

STARTS "THE BOYS WHO CAUGHT THE KAISER!" STARTS
NEXT WEEK! NEXT WEEK!

The BOYS' FRIEND 1^d/₂

THE "PENNY POPULAR" WILL REAPPEAR ON JANUARY 24th! See Inside!

No. 917. Vol. XIX. New Series.]

THREE HALFPENCE.

[Week Ending January 4th, 1919.

The 1st Chapter.

The Schoolboy Captives.

"Oh, dear!" Tubby Muffin sighed loud and long. The fat junior was sitting on the floor of a bare and cheerless attic. There were neither chairs nor tables in the room, and the only light which entered the place came through a small skylight in the roof. But Tubby Muffin was not the only occupant of the attic. In the far corner stood Jimmy Silver & Co., the Fistical Four of Rookwood. Their puckered brows told of deep thought. Apparently the Rookwood chums were discussing a very serious matter, to judge by their faces. At any rate, they were too engrossed to pay any attention to Tubby Muffin. This annoyed the fat junior, and prompted him to give them a withering look. "Oh, dear!" he sighed once again, in a much louder voice this time. Jimmy Silver turned round and glared at Muffin. "Shurrup, porpoise!" he said brusquely. "But, Jimmy, old man—" "Can't you see we're busy?" demanded Jimmy Silver. "Y-y-yes," faltered Tubby Muffin. "B-b-but can't we get out of this rotten hole?" "We're trying to think of a wheeze, fathead!" Tubby Muffin snorted with disgust. "If you ask me, it's time you thought of one!" he said snappishly. "Well, we haven't!" snapped Arthur Edward Lovell irritably. "I'm blowed if I'd let you into the wheeze if I thought of one!" "Why—" "You deserve to remain here for making such a row!" said Lovell. "Stop grunting, and let us go on thinking!" "But—but I'm hungry!" sighed the fat junior. "You'll have to remain hungry!" "S-s-s-supposing I starve?" "Well, suppose you do?" "I—I—I may die!" "What of it?" said Lovell sarcastically. "Everybody has to die some day, you know." "Oh, dear!" groaned Tubby Muffin dismally. "This is a beastly hole! I wish I'd never come here!" And the fat junior was not the only one who wished he were somewhere else. Jimmy Silver and his chums—Lovell, Raby, and Newcome—had as much reason to wish they had never entered the room in which they were at present confined. The previous day the juniors had departed from Rookwood for the Christmas vacation. They had taken the train for Lexham, where Jimmy Silver's house was situated, and where they had intended to spend the holiday. On the way, however, the train had been snowed up, and they had been forced to walk the last eight to ten miles. They had arrived to within a short distance of Lexham, when, in passing through a wood, they had come across a man being chased by a gorilla. The animal had taken the man in his arms, and had made tracks towards a fairly large white house. The strange happening had considerably puzzled the Rookwood chums, and they had made their way to the house for the purpose of elucidating the peculiar occurrence. They had been admitted by a most affable old gentleman, named Markwick. After treating the juniors in a most genial manner, Markwick had offered to let them see his gorilla, explaining to them that the man the animal had attacked in the woods was a relation of his who suffered from delusions, and that it was necessary he should be kept under control. Lovell, Raby, and Newcome accepted the explanation, but Jimmy Silver had been somewhat sceptical. Nevertheless, when the man offered to allow them to see his pet gorilla, whom he called by the name of Peter, Jimmy Silver fell in with the suggestion. Markwick had led them to an attic, which could only be entered through a trapdoor in the ceiling of what was apparently the top floor. Once they had passed through the opening, and had entered the attic, Markwick had quickly shut the trapdoor and bolted it. To say that the Rookwood chums were surprised was to put it mildly. They had been simply dumbfounded;

The Mystery of the White House!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Tale of Jimmy Silver & Co., by OWEN CONQUEST.



THE IMPRISONED JUNIORS! WILL THEY ESCAPE?

"Dotty people don't have any motives," said Lovell, with an air of wisdom. "They do things for no purpose at all, and—" "I—I say, Lovell, old man," interposed Tubby Muffin, rising to his feet, "s-s-surely you don't really think that rotter is barmy?" "Pretty sure of it." Tubby Muffin groaned. "Th-then he may come up here and—and murder us!" he faltered. "There's no knowing," replied Lovell, with a serious air. "These dotty chaps are fond of doing things like that." "Oh!" "There's one thing, porpoise, he's bound to start on you first!" "M-m-m-me?" "Oh, rather!" said Lovell. "Dotty people who commit murders always attack fat people, you know, and—" "Oh! Murder! Thieves! Help!" shrieked Tubby Muffin in despair. "Knock off, Tubby, you idiot!" growled Jimmy Silver impatiently. "But, Jimmy, old man, s-s-supposing he—" "I'm not supposing anything," said Jimmy Silver. "Can't you see that Lovell's been pulling your leg?" "Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Arthur Edward Lovell, as he gazed at the scared expression on the fat junior's face. Tubby Muffin gave him a withering look. "You rotter!" he exclaimed. "You ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourself!" "Go hon!" "I might have died from shock, and then—" "Well, it would have served you right," said Lovell. "You shouldn't be such a frightened idiot. You're no worse off than we are." "I know, but—" "Shut up, then, and help us to think of a wheeze for getting out of this hole!" "Oh, certainly!" said Tubby Muffin, wrinkling his brows. "I—I— Look here, suppose we make a hole in the wall." "How the dickens can we do that?" "Quite easily," said the fat junior. "We've all got penknives, and—" "Fathead!" snorted Lovell disparagingly. "We want to get out to-day, not in a year's time!" "But we could make a hole very quickly if we worked hard!" insisted Tubby Muffin. "Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Jimmy Silver. "I can see you working hard—I don't think!" "You won't adopt my wheeze, then?" "Another time, Tubby, old bean," said Jimmy Silver. "If the worst fails we might. For the present, I think we might bang away on this blessed trapdoor, and try and attract old Markwick's attention." "That's not a bad idea," said Lovell. "Well, stamp, then!" Stamp! The helpless juniors jumped on the trapdoor for all they were worth. They made a most awful din, but they were not in the mood to worry about a little noise. For fully ten minutes they kept the stamping up. Then Lovell stepped aside, breathing heavily from the exertion. "Come on, porpoise!" he said, as he caught sight of Tubby Muffin gazing in the direction of the skylight. "It's time you took a turn." "Oh, certainly, Lovell!" said the fat junior. "Well, buck up, then!" "I—I— Look!" Tubby Muffin pointed in the direction of the skylight. "What the dickens—" "There's somebody moving up there," said Muffin. "I saw him walk across a minute ago!" "Oh, rats!" "I'm sure I did!" said the fat junior. "He— Look! There's somebody opening the skylight!" Jimmy Silver and the others stopped stamping immediately, and stared in the direction of the roof. Their hearts beat heavily as the skylight was raised slowly. Next instant the bearded face of Silas Markwick, the man who had imprisoned them in that dreary attic, appeared in the opening. There was a very pleasant smile on his face. "Good-morning, boys!" he said affably. "You rotter!" exclaimed Lovell hotly.

(Continued on next page.)

but, think as they would, they could not discover a means of escape. They had been compelled to remain hungry, and stay in the musty, dimly-lit attic all night. It was now morning, but still there was no hope of their getting away. "Surely that old rotter won't leave

us here to starve?" remarked Lovell dolefully. "Goodness knows!" said Jimmy Silver, with a shake of the head. "But what the dickens did he want to shut us up here for?" "No good asking me a question like that," said Lovell.

"It wouldn't surprise me if Markwick was off his chump," said Newcome. "I must say I didn't like the look about his eyes." "Neither did I," agreed Jimmy Silver. "But what the merry dickens can his motive be?" "Ask me another!" said Newcome.



The Mystery of the White House!

(Continued from the previous page.)

"Why the dickens don't you let us out of this rotten hole?"

"I'm afraid I can't!" said the man, still smiling genially. "You see, I've lost the key, and—"

"What does that matter?"

"I can't undo the trapdoor, and—"

"Why, you don't want a key!" snapped Lovell. "The trapdoor is locked by a bolt."

"No, no," said Markwick, with a shake of the head. "It requires a key to unlock the door. I can't remember where I put the key. I would be only too pleased to let you out if I could."

"Well, how long do you intend to keep us here?"

"I really don't know," said the man. "I'm going back now to make a more thorough search for the key."

"You old fool!" roared Lovell angrily. "Haven't I told you that you don't want a key? I believe you're keeping us here for a purpose!"

"Dear, dear!" muttered Markwick, frowning seriously. "You misjudge me, my boy. But never mind; I bear no malice." The old man reached back, and held forth a fairly large parcel. "You see, I do not intend to let you starve. Here is some food for you."

The parcel dropped to the floor with a thud, and Tubby Muffin fastened on to it immediately.

"I will leave you now, my boys," said Silas Markwick, beginning to withdraw from the opening in the roof.

"Look here!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "Why don't you get an axe and break down the trapdoor? You—"

Jimmy Silver broke off abruptly, for the face of Silas Markwick had disappeared from the skylight.

For a few moments the two juniors were too dumfounded to speak.

Tubby Muffin, however, had opened the parcel, and was devouring some of the contents.

It was the munching of his jaws which attracted the surprised chums.

"Well, I'm blown—" began Jimmy Silver.

Lovell did not waste time in words; he pushed the fat junior unceremoniously aside.

"You fat burler!" he exclaimed wrathfully. "Just like you to start scoffing the grub!"

"Ow! Yow! My head! Groooogh!" roared Tubby Muffin, picking himself up from the floor.

"Come on, you fellows!" said Lovell. "We might just as well tuck in!"

And the others promptly "tucked in."

The 2nd Chapter.

Sympathy for Tubby Muffin.

"Well, I don't think much of this!"

It was Arthur Edward Lovell who uttered the remark.

Lovell had opened the parcel, to find that it contained several pieces of bread, a fairly large piece of cheese, and two or three bottles of lemonade.

"Beggars can't be choosers, you know!" said Jimmy Silver cheerfully. "Better wire in and make the best of it."

"Look here, Jimmy, old man," said Tubby Muffin, seating himself in the middle of the juniors. "That's my parcel!"

"Oh, rats!"

"That old Johnny is going to bring you fellows another parcel."

"How the dickens do you know?"

"I'm sure. I—"

"Draw it mild, Fatty!" said Newcome. "This is for the lot of us!"

"It isn't!" snapped Tubby Muffin. "It's mine; and I'm jolly well going to have— Ow! Yow! Yoooooop!"

Lovell rapped the fat junior on the knuckles with a lemonade bottle.

"Serves you right!" he said. "You'll have an equal share, and no more. But if you don't behave yourself you won't get that!"

"I—I—"

"Are you going to shut up?"

"Look here—"

"If you say another word you sha'n't have a smell of cheese, let alone a bite!" said Lovell threateningly.

Tubby Muffin said no more; he was not too obtuse to realise that further argument would lose him his share of the food.

The juniors started upon their slender meal, and began to discuss their unfortunate predicament once again.

"I wish I knew what that rotter's game was!" remarked Lovell thoughtfully.

"So do I!" said Jimmy Silver. "And I'd like to know who the chap really is that that beast of a gorilla collared in the wood yesterday."

"You—you don't believe Markwick's yarn, then?"

"No, I don't!" said Jimmy Silver firmly. "He said that the man's name was Aubrey Mackenzie, and that he was dotty, and had to be kept under control."

"That's right."

"Well, I don't believe anything of the kind!" said Jimmy Silver. "I believe that it's Markwick who's dotty, and that he's keeping the other chap here by compulsion."

"What ever should he do that for?"

"I can't answer that question," said Jimmy Silver slowly. "But—"

"Perhaps he keeps that gorilla to look after the man," suggested Raby. "He seemed jolly glad when the brute returned with Mackenzie yesterday."

"That's true," said Jimmy Silver, frowning portentously.

"But why should he keep us here?" asked Raby.

"Goodness knows!" said Jimmy Silver. "Because he's mad, I expect."

"He may have been afraid we might have told the police of what we saw here," suggested Lovell.

Jimmy Silver looked up at once.

"That's more than likely," he said. "But—but— My hat! He may keep us here till Domesday then!"

"Great Caesar!"

"Well, it's no good brooding over it," said Jimmy Silver, smiling. "We shall have to think of a way out somehow. I wonder whether we could get out through that skylight?"

"If you can jump a dozen feet you might!" said Lovell sarcastically.

"Fathead!" snorted Jimmy Silver. "I wasn't thinking of jumping."

"Well, how the dickens—"

"We might manage to get up to it by standing on one another's shoulders."

"By Jove!"

"It isn't much good trying it now, though."

"Why not?"

"For the simple reason, old son, that we might be spotted," said Jimmy Silver sagely. "We shall have to wait until tonight before we do anything."

"Good bizney!" said Lovell enthusiastically. "I reckon we shall be able to manage that all right. It'll be a job for the last one to get through."

"We'll work it somehow."

"Of course, we can leave Muffin behind," said Lovell, with a glance at the fat junior. "You won't mind staying behind, will you, porpoise?"

"Oh, won't I?" growled Muffin. "If you chaps are going to get out, you jolly well aren't going to leave me behind!"

"But you'll be able to have our lot of grub," said Jimmy Silver. "Markwick is almost bound to drop another parcel down to-morrow morning."

"I don't want his grub!" said the fat junior. "I—I thought I should have been tucking into roast turkey by this time, Jimmy."

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Jimmy Silver. "Who told you you would get turkey at my place?"

"Well, I should think your gov'nor would get a turkey for Christmas Day," said Muffin. "Christmas is nothing without a turkey."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose there would be a Christmas-pudding, too?"

"Almost sure to be."

"And plenty of nuts?"

"A few."

"What about apples and oranges?"

"Plenty of those, I expect," said Jimmy Silver, grinning. "Some chocolates, too, and buns and cakes and grapes—"

"Oh, dear!" sighed Tubby Muffin at the thought of what he was missing.

"At any rate," said Jimmy Silver, "there's bound to be a better spread than last year. You'll enjoy yourself, Tubby, when you get there."

Tubby Muffin groaned in anguish.

"I—I shall never get there!" he moaned. "And it's all through you fellows. If—"

"Through us?"

"Yes; if you hadn't followed that

beastly gorilla we should have been at the Priory by now!"

"That is quite likely," said Jimmy Silver. "But we had to follow the brute!"

"What ever for?"

"To see what the beast was doing with that poor chap Markwick called Mackenzie," replied Jimmy Silver.

"And what have you found out—nothing!" said Tubby Muffin indignantly. "Better far have not interfered, and gone straight on to the Priory. Think of what we should have been doing now!"

"We should have been skating on the pond, I expect," said Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, would we?" said the fat junior, with emphasis. "More likely been tucking into turkey and ham, and—"

"Fathead!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "To-day isn't Christmas Day. It's to-morrow, and—"

"You don't mean to say your gov'nor would have let Christmas Eve go by without giving us a taste of turkey?"

"I'll give you a taste of my boot in a minute if you don't shut up!" said Lovell threateningly.

"But—"

"Go and eat coke, you fat pig!" said Lovell angrily.

"But, Lovell, old man, don't you wish we'd gone straight to the Priory?"

"I wish we'd left you behind at Rookwood!" said Lovell firmly. "You're more nuisance than you're worth! We're in a quite bad enough mess, without you making things worse!"

Tubby Muffin gave Lovell a withering look.

"All right," he said. "I'll have my own back for this! I'll ask Jimmy to my place next Christmas, and I'll see you hanged first before I ask you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Lovell.

"You don't know what it's like to come to my place," went on the fat junior fervently. "You'd meet all my wealthy relations, and—"

"Are they anything like you, porpoise?"

"Of course they're like me!"

"Well, for goodness' sake don't give me an invitation!" said Lovell. "I'm blown if I want to meet any more porpoises! One is quite enough for me!"

"Look here, Lovell—"

"Br-r-r!" snorted Lovell expressively.

Tubby Muffin gave him one indignant look, and then proceeded to curl himself up in a corner of the room.

"What's the time, Jimmy?" asked Raby.

Jimmy Silver looked at his watch.

"Eleven o'clock," he answered.

"Phew!" whistled Lovell. "That means that we've got to wait six or seven hours before we try to escape!"

"Can't be helped!" said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "Better keep smiling, and hope for the best. I don't know how we're going to get off the roof once we get there."

"Let's get on the roof first," said Lovell wisely. "We can think about getting off afterwards."

"That's true!"

"I say, Jimmy, old man!" said Tubby Muffin, turning a pleading look in the direction of the four chums.

"Hallo!" said Jimmy Silver. "I thought you'd gone to sleep!"

"How can I sleep when I'm so beastly cold?" demanded the fat junior, shivering.

"I should have thought you could have slept anywhere," replied Jimmy Silver. "You've got enough fat on you to keep you warm!"

"Well, I reckon you fellows ought to get a fire somehow!"

"How can we?"

"Get that rotter Markwick to bring us some wood and coal."

"Idiot!" said Lovell disparagingly. "How are we going to get at Markwick to ask him?"

"Bang on the trapdoor," said Tubby

Muffin. "He didn't bring that grub up until you banged on the floor. If you do it again—"

"Well, I don't feel like doing any more banging," said Lovell. "You can, if you like."

"I'm too c-c-c-cold!" shivered the fat junior. "Perhaps Jimmy will—"

"Jimmy jolly well won't!" said Jimmy Silver at once.

"But—"

"I'm like you, Tubby, too c-c-c-cold!" said Jimmy Silver, mocking the fat junior.

"You do it, Raby, old man!" said Tubby Muffin pleadingly.

"I'm too c-c-c-cold!" stuttered Raby, his teeth chattering.

"Perhaps Newcome will—"

"I c-c-c-can't!" murmured Newcome. "M-m-my feet are l-l-l-ice!"

Tubby Muffin snorted with rage.

"You're all a lot of unsympathetic rotters!" he said angrily. "If I die, it'll be all your fault! Just think what the judge will say when you're accused of causing my death!"

"Just think!" sighed Lovell.

"He'll bound you down as a lot of cold-blooded murderers, and—"

"Oh, knock off, Tubby; you make me sick!" snorted Lovell. "If you don't keep quiet we won't take you away from here when we escape!"

"You wouldn't dare to—"

"Wouldn't we!" said Lovell. "You wait and see, old bean!"

Tubby Muffin evidently thought it best to wait and see, for he leaned back against the wall, and closed his eyes.

A few minutes later deep snores came from the fat junior.

Apparently Tubby Muffin's predicament was not weighing so heavily on his mind, after all.

The 3rd Chapter. An Attempt to Escape.

"I say, Jimmy—"

"Shush!"

"But—"

"Be quiet, fathead!"

Tubby Muffin had awakened from his slumbers, to find Jimmy Silver & Co. standing in the centre of the attic.

The room was dark, save for a flickering glimmer which came from a candle standing in the fireplace.

The fat junior opened his eyes in astonishment as he watched the Classical chums.

"I say, Jimmy," he said, lowering his voice to a whisper, "what are you doing?"

"We're going to try and escape now," answered Jimmy Silver softly.

"Escape!" muttered Tubby Muffin. "But—but we've had no dinner or tea yet!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fistical Four could not repress a faint chuckle.

"Is it late?" asked Tubby Muffin quietly.

"About six o'clock," answered Jimmy Silver. "You've been asleep for over six hours."

"Oh, dear!" sighed the fat junior miserably. "I—I suppose you've had your dinner and tea?"

"We haven't," said Jimmy Silver. "Markwick hasn't shown himself again."

"That's all rot!" said Tubby Muffin disdainfully. "I bet he brought you a big bag of grub, and—"

"He didn't!"

"Bosh!" snapped the fat junior. "You can't take me in like that! Now, where's my share of the grub? I know you've got it!"

"Don't be a silly idiot, Tubby!"

"Where's my grub?" demanded Tubby Muffin, in a louder voice.

Lovell strode over to the fat junior, and held his fist threateningly before Muffin's plump face.

"Look here, you burbling chump!" he

said wrathfully. "If you breathe another word, we'll leave you here!"

"I say—"

"Right!" said Lovell quickly. "It's settled, isn't it, you fellows? We leave the porpoise here."

"What-ho!"

Tubby Muffin rose to his feet, a concerned expression on his face.

"I—I say, Lovell, old man," he stammered, "surely you d-d-don't mean—"

"It's your own fault," said Lovell relentlessly. "If you'd kept quiet, as I told you to, everything would have been all right."

"I will keep quiet now, really I will!"

"It's too late now!"

"Oh, dear! I—I shall shriek!" declared the fat junior. "I'll make the very dickens of a row if you leave me here. I'll yell! I'll—"

"You do, that's all!" said Lovell belligerently. "Make a sound, and I'll give you the biggest bumping you've had in your life!"

"Well, take me with you then."

"I'm hanged if—"

"Oh, let him come!" said Jimmy Silver sympathetically. "I know he's a blessed idiot, but we can't leave him here to the mercy of that scoundrel Markwick!"

"Well, I would!" said Lovell emphatically.

"That's because you've got no finer feelings, Lovell," said Tubby Muffin reproachfully.

"My hat!" roared Lovell. "I'll slaughter you! I'll—"

"Lovell, you fathead!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, dragging his wrathful chum back. "You'll muck up everything if you kick up that shindy."

"Well, the burbling chump shouldn't make—"

"Rats!" snapped Jimmy Silver impatiently. "Leave Muffin alone. We've got something far more important to do than to fool about with him!"

"Oh, all right!" said Lovell resignedly.

"How are we going to manage this bizney?" asked Newcome.

"The strongest one of us will have to stand at the bottom," said Jimmy Silver thoughtfully. "Then, if somebody else stands on his shoulders, and holds on to the roof, the others can climb up to the top."

"Well, you had better be at the bottom, Jimmy, old son," said Lovell.

"No fear!" said Jimmy Silver. "You're stronger than I am, and—"

"I'm not," said Lovell immediately. "You'd far better take on the job yourself. You're only wasting time by arguing."

"Right-ho!" said Jimmy Silver, with a grin. "Anything for a peaceful life. Now then, you climb on to my shoulders, Lovell."

"Good bizney!"

Jimmy Silver stood in the centre of the room, just beneath the skylight.

Lovell climbed quickly on to his shoulders, and, pushing the skylight open, took a firm grip on the roof.

"Now, who's coming up first?" asked Jimmy Silver, in a low voice.

"H-h-hadn't I better be first?" faltered Tubby Muffin. "You see, I'm a bit heavier than the others, and—"

"All the more reason why you should be last," said Lovell, with emphasis.

"I wasn't talking to you, Lovell!" snapped the fat junior.

"Stop arguing," muttered Jimmy Silver, "and hurry up! I can't stand Lovell's weight on my shoulders for a week. Come on, Tubby!"

Tubby Muffin quickly placed his hands on Jimmy Silver's shoulders, and started on the difficult climb.

Incidentally he stuck his foot in Jimmy Silver's stomach.

"Ow! Gerraway, you silly idiot! Yow-ow-ow!"

"Look out!" said Lovell, as Jimmy Silver swayed backwards and forwards. "You'll have me over if you're not careful."

Jimmy Silver quickly steadied himself, and looked at Newcome and Raby.

"Lend him a hand, you fellows," he said. "He's too fat to climb up by himself."

"I'm not fat, Jimmy. I—"

"Buck up, porpoise!" said Newcome, taking a grip on Tubby Muffin's legs. "Now then, up you go!"

This time the fat junior rose more easily.

His feet rested on Jimmy Silver's shoulders, and then came the task of climbing up Lovell to the roof.

The fat junior clutched Lovell round the neck, in an endeavour to reach the roof.

"Go easy," muttered Lovell, "and look out where you put your blessed feet!"

"Look here, Lovell, if you're going to make a— Ow! Yarooogh!"

"Shut up, Muffin, you fool!" cried Newcome. "What do you mean by making that frightful row?"

"Ow! Lovell punched me in the ribs! Yow-ow-ow!"

"Serves you right!" said Lovell unsympathetically. "You shouldn't have jabbed your foot in my stomach."

"I couldn't help it."

"Well, have another shot at it, and if you don't get up this time, I'll see that you're left here by yourself."

The threat was sufficient for the fat junior.

By a strenuous effort he managed to climb on to Lovell's shoulder.

Then he gripped hold of the roof, and by means of another big effort he passed through the skylight.

"Now then, you fellows, don't you take so much time as that fat idiot," whispered Lovell.

Newcome and Raby took nowhere near so much time.

They were more agile than the rotund Tubby, and in less than five minutes they were standing by the side of Tubby Muffin on the flat roof.

Lovell was the next to pass through the opening.

He looked back at Jimmy Silver, now

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."

GREAT NEWS!

Just ever nine months ago I was compelled, with deep regret, to make the announcement that the "Penny Popular" would suspend publication. Readers of the "Penny Popular" will remember that I promised to continue publication at the earliest opportunity. From letters which I have received I know that you have all waited patiently for the good old "Penny Pop." to reappear. You will not have to wait much longer, for on

JANUARY 24th

you will have the unbounded pleasure of going to your newsgate and asking him for a copy of the "Penny Popular." On this date the paper will appear in all its old glory. There will be a long, complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co., a splendid story of Tom Merry & Co., and, most important of all to readers of the BOYS' FRIEND, there will be a grand yarn, dealing with the early adventures of Jimmy Silver & Co., and describing how Jimmy Silver came to Rookwood.

Another splendid attraction in this particular issue will consist of a

MAGNIFICENT PLATE

of Billy Bunter, which will be given away with the number dated January 24th. In the following issue another Free Plate of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy will be presented. But more about this next week.

There is bound to be a big demand for

the "Penny Popular" on January 24th, and only those readers who order in advance will be sure of getting copies.

NEXT MONDAY'S SPLENDID NEW SERIAL.

In the next issue of the BOYS' FRIEND you will have the pleasure of reading the first instalment of our new serial, entitled:

"THE BOYS WHO CAUGHT THE KAISER!"

By Duncan Storm.

Our present serial, the concluding instalment of which appears this week, has, without doubt, been one of the most popular stories which has ever appeared in the BOYS' FRIEND. You have all, I am sure, revelled in the exciting adventures which have befallen the boys who beat the Kaiser, but you will enjoy still more the adventures they go through in their endeavours to catch the Kaiser.

In this magnificent new serial you will meet all your old friends. Captain Handyman and Cy Sprague will be there, and so will Lal Tata, Dick Dorrington, Chip Prodders, Skeleton, and the rest of the merry band. Horace, the goat, and Gus, the crocodile, will also be very prominent. Horace, in fact, plays a very leading part in Instalment One. He breaks loose in a big London hotel, and— Well, I must not tell you any

more. I want the first instalment to come as a great surprise to you.

"TUBBY'S LITTLE TRICK!"

By Owen Conquest.

In next Monday's splendid tale of Jimmy Silver you will find much to amuse you. When I tell you that Tubby Muffin is scheming to get money, and then you think of the second and third words in the title of our next story, and connect them with the fat junior, I do not think I need say much more to prove to you that the yarn will be a most amusing one.

"A SCHOOLBOY'S TREACHERY!"

By Martin Clifford.

Kern Gunten, the rascally Swiss, plays a leading part in our next story of the chums of Cedar Creek. I might say, however, that he does nothing to his credit. In fact— I was just going to tell you what Gunten does. On second thoughts I will let that remain a secret until next Monday.

"BARKER, THE BOUNDER!"

By Herbert Britton.

I am sure every reader of the BOYS' FRIEND has admired Bob Travers for the manner in which he has stood by Jack Jackson. Bob has had to suffer for his loyalty to his chum, but he suffers still more in our next instalment.

YOUR EDITOR.

the sole occupant of the attic, and grinned ruefully.

"My giddy aunt!" he muttered. "How the dickens are we going to get you up, Jimmy?"

"That's easily done," replied Jimmy Silver. "Knot several handkerchiefs together, and if they're not long enough, you might tie a couple of coats to the handkerchiefs."

"Good!" said Lovell, and he acquainted his chums on the roof with the scheme.

Each of them brought their handkerchiefs into view, and proceeded to knot them together.

Then Lovell reached through the skylight, and held the improvised rope for Jimmy Silver to climb up.

Jimmy lost no time. Climbing hand over hand, he was soon in line with the ceiling of the room.

To take a grip on the skylight, and to pass through on to the roof, proved quite a simple task.

"What are we going to do now?" asked Lovell softly, as he gazed across the flat roof, which was covered with a white mantle of snow.

"Follow me," whispered Jimmy Silver; and very cautiously he led the way.

The juniors' hearts beat quickly as they followed the Classical captain, for it was not a pleasant experience exploring that snow-covered roof.

Not a sound came to their ears, and that, coupled with the darkness, gave them very queer feelings.

Tubby Muffin was positively frightened, and could have cried aloud.

But even the fat junior was not too obtuse to realise that absolute silence was necessary to enable them to escape.

Jimmy Silver crept noiselessly across the roof, gazing to right and left, in the hope of discovering some means for getting to the ground.

But although he came across several skylights, he discovered, to his disappointment, that they were all locked from within.

"Looks as though we shall have to go back," remarked Newcome, in an undertone.

"I don't know," said Jimmy Silver quietly. "We haven't finished exploring yet. We—Hallo! What's that light ahead?"

A ray of light had suddenly appeared some distance ahead, apparently from a skylight.

Several chimney-pots jutted out midway, however, and the whole of the skylight was not discernible.

"You fellows wait here a minute," whispered Jimmy Silver. "I'm going to see where that light comes from."

With extreme cautiousness, Jimmy Silver crept ahead.

He reached the chimney-pots, and disappeared round the other side.

His chums waited patiently for him in the rear.

Their eyes were fixed on the light in front of them, but they were not prepared for what happened next.

Suddenly the light vanished.

Next instant a startled cry pierced the night-air, and the Rookwood chums were struck spellbound at the sight of Jimmy Silver racing towards them.

Jimmy Silver was one of the pluckiest fellows at Rookwood, but there was a look of fear on his usually sunny countenance as he raced forward.

"What's the matter?" said Lovell, in broken tones.

"Get back!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, as he came up with his chums. "That beastly gorilla is coming after me. Run for all you're worth!"

The chums rushed pell-mell in the direction of the skylight, through which they had made their escape from the attic.

The heavy breathing of the gorilla came plainly to their ears, and the padding of the huge brute's feet was all too plainly discernible.

The juniors realised that the animal was gaining on them, and they put on a spurt.

Even Tubby Muffin, although he screamed at the top of his voice, managed to keep up with the others.

Jimmy Silver, however, was the first to arrive at the skylight.

"Better let Tubby go through," he said. "He'll be softer to fall on."

"I say, J-J-J-Jimmy, you won't—"

"Buck up!" said Jimmy Silver impatiently. "You'll be chewed to death if that brute gets hold of you!"

"Ow! Yow-ow-ow-ow!" yelled Tubby Muffin, in fear.

But next moment there was a loud thud as the fat junior fell through the opening on to the floor of the attic.

The gorilla was very close now.

Jimmy Silver & Co. heard him grunting savagely, and, without stopping to argue who should go first, they fell through the skylight.

Lovell came down just as Tubby Muffin was rising to his feet.

"Ow! Murder! Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

Tubby Muffin uttered a fiendish yell as Lovell landed on his back, sending him to the floor again.

He yelled louder still, however, when Newcome sprawled on top of Lovell, and Jimmy Silver and Raby piled on top of Newcome.

The five juniors lay in a heap on the floor.

Tubby Muffin shrieked frantically, but he could not be blamed for that, considering he was bearing the weight of all the others.

"Ow!" he yelled. "You're breaking my back, Lovell! Gerroff! I—Ow! Groooooooh!"

Jimmy Silver was the first to rise to his feet.

The others quickly followed, leaving Tubby Muffin lying in a helpless position.

"Oh, dear!" groaned the fat junior. "You've killed me! I shall never walk again! I—"

"Don't talk such rot!" snapped Lovell, breathing heavily. "You're all right!"

"I'm not!" wailed Muffin. "I feel real bad! I—Ow-ow-ow-ow!"

The fat junior uttered another piercing shriek.

He had happened to look up at the roof of the attic, and his face was ghastly pale at the sight that met his gaze.

For, revealed in the opening, was the large, ugly, hairy head of the gorilla.

"Gr-r-r-r-r!"

A deep, rumbling grunt came from the mouth of the beast, and he reached out one paw, evidently with the desire to clutch at the juniors.

"Keep him off!" wailed Tubby Muffin. "Don't let him get near me! Don't—"

"Shut up, you frightened idiot!" exclaimed Lovell.

"But keep him outside!" babbled the fat junior. "Hit him on the head! Throw something at him!"

"He's all right!" said Jimmy Silver consolingly.

"He isn't. He—"

"Don't be such a silly ass, Tubby!" said Jimmy Silver firmly. "Can't you see that the brute is too big to get through the opening?"

"He may squeeze through."

"He can't! He— There you are! He's gone now," said Jimmy Silver, as the animal disappeared from the opening.

"Pull yourself together, Tubby! Act like a man, for goodness' sake!"

"Oh, I'm all right!" said Tubby, as he clambered to his feet. "I'm really quite brave, you know. Of course, I was a bit out of breath, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled the juniors. "You mean you were in a blue funk!"

"No, I—"

"Knock off for a bit, old bean!" said Jimmy Silver, somewhat irritably. "I've just about had enough of you to last me for a time! You'd better try and think of another wheeze for getting away from here."

"Well, it's pretty certain that the first one has failed," remarked Lovell ruefully. "But who ever thought that beastly gorilla would have been hanging about?"

"We can consider ourselves jolly lucky to have escaped with our lives, I think," said Newcome. "I'm positive the brute is mad!"

"So am I!" agreed Jimmy Silver. "If we've got to get past him every time we try to escape, I guess we shall remain here till Domesday."

"I wonder what your guv'nor is doing, Jimmy?" said Lovell.

"Worried out of his life, I expect," said Jimmy Silver glumly. "But it can't be helped. I dare say they've had search-parties out, and they may come across our bags."

"Our bags?"

"Yes. Don't you remember we left them in the woods when we first saw the gorilla?"

"My hat! So we did."

"And then there's Mornington and Erroll," said Jimmy Silver hopefully. "They're due to arrive at my place tomorrow. They won't leave a stone unturned to try and find us."

"That's true," said Lovell. "I— Look here, Jimmy, one of us might hang about on the roof to-morrow in the hope of attracting attention."

"But supposing the gorilla—"

"It'll be quite easy to jump down again if that brute appears."

"Good!" said Jimmy Silver. "We'll do it. I'll go up and wave my handkerchief if I spot anybody below. I wonder we hadn't thought of the wheeze before."

And, feeling somewhat more hopeful, the juniors sat down on the floor to while away the hours of the night.

The 4th Chapter. Carrying Out the Plan.

"What ever can have happened to them?"

It was Mr. Silver, Jimmy's father, who made the remark, as he paced up and down the library at the Priory.

Christmas morning had dawned, and still there was no sign of the missing juniors.

Mr. Silver had inquired in all directions in the hope of receiving news of the Rookwood chums.

He had sent search-parties to scour the countryside, but they had not brought back the least bit of information that might lead to the discovery of the whereabouts of Jimmy Silver and the others.

Mr. Silver was in a quandary.

He was endeavouring to think of some means of getting on the track of the juniors, but a scheme failed to reveal itself to him.

"Master Mornington and Master Erroll to see you, sir!"

The butler appeared in the doorway.

Mr. Silver looked up.

"Show them in at once!" he said commandingly.

A moment later Mornington and Erroll, of the Classical Fourth at Rookwood, entered the library.

They started with surprise at sight of the set, anxious expression on Mr. Silver's face.

"Has Jimmy gone out, sir?" asked Erroll politely.

"I am very sorry to have to inform you that my son has not yet arrived here," said Mr. Silver quietly.

"Not arrived?" gasped Erroll.

"No," said Mr. Silver. "I understand that the train was snowed up about ten miles from here. They left the train, and, as far as I can gather, decided to walk the rest of the distance."

"Lovell and the others have not arrived, then?"

"No," said Mr. Silver, with a shake of the head. "I have inquired and searched in all directions, but not an atom of news can I obtain."

"By gad!" drawled Mornington. "This is amazin'! I wonder what has happened to them?"

"I have been wondering for more than a day," said Mr. Silver, with a sigh. "I am completely baffled. Never before have I been confronted with such a mystery."

Mornington gave Erroll a questioning look.

"Shall we have a search round, Kit, old man?" he asked.

"Oh, rather!" said Kit Erroll at once. "Let's trot along now."

"No, no!" said Mr. Silver quickly. "You must have something to eat first, my boys. I will order a meal to be laid for you, and then you are welcome to start on your search."

During the meal Mr. Silver explained to the juniors where the train had been snowed up, thus giving them some idea where to look for the missing fellows.

It was just past midday when they set out.

Snow was falling, but this troubled them little. They were too anxious about Jimmy Silver & Co. to worry about trifles like this.

They kept straight along the road to Mortham, the village at which the train had been snowed up.

They kept their eyes open for signs that might lead them to the whereabouts of their chums.

But not a single sign revealed itself to them.

At last they came to the edge of a thick wood.

"Better come through here, Kit," said Mornington. "They may have lost themselves, you know."

"Surely they could have found their way out somehow?" asked Erroll.

"My dear old man, haven't you ever heard of fellows walking round in a circle in trying to get out of a wood?" asked Morny.

"Yes; but we may do the same thing ourselves."

"I don't think so," said Mornington. "If I walk heavily we shall leave our

They were very faint, for fresh snow had fallen since they had been made.

Nevertheless, they were sufficiently plain to guide the two chums.

"Come on, Kit!" said Mornington. "We'd better follow these footprints. I reckon it won't be long before we find those silly duffers."

"I hope not, Morny," said Erroll, as he walked by the side of his chum.

They followed the footprints for a short distance, and at length came to an open space.

Looking across this, they observed a big, white house in the distance.

"By gad!" drawled Mornington. "This is gettin' more amazin' than ever!"

"What's the matter, Morny?"

"Can't you see that those footprints lead up to that house ahead?"

"By Jove!" said Erroll. "So they do. But—"

Kit Erroll broke off abruptly, for his eyes were fixed on the roof of that big white house.

Something was moving on the top of the house.

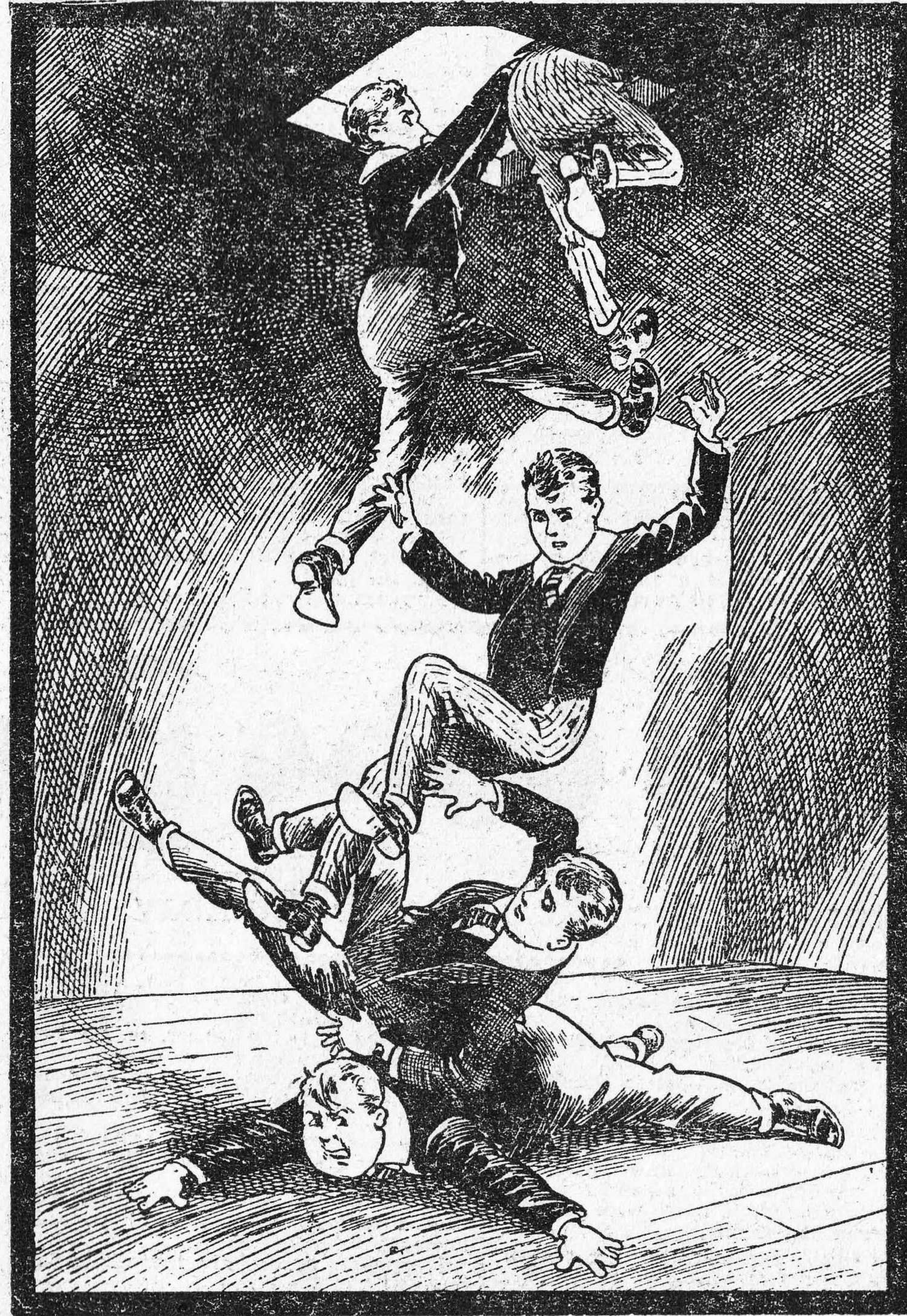
Mornington caught sight of it, too, and for a few moments the chums were too puzzled to speak.

It was Kit Erroll who broke the silence, however.

"What is that on the roof, Morny?" he asked.

"Looks to me like a human bein'," remarked Mornington. "I shouldn't wonder— By gad! It's a man, and— and— Look, he's coming closer!"

The figure had moved to the edge of the roof.



A WEIGHTY PROBLEM FOR TUBBY!

footprints in the snow, and it'll be quite easy to find our way back."

"You're quite right, Morny; lead on." Mornington walked into the wood, picking his way carefully through the trees.

The two chums had little idea which direction they were taking.

Nevertheless, they peered to right and left of them, in the hope of spotting footprints.

They must have walked a good half-mile, when Kit Erroll clutched his chum by the arm, and pointed ahead.

"Look, Morny!" he exclaimed; and as Mornington followed the direction of Erroll's outstretched hand, he, too, uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"By gad! This is astoundin'!"

Mornington had great cause to be astounded, for there in the snow, some twenty yards in front of them, lay four leather bags.

They were the bags belonging to Jimmy Silver & Co.

Erroll rushed up to them, and as he caught sight of the initials on them, and realised that they belonged to the missing juniors, a relieved expression came over his face.

"We're on the track with a vengeance now, Morny," he said.

"No doubt about it, Kit," replied Mornington cheerily. "But I wonder where Jimmy Silver and the others can have—"

Mornington paused, as he observed a number of footprints in the snow.

"Come on, Morny!" said Erroll, and he ran in the direction of the house.

As he did so the figure on the roof became clearer, and all of a sudden Erroll uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Look, Morny!" he cried. "Can't you recognise that figure?"

"By gad!" said Mornington. "It—it's Jimmy Silver. He's waving to us, and— and— Yell to him, Kit, old son!"

The two chums shouted at the top of their voices, and Jimmy Silver waved his hand in return.

Mornington and Erroll were within a few yards of the gates, when Jimmy Silver suddenly took to his heels, and disappeared from view.

Next instant the hairy shape of a gorilla came into view, and the two chums gazed at it open-mouthed.

"By gad!" exclaimed Mornington. "What the merry dickens is that gorilla doing there?"

"It beats me, Morny," said Erroll, frowning portentously. "Something mysterious is happening, but I'm going to find out all about it."

"How—"

"It's pretty evident to me that Jimmy Silver and the others are being kept there against their will."

"I agree with you there, but what the dickens was that gorilla doing on the roof?"

"We'll soon discover that," said Kit Erroll resolutely. "Come with me. I'm going to make inquiries at that white house."

"I'm with you."

Kit Erroll strode over to the gates of the White House, and rang the bell.

A moment later Silas Markwick shuffled along, a very genial smile on his face, a smile that Jimmy Silver & Co. had learned to distrust.

"Come to wish an old gentleman a happy Christmas, eh?" muttered the old man.

"Ahem!"

"Come inside, my dear boys!" said Markwick, opening the gates. "Silas Markwick is pleased to see anybody and everybody. Come along with me; I will get you something to eat."

"I guess we haven't come for anything to eat," said Mornington. "We—"

"Never mind; we will have a pleasant chat together," said Markwick affably. "I am all alone here, and it is very pleasant to see fresh faces."

"All alone?" gasped Erroll, aghast.

"Yes; I live here all by myself," said the man. They had reached the door of the house, and Markwick held it open for the chums to enter. "Mine is a miserable life," he added. "But there, beggars cannot be choosers. I don't grumble. Silas Markwick always took things as they came."

"Ahem!"

Mornington's brows were puckered, and he gave Kit Erroll a meaning look.

Erroll made a sign, signifying that he did not trust Silas Markwick.

Mornington promptly nodded his head to show that he was in agreement, and he resolved to tackle the man on the matter at once.

"Come in here, my dear boys," said Markwick genially, leading the way into the library, "and warm yourselves by the fire."

"Look here," said Mornington firmly. "We haven't got time to waste. You said just now that you lived here alone."

"That is true."

"Then what are our chums doing in the place?"

"Your chums?" ejaculated Markwick, looking extremely surprised. "I fail to understand what—"

"Rot!" exclaimed Mornington hotly. "I saw one of our friends standing on your roof only a few minutes ago."

"Dear, dear!" said the man, thoroughly shocked. "You must be dreaming. I am the sole occupant of this house, and—"

"I tell you you aren't!" said Morny, raising his voice. "What's more, there's a gorilla on the premises."

"A gorilla?"

"Yes," said Mornington, with an impatient gesture. "It was on the roof as we came along. It's no good your denying it, for we've seen the brute with our own eyes."

"Good gracious!" said the man, drawing away as though in fear. "Are—are you in your right senses, my dear boy? I am afraid—"

"Bosh!" snapped Mornington. "You're acting jolly well, old bean, but you can't delude us. Now, we haven't got any time to waste, so take us to our chums at once."

"But—but your chums are not here!"

Mornington stamped his feet in his anger.

"I tell you they are here, you artful old fossil!" he exclaimed. "What's more, I'm going to find them!"

"You may search the house with pleasure, my dear boy," said Markwick, rubbing his hands together. "I will show you every room, and you may inspect every inch of the house."

"You'd far better take us straight to our friends," said Erroll.

"But your friends are not here," insisted Markwick. "I cannot—"

"Cut the cackle, old bean!" said Morny impatiently. "We haven't got all day to spare."

Silas Markwick took the juniors over the house.

He allowed them to inspect every room, but not a sign of the missing juniors did they see.

The old man took care, however, not to take them to the full length of the top-most passage.

The two chums were not aware of this. It was such a rambling old house, and they went through so many passages, that they were inclined to think they had traversed some more than once.

"Are you satisfied, my dear boys?" asked Silas Markwick in kindly tones, when they returned to the library.

"I don't know," said Erroll meditatively. "You—"

"Oh, yes, we're quite satisfied, old nut!" said Mornington cheerily. "Thanks very much for showing us over the house. We'll give you a look in some other day. Cheerio!"

"Morny—" began Kit Erroll in protest; but he paused as Mornington winked at him.

He bid good-bye to the old man, and they both left the mysterious white house.

The Mystery of the White House!

(Continued from the previous page.)

The 5th Chapter.

An Amazing Discovery.

"I suppose Morny and Erroll have gone by this time," remarked Arthur Edward Lovell lugubriously.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were sitting on the floor of their miserable prison.

It was some time since Jimmy had waved to Mornington and Erroll from the roof, and darkness had fallen fully an hour before.

The captive juniors had brightened up wonderfully at the thought that Morny and Erroll might discover their prison and set them free.

But nothing had happened, and the hopes they had cherished of escaping from the attic were dashed to the ground.

Jimmy Silver shook his head sadly at Lovell's remarks.

"I'm afraid so," he said. "It was quite three hours ago that I spotted them making for the house."

"I expect that rotter Markwick told them some plausible tale," said Newcome dolorously. "If I get a chance to lay my hands on him I'll have no mercy on him!"

"Neither shall I!" agreed Lovell.

"I say, Jimmy, old man, don't you think—" began Tubby Muffin, stepping towards the Fistical Four.

"Shut up, porpoise!" snapped Lovell irritably. "We—What the dickens!"

Suddenly there had come the sound of a scuffle on the roof. The Rookwood juniors looked up at once.

They could see nothing, but the growling of the gorilla and a man's voice came plainly to their ears.

"My hat!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver in a startled voice. "There's that gorilla again!"

"There's a man up there, too!" said Lovell. "Surely the brute isn't attacking— By Jove, it may be that chap we saw in the woods the other day!"

"More than likely," said Jimmy Silver, "but— Look out!"

The juniors backed away as the feet of a man dropped through the skylight, to be followed quickly by the rest of his body.

Jimmy Silver leaped forward at once, with the intention of catching the man as he fell.

He grabbed at his feet, but the force at which the man was falling sent him sprawling to the floor.

But Jimmy had broken the man's fall, however, and, rising promptly to his feet, he bent over the new-comer, whom he recognised as the man they had seen in the woods.

The latter wore neither coat nor collar, and he was breathing heavily as he raised himself to his elbow.

"The brute!" he muttered hoarsely. "He nearly had me! He—"

The man paused as there came a low groan from the direction of the skylight.

The juniors looked upwards, and to their horror observed the gorilla trying his hardest to force his way through the aperture.

"Heave something at him!" muttered Jimmy Silver. "Take off your boots, you fellows, and biff them at the brute!"

"What-ho!"

The juniors quickly took off their boots, and with unerring aim hurled them at the huge, hairy brute.

Biff!

The boots landed in quick succession on the gorilla's face, causing him to grunt savagely.

He disappeared from view, to return an instant later, looking fiercer than ever.

But three more boots were hurled in his direction, hitting him full on the snout.

This time the animal vanished from view, and did not return.

"Good heavens!" muttered the man on the floor. "I—I never thought I should escape from that beast! But—but what are you boys doing here? Surely that scoundrel hasn't got you in his clutches as well?"

"Whom are you referring to?" asked Jimmy Silver, allowing the man to rest his head on his knee.

"Markwick—Silas Markwick!" said the man. "But—but didn't I see you in the woods the other day when—"

"That's right," said Jimmy Silver at once. "We saw that beastly gorilla carry you to the house, and, being somewhat puzzled, we followed. We asked Markwick what the brute was doing with you, and he said that you suffered from delusions."

"The scoundrel!" exclaimed the man hotly. "It is he who suffers from delusions. My name is Aubrey Mackenzie, and Markwick is my uncle. He is a wealthy man, and by rights all his property should come to me upon his death. His brain has been weak for years, and for some time he held the opinion that I was trying to bring about his death, in order to obtain control of his fortune."

"Great Scott!"

"Again and again I told him that I had no such intention," went on Aubrey Mackenzie. "But he would not believe me, and one day, when I called to see him, he shut me in a room, and has refused to allow me to leave ever since."

"The brute!" cried Jimmy Silver vehemently. "I suppose you were trying to escape the other day when we saw you?"

"Yes," said the man. "That is about the sixth time I have got away, but that beast of a gorilla has always colared me and brought me back. I have never given up hope of escaping, but now—"

"How long have you been here?" asked Lovell.

"I cannot say," replied Aubrey Mackenzie. "I have lost all count of time. What is the date to-day?"

Jimmy Silver smiled faintly. "To-day is Christmas Day," he said.

"Good heavens!" muttered the man. "Then I have been here twelve months! It was last Christmas Day that I came here. That scoundrel has kept me prisoner for twelve months! It has been a terrible time. He has kept me short of clothes and food, and—"

"Well, he hasn't been very generous to us," said Jimmy Silver. "I can see now why he wouldn't let us go."

"He was afraid you might tell the police what you had seen here," said the man. "The villain is off his head, I know, but he's very cute in some things. But, I say, have you tried to escape?"

"We made an attempt last night," explained Jimmy Silver reminiscently. "We got on to the roof, and then that brute of a gorilla chased us back here."

Aubrey Mackenzie shook his head sadly.

"It's always the way," he said. "You can't move an inch without finding that brute behind you! It almost seems that it's hopeless to try and escape."

"I don't know," said Jimmy Silver, slowly. "I was on the roof to-day when I spotted two of our chums making for the house. I'm almost sure they tackled old Markwick about us."

"I don't suppose they got any information out of him."

"Perhaps not," said Jimmy Silver. "But Mornington and Erroll won't let things rest. Whatever Markwick told them, they must be convinced that we're here."

"But what can they do?"

"I don't know," said Jimmy Silver. "But I rely upon them to get us out somehow."

And Jimmy Silver's reliance was well placed, for at that moment Mornington was creeping quietly along the ground floor passages of the White House.

He had managed to gain an entrance through a lower window.

He had been hanging about the passage for some time, hoping that Markwick would come along and lead him to Jimmy Silver & Co.'s prison.

Suddenly he saw a door open some distance ahead of him.

Next moment the bent figure of Silas Markwick appeared in view, and came along the passage.

Mornington immediately dropped back

into a recess, and allowed the man to pass.

Markwick shuffled along the passage and up a flight of stairs.

Mornington kept well in the rear, but did not permit the man to get out of sight.

Quite unsuspecting of the fact that he was being followed, the old man made his way to the second floor passage.

Suddenly he pulled up before a door, and, extracting a key from his pocket, fitted it into the lock.

"Come on, Peter, old boy!" he said softly, as he pushed the door open.

An instant later, to Mornington's amazement, the hairy form of a huge gorilla appeared in view, and followed Markwick along the passage.

Up another flight of stairs the man and the gorilla went, and then along a dimly-lighted passage.

Mornington walked stealthily in the rear; but he pulled up sharply as Markwick stopped before a ladder leading to a trapdoor in the ceiling.

Mornington took in the situation in a glance.

He was convinced that Jimmy Silver's prison was near at hand, and his heart beat rapidly as he moved slowly forward.

Markwick was climbing the ladder now, and the gorilla, looking intently on, stood by the side of an open door.

The man shot back the bolt of the trapdoor in the roof, and next moment an astounding thing happened.

A fat form fell through the opening, dropping on the top of Markwick's head.

The two sprawled to the floor, and next instant piercing shrieks filled the air.

But amongst those shrieks Mornington recognised the voice of Tubby Muffin.

Then the grunts of the gorilla mingled with the yells, and the savage brute was about to move forward, when Mornington broke into a run, and, with all the force at his command, hurled himself at the huge brute.

Morny caught the animal whilst it stood on one foot.

There came a savage growl from the gorilla, but it was completely unbalanced, and fell in a heap inside the room on the right side of the passage.

Mornington made a quick grab at the door and pulled it shut.

Then, as the gorilla threw its whole weight on the door, Morny turned the key in the lock.

He looked round at once, and, to his amazement, he saw his missing chums stepping down the ladder leading from the trapdoor.

"Morny!" muttered Jimmy Silver thankfully. "What the merry dickens have you been doing?"

"Oh, lots!" chuckled Mornington. "But what have you been doing?"

"I'll tell you presently," said Jimmy Silver. "But we've got to take charge of this old jossler here. He's off his chump!"

"By gad!" exclaimed Mornington. "I— Look out!"

Silas Markwick had suddenly risen to his feet, and was about to make a bid to escape.

But before he had covered half a dozen yards the juniors had thrown themselves upon him, and borne him to the ground.

"I guess somebody had better go for the police!" said Mornington.

"I'll go," said Newcome, and he promptly dashed off.

A little later a couple of constables arrived, and the juniors explained everything to them.

It was not long before Silas Markwick was in a place where he could do no more harm. The gorilla, too, was treated in a like manner.

"Well, it's been an exciting time!" remarked Jimmy Silver, when at length they left the local police-station. "But I've had sufficient. I reckon we'd better make tracks for the Priory and a jolly good feed!"

"Oh, rather!" said the juniors, in chorus.

"You must come, too, Mr. Mackenzie!" said Jimmy Silver to the man whose freedom he and his chums had practically been the means of securing.

"But—" protested Aubrey Mackenzie. "Can't stop to argue now!" said Jimmy Silver cheerfully. "I'm too hungry! Come on!"

And the juniors, accompanied by the man, followed eagerly enough.

It proved to be a happy Christmas, after all. The juniors thoroughly enjoyed themselves, and discussed again and again the mystery of the White House. But there was one there who was more thankful than all to be rid of the place.

Aubrey Mackenzie, after a year of captivity, brightened up wonderfully under the juniors' cheery influence; and when at length he took his departure for his own home, he went with the feeling that he owed the Rookwood chums a debt that he could not repay.

But the chums did not ask for payment. They had been through one of the most exciting adventures of their lives, but they had been the means of securing Aubrey Mackenzie's freedom; that was sufficient for them.

THE END.

NEXT MONDAY.

TUBBY'S LITTLE TRICK!

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.

Last week's instalment described how, after many thrilling adventures with Von Slyden & Co., in which the latter were defeated, the little expedition started on the last stage of the journey in the quest for the treasure.

They reached to within a short distance of Oki Town, and scenting trouble with the natives there, they prepared to meet the attack.

(Read on from here.)

The Mahdi's Treasure.

It was a queer sort of battle which commenced between the boats of the expedition and the naval forces of King Oki.

Not a canoe showed on the vast lake, and not a nigger showed along the long wall of sun-dried reeds that fringed the borders of the lagoon.

And Captain Handyman made no mistake when he put this bit of generalship down to Baron von Slyden.

Whatever the forces were at the disposal of the enemy, they were not to be despised.

The volume of gun-fire which came from the wall of reeds, in which the canoes of the enemy had taken cover, was heavy enough to account for seven or eight hundred men.

Now and again a rifle-bullet would whistle overhead or smack on the steel

plates that armoured the launch and the whalers.

But the rest of the nigger fire fell short by a few hundred yards.

This was just what Captain Handyman wanted to see.

It showed him that he was up against about thirty Askaris and their three German masters—thirty-three rifles in all.

The war-drums were sounding in the canoes of King Obob, which were paddling up behind the flotilla.

King Obob's fat warriors were already singing their war songs, in which they extolled the greatness of Obob, their king.

Captain Handyman, as he steered the launch, was careful to keep the war canoes which followed in his wake well out of the range of the gun-fire of the people of King Oki.

He did not want to get any of Obob's fat niggers killed if he could help it.

So he swung away from the tall wall of the reeds as the flagship of the navy of Booloo got ready to go into action with her heavy guns.

Two fat niggers got on to the fighting platform in the bows of the leading war-canoe.

One carried a gun as big as a section of gas-main. It was the king's own elephant gun.

"Crumbs!" exclaimed Skeleton, his mouth full of cake, as he crouched on the floor of the whaler with King Obob. "What are those nuts going to do, Obob?"

"Dey shoot my big gun, Teleton," replied the king. "You see, him plenty big gun. Him talk berry loud, dat gun!"

"I should think it'd blow old Jumbo and Cherry Blossom into the middle of next week!" replied Skeleton, as he peered over the stern of the whaler at the preparations that were going on to bombard the shore.

"Dey two berry stiff niggers," said the king.

"They need be stiff if they are going to fire off that gun," replied Skeleton. "Have another slice of cake, king, before the explosion takes place."

The king accepted the piece of proffered cake, and watched his niggers with eager eyes as, with ropes, they hoisted the miniature cannon on their fat shoulders.

A third nigger rammed powder, wads, stones, and bullets into the gun, whilst

a fourth nigger stood ready, blowing at a piece of burning reed.

This nigger was the gunner, and the two fat niggers were the gun-carriage.

Stooping, they held the gun on their shoulders by ropes which were lashed around it.

Then the master gunner trained the gun on the reeds where the lurking enemy were hidden.

"Now for the bump!" said Skeleton, who was intensely interested in this human gun-carriage.

The gunner applied the linstock to the touch-hole of the king's cannon.

There was a burst of flame, a tremendous report, which caused the ears of the boys to ring again and again. Then, in a huge puff of blue smoke, they saw the gun, niggers and all, fly out on the recoil, and plunge into the blue waters of the lagoon.

There was a splash for each nigger, and another for the gun, which disappeared beneath the blue wave twenty feet from the war-canoe.

"Dat berry good bang!" said King Obob, beaming. "Dat berry good bang, Teleton!"

"But you've blown your big gun overboard!" said Skeleton. "It's lucky that your gunner was not standing right behind it, or he'd have got that cannon where you are stowing your cake, Kingy."

But Obob only smiled.

"Him berry good bang!" he said, holding up a fat forefinger. "Listen!"

And, sure enough, notwithstanding the primitive methods of the naval gunnery of Booloo, somehow or another that raking charge of slugs and small stones had found its billet in the enemy hidden behind that impenetrable wall of rushes.

A chorus of wild howls and a pepper of rapid fire told that Obob's big gun had hit the hidden enemy.

But Captain Handyman carefully kept outside the range of the native guns.

He could not get beyond the range of the modern rifles of the Askaris.

But these, with their view obscured by the wall of reeds which formed their shelter, were making very bad shooting.

To ease their feelings they sent a round now and then into that blank wall of reeds.

Lal Tata, who was thoroughly worked up, was firing magazine after magazine at the puffs of blue smoke that betrayed the position of their unseen enemy.

Bang! went Lal's rifle.

"Take that, you insolent nigger fellows!" growled Lal.

"I am sure I hit some fat nigger that time," he continued.

Porkis laughed.

"Pint o' nuts or a good cigar every time the bell rings, sir!" he said. "Let me have a look at the sighting of your rifle."

He examined the sights of the rifle which the excited Lal Tata had fired till the barrel was so hot it burned his fingers.

"Why, you are landing your shots a mile behind them, sir!" he said.

"Mind your own business, Mr. Porkis, sir!" retorted Lal, somewhat put out.

"Teach your grandmother to lay eggs! You will write me two thousand lines for teaching your master to shoot!"

Porkis grinned.

Since Horace, the goat, had eaten up all the impot-paper and exercise-books which the expedition carried Lal's tremendous impositions had no terrors for him.

But Captain Handyman had slowed down the launch, bringing it alongside the whaler in which the boys were crouching.

"We've got to smoke that crowd out of the reeds," he said. "It won't do to go on to Oki Town and leave them in our rear. Cast your whaler out of tow, boys, and hitch on behind the launch. The rest of the flotilla will stay where they are, whilst we run in and smoke those rascals out of their position!"

The boys cast off the whaler from the tow, and she was taken in tow alone by the launch.

Boxes of rockets were opened and handed out to them.

These they laid in tubes, ready trained for firing into the reeds.

"That's the stuff to give 'em!" said Captain Handyman, when the preparations were complete. "We'll make old Hokey Pokey's navy sit up! I'm going to run in and bombard that reed wall at close range. Fire when I give the word,

and keep your heads down behind the shields."

The launch raced off.

With only the single whaler in tow she travelled fast, heading and twisting across the lake in a wide circle, whilst the bullets of the enemy flipped the water into ducks and drakes all round her.

Then suddenly Captain Handyman headed for the reeds, and the fire of the enemy brisled up.

As they drew near that sinister wall the fire of the enemy redoubled.

Thick wreaths of blue gunpowder-smoke drifted through the tall, dry stems of the reeds, making the great reed-beds look as though they were on fire.

"That's nothing to what they'll look directly!" said Captain Handyman grimly.

Turning the launch, he skirted close along the reed wall, till the boat was almost abreast of the spot where the main body of the enemy were hidden.

A volley of arrows and spears blackened the sky, the long, quivering shafts rising in a flight from the reeds.

But most of these fell short of the boats, for the reeds hindered the hidden warriors.

Lal gave a howl as one long-barbed spear whistled down just behind him, pinning him by the slack of his baggy trousers to the seat on which he was crouching.

"Yow!" he yelled. "I am wounded in my sit-place!"

"It's all right, sir!" said Chip reassuringly. "It has only got you in the trousers, and a miss is as good as a mile."

"Fire!" shouted Captain Handyman, as the launch, travelling at a great speed, raced close along the wall of reeds.

The boys were ready with their tinder-fuses to fire the rockets, which were trained upon the heart of the reed-beds. They were so close now that they could see the shapes of great war-canoes jammed in the reeds, and the dark writhing figures of the savage warriors who pulled bows and hurled spears.

But all this firing was too high.

To clear the reeds bows were directed towards the sky, and spears were cast with a trajectory that sent them flying far away overhead.

Out in the lagoon, a few hundred yards

from the reeds, it was simply raining spears and arrows.

But not an arrow fell on the launch or whaler.

Woosh!
With a roar and a shower of sparks the great ship's rocket, which Chip was the first to despatch, tore into the reeds. A fury of yells broke out as it raced round amongst the hidden canoes and burst in a roar, scattering coloured stars in all directions.

Woosh, woosh, woosh!
The boys buzzed the rockets into the cover one after another.

They could hear them racing and roaring through the reeds, twisting round like fiery serpents, and chasing the niggers out of the war-canoes.

Then Captain Handyman, rising in the launch, hurled a far more deadly projectile into the reeds than any rocket.

It was a tin of petrol, fitted with a fuse and detonating charge.

It burst with a boom as the launch sheered off, throwing up a fountain of flaring petrol and a huge cloud of black smoke.

The flame of petrol licked down the reeds, and in a second, as the launch raced away, the reed-bed started to flare red.

The evening breeze was freshening.

Great twisting tongues of red flame shot up from the reeds, leaping from stem to stem.

The rockets and the petrol had done their work.

The reed-beds were well alight all round the spot where the navy of King Oki and the Spies of the Kaiser were hidden.

"That'll soon make the place too hot to hold them!" shouted Captain Handyman, as the launch shot out across the lake towards the rest of the waiting flotilla.

The fire spread through the crackling reeds.

They could see the yelling niggers of King Oki trying to pole their great war-canoes out of the flaring reeds.

But the stems of the stout papyrus and the tangle of water-lilies that grew amongst them held the great craft as though in a vice.

The bows of half a dozen appeared in view, forcing their way through the wall of the reeds.

But on the edge of the reed-bed, whilst their bows were over the deep water, they jammed fast.

The flames swept towards them and over them.

The violent updraught caused by the acres of reed that were now blazing, carried sparks and flaming reeds far and wide.

Fresh fires started.
Now the niggers were tumbling out of the reeds in all directions, diving into the lagoon to escape the flames.

Guns and spears and bows were abandoned in a wild helter-skelter flight.

The fringe of the lake by the burning patch was black with bobbing woolly heads.

Captain Handyman was merciful to his enemies. He sternly forbade any trigger to be pulled on the swimming men.

The little captain ordered the crew of Obob's leading war-canoe to vacate their vessel and to distribute themselves amongst other craft.

As soon as she was empty he took her in tow behind the boat containing the boys, and raced off with her towards that patch of bobbing heads.

He took the risk of a chance shot from the reeds on this errand of mercy, and had the satisfaction of seeing the boat, when the boys had neatly slipped her tow-rope at full speed, gliding slowly in amongst the swimming niggers.

In a minute they started to crowd on board this raft, swarming over her gunwales and crowding on to her till she looked, as Porkis remarked, like a Belle steamer on a Bank Holiday.

There was no more fight left in this portion of King Oki's forces.

They had had their first taste of sea power.

They had lost their guns and their spears. Their great war-canoes were flaring like separate bonfires in the conflagration amongst the reeds.

It was almost a bloodless victory which Captain Handyman had gained over his enemies.

But there was still fighting to be done, and Captain Handyman was quick to range his forces for it.

With the instinct of a born commander he knew that he had not caught the Germans and their Askaris.

They were hidden in the reeds farther down, and beyond the flare which had driven the forces of King Oki from their canoes.

With the whaler still in tow, he formed his little fleet in a diamond shape, with the launch as the point of the diamond.

It was growing dusk now, but there was still plenty of light for close shooting.

He saw, appearing from out of the reeds a quarter of a mile farther down, three huge war-canoes, crowded with men.

Captain Handyman took one look at these three huge canoes through his glasses.

There was no doubt that these were the Dreadnoughts of King Oki's fleet.

A huge parasol, perched high up on the stern of the leading canoe, showed that King Oki himself was in command.

By his side stood a figure clad in white drill and crowned by a sun-helmet, which he had no difficulty in recognising as Von Slyden.

The little captain laughed as he surveyed this grim array of black craft which, shaped like huge gondolas, drew across the lake to block his passage.

His quick eye saw at once that the craft were overloaded.

Not only had King Oki loaded up these battleships of the line with the flower of his army, but his courtiers had crowded on to the Royal ships.

Refugees from the burning canoes in the reeds had swum down through the

back channels, and had climbed on board, till the huge craft were crowded up like excursion steamers.

On those three hulls were crowded four hundred fighting-men, so packed and jammed that nine-tenths of them could not use their weapons.

But their war-drums beat, and their warriors yelled defiance as the little flotilla made steadily towards them.

The swift tropic darkness was falling now.

The light had lasted long enough to show Captain Handyman just what he wanted to see.

Here were the remnants of King Oki's fleet, so topsy-turvy with their weight of fighting-men that one good punch from the launch would capsize any of them.

And the Germans, with their followers, were all on board.

Von Slyden had risked all to stop the flotilla before it could reach Oki Town.

He knew that there or thereabouts the treasure of the Mahdi was hidden, and he had a shrewd suspicion of its hiding-place.

This was the idol of Oki Town, a huge granite Sphinx which stood in the sacred grove beyond the town of reed huts.

The Sphinx, some remnant of the frontiers of ancient Egyptian civilisation, was held sacred by the niggers.

Once a year they made human sacrifice there.

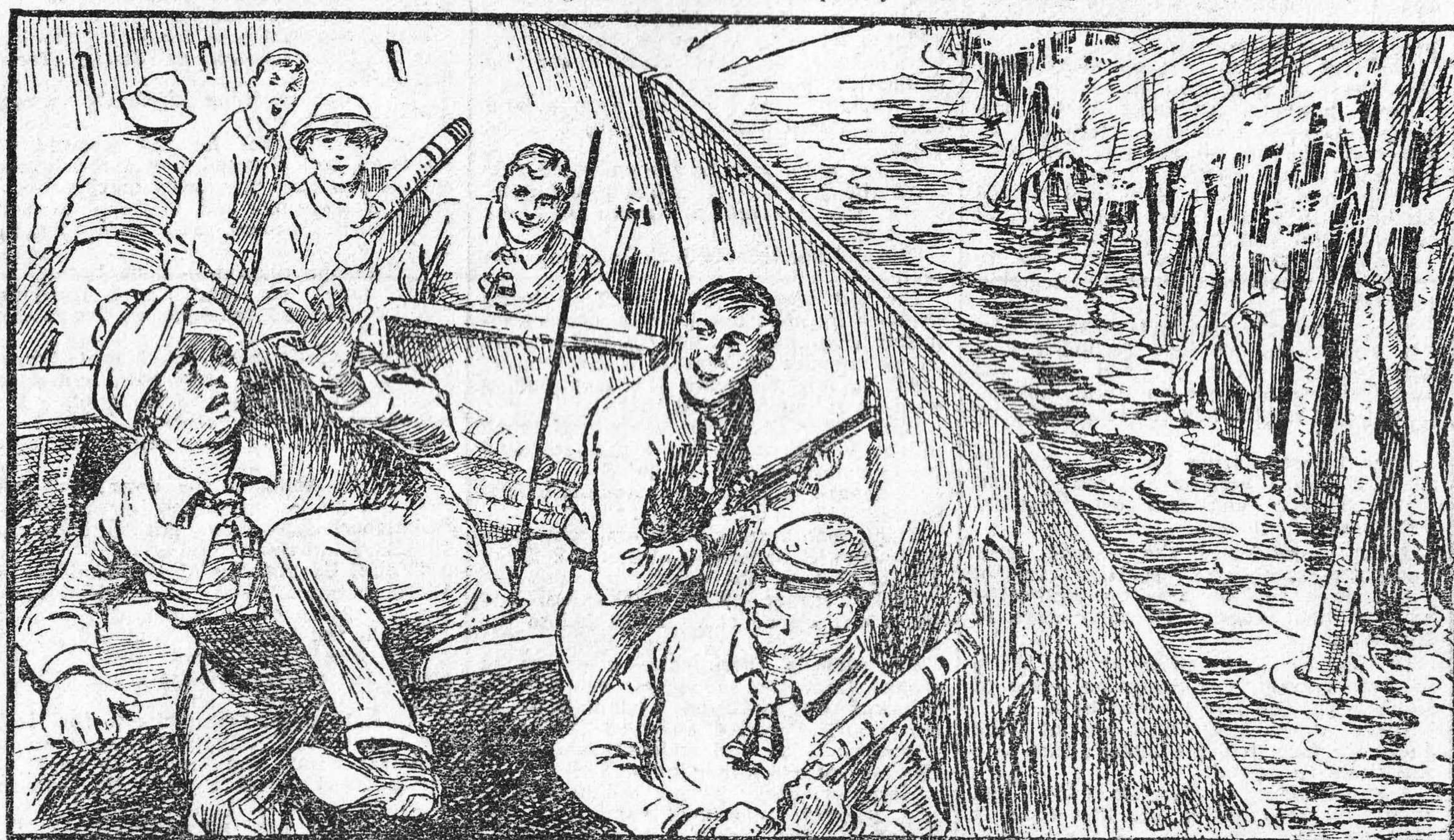
But not a nigger would enter that grove, with its grim granite figure and its rows of human skulls stuck up on sticks like fairy-lamps, for all the wealth of Oki Town.

To King Oki Von Slyden had told the tale in true German fashion.

By his portraits and his portraits of the Kaiser, which hung about every nigger's neck, he had made the whole of King Oki's people familiar with the grim face and the upturned moustaches of the German Emperor.

He had told Oki that the Kaiser would come in person and reward him with all sorts of fine things if he allowed that huge granite Sphinx to be removed from its huge stone bed in the grove.

Oki had hummed and hawed about this.



LAL TATA IS PINNED TO HIS SEAT!

He had said that the Sphinx was big magic, and that if he allowed it to be shifted the luck would go from Oki Town.

He said that the Sphinx ate up ten fat niggers and fifty oxen every year, and that it was the biggest medicine in that part of the country.

But Von Slyden had cunningly suggested that if the Sphinx were shifted, the king would be ten niggers and fifty oxen in hand every year.

He also promised that the Kaiser would come himself in person to thank the king, and would give him a new top-hat and a red coat with gold braid.

King Oki had allowed himself to be persuaded, and had given Von Slyden and his fellow spies permission to shift the Sphinx.

But first he had insisted that they must make a battle against the British and defeat his enemy King Obob of Booboo, who, in their company, was coming up against them.

Baron von Slyden was getting very near the truth when he guessed at the old Egyptian monolith as the hiding-place of the treasure, for it was under this mighty monument that the maps in Captain Handyman's possession marked the hiding-place of the treasure.

Von Slyden had made his mistake when he had elected to meet Captain Handyman in a naval engagement.

Von Slyden was a soldier—not a sailor; Captain Handyman was a sailor to his finger-tips.

"Close down the plates, boys, and prepare to ram!" he shouted.

The boys knew what this meant.

They closed the hinged plates of steel that were set up on the gunwales of the whaler, so that they met together above their heads like a roof.

Then the launch, with the whaler in tow, shot forward at full speed against the great dusky shapes that barred their way.

Crouching down under their penthouse of steel, the boys could yet get a peep between the plates.

They heard the powerful little engines of the launch running up to full speed.

"Jiminy!" exclaimed Skeleton. "The captain is heading straight for the king's canoe! Hang on, boys, for the bump!"

Skeleton could see the launch tearing along ahead of them, heading straight for the king's great war-canoe.

Then suddenly a dead silence fell.

The warriors, crowded on the great top-heavy canoe, had ceased to howl as they saw the launch and the whaler dash away from the rest of the flotilla, and head straight towards them.

"Ho! Now she bumps!" groaned Lal Tata, in the darkness under the steel roof.

"Not yet!" gasped Skeleton, with his eye glued to his peephole. "He's going for her," he added. "He's—"

Skeleton's remarks were broken short by a rattle of guns and a hundred flashes, as the warriors on the great war-canoe poured a volley at the oncoming launch.

Then followed a cloud of spears and arrows.

But the bullets smacked harmlessly on the steel roof, whilst spears and arrows bounced on the steel, and slid overboard.

The launch simply leaped at the stern of the great canoe.

It smashed into the great clumsy craft with a shattering, rending bump.

Then it rushed on after dealing a glancing blow under the wide-spreading fighting-platform.

A yell went up from the niggers.

They had all crowded to one side to get their shot in at the oncoming craft.

The punch from the launch was all that was needed to finish the heavy list, which this rush put on the top-heavy craft.

Slowly she heeled over.

The boys could hear Von Slyden shouting as the whaler slid past in the wake of the launch, cannoning off her stern with a heavy thump.

"She's going over!" yelled Dick Dorrington, who had a peephole astern. "She's turning turtle!"

In the dim light he could see the great umbrella which sheltered King Oki topple and sway.

Then, slowly and completely, Dick saw the great hull turn completely over

Up they jumped with a yell, crowding to the side of the canoe.

Over she toppled, with Captain von Stoom spluttering and cursing amongst them, vowing that he wished he had never left his beloved Berlin.

Then from the interior of the whaler a yell went up.

It was not a yell of triumph, but of pain and sorrow.

It was Lal who, on his hands and knees, had awaited the bumps of the collisions.

The third bump had swung the whaler against the canoe, and caused her to heel over.

Lal, grabbing out in the dark, had thrust his hand on to Gus the crocodile's head, which was stuck out of a hole in the cricket-bag to see what was going on.

Gus, excited by the sounds of combat, had grabbed Lal's hand, whilst Horace, likewise excited by the roar of battle and by Lal's yells, started butting and bashing at Lal's back with great vigour.

The boys, knowing that all the fighting was over, threw up the covering plates and separated the combatants.

"Yow!" wailed Lal, nursing his hands. "That crocodile is a budmash! He is a naughty crocodile! He is worse than bull-terrors!"

Lal meant a bull-terrier, and the boys laughed out loud as Dick tapped Gus over the snout with a rifle-butt, which made him draw back his head into the cricket-bag.

"Cheer up, Lal!" said Chip. "We've won the battle! Look at all those chaps sitting on the keels of their canoes like frogs on a stick!"

Captain Handyman circled the launch round the discomfited navy.

His triumph was complete.

Away down the lake loomed the great war-canoe, which he had given as a life-boat to the niggers, who had escaped from the first rout.

She was drifting away towards Khar-toum, for he had taken care that no paddles were left in her.

Then he turned the searchlight on the crowded, overturned hulls that littered the lagoon.

shooting the crowd of yelling niggers and Askaris into the water.

Von Slyden went over with the rest.

King Oki, scared out of his wits, grabbed him by the neck, and, wrapping his legs round him, pushed him under.

King Oki could not swim.

He was one of the few niggers in his country who had never learned this art.

So things would have gone badly with Baron von Slyden if he had not managed to kick the king in the stomach, and to bob up to the surface again.

Then, German-like, he climbed up on the keel of the overturned war-canoe, kicking off a nigger who had been the first to take a comfortable seat there.

Von Slyden did not worry about the king.

But King Oki came up, puffing and blowing, and was helped up on the upturned canoe close alongside his German pal.

So it happened that Baron von Slyden and King Oki had a better view of the subsequent proceedings than either the boys or Captain Handyman, shut down as they were beneath the steel penthouses of their craft.

They saw the launch sweep round with a wide circle, and land with a smash into the second Dreadnought of the Oki Town Navy.

Over she went in exactly the same fashion as the first, with a big hole torn in her stern, the niggers dropping their guns and sliding down in an avalanche of yells, screaming savagely.

Von Sneek was in command of this vessel, and he went with the rest.

And the next they saw of him he was sitting on the upturned keel, yelling through the darkness words of warning to Captain von Stoom, so that he might paddle the third war-canoe out of the way of the charging launch.

Captain von Stoom yelled to his paddlers.

But they were so crowded with fighting-men that they could not get any way on the great lumbering mass.

They barely waited for the dread launch and whaler as they charged at her through the gloom.

The carbons fizzed, and the little dynamo raced as the white beam stabbed the darkness and rested on the limp, white figure of Von Slyden.

"Got you, you hooligan!" called Captain Handyman. "You're done! You've lost your rifles, you've lost your ships! You can float about there all night, whilst we lift from under your very noses the boodle you are after. Send my love to Kaiser Bill next time you are writing to him!"

The launch signalled to the rest of the flotilla to close with her, and on they swept towards the town and the treasure-chamber of the dead Mahdi.

For ten miles the launch raced onwards, the lake narrowing all the time.

And whilst they travelled Chip, busy with needle and thread, rapidly stitched up a white skull-and-crossbones to a shako he had cut out of an old waistcoat.

"What on earth are you up to, Chip?" asked Dick Dorrington curiously, as he watched Chip at work, his intent face lit by the light of the hurricane-lamp.

"Wait and see," replied Chip; and, diving amongst his kit, he fished out a pair of sea-boots and white trousers.

Then, in triumph, he produced his make-up box, and an old military tunic, which he had intended to trade to some savage king.

"Have you gone off your chump, Chip?" demanded Porkis, for Chip was smearing his face with grease-paint, and making it up like the face of an old man.

Considering that he had only the light of a dim lamp to work by, Chip was not long in performing a wonderful feat of make-up.

The boys simply gasped as he worked with his grease-pencils, lining up and marking his face into the sinister wrinkles and crow's feet of the Kaiser's face.

Then, with a touch of spirit-gum, he attached a wisp of moustache to his upper lip, twisting the ends up fiercely so that he resembled the Kaiser.

Then on his head he clapped the home-made shako which carried out the resemblance to the uniform of the famous Death's Head Hussars.

"Jiminy!" exclaimed Porkis, in an awed whisper. "Chip, you're a fair masterpiece. You look like the old hooligan to the life!"

"Near enough for a nigger, anyway," replied Chip.

Then Chip unfolded to his companions the plan that he had formed of leading them through the hostile town of King Oki, direct to the treasure-house of the Mahdi beneath the sacred sphinx.

The plan he had already discussed with Captain Handyman.

Ahead of them in the darkness, they caught the red flare of torches and fires, and heard the beating of drums.

They were nearing the stronghold of King Oki, and the niggers, disturbed by the sounds of the distant firing across the lake, were gathered in thousands at the landing-place to meet them.

And now was the time to put the plan into execution.

Captain Handyman slowed his engines.

A puff of breeze that brought him the smell of mud and the thousand and one odours of a big nigger town, told him that he was close on Oki Town.

Rounding a bend of stagnant, black water, they found themselves close upon the village.

They heard a roar go up from a thousand throats as the great gathering of hostile niggers discovered that it was not their King Oki returning in triumph, but the dreaded choo-choo boat of the British that was coming to their shore.

For a moment they stood irresolute.

Many of them were armed with spears and arrows, and the bowmen were already fitting the notches of their deadly shafts to the bowstrings.

But at this moment, at a whistle from Captain Handyman, Chip stood upright in the bows of the whaler.

The little searchlight of the launch suddenly came to life, turned full on Chip as he stood there in his Death's Head Hussar shako, his military tunic, his white trousers, and his twisted moustaches.

Ringed in its white light, Chip stood there steadily.

Not a muscle of his face moved as the circle of the searchlight lit him into a mark for a thousand arrows.

The boys crouching in the whaler thrust their rifles through the loopholes of the protecting plates, and sighted them on the bowmen.

But the points of the arrows were lowered as a dull murmur of wonderment was succeeded by a tremendous shout of welcome.

The deception would not have deceived any civilised being, but the niggers took it in completely.

There before them stood the great Kaiser himself.

There was a rustle and a rush, like the flight of a huge swarm of birds.

The niggers raced back, leaving a wide open space on the bank at the entrance to the town.

Then they all flopped on their faces, not daring to look at the War Lord as he stepped ashore.

"Quick, boys!" exclaimed Captain Handyman. "Up the main street. That's the way to the treasure! Bring the dynamite boxes along. We're got to shift a monument!"

The niggers did not move as the party landed.

They lay with their faces between their hands, and not a nigger as much as peeped at Chip, as he headed the party up the great wide street that ran between the reed huts to the sacred grove of the Sphinx.

There was a superstition amongst King Oki's people that the Kaiser was so august a personage, that anyone who looked him in the eye would die of shock.

And as soon as the procession had passed, every nigger slunk away to his hut amongst those thousands of reed dwellings.

He had seen the dread Kaiser coming in a glow of magic glory and light.

That was enough for him.

Soon the party reached the Sphinx with its grim surroundings of skulls.

Captain Handyman was not slow in getting to work.

Close under the Sphinx's tail the niggers were set to work to prise out a huge stone with crowbars.

Into the hollow six boxes of dynamite were lowered, and a fuse was run out to a safe distance.

All hands took cover, and Captain Handyman, lighting the end of the fuse with his cigar, ran back to shelter.

Baron von Slyden and his companions, floating about on their upturned craft, must have seen the flash and heard the roar of the explosion that followed.

The tall end of the Sphinx was blown sky-high in great chunks of red granite.

Then the party, running forward, peered down into the chamber revealed, and a great shout went up from them.

There lay the treasure of the Mahdi, wrung from the Sudan in the years of terror, ready to be returned to the Sudan for fruitful enterprise and good works under the British rule.

Before dawn they had cleared it.

As the sun rose it was safely stowed on the boats, and in the great canoes.

And an hour after sunrise Baron von Slyden and his companions, still floating about the lagoon on the wrecks of the shattered fleet of King Oki, ground their teeth as they saw the heavy laden canoes pass down, and heard the cheers of farewell from the Boys who Beat the Kaiser.

THE END.

NEXT MONDAY.

"THE BOYS WHO CAUGHT THE KAISER!"

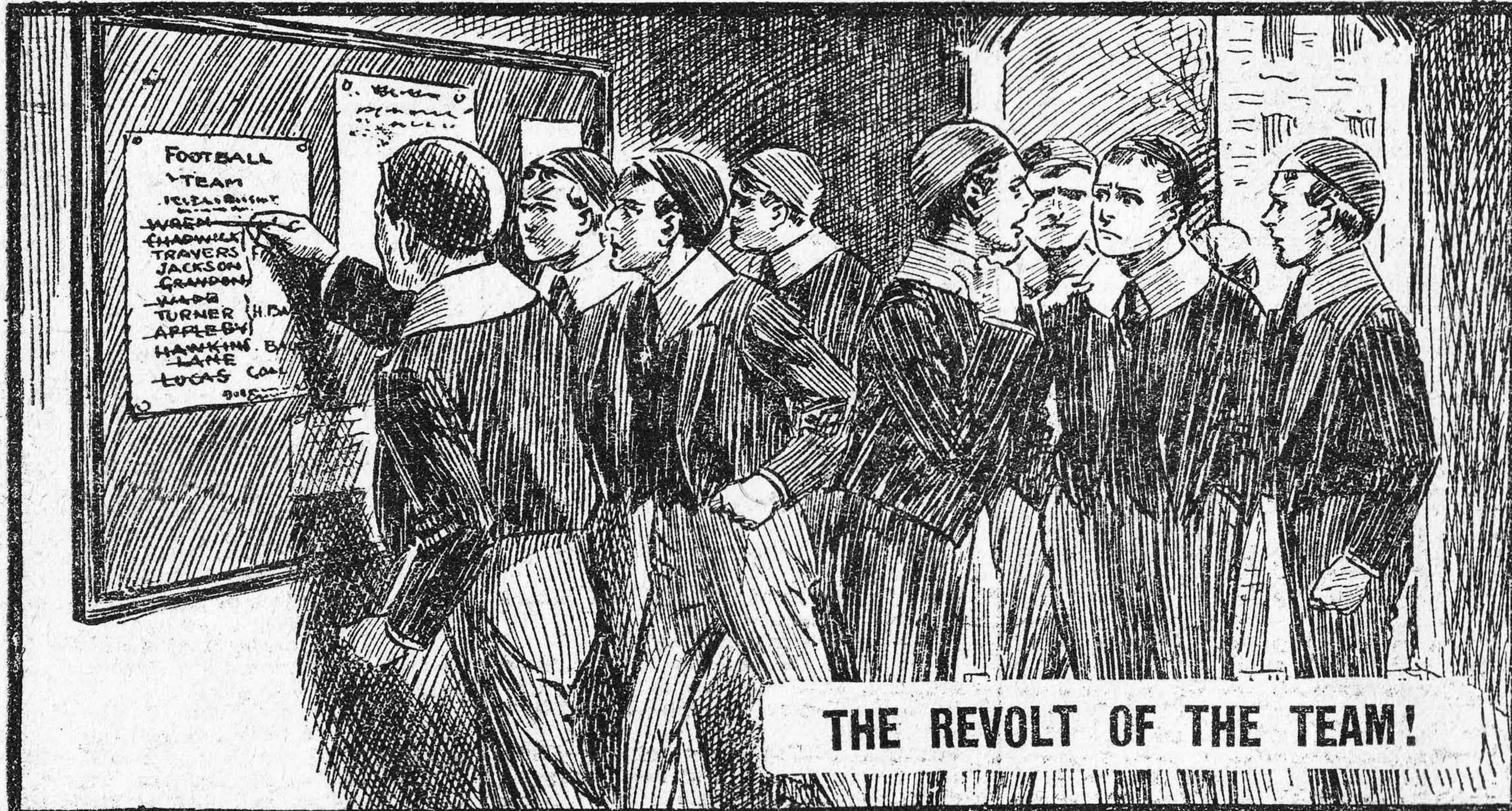
By DUNCAN STORM.

DON'T MISS IT!

BARKER, THE BOUNDER!

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

By HERBERT BRITTON.



THE REVOLT OF THE TEAM!

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.

It has been described how Jack Jackson was accused of drinking whisky, and was sent to Coventry, and how Bob Travers was sentenced to the same punishment for standing by the convicted junior.

In last week's instalment Dicky Turner drove his fist in Jack Jackson's face, as he was under the impression that the latter had hit Bunny, the duffer, a foul blow.

(Read on from here.)

Two in Conflict.

Dicky Turner had put a tremendous amount of force behind the blows he had aimed at Jack Jackson's head. Small wonder, therefore, that Jackson did not jump to his feet at once.

He raised himself upon his elbow, and glared somewhat absently at the angry Dicky.

Dicky shook his fist in a threatening manner.

"Come on, you cad!" he exclaimed. "Get up and take your gruel! I'm waiting for you!"

"I—I—I—" faltered Jackson.

"I won't wait much longer," cried Dicky Turner, with a shake of the head. "I'm going to teach you that it doesn't pay to hit a chap in the stomach!"

"I—I didn't!" faltered Jack Jackson.

"I—"

"Don't tell lies!" snapped Dicky, stamping his feet impatiently. "I saw you with my own eyes. You aimed a deliberate blow at Bunny's stomach, and you're jolly well going to suffer for it."

Jack Jackson's eyes blazed with anger. "I did nothing of the kind!" he cried vehemently.

"Rot!" exclaimed Dicky disdainfully. "I'm not blind. I saw you, and so did Barker—didn't you, Barker?"

The bounder grinned cynically. It rather amused him to see this quarrel between Turner and Jackson.

Barker could have explained matters in a few words—could have explained that he had pushed Jack Jackson towards the duffer, and been the cause of creating the impression that Jackson had given Bunny a foul blow.

But Barker had no intention of backing up Jackson.

"I'm sorry to say I did see Jackson," he said untruthfully. "I wouldn't have believed he could have struck such a blow."

"You—you cad!" cried Jack Jackson fiercely. "It was you who pushed me. You—"

"Shut up, you rotter!" exclaimed Dicky Turner savagely. "Get up at once, and I'll give you a thundering good hiding!"

Jack Jackson gave Dicky Turner one severe glance.

Next instant his face flushed with temper; he leaped quickly to his feet.

He clenched his fists tightly, and without troubling to take off his coat he squared up before Dicky Turner.

At one time Jack Jackson's temper

had been of a most unreliable nature, and it had only been by sheer strength of will and determination that he had been able to control it.

The fact remains that on many occasions he had controlled it.

Now, however, smarting under the harsh treatment he had received at the hands of the Fourth Formers, his temper was running away with him.

He gripped his teeth tight, and knitted his brows in a savage frown as he faced the wrathful and indignant Dicky.

"Suppose you wouldn't like me to referee?" remarked Barker, stepping forward.

"No, thanks!" remarked Dicky tersely. "It won't take me long to finish with this rotter. Come on, you cad!" he added, fixing his eyes on Jack Jackson.

"I'm going to give you the lesson of your life!"

Once before, during his early days at Redclyffe, Jack Jackson had fought with Dicky Turner, and had been soundly whacked.

Dicky remembered the contest well, and quite expected to repeat his triumph.

But Jack Jackson was not quite the miff he had been in his early days at Redclyffe.

He had received tuition at the hands of Bob Travers, the champion boxer of the Fourth, and had profited by it.

Dicky aimed a straight left at Jack Jackson's face, but the latter's face was not there to meet it.

Jackson dodged in the nick of time, and it was he who got in the first blow, a stinging blow that sent Dicky Turner staggering backwards.

"By gad!" drawled the bounder cynically. "I always thought you could box, Turner. Doesn't seem much like it, though."

Dicky recovered himself quickly, and shot an indignant look at the bounder.

Then he strode towards his opponent once again.

"I'll slaughter the cad!" he cried fiercely. "I'll—Ow! Yow! Yarooooo!"

Once more Jack Jackson had got there first, and Dicky Turner fell back, rubbing his injured nose.

Jack Jackson had calmed down somewhat by now, and it was as well he had; for had he lost complete control of his temper he would certainly have received the hiding of his life.

As it was he fairly held his own, and Dicky Turner's resolute efforts to land him on his back met with failure.

Dicky Turner's temper was not of the reliable kind, and it was plain to see that it was getting out of hand, as he tried to ward off the blows his antagonist aimed at him.

It was a desperate struggle, and it was a wonder that a master or prefect had not yet arrived on the scene.

Several Fourth-Formers were on the other side of the quadrangle, engaged in a snowball fight.

All of a sudden, however, when the conflict between Turner and Jackson was at its height, Jimmy Wren happened to look over in the direction of the old elms.

Immediately he drew the attention of his chums to the fistic combat.

The snowball fight ceased at once, and although several fellows remained behind, Jimmy Wren and Lucas and Lane of the New House, and Appleby and Hawkins and Wade of the School House, came rushing towards the old elms.

"What's the row about, Bunny?" asked Jimmy Wren, breathing hard.

"I was explaining to Jackson the evils of whisky-drinking," said the duffer simply, "when all of a sudden he turned upon me and gave me a punch in the stomach. Turner saw him do it, and he—"

"Good man, Turner!" said Jimmy Wren praisingly. "Give him socks!"

"I'll smash him!" cried Dicky fiercely.

He tried to do so, but Jack Jackson was on his mettle.

Dicky was beside himself with rage, and his temper was not improved when, time after time, Jack Jackson skilfully dodged his punches.

More fellows were coming up now, and quite a crowd was gathered by the old elms.

It was quite easy to see on whose side were the juniors, for not a praising remark was uttered in favour of Jack Jackson.

This did not trouble Jack Jackson, however.

He had become quite used to being snubbed by now, but he was more determined than ever to obtain his revenge on his enemies by beating Dicky Turner.

For a few moments the two juniors went at it hammer and tongs.

Blow after blow was exchanged, each of the juniors doing his utmost to send his opponent to the ground.

At length Jack Jackson dodged a left-handed blow at the body.

Then, with a quick turn, his right came up in a swift upper-cut, and struck Dicky Turner full on the point.

Dicky Turner reeled backwards, and there was a loud crack as he fell to the ground.

Immediately there came a chorus of groans from the onlookers, which were followed by muttered exclamations as the Fourth-Formers observed the pale expression that had suddenly shot over the face of the fallen junior.

Moreover, Dicky Turner did not move, and cries of amazement came from the juniors as they realised that something unforeseen had happened.

"Let's lift him up," said Jimmy Wren quickly; and he proceeded to raise the fallen junior from the ground.

As he did so Jimmy Wren's hand came into contact with a big stone lying on the ground underneath Dicky's head.

Then he caught sight of blood on the junior's head, and he gave Jack Jackson a bitter look.

"You utter cad!" he cried hotly. "D'you see what you've done? You've knocked Turner down on this stone, and he—"

"How was I to know the stone was there?" cried Jack Jackson, roused by the unfairness of the accusation made against him. "It was an accident, and—"

"Accident be hanged!" roared Jimmy Wren. "It was all your fault! If you hadn't hit Bunny in the stomach this wouldn't have happened!"

"I tell you I didn't—"

"Shut up!" exclaimed Jimmy Wren. "I shan't believe a word you say; but you'll be made to suffer for this! I'll attend to you presently, when I've got Turner into the house. Lend a hand, you fellows!"

Several of the Fourth-Formers lent their assistance, and the unconscious Dicky was carried towards the House.

There was no doubt about it, the Fates had been very unkind to Jack Jackson recently.

It was not his fault that Dicky Turner had fallen upon the stone, but the Fourth-Formers were in a too unreasonable mood to allow that it was an accident.

Jack Jackson groaned aloud in despair, and, with his eyes fixed on the ground, he followed in the wake of the other juniors.

All of a sudden he looked up quickly, for the sound of Mr. Chambers' rasping voice came from the direction of the House.

"What is the meaning of this?"

A Caning for Jack Jackson.

The juniors pulled up at once as they caught sight of the Fourth-Form master.

Mr. Chambers came striding down the steps, and pulled up short before the juniors bearing the unconscious Dicky.

"Bless my soul!" he gasped. "What ever has happened? Tell me quickly!"

The juniors did not reply. Much as they hated Jack Jackson, they had no intention of acting the part of tale-bearers.

Mr. Chambers fumed with anger as nobody offered an explanation.

"How dare you refuse to answer me!" he roared. "Wren, you will give me an explanation at once!"

"It—it was an accident, sir!" faltered Jimmy Wren. "Hadn't we better get Turner into the House?"

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Chambers. "But—but—" He paused, as he observed the bruises on the unconscious junior's face. "Bless my soul! Is this the result of a brutal fight? I—"

Mr. Chambers paused again, for he had glanced over the throng, and caught sight of Jack Jackson, bruised and damaged, walking slowly towards him.

"Jackson!" he cried sternly. "Come here this instant! You've been fighting! Your face is bruised, and there are marks of blood on your collar. Are you responsible for the state in which Turner is now in?"

"Partly, sir," replied Jack Jackson, undaunted by the expression of anger on the master's face. "He fell on a stone, and—"

"It was you who knocked him down, then?"

"Yes, sir; but—"

"Enough!" rapped out the master of the Fourth. "Follow me at once to Dr. Hamlin's study. This is a far too serious matter for me to attend to. I have never heard of such an act of hooliganism before!"

Mr. Chambers turned towards the Fourth-Formers.

"Take this poor boy to the sanatorium at once," he said. "I will phone for the doctor to come immediately."

"I don't think there's any necessity to take him to the sanatorium, sir," said Jimmy Wren. "He's recovering now, and—"

"Obey my command at once!" roared the angry master, with a wave of the hand.

The Fourth-Formers moved off in the direction of the sanatorium.

There was really no need to take the injured junior there, as Jimmy Wren had said.

There was nothing seriously wrong with Dicky Turner.

The severe crack he had received on his head had stunned him for a while, but he was now recovering quickly.

His eyes opened, and he stared hard at the Fourth-Formers, who were carrying him.

"What the dickens—" he began.

"Be quiet, old son," urged Hawkins. "We're going to take you to the sanatorium, and—"

"You're jolly well not!" said Dicky, pulling one of his arms free, and passing it across the back of his head. "I'm not going to any sanatorium. What—"

"My hat! What's happened? My head—"

"Jackson knocked you down, and you fell on a stone," explained Lucas quickly. "Chambers says we've got to take you to the sanatorium."

"You'll do nothing of the kind!" said Dicky at once. "Did you say that Jackson biffed me on to a stone?"

"Well, you fell on one, and—"

"By jove!" exclaimed Dicky. "I'll smash the rotter! Where is he! Where is—"

"Chambers has taken him to the Head for a wiggling," explained Jimmy Wren. "He came out, and wanted to know all about it. I guess that rotter, Jackson is going to get it in the neck."

"It serves him jolly well right, the cad!" said Dicky Turner. "But I'd sooner have piled into him myself."

"Ha, ha, ha!" A loud chuckle came from Barker, the bounder. "I should advise you to leave Jackson alone for a while," he said. "Seems to me as though he'd about got the measure of you."

"My hat!" exclaimed Dicky, his face lighting up with annoyance at the bounder's remarks. "I won't stand any of your sauce. I'll—"

"Keep calm, old son," urged Jimmy Wren, holding Dicky back. "You mustn't get excited now. You can give the bounder a biffing when we've bathed your head. You aren't in a fit state to do any fighting just now."

Dicky Turner evidently saw the force of Jimmy Wren's argument, for he allowed himself to be led into the House.

Up the stairs the juniors went, and had just reached the Fourth Form passage when Mr. Chambers came striding quickly towards them.

He pulled up at once at sight of Dicky. "Bless my soul!" he gasped. "I—I thought I told you boys to take Turner to the sanatorium."

"It's all right, sir," said Dicky Turner slowly. "I shall be all right in a minute."

"But—but your head—" began Mr. Chambers.

"I'm going up to the bath-room to bathe it," said Dicky. "There's really no need for me to go to the sanatorium. I—"

"Very well," said the master. "Don't waste any time, and when you've bathed your head, come straight to my study. I wish Dr. Hamlin to see the state of your head."

The juniors moved on to the bath-room and did all they could for the injured boy.

Warm water was procured, and Appleby proceeded to bathe the injured junior's head.

There was a very severe lump there, and it pained Dicky considerably; but he brightened up wonderfully, and by the time he went down to Mr. Chambers' study he was almost his own cheery self again.

The master of the Fourth was surprised at the change in Dicky Turner.

Mr. Chambers had never really liked Jack Jackson; and he had rather hoped that it would have been necessary for Dicky to stay in the sanatorium, so that

he could have laid a more serious charge against Jackson, and secured a heavy punishment for him.

However, he felt that there was sufficient evidence as it was to get Jack Jackson caned severely, and as he led the way to the Head's study there was a look of eager anticipation upon his face.

Mr. Chambers entered Dr. Hamlin's study first, and Dicky followed, to find Jack Jackson standing before the Head.

Dr. Hamlin looked up in surprise as he observed Dicky Turner. Then he turned to the master of the Fourth.

"I thought you said that Turner had been taken to the sanatorium?" he said quietly.

"I ordered him to be taken there," said Mr. Chambers. "But it appears that, bad as Turner's injury is, it was not really necessary for him to take to his bed. Just look at this, Dr. Hamlin."

The master of the Fourth parted the hair on Dicky's head, and as the Head observed the ugly gash which had been caused by the junior's fall, he frowned severely.

"Dear me!" he muttered. "This is bad—very bad."

"It is, Dr. Hamlin," said Mr. Chambers quickly; "and I consider that Jackson should be punished most severely for having caused his schoolfellow such a terrible injury."

The Head faced Jack Jackson, and stared at him sternly.

"Jackson," he said, "I am surprised at you. I never dreamed that you could behave in such a disgraceful manner."

"Excuse me, sir," broke in Dicky Turner. "It was an accident. It was not really Jackson's fault. He didn't mean to injure me like this."

Jack Jackson looked round quickly at Dicky's remark. He had not expected his enemy to speak up like this; but, much as he hated Jack Jackson at this moment, Dicky could not stand by, and leave the Head with the impression that Jack Jackson had deliberately injured his head.

"Accident," said the Head. "But—but I understood that you boys were fighting in the quadrangle."

"Yes, sir," said Dicky Turner at once. "I fell backwards on to a stone, and—"

"But what compelled you to fall backwards?" demanded Mr. Chambers, in icy tones. "Jackson hit you, I presume?"

Dicky Turner did not reply.

Mr. Chambers fixed his beady eyes on Jack Jackson.

"I don't think there is any doubt that you were really the cause of Turner's injury," he said. "Did you hit him, and cause him to fall on the stone?"

"Yes, sir," admitted Jack Jackson.

"H'm!" Mr. Chambers smiled in a sickly manner, and then turned to Dr. Hamlin. "I consider that Jackson's behaviour is most reprehensible," he said. "And, in my opinion, he should be soundly flogged!"

The Head frowned portentously.

He did not need Mr. Chambers' advice, for he considered he was quite capable of deciding what form Jack Jackson's punishment should take.

"I will deal with this matter, Mr. Chambers!" he said severely. "Kindly leave Jackson with me. Turner, you may go, and you will do me a hundred lines for fighting. I trust your head will soon be better."

Mr. Chambers, with a sour look on his face, took his departure with Dicky Turner.

As soon as the door was shut, Dr. Hamlin, kindly old gentleman that he was, talked to Jack Jackson in a pleasant, though stern, manner.

He pointed out that, by indulging in a bout of fisticuffs in the quadrangle, he was paying little respect to the rules of the school.

He concluded by giving Jack Jackson two swishes of the cane on each hand.

The Head laid it on hard, and when at length he left the Head's study, Jack Jackson was rubbing his hands in a most rueful manner.

The Revolt of the Team.

"What the dickens have you been up to?"

Bob Travers asked the question as Jack Jackson strolled wearily into Study No. 5.

Bob was the sole occupant of the study. Dicky Turner had taken up temporary quarters with Appleby and Hawkins, and Bunny was farther down the passage.

"Haven't you heard?" asked Jack Jackson, as he sat down in the easy-chair.

"I've heard a lot of extraordinary yarns," said Bob seriously. "Bunny says you half killed Dicky Turner. I saw Dicky walking along the passage with Chambers a while back; he looked pretty much alive then."

Jack Jackson smiled faintly.

"I'll tell you all about it," he said; and he proceeded to give Bob a full account of all that had happened that morning.

Bob listened intently the while, but his face became angry and set as he learned the manner in which Dicky Turner had started the fight with Jackson.

"You're sure you didn't hit Bunny in the stomach?" asked Bob.

"Positive!" said Jack Jackson. "You know me better than to think that I should give a chap a foul blow like that."

"Quite so; but—"

"It was all through that rotter Barker," said Jack Jackson. "He pushed me on to the duffer, and at the same moment Turner came rushing up. I suppose it must have looked to him as though I was giving Bunny a foul blow."

"Well, why the dickens didn't Barker say what he had done?" demanded Bob.

"Because he's an out-and-out cad!" cried Jack Jackson vehemently. "He thoroughly enjoys causing trouble, and I could see by his face that he was highly amused to see us fighting."

BARKER, THE BOUNDER!

(Continued from the previous page)

Bob shook his head sadly. "By Jove!" he ejaculated. "Wouldn't I like to give that rotter a sound thrashing! I've a jolly good mind—"

"Bob," muttered Jack Jackson, placing his hand upon his chum's arm, "don't do it. Leave him alone for—for my sake."

"But—"

"If you touch him, he'll take his revenge out of me!" said Jack Jackson bitterly. "He'll make my life a worse misery than ever!"

"But how can he do it?"

"I—I can't tell you," said Jack Jackson miserably. "But he can do it, and he will do it if you lay a hand on him."

Bob gazed thoughtfully into the fire, and for a few moments there was silence in the study.

Then Bob looked up, and gave his chum a questioning look.

"I don't want to probe into your secrets, old son," he said, in a friendly manner. "But—but I do wish you'd explain things. What is the nature of this hold the bouncer's got over you?"

"I—I mustn't tell you—I dare not!"

stammered Jack Jackson helplessly. "I do so like a shot, only—"

Jack Jackson paused.

He would have given anything to have taken the good-natured Bob into his confidence.

But it was impossible to do so. He knew only too well that Barker would wreak his vengeance on him, if he gave Bob an inkling of what was happening.

"All right, old son!" said Bob, as cheerfully as possible. "Don't worry over it. This is a rotten business, but we'll see it through. I'm standing by you until the end."

"But—but think of yourself, Bob," urged Jack Jackson. "Why don't you leave me to look after myself? It isn't fair that you should be made to suffer on my account."

"Oh, rats!" said Bob, with a shake of the head. "I'm quite capable of looking after myself. I don't care a hang if the whole Form shuns me for sticking to you. One day everything will come out right, and then the fellows will be jolly sorry they misjudged you."

Jack Jackson gazed gloomily into the

fire. It was very evident that he had very little hope of things righting themselves again.

Bob Travers clapped him on the shoulder.

"Now, buck up, old son!" he said cheerily. "No good moping over it. Come and give me a hand in choosing the team for the Bagshot match. I suppose you'll be willing to play?"

"Me?" exclaimed Jack Jackson, in surprise.

"I'm going to give you a trial at inside-right," said Bob, picking up pencil and paper.

"But—but the others won't play with me," said Jack Jackson.

"Won't they?" said Bob, frowning seriously. "Well, we shall have to see about that. Now, I shall play Lucas in goal as usual. The backs will be Hawkins and Lane, the halves Wade, Turner, and Appleby, and the forwards Wren, Chadwick, Travers, Jackson, and Graydon. I don't think we can better that lot."

Bob Travers picked up the slip of paper, and moved towards the door of the study.

"I'll just shove this on the notice-board, and—"

Bob Travers paused as his chum rose to his feet and clutched him by the arm.

"Bob," he muttered, "do cross my name out! It will be better, and—"

"Don't you want to play?" asked Bob.

"Yes, but—"

"Well, that's all right," said Bob. "If you're willing to play you're going to. The fellows can kick up a fuss if they like. I'm quite capable of dealing with them."

In another moment Bob had disappeared down the passage, and a little later the names of the team to play against Bagshot on the following Saturday were pinned on the board in the hall.

Bob went back to Study No. 5, but it was not long before several fellows appeared before the notice-board.

Immediately exclamations of disgust came from the throats of the juniors.

"Blessed cheek!" cried Mason wrathfully. "The idea of playing that cad Jackson!—If I were you fellows I wouldn't put up with it!"

"What can we do?" asked Appleby.

"Cross your names out, of course," said Mason. "Refuse to play. That will soon bring Travers to heel. Besides, what right has Travers to choose a team when he's in Coventry?"

Appleby did not answer that question, but he proceeded to draw a line through his own name.

"Come on, you fellows," he said. "Cross your names out."

Several others proceeded to follow suit, and the names of Appleby, Hawkins, Wade, Chadwick, and Graydon had lines drawn through them.

Then Jimmy Wren & Co., of the New House, came striding up, and wanted to know what the trouble was about.

Mason explained willingly enough. "By Jove!" exclaimed Jimmy Wren, thoroughly annoyed. "We're not going to stand that! I've never heard of such cheek in my life! Lend me a pencil, somebody."

Appleby handed the pencil to the New House junior, and a moment later three more names were crossed out, leaving only those of Turner, Travers, and Jackson.

The junior team had revolted with a vengeance.

Eight of the eleven were resolved not to play in the match if Jackson was included in the team.

Would Bob Travers exclude the despised junior?

That question was being asked on all sides.

(Another magnificent long instalment of this splendid 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.)

MR. PECKOVER'S PARTY!

A Splendid Long Complete Story of FRANK RICHARDS & CO., the Chums of the School in the Backwoods.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

The 1st Chapter.
Hard Luck!

"Oh!"

"Ow!"

"Oh, dear!"

"I guess somebody's been hurt!"

grinned Chunky Todgers.

It certainly sounded like it!

A group of Cedar Creek fellows were waiting in the trail in the thickening winter gloom.

From the darkness along the trail, which led to Cedar Creek from Hillcrest School, came those sounds of woe.

"Hyer they are!" chuckled Eben Hacke, as three figures came in sight in the dusk. "They've been lookin' for trouble, and, by thunder, I reckon they've found it—some!"

"Just a few!" chortled Todgers.

The three were Frank Richards, Bob Lawless, and Vere Beauclerc.

They were on their snowshoes, but were going slowly over the frozen snow of the trail.

They did not look happy.

But their pained ejaculations suddenly ceased as they spotted the Cedar Creek crowd waiting for them.

"Hallo!" said Bob Lawless gruffly. "What are you galoots hanging around for?"

"For you!" said Tom Lawrence, laughing. "We knew you'd gone over to Hillcrest School—"

"To rag Mr. Peckover!" chuckled Chunky Todgers. "We waited to see what luck you'd have."

"And now we know! Ha, ha!"

"Nothing to cackle at!" said Frank Richards. "We've had rather bad luck. We were fairly caught—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Eben Hacke. "I guess I could have told you that! You'd better let Peckover alone!"

"We won't let him alone," said Beauclerc. "We've had bad luck this time."

"You look it! Did he lambaste you?"

"Ye-es."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Jolly funny, isn't it?" growled Frank Richards.

"I guess so. Ha, ha!"

"But what happened, Frank?" asked Molly Lawrence, in her sweet, soft voice, which had a soothing effect.

"Well, it was hard luck, Molly," said Frank. "You know, Mr. Peckover came over from Hillcrest to complain to Miss Meadows about us, and actually told her what wasn't true. So we went over to—"

"To get a cow-hiding!" suggested Chunky Todgers.

"To make him sit up somehow," said Frank, unheeding the humorous Chunky. "We snowballed him in his own room, and cleared off; and then by sheer ill-luck we ran into Dicky Bird and Fisher and some others of that lot, and they collared us."

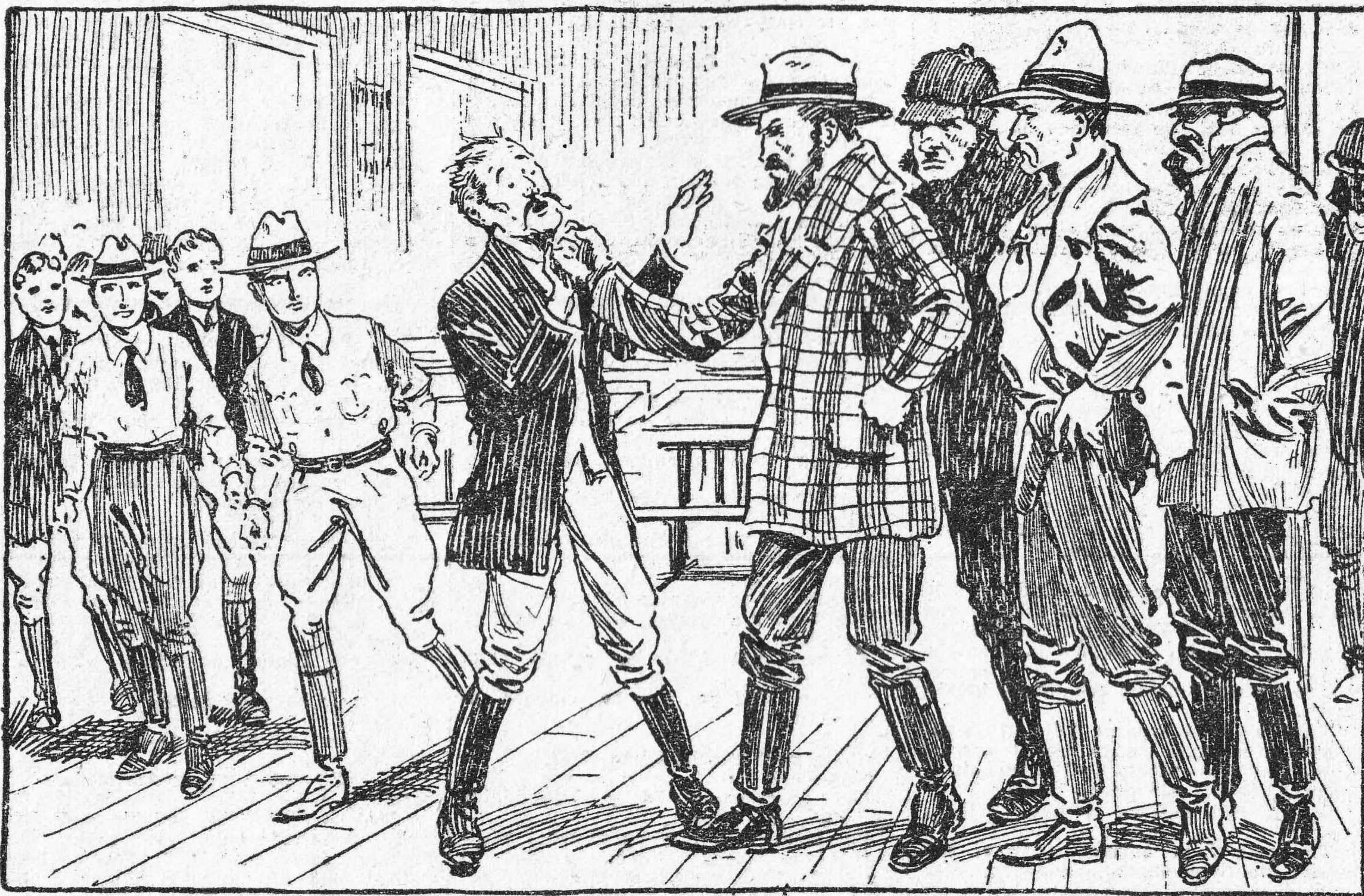
"You didn't expect to see them!" said Chunky.

"We thought they'd gone home, of course."

"They didn't think you had!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The silly asses collared us, and then Peckover came on the lot of us!" said Frank ruefully. "Dicky Bird and the rest



MR. PECKOVER'S GUESTS ARE NOT AT ALL PLEASED!

cleared off; but we were down in the snow, and before we could get away—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cut the cackle!" said Bob Lawless gruffly. "I don't see why you galoots haven't gone home. Nothing to wait for that I can see!"

"We wanted to know how you'd got on at Hillcrest," said Molly, restraining her smiles. "It was very reckless to go there and snowball a headmaster. He might come complaining to Miss Meadows again."

"He didn't know us in the dark, luckily," said Beauclerc. "Still, it was a silly duffer's idea, yours, Bob!"

"Br-r-r-r!" growled Bob.

"We'll make Peckover sit up, somehow, all the same," said Frank Richards.

"Tell us when you mosey over to Hillcrest to do it!" implored Chunky Todgers. "We want to be on the scene next time; it will be worth seeing!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rats!"

Frank Richards & Co. slid on their way, and the Cedar Creek fellows took their homeward route, still laughing.

The unfortunate ending of the expedition to Hillcrest seemed to strike them as comic.

It did not seem very comic to the three fellows who had taken part in it; they were still aching from the lashes of Mr. Peckover's big stick.

In fact, the expedition, which had been reckless enough, had turned out a hopeless failure; and the chums of Cedar Creek School were sore both in mind and body.

"Ow!" mumbled Bob Lawless, as they slid on over the snow. "I say, I've got a lot of bumps and things! That old galoot seemed to think that he was beating carpets when we were hanging on the fence!"

"Oh, dear! I'm aching all over!"

"But we're not done with him yet," said Bob.

"Fathead!"

"I say, Franky—"

"Don't say anything!" growled Frank Richards. "I feel as if I'd been put through a quartz crusher! You're an ass, Bob! If you propose going over to Hillcrest again I'll biff you!"

"Well, perhaps it was a bit reckless," admitted Bob. "But it would have gone all right if we hadn't fallen in with Dicky Bird."

"But we did!" grunted Frank.

"There's other ways," said Bob Lawless.

"I tell you Peckover's got to pay the piper, and I'm going to think—"

"You can't think, old chap!" said Frank. "Don't try!"

Tempers were a little sore in the Co., as well as backs.

They slid on in silence for some time, till they reached the fork in the trail.

"Good-night!" called out Beauclerc, as he took his turning.

"Good-night, Cherub!"

Vere Beauclerc disappeared along the dark trail that led to the shack by the creek, and Frank and Bob kept on by the main trail for the Lawless Ranch.

They were tired when they arrived home, and late for supper; and when they sat down to supper they betrayed an incessant desire to shift in their seats.

Mr. Peckover had laid on his big stick not wisely, but too well; and it was likely to be some days before the chums recovered from the infliction.

They were still feeling sore and sorry when they went up to the room they shared in the ranch-house.

"Frank, old chap!" said Bob, from his bed, after they had turned in and the candle was out.

"Ow!" was Frank's reply.

"Still feeling bad?"

"Ow! Yes."

"Never mind!"

"But I do mind, ass! Ow!"

"I've been thinking—"

"Bosh!"

"I've got an idea—"

"Take it out and bury it!"

Bob laughed.

"I'll tell you to-morrow, then," he said. "If you do, I'll punch your nose!"

And Frank Richards laid his head on the pillow, and tried to sleep.

snowshoes, under the bright wintry sunshine. "Just listen to me—"

"I'll race you to school, if you like," answered Frank.

"But, listen—"

"Rats, old chap!"

And the chums of Cedar Creek arrived at school with the "stunt" still uncommunicated.

The 2nd Chapter.

Doubting Thomases!

Frank Richards & Co. were greeted with smiles by their schoolfellows at Cedar Creek that morning.

All Cedar Creek was "up against" Mr. Peckover, the exceedingly unpleasant master of Hillcrest School, and they quite approved of punishing him, if possible.

But Bob Lawless' reckless expedition only appealed to their sense of humour.

It was in vain that Bob explained that the expedition had really been a success, and Mr. Peckover had been snowballed in his own sitting-room.

The fact remained that the raiders had been caught on the fence, in escaping, and soundly "lambasted" by the schoolmaster's stick, and that incident made the Cedar Creek fellows roar.

The chums were rather uneasy as they entered the school-room and saw Miss Meadows.

But the Canadian schoolmistress did not take any special note of them, and they were relieved.

It was apparent that Mr. Peckover had not recognised the raiders in the dark, and so there was no complaint to come to the schoolmistress of Cedar Creek.

Perhaps, too, Mr. Peckover considered that the raiders had been sufficiently punished.

Certainly he had laid it on well with his big stick, and they were likely to ache for some days to come.

Bob Lawless glanced reproachfully at his chums several times during morning lessons.

He was in possession of a great idea for "downing" the obnoxious Peckover—or, at least, he believed he was.

But it was not surprising that his chums, for the present, were tired of Bob Lawless' "stunts."

His reproachful looks had no effect on them.

When school was dismissed at twelve, Bob approached the subject again, but

Frank and Vere Beauclerc waved him off.

"Cheese it!" said Frank.

"Give us a rest, old chap," urged Beauclerc. "We haven't got over your last ripping wheeze yet, you know."

"Look here—"

"Wait till we recover."

"But I guess—"

"Anybody coming on the ice?" called out Frank.

The creek was frozen over that morning, and most of the Cedar Creek boys and girls were going down to the ice.

Frank and Beauclerc joined them, and Bob was left to waste his eloquence on the desert air.

He grunted, and took his skates after them, and there was no further opportunity for talk before dinner.

But after dinner Bob Lawless gripped his two chums by the arms as they came out into the playground.

He did not mean to let them escape him again.

"Now I'm going to talk to you," he said.

"Mercy!"

"Help!"

"Don't be such all-fired jays!" exclaimed Bob. "I tell you it's a stunt that puts the lid right on. I tell you it's a stunt that will make Peckover sit up and weep."

"More likely to make us sit up and howl, if it's anything like the last," said Frank Richards.

"It's nothing like the last."

"Well, that's in its favour!" said Vere Beauclerc, laughing. "Let's hear it, for goodness' sake, and then we'll tell you it's rot, and we'll get on the ice again."

"Go ahead, then, and cut it short, Bob," said Frank.

"You fellows coming on the creek?" called out Chunky Todgers.

"Yes, when Bob's ready to give his lower jaw a rest," answered Frank.

"Look here!" roared Bob Lawless. "If you don't want to hear my stunt, Franky—"

"My dear chap, I want you to go and find the deepest, darkest corner in the pine woods, and bury it—deep!" answered Frank.

"And don't mark its grave!" said Beauclerc, with a chuckle.

Bob Lawless surveyed his chums with a grim brow.

He was evidently ruffled.

"You're a pair of silly jays!" he said. "Hear, hear! Now are we going on the ice?"

"You can go to Jericho, for all I care!" retorted Bob gruffly, and he strode away.

"Hold on, Bob—"

But the rancher's son did not turn his head.

He took his snowshoes, and started out on the trail, plainly in a huff.

"Poor old Bob!" said Frank. "He's got his back up, but he really can't expect us to enthuse over his new stunt while we're still sore from the last one. He will come round by lesson-time. Let's get on the creek."

And the two schoolboys joined the merry crowd on the ice.

Meanwhile, Bob Lawless was covering the trail towards Thompson Town, over the frozen snow, in great style.

Where he was gone, and what was his object, his chums did not know; but they looked for him when the bell rang for afternoon classes.

Bob Lawless did not appear, however.

The rest of Cedar Creek went in without him, but as they were settling down at their desks Bob Lawless came in, ruddy and breathless.

He dropped into his seat beside Frank, who greeted him with a smile.

Bob nodded amiably in response.

His "huff" was over, and his good temper had quite returned. Bob could be very wrathful sometimes, but his wrath never lasted long.

He found an opportunity of whispering to Frank during lessons.

"It's all O.K."

"What is?"

"The stunt."

"Oh, my hat!"

That was all that could be said until after lessons.

But when Cedar Creek was dismissed, Frank and Beauclerc joined him in the playground, rather curious to hear where he had been, and what he had done.

But they found Bob uncommunicative.

"I'm going home through Thompson," he said, as he fastened on his snowshoes. "You fellows coming?"

"Of course we're coming, if you're



Mr. PECKOVER'S PARTY!

(Continued from the previous page.)

with names, and send them to a set of the toughest characters in Thompson," said Bob coolly. "Four Kings, and Euchre Dick, Dave Dunn, and Frisco Bill, and some more of that sort."

"My hat!"

"They'll accept the invitation, of course."

"The—the invitation? Oh, dear!"

"They're bound to. Nobody ever refuses an invitation to a party in this section, where there ain't many parties given. Besides, the word 'refreshments' would bring them a hundred miles!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Music and dancing, too," said Bob.

"You don't get much music and dancing in the Thompson Valley. They'll jump at the chance!"

"I—I suppose so. But—"

"You see, I had to get cards printed for this stunt, so as to use the third person. I couldn't write an invitation in Peckover's name. Can't use a man's name like that. But I can send along an invitation-card, stating that Peckover would be glad of someone's company on the occasion of his birthday. I dare say he would be—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Peckover won't know, of course. These cards will be delivered to-night. I'll get Injun Dick to take them round—he carries half the messages in Thompson, and it will look natural enough—and as Thursday's to-morrow there won't be time for the guests to reply, even if they thought of doing it. They'll simply turn up at Hillcrest for the party."

"Great Scott! But there won't be any party!"

Bob shrugged his shoulders.

"Peckover can settle that with his guests," he answered.

"Oh!"

"And when a rough crowd turns up there, expecting a great time and free drinks, and gets nothing but slanging from old Peckover, I've a suspicion that there will be trouble. I shouldn't be surprised if they wreck the place."

"Oh!"

"It will be quite amusing for Peckover—as amusing as laying into fellows with a big stick!" chuckled Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now to get these cards filled in," said Bob, jumping up. "We can get pen and ink at a store in the town. Come on!"

Bob's chums followed him in almost a dazed state of mind.

The "stunt" almost took their breath away.

What would happen at Hillcrest on the morning, when a rough crowd arrived there for the party, and were disappointed, they could hardly imagine.

But it was certain to be something very exciting.

The schoolboys entered a store, and Frank and Beauclerc made a few small purchases, while Bob Lawless asked for pen and ink, and sat down at a table in a corner.

There he filled up the cards, taking care to use a round-hand, quite unlike his ordinary "fist."

Frank glanced over his shoulder as he completed the first card.

It ran now:

"Mr. Peckover has the pleasure of requesting the company of Euchre Dick on Thursday afternoon, the 21st inst., on the occasion of his birthday.

"Music, dancing, refreshments."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Frank.

It did not take Bob long to work through the cards.

They were filled in with the names of Euchre Dick, Four Kings, Dave Dunn, Frisco Bill, Billy Bowers, Ikey Scooter, and several others of the roughest characters who made the town of Thompson their abiding-place.

"Got the envelopes, Franky?"

"Here you are."

Frank had purchased a dozen envelopes in the store for the purpose.

Bob enclosed the cards in them, and inscribed the names on the outside.

"Wait for me here," he said.

He left the store and walked along the Main Street into the naphtha-glare from the Red Dog Saloon.

Leaning against a post outside the Red Dog was Injun Dick, the red man who had once been a great chief, and was now a fetcher and carrier of messages, and a terrific consumer of the potent fire-water.

Injun Dick returned Bob's greeting with a stately inclination of the head.

"Injun thirsty!" he remarked.

"You'd like a dollar, old sport?" asked Bob.

"You bet!" said the red man tersely.

"I want you to deliver these letters. You know where to find the galoots," said Bob in a low voice. "They're all to be delivered this evening. And you don't let on who gave them to you to deliver, Dick. Savvy?"

"Injun savvy."

"And there's your dollar," said Bob.

"The Little White Chief is a bully boy with a glass eye," said the red man solemnly.

And he started on his errand at once.

Bob Lawless rejoined his chums at the store.

"All O.K.," he said. "I guess it's time we lit out for home. Get on your snowshoes."

And the chums scudded on cheerily.

Their only regret was that they would not be at Hillcrest on the following afternoon to see what happened.

The 4th Chapter.

Guests at Hillcrest.

"The old sport's ratty this afternoon!" murmured Dicky Bird.

"Mind your eye!" whispered Fisher.

There was a hush in the school-room at Hillcrest.

Mr. Ephraim Peckover, the headmaster—and only master—of Hillcrest School, had just entered.

He did not look amiable.

Mr. Peckover had a very sharp and unpleasant temper—as the Cedar Creek fellows had discovered—and as the Hillcrest boys had learned to their cost.

The only fellow at Hillcrest who was in Mr. Peckover's good books was Kern Gunten, the son of the richest store-keeper in Thompson, who had a financial interest in the new school.

So far, the new school was not a numerous one, the fees being rather too high for the average citizen of the Thompson Valley; more especially as most of the people of the section sent their boys and girls to Cedar Creek.

Mr. Peckover's curriculum was more imposing than that of the "National" school, but French and Latin did not "cut much ice" with the citizens of Thompson.

Indeed, it was not at all certain that the venture would be a financial success; and that, perhaps, sharpened Mr. Peckover's naturally sharp temper.

Certainly he did not seem to think it was necessary to make himself liked by his pupils.

One of his favourite methods of instruction was rapping knuckles with a pointer, a method that could not be expected to recommend itself to the owners of the knuckles.

Mr. Peckover's look showed that his never amiable temper was a little worse than usual that afternoon.

He was still feeling the annoyance of his late experience, when he had been snowballed through the window of his sitting-room.

He had taken condign vengeance on the culprits, but he did not know who they were, and he suspected that some of his own boys were mixed up in the affair.

His eye singled out Dicky Bird, as he came before the class, and the unfortunate Dicky wished that he had not addressed that murmured remark to Fisher.

"Bird!" rapped out Mr. Peckover.

"Yes, sir," said Dicky meekly.

"I think I have spoken to you before about chattering in class."

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"What did you say to Fisher?"

"Only—a remark, sir," stammered Dicky Bird.

He was not likely to repeat that remark to Mr. Peckover.

"I have told you not to chatter in class, Bird."

Rap!

"Yaroooh!" roared Dicky Bird.

"Silence!"

The unfortunate Dicky sucked his knuckles, and gasped.

The class were very circumspect when the lessons began. Nobody wanted to catch Mr. Peckover's dyspeptic eye.

But several fellows caught it, all the same, and the pointer rapped several times.

By the time an hour had elapsed, Mr. Peckover had made the tempers in class as bad as his own, and there were black and sulky looks on all sides.

Fortunately for the class, there came an interruption then.

A heavy tread sounded in the porch of the schoolhouse, and a deep, powerful voice bawled:

"Anybody to home?"

Mr. Peckover jumped.

He knew the voice; it was that of Four Kings, the leader of the "Red Dog crowd" in Thompson.

"Hyer I am!" went on the powerful voice. "I've come! Isn't there anybody to home, to speak to a galoot?"

"Dear me!" murmured Mr. Peckover, while the Hillcrest fellows stared at one another in astonishment. "What can the man want?"

Apparently Four Kings was annoyed at finding no one to receive him.

The man and wife who served Mr. Peckover in his house were occupied elsewhere.

Visitors were not expected during lessons, and the man was cutting logs in the timber, and his wife was gone marketing in Thompson.

Mr. Peckover was there to deal with his visitor himself, but he did not like interviewing such a visitor.

"Bird," he snapped, "go out and ask the man what he wants!"

"Yes, sir."

Dicky Bird left the school-room.

He came back in a minute or so, with an expression of astonishment on his cheery face.

"Well?" snapped Mr. Peckover.

"He says he's come to the party, sir," said Dicky.

"The—the what?"

"The birthday party, sir."

"What do you mean, boy? Whose birthday party?"

"Yours, sir."

"Is this impertinence, Bird?" thundered Mr. Peckover.

"That's what he said, sir."

"Nonsense! Hold out your hand!"

"But, sir, he said—"

"How dare you tell me such ridiculous falsehoods, Bird? Hold out your hand at once!"

Swish!

"Ow! Oh! Ah!"

"Go to your place, Bird, and be silent!"

Dicky Bird went to his place, with glittering eyes.

He had told Mr. Peckover the exact facts, but perhaps it was not surprising that the Hillcrest master suspected him

of an attempt to "pull his leg," when he received that astonishing message.

But the message was quickly confirmed.

Dicky Bird had hardly sat down at his desk when the school-room door was thrown open, and a burly ruffian in leathern trousers, big boots, red shirt, and woollen jacket, and Stetson hat, looked in.

He gave the startled schoolmaster a grin and a nod.

"Oh, hyer you are!" he exclaimed.

"I—I am certainly here," stammered Mr. Peckover. "I—I do not understand what—"

"Put it there!" said Four Kings, holding out a huge, hairy hand.

Mr. Peckover shook hands with him mechanically.

He certainly did not want to shake hands with the ruffian, especially as Four Kings' hand showed that he had a rooted objection to the use of soap and water; but refusal was impossible.

"Glad to see ye, Peckover!" went on Four Kings amiably. "Many happy returns of the day to you!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"I'm the first, am I?" said Four Kings, looking round. "Never mind—the boys will be along in a brace of shakes!"

"The—the boys!"

"I s'pose the dancing will be hyer," said Four Kings. "Are the kids staying for the party, Peckover?"

"The—the party?"

"And if the refreshments are handy, Peckover, I guess I don't object to a long drink, arter my walk up the hill."

"I—I—I—" stammered Mr. Peckover helplessly.

"Oh, here they come!" exclaimed Four Kings, as Euchre Dick and Billy Bowers appeared together in the doorway.

"Mosey right in, boys!"

"Hyer we are!" announced Billy Bowers. "Top of the afternoon to you, Mr. Peckover! You're a gentleman, sir!"

"Bless my soul!" murmured Mr. Peckover, wondering whether he was dreaming.

"The gentleman was jest speaking of a long drink," remarked Four Kings.

"Mr. Peckover, you're a white man!" exclaimed Dry Billy Bowers. "A long drink, sir—that hits me jest where I live! You're the real goods, sir!"

"But—but—" said Mr. Peckover dazedly.

"P'raps we've come rather early for the party?" suggested Euchre Dick. "You said Thursday arternoon."

"I—I said what?"

"Bless your 'art, if we're early, what matters?" said Four Kings heartily. "Give us a quiet corner and something to drink, and we'll wait as long as you like."

"Correct!" said Mr. Bowers.

"But—but—" shrieked Mr. Peckover.

"This—is this some mistake—"

"What?"

"There is no party here—"

"Hay?"

"It is not my birthday—"

"Eh?"

"I—I did not—I never dreamed—I certainly—"

"Look here!" The amiable look had quite departed from the rough and stubbly countenance of Four Kings.

"What sort of game do you call this hyer? You asked us hyer—"

"I did not!"

"You hear him, pards? What sort of a trick is this?"

"On the occasion of his birthday!" said Mr. Bowers solemnly. "Them was the werry words."

"Music, dancing, refreshments," said Euchre Dick.

There was a fresh tramp of feet in the porch.

More of the guests were arriving.

Dave Dunn and Ikey Scooter looked into the school-room.

Three or four more rough-looking customers could be seen beyond them.

Mr. Peckover gazed at them dazedly.

This party of the roughest characters in Thompson had arrived for his birthday-party, apparently, and it was no wonder that it seemed like a specially severe nightmare to the unhappy headmaster of Hillcrest.

The 5th Chapter.

Nice for Mr. Peckover.

Dicky Bird and his companions looked on in silence and amazement.

They could not understand the strange affair any more than Mr. Peckover could.

The schoolmaster stood rooted to the floor, breathing hard.

Four Kings & Co. were indignant.

They had tramped a good distance, mostly uphill, to accept the invitation to Mr. Peckover's birthday-party, and instead of the hearty welcome they had expected, they met—this!

No birthday, no party, and, above all, no drinks!

Unless the man was mad, the Red Dog gentlemen could not imagine why he should play such a trick on them.

But, undoubtedly, they were not the kind of men to take such trickery patiently.

Four Kings' rough face was already assuming the expression of an infuriated bulldog.

"Hyer we are!" came the voice of Ikey Scooter, from the doorway. "Good-afternoon to you, Peckover, old sport!"

"Dear me! I—I—I—" moaned Mr. Peckover.

"Boys!" roared Four Kings. "He says as how it's a trick on us, and there ain't no party!"

"Wot!"

"No, no!" panted Mr. Peckover. "Not at all! I—I said it was a mistake! You are under a—a—a misapprehension."

"You invited us hyer for your birthday, didn't you?" demanded Dave Dunn angrily.

"No; certainly not!"

"Why, I've got the card hyer, you lying old skinflint!" shouted Dunn. "Do you mean to say there ain't a party at all?"

"No! No, certainly not! I—"

"No music and dancin'?" howled Euchre Dick.

"No. I—"

"No refreshments?" wailed Mr. Bowers.

"Oh, dear! No. I—I—"

"Then we've been gilled!" roared Four Kings furiously. "Boys, that there old hunk has brought us up the hill for nothing—jest a stunt on us!"

"Lynch him!" yelled Dry Billy.

"Peckover, you coyote—"

"You skinny rascal—"

The guests surrounded their unhappy host, whose knees were knocking together.

Four Kings flourished a huge fist under his nose, and Mr. Peckover jumped back.

"You've fooled us—hay?" roared Four Kings. "Give us a tramp up the hill for a joke on us—hay? I'll joke you, I guess! There ain't going to be no party, ain't there? There ain't going to be no drinks? By gum, if you don't trot out them drinks in short order, we'll lynch you over your own doorway!"

"Oh! Ow! Help!"

"Trot out them drinks!" exclaimed Mr. Bowers indignantly. "I'm s'prised at you, Peckover! Can't you ask a gentelman if he's got a mouth on him?"

"Rope him!" exclaimed Euchre Dick. "Give him a larruping!"

"That's the music! Rope him!"

Mr. Peckover, with a gasp of terror, made a wild rush for the door.

He was grasped instantly by two or three of his unruly guests, and dragged back.

"No, you don't," said Four Kings grimly.

"Yarpooh! Help!"

"Shet up!" Four Kings shook the unhappy schoolmaster till his teeth rattled in his head. "Now, Peckover, I'll go easy with you! You've fooled us! You're a silly old coyote, and you oughter be lynched! But you trot out them drinks, long and strong, and we'll let you off with a cow-hiding. I can't say fairer than that!"

"Ow, ow, ow!"

In Four Kings' muscular grip, Mr. Peckover was marched out of the school-room, surrounded by his terrible guests.

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Dicky Bird.

The class sat and listened, dumb-founded. Dicky Bird ventured to the door, and watched the proceedings.

The unhappy Mr. Peckover, trembling for his skin, was serving his awful guests with all he could lay his hands on; the dining-room was filled with thick smoke of pipes and cigars, the fumes of whisky, and the clatter of glasses and bottles.

It was fortunate for Mr. Peckover that he had a supply of firewater on the premises.

It was a party, after all—of sorts.

But the guests wasted no politeness on Mr. Peckover.

They shouted at him, cursed him freely, and even threw glasses at him when he did not move quickly enough to please them.

And the unhappy master laboured untiringly in their service, lest worse should befall him.

He was still waiting on the guests when the hour of dismissal came round, but he had forgotten his pupils.

They dismissed themselves, and left the schoolhouse, with a roaring chorus following them.

Four Kings & Co. seemed to be enjoying themselves, after all.

"Well, my hat!" said Dicky Bird, as he came down the trail from the school.

"My word! Poor old Peckover! It serves him right, but—"

"Hallo, here's the Cedar Creek galoots!" said Blumpy, as they turned into the Thompson trail.