolly. "We're holding the fort here, sir, until our headmistress comes back. No disrespect to you, sir, but those are our terms."

"Hear, hear!"

The superintendent made no reply, but he put his foot on the window-sill, and leaped lightly into the room.

The schoolboys did not oppose him, at a sign from Bob.

It was easy enough to deal with one man, if necessity arose. But they had the impression that Dr. Macfarlane did not come as an enemy.

"Tell these boys to release me, sir!" rapped out Mr. Gunten.

The superintendent did not heed; he was looking at Four Kings and Euchre Dick, who tried to avoid his glance.

"Those are the two men who attempted to rob me in the wood yesterday, when these lads came to my rescue!" he exclaimed.

"The very pippins, sir!" said Frank.

"They are in your employ, Mr. Gunten?"

"I got their help to reduce these young scoundrels to order," replied the storekeeper sullenly.

"And you considered that that was a right step for a school trustee to take?"

"I did as I thought best!" snapped the storekeeper.

"Very good! I called on you this morning at your store, Mr. Gunten, but found that you were absent. I desired to see you, and hear your version of this affair. You are aware, I believe, that I am the superintendent despatched from Kootenay to inquire into this matter. I have seen Mr. Lawless, one of the trustees, and I have called upon Mr. Grimm. There is not the slightest doubt, in my mind, Mr. Gunten, that you discharged Miss Meadows, against Mr. Lawless' objections, from personal motives which had nothing to do with her conduct here as headmistress."

"Sir!" spluttered Mr. Gunten.

"You engaged a new headmaster, who agreed to take back your son, whom Miss Meadows had turned out of the school for rascally conduct. Where is the man? Let him speak for himself."

"He's gone, sir!" said Frank Richards. "He says he's had enough of us, and he's resigned and cleared off. He doesn't seem to like us, somehow."

The superintendent smiled slightly. But his face became severe again at once.

"That simplifies the matter," he said. "Mr. Gunten, your conduct during this affair is a plain proof that you are not fit to hold the position of school trustee. I am informed that the ruffians you employed would have done serious injury here, even to risking the lives of the boys, but for the interference of the cattle-men from the Lawless Ranch. The whole affair is due to your desire to get rid of a schoolmistress who refused to allow your son to defy all the rules of the school. That is my firm opinion, and that is what I shall report to the authorities."

Mr. Gunten did not answer; he was too enraged to speak.

But for the strike in the school, his measures would have met with complete success.

But he knew that his methods would not bear a close inquiry from the authorities, and having failed to put down the rebellion in time, he knew that the game was up, so Dr. Macfarlane's verdict did not surprise him.

The superintendent waited a moment, and as the storekeeper did not reply he went on:

"It is my intention to ask Miss Meadows to resume her position here, pending an official inquiry, and her formal reinstatement. That she will be reinstated in all honour I can guarantee."

"Hurray!" ejaculated Bob Lawless.

The superintendent turned to the rebels, whose faces expressed the most profound satisfaction.