

£10 IN PRIZES MUST BE WON THIS WEEK!

The BOYS' FRIEND

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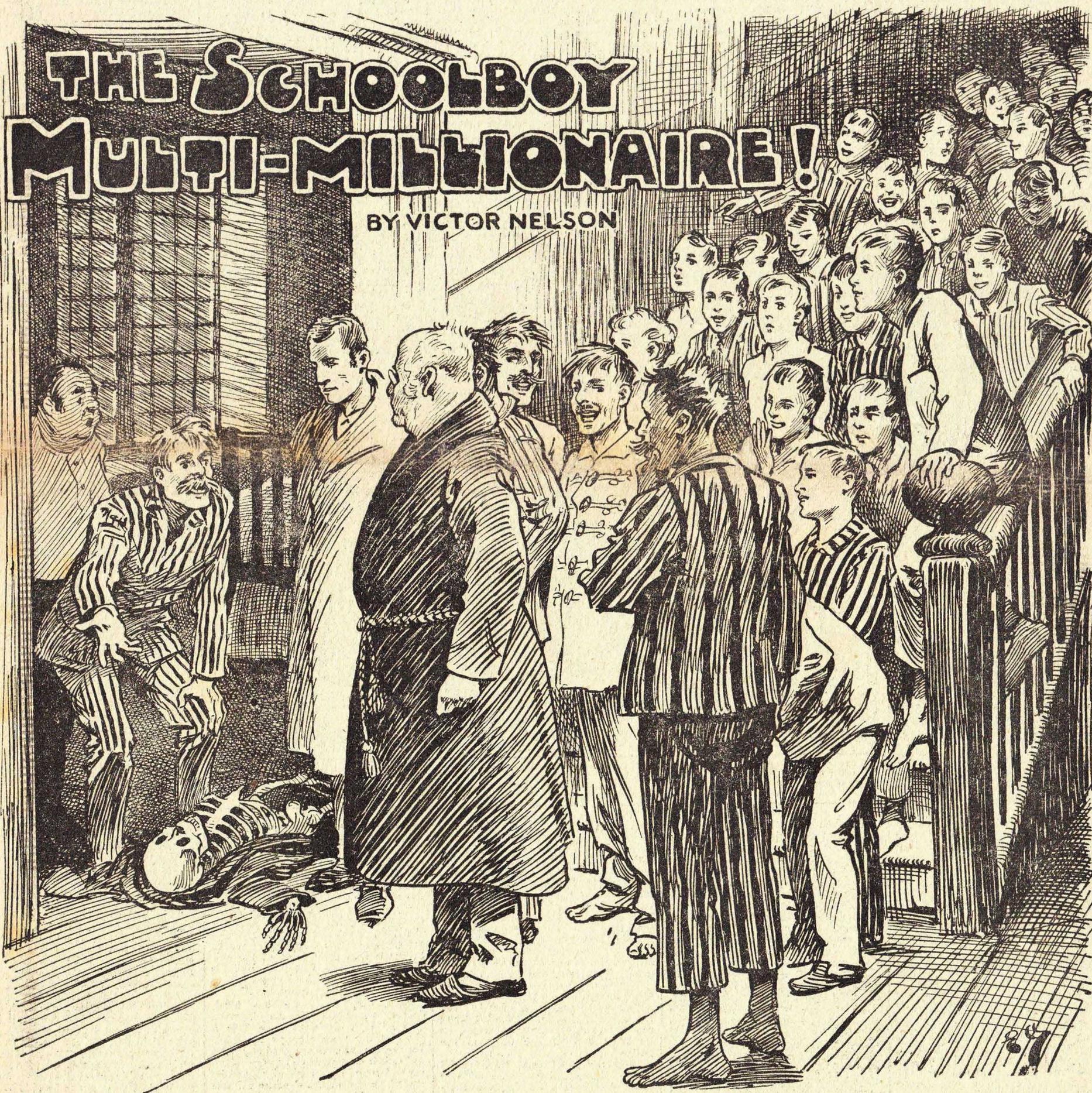
TWELVE PAGES!

TWENTY-SEVENTH YEAR!

No. 1,032. Vol. XXI. New Series.]

THREE HALFPENCE.

[Week Ending March 19th, 1921.



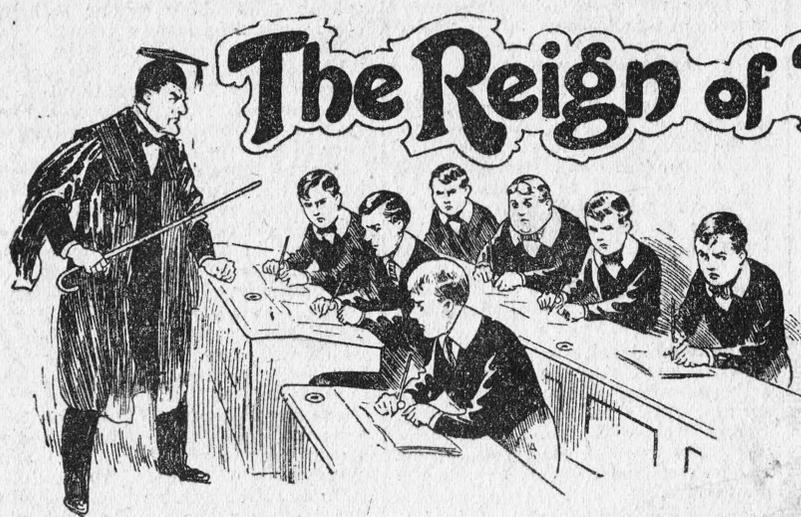
The "Ghost" of Hag's Manor Brought to Light!

a frock-coat. The boys roared, but Don Darrel & Co. were careful to keep well in the background, not especially wanting their part in the jape to be discovered.

Like a pack of startled rabbits the juniors crowded on to the staircase. The Head gazed down at the "ghost." A model skeleton belonging to Mr. Philby, the science-master, was revealed, dressed up in

THE PAPER FOR PARTICULAR READERS!

A GRAND COMPLETE YARN OF JIMMY SILVER & Co.



The Reign of Terror!

A TALE OF
THE CHUMS OF
ROOKWOOD
SCHOOL.

By . .
OWEN
CONQUEST.

The 1st Chapter. Called to Account!

"Not a word!"
"Not a giddy syllable!"
"But I say—"
"Shut up, Muffin!"
"That's all very well," persisted Tubby Muffin. "But the Head will rag us all round!"
"Let him!" snapped Jimmy Silver.
"But—"
"Shut up, Muffin!" roared Arthur Edward Lovell.
Tubby Muffin shut up, but very reluctantly. He seemed to be rather dismayed at the prospect of a "ragging" from the Head.
He was not, as a matter of fact, the only dismayed fellow in the Classical Fourth at Rookwood School.
Many of the juniors looked very dubious.

The Classical Fourth were gathered in the Form-room after prayers that morning, and nobody present looked happy.

Valentine Mornington had a rather sardonic air of supreme indifference, probably assumed for the occasion. Jimmy Silver & Co. were frankly uneasy. But the word had gone forth that the Form were to "stand together" in the forthcoming interview with the Head; Jimmy Silver was captain of the Fourth, and his word was law. Even Peele and Gower and Lattrey felt that they had to line up with the rest, lest worse should befall them; while the great majority of the Form backed up Jimmy Silver without hesitation.

"Not a word!" repeated Jimmy impressively. "The Head will ask us who rigged up the booby-trap in the dormitory last night. We can't say we don't know, because we do know—"

"I don't see why we can't say we don't know, all the same!" grunted Peele.

"Perhaps you don't, Peele," answered Jimmy crushingly. "But I do, and all the decent fellows here do. We can't tell the Head a whacking lie, for two reasons—first and foremost, because we're not liars—second, because he wouldn't believe it."

"Two jolly good reasons, with the odds on the second!" grinned Gower. "You can tell him it was I, if you like," drawled Mornington. "I'm not afraid to face the music!"

"We're not going to tell him anything," said Jimmy Silver. "Speech is silver, silence is golden—"

"Oh, we're all standing by Morny in this," said Raby. "Morny ragged the brute, but we all wanted to see him ragged."

"Hear, hear!"
"But, I say!" murmured Tubby Muffin. "S-s-suppose the Head gets awfully waxy—"

"Let him!"
"But he will lay into us if he's waxy!" wailed Muffin.

"Let him!"
"I don't want to be flogged!" shrieked Muffin indignantly.

"A flogging would do you good," said Newcome.

"Why, you silly ass—"
"Hush! Here comes his royal Nibs!" said Lovell.

There was a tremor in the Fourth Form, as the stately tread of Dr. Chisholm was heard approaching.

Silence fell on the anxious juniors as the Head swept into the Form-room with rustling gown.

He was followed in by Mr. Cutts, the new master of the Fourth Form at Rookwood.

Mr. Christopher Cutts looked pale and bitter. It was only his second day in charge of the Rookwood Fourth; but already relations had been strained to breaking-point.

Possibly the Fourth had taken things a little easily under the sway of Mr. Bootles, their old master. At

all events, they had got on very well indeed with Mr. Bootles. Mr. Bootles had seldom used the cane, and never willingly, while Mr. Christopher Cutts seemed to revel in the use of it. Since his advent at Rookwood, the Fourth Form room had been a place of weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Indignation had grown. If Mr. Bootles could handle his Form without incessantly ragging them, why couldn't Mr. Cutts? That was a question the juniors asked themselves, and one another. They agreed to lay all the blame upon Christopher Cutts. He was a gentleman with very severe ideas, which the juniors considered he had no right to put into practice at their expense.

Dr. Chisholm was very grave, and his brows were knitted. What had happened in the dormitory the previous night seemed to him an "outrage." To the juniors it seemed only a lark on an unpopular master; as Lovell remarked, booby-traps had been rigged up before, without all this fuss.

For some moments the Head surveyed the Fourth Form in silence, and their uneasiness increased. They carefully avoided catching his eye. He spoke at last; and his voice, though quiet, seemed to rumble like thunder through the silent Form-room.

"Boys! It is my duty to inquire into the outrage that occurred last night in your dormitory. A—receptacle—a basket of some sort—was placed on the top of the door, and it—ah—fell on the head of Mr. Cutts when he entered to see lights out, and—ah—covered him with—with a peculiar mixture of various liquids, including, I believe, ink, and gum, and—and paint, and several other extraordinary ingredients."

The juniors did not venture to smile, though it was difficult to keep serious when they remembered how Mr. Cutts had looked with those various and extraordinary liquids streaming over him.

"This is an unprecedented outrage," continued the Head. "Mr. Cutts has been with us only a few days, and yet he is treated in this manner by his boys. Nothing of this kind occurred in connection with your late master, Mr. Bootles. Besides the disrespect of this action, it involves—er—a shocking lack of hospitality to a newcomer in our midst. I require to know the name of the boy who placed this—ah—receptacle on the dormitory door."

Silence.
"One boy is guilty," said the Head. "I request him to stand forward, and admit his guilt."

Mornington closed one eye at Jimmy Silver. Morny, at all events, was not taking this serious situation with much seriousness.

The Head waited.
Nobody, evidently, was going to stand forward. Mr. Cutts closed his thin lips tightly together.

"I am waiting!" said the Head at last mildly.

Still silence.
"Every boy present must be aware of the—the culprit's identity," said the Head. "Silver!"

"Yes, sir!" murmured Jimmy.
"As head boy of the Form, I ask you to give me the name."

Jimmy's lips closed hard.
"You are aware of the identity of the delinquent, Silver?"

"We all know, sir," answered Jimmy. "But it really wasn't only one fellow, sir! The whole Form supports him!"

"Hear, hear!" murmured Lovell.
The Head frowned.

"If the whole Form identifies itself with this outrage upon Mr. Cutts, I shall regard the whole Form as equally guilty; Silver."

"Yes, sir."
The Head paused.
"Has any boy anything to say?" he asked at last.

Tubby Muffin turned an anguished blink upon Jimmy, and received a ferocious frown in response. The fat Classical remained silent. Not a word came from the Classical Fourth.

"Very well!" said the Head. "The whole Form will be punished for this outrage. I shall inflict the punishment personally. Mr. Cutts has been insulted; and, through him, my authority has been treated with contempt. I shall cane the whole Form."

"Oh crumbs!" mumbled Tubby Muffin.
"Kindly hand me your cane, Mr. Cutts."

Mr. Cutts kindly handed his cane to the Head. Valentine Mornington, quietly and coolly, came out before the class.

"It was I, sir!" he said.
There was a murmur in the Fourth.
"Good old Morny!"
"Bravo!"

The 2nd Chapter. Facing the Music!

"Silence!" rapped out the Head. The murmur died away.

Dr. Chisholm fixed his eyes gravely on Mornington. Mr. Cutts' eyes glittered at him. The dandy of the Fourth took no notice whatever of Mr. Cutts. He stood before the Head, cool and calm.

"You, Mornington?" said Dr. Chisholm.

"Yes, sir!"
"You laid this trap for your Form-master, and covered him—smothered him, in fact—with a flood of—of various liquids—"

"Yes, sir!"
"Very well, Mornington! I shall punish you with the greatest severity for the outrage," said Dr. Chisholm quietly. "I will, however, first ask you your reason for acting in such a manner. What could have caused you to treat your new master so maliciously?"

"What was Mr. Cutts comin' into our dorm at all for?" said Mornington coolly. "In Mr. Bootles' time, a prefect used to see lights out for the Fourth."

"Mr. Cutts preferred to take that duty upon himself, Mornington. Surely you did not act in such a way for so trifling a reason—"

"Oh, no, sir! We all knew that if Mr. Cutts came in, he would find some excuse for pitching into some of us," said Mornington coolly.

The Head started.
"Boy! Do you venture to accuse your Form-master of administering unjust and unprovoked punishments?"

"Yes, sir!"
"Good old Morny!" murmured Lovell, greatly delighted. Morny was booked for a severe caning, and apparently he was bent on taking out its value, as it were, in advance.

"How dare you, Mornington!" exclaimed the Head, greatly shocked.

"Mr. Cutts is a bully, sir."
"What?"

"And a brute, sir!"
"Boy!"

"And so say all of us!" roared Arthur Edward Lovell suddenly, feeling called upon to give Morny some support.

"Hear, hear!"
"Silence!" exclaimed the Head angrily.

Mr. Cutts looked almost green.
"Dr. Chisholm!" he stuttered.

"Am I—I to listen to this—to such outrageous insults—"
"Calm yourself, my dear sir!" said the Head. "You may depend upon me to uphold your authority. Mornington—"

"You are going to punish me, sir, for punishing Mr. Cutts," said Morny calmly. "I have a right to speak, and give my reasons."

"That is true. But—"
"Mr. Cutts has already caned every fellow in the Form. He has caned some of us a dozen times. Mr. Bootles never found that necessary, sir. Why should Mr. Cutts find it necessary?"

The Head paused—that was a point well taken.

"Mr. Cutts supervises our prep, sir, and watches us in our studies while we are doing it," said Mornington. "Mr. Bootles never did. The Fourth have always been allowed to prepare their lessons by themselves, without being supervised like the fags."

"I do not quite understand this," said the Head. "Your preparation is done in your studies as usual, I presume?"

"Yes, sir; and Mr. Cutts orders us to leave our doors open, and he walks up and down the passage with his eye on us."

"I was not aware of this!" said the Head. "That is, however, no excuse—no excuse whatever—for the outrage that has occurred. You have not justified yourself in the least, Mornington—indeed, your outrageous conduct admits of no justification. You will now hold out your hand!"

What followed was painful—especially to Mornington.

Morny received six strokes, and they were laid on in earnest.

With all his coolness and nerve, Mornington writhed under that severe infliction.

His handsome face was quite pale, his lips tightly set, as he went back to his place.

Dr. Chisholm laid down the cane.
"I trust," he said, "that this will be a warning to all the Form. Mr. Cutts is my representative in this Form-room, and must be treated with the same respect and obedience as myself. That is all!"

He rustled to the door.
"Mr. Cutts, I shall be glad of a few words with you before you take your class."

"Certainly, sir!"
Mr. Cutts' hard face had quite brightened as Mornington went through his punishment. But it clouded as he followed the Head from the Form-room.

Dr. Chisholm did not speak till he was well out of the hearing of the juniors. He would not allow them to hear their master being taken to task. He paused at last by the corridor window, and looked directly at Mr. Cutts, who found some difficulty in meeting the Head's clear, calm eyes.

"You are new here, Mr. Cutts," said the Head very mildly. "You are young and—doubtless—keen and enthusiastic. No doubt the changes you have made seem to you to make for increased efficiency."

"That is certainly my motive, sir," said Mr. Cutts.

"There is an old Latin tag that everyone does well to remember, however," said the Head. "'Festina lente,' Mr. Cutts—'Make haste slowly.' Schoolboys are born conservatives. They are strong upon tradition. They resent interference, however well-intentioned, with prescriptive rights and ancient customs. I should suggest—the Head's voice was mildness itself, but his "suggestion" was evidently in the nature of a command—"I should suggest that you do not interfere hastily with any established practice that is harmless in itself."

Mr. Cutts set his lips.

"I suggest that the duty of seeing lights out in the Fourth Form dormitory should be left to a prefect, as before. I suggest that preparation in the studies should not be done under supervision. Supervision is necessary with the Second and Third; but the Fourth are supposed to be old enough to understand something of a sense of responsibility. I think it would be wise to leave these customs unchanged. Good-morning, Mr. Cutts!"

The Head sailed majestically away. Mr. Cutts remained where he was for some moments, staring after the Head.

His look was not pleasant.

It was, in fact, checkmate for the new rules the new master had introduced, and which had so much exasperated the Classical Fourth.

Mr. Cutts gritted his teeth.

He was a hard, severe man, with a peculiar sense of duty that was all his own. He had a firm belief in efficiency; and his idea of efficiency was incessant interference and driving. But Mornington's bold words to the Head had cut the ground from under his feet, as it were. What Mr. Cutts called efficiency the Head would have called

fussiness; and the Head had no use for fussiness.

Morning lessons did not go pleasantly in the Fourth Form-room that day.

The Modern portion of the Form were not present that morning, which was rather fortunate for them.

Mr. Cutts had the Classics all to himself; and he was in a temper for which the word "Hunnish" would have been a mild description.

Mornington, after his punishment, was not in a fit state for school work; and a tactful master would have given him a rest. But Mr. Cutts had no tact; or, perhaps, he found pleasure in ragging the junior who had swamped him the previous night with various and extraordinary liquids. He had no mercy upon the hapless Morny; and before the class was dismissed, Morny was white with rage, and on the verge of an outbreak. Mr. Cutts had a bitter tongue, and he used it pitilessly upon Mornington.

There was black wrath in the breasts of the Classics when they were dismissed at last.

"There's going to be trouble!" said Arthur Edward Lovell savagely as he rubbed his hands in the passage.

"There is—and jolly soon!" said Mornington.

Jimmy Silver nodded rather dismally. It was quite certain that trouble was coming; the only question was, what form and shape would it take?

The 3rd Chapter. Catching Carthew!

"What's the game?"
Jimmy Silver asked that question rather dispiritedly, as he came on Mornington in the Fourth Form passage after lessons.

Afternoon lessons had been a severe infliction to the Classical Fourth, and more than ever had they envied the Moderns when the latter trooped off to Mr. Manders' House for scientific instruction. Arthur Edward Lovell had desperately declared that he would be willing to study German and "stinks"—the Classical name for chemistry—rather than stand Mr. Christopher Cutts.

But only the Moderns could escape; the Classics had to stand Mr. Cutts, and they bore him with much repining.

In the end study there was some excited talk over tea, but even "Uncle James" could not exactly say what was to be done. Christopher Cutts was impossible, and not to be stood; only, as Jimmy dismally remarked, they had to stand the brute.

It was after tea that Jimmy happened on Valentine Mornington in the passage, and he found Morny busy—in a very curious way. He was driving a gimlet into the wainscot, about three inches from the floor. As Jimmy Silver stopped to observe him, Morny crossed the passage, and drove in a second gimlet, exactly opposite the first.

Then the captain of the Fourth demanded to know what was the game. Morny looked up with a grin.

"Cord across," he explained.
"What for?"

"Oh, to catch rabbits!" said Mornington sarcastically.

"You mean for Cutts?" asked Jimmy.

"If Cutts comes up to watch us at prep, as he did yesterday, I shouldn't wonder if he takes a tumble," smiled Mornington. "His own fault, for spying on us. We don't ask him to spy."

"But he'll see the cord," said Jimmy.

"There won't be a light in the passage. I'm going to put it out just before seven," smiled Mornington. "You might tip the fellows the wink not to come strolling along here in the dark."

"It will mean another row," said Jimmy.

"Let it!"
Jimmy Silver nodded.

"You're right, Morny. Let him take a tumble if he comes spying into our quarters. Don't own up if there's a row. We'll all stand together. Here, let me take a drive at that gimlet; then I shall be in it as well as you!"

"Right-ho!" said Mornington, with a grin.

In a short time all the Classical Fourth knew that another trap was laid for the stealthy Mr. Cutts.

Before seven o'clock the light was extinguished—accidentally, of course—in the passage, and the juniors started prep in their studies, listening intently, giving much more attention to Morny's trap than to prep.

They were blissfully eager to hear Mr. Cutts come along the passage in the dark, and catch his foot in the stretched cord, and take a tumble.

It was not a trick that Jimmy Silver would have approved of in the

ordinary way, but a persecutor who persisted in invading the Fourth Form quarters had to be dealt with somehow.

The juniors were, of course, ignorant of the talk that had taken place between the Head and the new master that morning. Mr. Cutts no longer felt at liberty to parade the Fourth Form passage, supervising personally the Fourth Form prep. He was annoyed and irritated, but he knew that he had to observe the dictates of the Head. But he could not make up his interfering mind to leave the juniors in peace. Towards seven o'clock Mr. Cutts dropped into Carthew's study in the Sixth Form passage.

He had already spotted Carthew of the Sixth as a prefect who would be likely to help him in his drastic methods with the juniors. He did not like Bulkeley or Neville; but Carthew, the bully, was a fellow after his own heart.

After a little agreeable conversation with Carthew, in which prefect and master took each other's measure pretty accurately, Mr. Cutts remarked in a casual way: "I should be glad, Carthew, if you would look in at the Fourth Form studies at seven, and note whether the juniors are at work, as they should be. I fear that there is a good deal of disorder in that passage, which naturally leads to the neglect of work."

"Quite so, sir." "Anything out of order you will, of course, report to me," said Mr. Cutts. "It is my firmest principle to give a prefect the fullest support."

Carthew smiled as the new master strolled away. He thought he saw an opening now to wipe off some old scores against the Fistical Four. Anything above a whisper would be enough for Carthew to report as disorderly conduct in the junior passage.

At seven sharp Mark Carthew left his study, and ascended the stairs to the Fourth Form passage.

He found it in complete darkness. Carthew smiled to himself.

This was a delinquency to begin with, for he guessed easily enough that the light had been extinguished intentionally.

Most of the study doors were closed, but at the far end of the passage, Jimmy Silver's door was open, and light streamed out. A faint buzz of voices came from that study, looking very much as if a number of juniors had gathered there to chat, instead of attending to prep in their own quarters, as they ought to have been doing.

Carthew trotted cheerfully along the passage, to look for something to report to Mr. Cutts—any trifle, light as air, would have suited him.

But he did not get anywhere near the lighted doorway of the end study. As he came briskly along, something caught him on the ankles, and he went spinning forward with a wild yell.

was inclined to rush at the group of grinning juniors, hitting out right and left. But prudence forbade. The Fourth were not in a tame mood, and Carthew could see by their looks that he would be roughly handled. He choked down his rage.

"I shall report this to Mr. Cutts!" he gasped.

"Report and be dashed!" retorted Mornington.

"Get out of our passage, Carthew!" bawled Higgs.

Study doors were open all along the passage now.

"Kick him downstairs!" shouted somebody.

Carthew beat a hasty retreat.

Hisses and catcalls followed him to the stairs, and an over-ripe apple caught him in the collar as he went.

Carthew hurried down. He was rather anxious to get out of that hornets' nest.

"Caught the wrong bird!" growled Mornington, jerking out the gimlets and the cord. "But it was Cutts that sent him, of course. And now we're going to see the Cutts' bird himself, I reckon."

"With his cane!" said Van Ryn grimly.

"We've already decided what to do about Cutts," said Mornington coolly.

"Every fellow locks his study door, and takes no notice of him. Mind you all stick to it."

"I—I say—" began Tubby Muffin.

"If any fellow lets him in, he will take it out of that fellow. You can bet your boots on that!" said Mornington. "If you're wise you'll keep your doors locked."

"It's a go!" said Conroy.

"You bet!" said Putty Grace.

"Silver!" No reply.

"Silver! I know you are there! Open this door at once!"

Jimmy Silver closed one eye at his comrades, and there was a faint chuckle in the end study. But that was all.

Crash! Mr. Cutts' cane smote the door again.

"Silver, open this door! I command you!"

"Go hon!" murmured Jimmy Silver, sotto voce.

"Lovell! Raby! Newcome! Open this door!"

Dead silence in the end study. Mr. Cutts, breathing hard, moved along the passage, not unlike a tiger on the prowl. He stopped at the door of No. 4, in which Mornington and Erroll were at prep. He tried the handle, and found the door locked.

"Mornington! Erroll! Admit me at once!"

No answer.

"I command you to admit me, Mornington!" exclaimed Mr. Cutts, his voice throbbing with rage.

Not a sound from the study.

"This is rank rebellion!" stormed Mr. Cutts. "If you do not obey instantly I shall fetch Dr. Chisholm here!"

Morny winked at his study-mate.

"That's the game!" he murmured. "The Head will soon get tired of being dragged into rows with the Fourth! Bootles never used to drag him up here. Cutts is buyin' a rope with which to hang himself."

Erroll nodded. Perhaps Mr. Cutts realised that it was not for his own benefit to "drag in" the Head if he could help it. At all events, he

the Fourth, so the peculiar situation was growing rather serious. But Jimmy Silver & Co. sat tight, and the rest of the Fourth did not intend to open their doors until the end study set the example.

Bulkeley of the Sixth came up the stairs with an expression of perplexity on his face. He had looked in the Common-room for the Fourth, as usual, and had found only Shell fellows there. He started a little at the sight of Mr. Cutts seated in the passage, his cane across his knees, and his face full of suppressed fury.

"Are the Fourth in their studies, sir?" asked Bulkeley.

"Yes!" snapped Mr. Cutts.

"The Head informed me that I am to see lights out for them, sir," said the Rookwood captain.

"I am aware of that."

"It's very odd," said Bulkeley, "not one of the Form appears to be downstairs! I suppose I'd better rout them out?"

"Do so at once!"

Bulkeley could see that something very unusual was on, though he did not guess just yet what it was. He rapped at the door of the first study, and would have opened it, but the door held. He rapped again.

"Peele! Gower! What does this mean?"

"Ask Jimmy Silver, Bulkeley!" answered Peele, with rather a quaver in his voice. "He's got to start!"

"To start what?" demanded Bulkeley in amazement.

"We're not to open our doors till he does, I mean," stammered Peele.

Bulkeley uttered an angry exclamation, and strode along the passage to

simply report to the Head that I am unable to see lights out for the Fourth, as they decline to go to their dormitory!"

Bulkeley spoke sharply, and he turned towards the stairs. Mr. Cutts looked as if he would like to lay his cane across Bulkeley's broad shoulders.

"Stop!" he said hastily. "I do not want the Head brought into this matter. He has been quite sufficiently troubled by the Fourth Form to-day!"

"I am bound to make my report to him, if the juniors do not go to their dormitory," said Bulkeley coldly.

Mr. Cutts seemed to have an inward struggle. He realised that he was treading, as it were, in slippery places.

Bulkeley waited. It cost Mr. Cutts an effort to get it out, and Bulkeley had to wait a full minute, but the tyrant of the Fourth got it out at last.

"I will postpone the punishment of the Fourth Form," he said. "You may tell the juniors so, Bulkeley. This unseemly state of affairs must end."

"Very well," said Bulkeley. He shot a quick glance at the master. Somehow, he did not trust Mr. Cutts.

"The matter is postponed until to-morrow, I suppose?"

"That need not be entered into."

Bulkeley flushed.

"If you are thinking of making use of me, sir, to get the juniors to the dormitory, intending to cane them there—" he began hotly.

"The punishment is postponed until the morning!" said Mr. Cutts hastily.

"I accept your word, sir!"

Mr. Cutts, gnawing his under-lip with rage, went downstairs. Bulkeley tapped again on the door of the end study.

"You may come out now, Silver. Mr. Cutts has postponed dealing with the matter until to-morrow."

"He's a downy bird," came Arthur Edward Lovell's voice. "I jolly well don't trust him."

"You may trust me!" said Bulkeley sharply.

"Oh, yes, rather!"

Jimmy Silver threw open the door of the end study. It was the signal to the rest, and all the Classical Fourth crowded into the passage.

Very obediently they allowed Bulkeley to shepherd them off to the dormitory. But they grinned, and exchanged glances of satisfaction. Christopher Cutts had registered his first defeat.

It was a victory for the Fourth. The new master had been defied, and he had had to swallow the defiance. The juniors pictured him spluttering with rage in his study, and the picture pleased them mightily.

They turned in in the most orderly way. There was no quarrel with Bulkeley, and, in fact, they wanted Bulkeley to see what really nice, well-disciplined fellows they were—when properly treated.

"Good-night, Bulkeley!" came an amiable chorus, when the Rookwood captain put out the light.

"Good-night, kids!"

The door closed after Bulkeley.

Valentine Mornington whipped out of bed, and groped to the door in the dark. There was a click!

"Hallo, what's that?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"Locking the door!" answered Mornington coolly. "I don't trust Cutts! Now Bulkeley's gone, I fancy the Cutts bird will rustle this way."

"Dash it all, even that cad wouldn't break his word!" said Lovell.

"We shall see!"

Mornington turned in again. The juniors listened intently. Five minutes had scarcely elapsed when the door-handle was turned on the outside.

"Cutts!" breathed Jimmy Silver.

There was a low exclamation outside; the door creaked as it was pushed. Evidently Mr. Christopher Cutts was not keeping his compact. If anything was needed to fill the cup of his pupils' scorn for him, that would have done it. They were not likely to respect a master who could not keep his word. But for Morny's precaution, the cane would have been busy in the dormitory now on thinly-clad limbs. But the big oaken door was locked. And after another savage shove, and a muttered word or two, the baffled master retired.

"Nice man!" murmured Lovell.

"We've beaten him once," said Jimmy Silver, "and we'll beat him again. It's the Fourth against Christopher Cutts now, and we're going to win!"

THE END.

("Cutting Christopher Cutts!" is a fine, long complete Rookwood School yarn in next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND.)



CARTHEW TRIPS UP! Carthew of the Sixth landed on his knees in the Fourth Form passage. "Ha, ha, ha! Always putting your foot into something, ain't you?" grinned Lovell.

The 4th Chapter. Rank Rebellion.

Crash!

The concussion rang through the passage as Carthew of the Sixth landed on his hands and knees.

From the end study there came an irrepressible outburst of chuckles.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yooop!" roared Carthew.

"Got him!" chuckled Lovell.

"Landed him, by gad!" grinned Mornington.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Better go out and sympathise," grinned Conroy. "Mind you're all astonished when you see the cord across the passage."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow-ow-oooooh! Oooooop! Oh dear! Ow!"

"Hallo! That's not Cutts' toot!" murmured Jimmy Silver, as the juniors crowded out of the end study.

Erroll groped for the switch, and turned on the light.

"Carthew!"

"My hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Carthew was sprawling in the passage. He was howling with pain; his knees were barked and his hands were hurt, and he was in a towering rage.

"Hallo, Carthew!" said Jimmy Silver genially. "Fallen over, old bean?"

"You young villain!" roared Carthew. "I've caught my foot in something."

"Always putting your foot in something, ain't you?" grinned Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Carthew scrambled up.

"There's a cord here!" he hissed. "It was put there on purpose."

"Not for you, Carthew," said Raby. "We didn't know you were coming sneaking along our passage, you know."

Carthew clenched his hands. He

"Tumble in before the brute comes along."

The juniors hurried into their rooms.

Every door was closed and locked, and with breathless anticipation the Classical Fourth waited for Mr. Christopher Cutts.

They had no doubt that Carthew would seek him at once, and that the new master would be only too glad of an excuse for visiting the Fourth Form passage, cane in hand. They were right, for a couple of minutes later his step was heard on the stairs.

"Here he comes!" murmured Jimmy Silver, in the end study.

"Now for the giddy tug-of-war!"

"Let him rip!" chuckled Lovell.

"It's going to be war, anyhow. He's asked for it."

"Yes, rather!"

"Boys!" boomed Mr. Cutts' voice.

"Lend him your ears!" chuckled Newcome

"Every boy will come out of his study immediately!"

"Will he?" murmured Lovell. "I don't think!"

Mr. Cutts waited a few moments, evidently in expectation of seeing all the doors thrown open. But not a door moved. The master seemed a little puzzled. He strode along the passage to the end study, and delivered a sharp cut of his cane on the door.

"Open this door at once!"

The Fistical Four, in the study, breathed rather hard, but they did not move.

The handle turned, but the lock held the door, and Mr. Cutts shook the handle angrily.

did not go for Dr. Chisholm. He moved along the passage, rapping at door after door, and demanding admittance. Not a door was opened.

The new master desisted at last. He realised that it was rebellion, and that the doors were not going to be opened.

With a face that was almost livid with fury, he sat down at last on the window-seat in the passage to wait.

In the studies the Classical Fourth went on with their prep with beating hearts. Prep was not very thoroughly done that evening. In such circumstances it was not likely to be. Like a tiger in his lair, Mr. Cutts was waiting for them to emerge from their studies, and then—

The 5th Chapter. Defeated!

"What next?" asked Lovell, with a rather tremulous grin.

Prep was over.

The Fistical Four had stood themselves a supper in the study, as most of the other fellows were doing. To go down to the school supper they had to pass Mr. Cutts, and nobody wanted to pass Mr. Cutts.

"We shall have to clear out at bed-time, I suppose?" said Raby doubtfully.

"Not with that giddy wild animal loose in the passage," said Jimmy Silver resolutely. "Fancy the temper he will be in by this time, after waiting for us a couple of hours! Fairly boiling, I should think!"

"Red-hot!" grinned Newcome.

The minutes seemed to drag by till half-past nine. This was bed-time for

the end study. Mr. Cutts rose to his feet, his eyes glittering, and his grasp closing hard on his cane. He was prepared to deal with the Classical Fourth as soon as Bulkeley brought them into his clutches.

The captain of Rookwood thumped on the door of the end study.

"Silver! What is this nonsense? You know it is past bed-time! Come out and go to your dormitory at once!"

"Is Cutts still there, Bulkeley?"

"Mr. Cutts? Certainly!"

"We're not coming out to be licked by Cutts!" said Jimmy Silver determinedly.

"What do you mean? I do not suppose for a moment that Mr. Cutts is here to punish you—"

"Ask him!" said Lovell.

Bulkeley turned round.

"The juniors appear to think that you are waiting here to punish them, Mr. Cutts," he said.

"That is the case!" answered Mr. Cutts through his teeth.

"Not the whole Form, I suppose?" asked Bulkeley, with a stare.

"The whole Form, without exception!" replied Mr. Cutts.

"Really, sir—"

"Kindly get them out of the studies, if you can," interrupted the master of the Fourth.

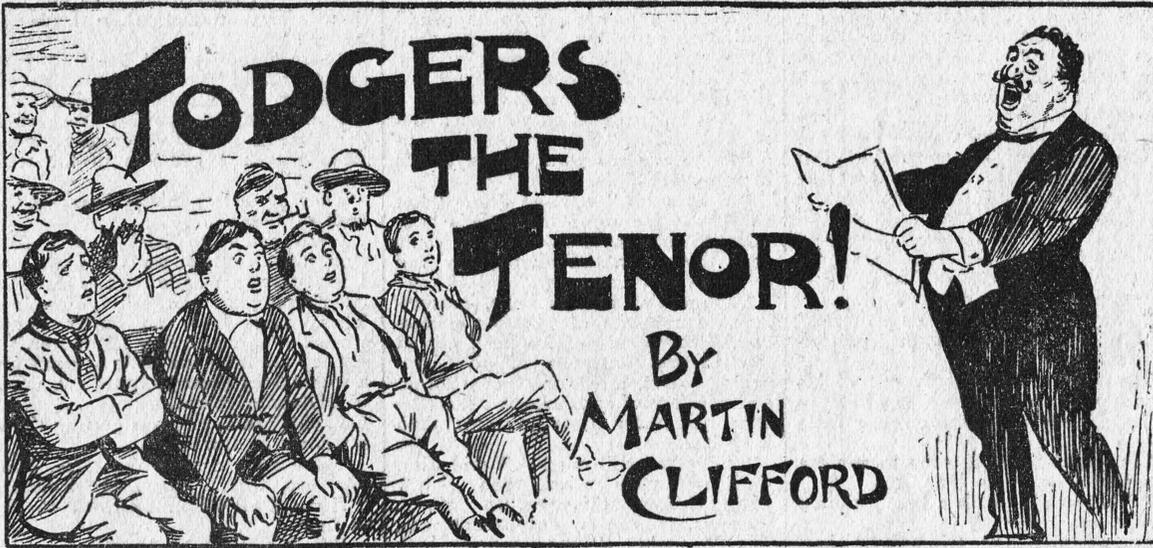
"For what is the whole Form to be punished, sir, may I ask?" said Bulkeley.

"That is my business!"

George Bulkeley bit his lip.

"Quite so," he said. "It is also your business, sir, to get them out of their studies—not mine. I shall

A FINE LONG COMPLETE YARN OF FRANK RICHARDS & Co.



The 1st Chapter.

Todgers, too!

Frank Richards & Co. had led their horses out at the gate of Cedar Creek School, when Chunky Todgers joined them with his fat little pony.

The three chums had paused in the trail, apparently to debate an undecided point.

"I guess we should be home late," Bob Lawless was saying.

"Moonlight to-night," said Beauclere. "A late ride won't hurt us."

"And there's not many shows in Thompson," said Frank.

"I guess this isn't exactly a show—only a fat man tootling!" said Bob Lawless.

Frank Richards chuckled.

For days past all the dead walls in Thompson Town had been placarded with announcements that Signor Marco Malvolio, the celebrated Italian tenor, was paying a very special visit to Thompson. The signor was going to ravish the ears of the Thompson citizens with Italian arias and terrific top notes, at the moderate charge of a dollar a head, in Gunten's Assembly Room.

Frank wondered what Signor Malvolio would have thought if he could have heard himself described as a "fat man tootling."

"I say, you fellows going?" broke in Chunky Todgers. "You wouldn't think of missing it, surely?"

"I guess I was thinking of giving it a miss," answered Bob Lawless. "I'm not gone on Italian tenors."

"But we don't often get one in the Thompson Valley!" argued Frank Richards. "Besides, the chap ought to get an audience; it may be serious for him if he stands his expenses up here and has to tootle to an empty room. Why not give him a leg up?"

"Oh, you're a soft jay, old scout!" said Bob.

"Such a thing as hospitality," said Frank. "I don't think he'll get a crowd, and every little helps. Let's go."

"Better go," said Chunky Todgers. "It's a thing you really can't afford to miss. This galoot Malvolio has sung in opera in all the capitals of Europe."

"How on earth do you know?" "It says so in the advertisement in the 'Thompson Press,'" answered Chunky innocently.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He was given a medal of honour by a reigning monarch in Europe, who pinned it on with his own royal hand," said Chunky impressively.

"Which monarch?"

"The advertisement doesn't mention his name—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's been making a tour across Canada, received everywhere with terrific applause," continued Chunky. "In some of the towns, the paper says, the people took the horses out of his carriage and pulled it themselves, they were so enthusiastic."

"Which towns?"

"It doesn't mention the names of the towns. But you ought to go, you know; you don't often hear a celebrated Italian tenor in these wilds. I guess I'm going!" said Chunky Todgers. "Come with me! Do!"

Chunky was very insistent. He seemed quite distressed at the idea of Frank Richards & Co. missing the great treat of hearing Signor Marco Malvolio "tootle."

The chums of Cedar Creek looked at one another.

"Well, shall we go?" asked Bob. "I leave it to the majority. 'Tain't worth a dollar."

"Let's!" said Frank and Beauclere together.

"Oh, all right!"

"Good!" said Chunky Todgers. "You won't be sorry. We'll get a snack at the Occidental, as we shall be late for supper—it will be starting by the time we ride into Thompson. Come on!"

The four schoolboys rode up the trail to Thompson together.

Bob Lawless was not very keen on the show, but he had fallen in cheerfully with the wishes of his chums. Frank Richards was rather curious to see and hear the Italian tenor, wondering what sort of a tenor he would prove to be. He thought it probable that Signor Malvolio was not quite so celebrated as the advertisements declared. There was but a small harvest to be gathered in the Thompson Valley, and if the signor had been able to gather enthusiastic audiences in Montreal or Quebec he would hardly have wasted his time in the little frontier settlement.

Still, whatever the show was like, it was a change; entertainments of any kind were few enough so far north of the Canadian Pacific railroad.

The schoolboys turned their horses into Main Street, Thompson, and rode along to Gunten's Store.

Behind the store was the big galvanised-iron apartment which Mr. Gunten rather loftily called the Assembly Room.

The entrance was beside the store, and a number of citizens had gathered there, a few going in.

"Doesn't look like a rush, I guess," remarked Bob Lawless. "Lots of time for a snack at the Occidental."

And the Cedar Creek fellows rode on to the lumber hotel, where they had the required "snack" and put up their horses.

Then they strolled down Main Street again on foot, and took their tickets in the store. Mr. Gunten was handing out tickets, but he did not seem to be rushed.

"Dollar each!" said the fat storekeeper.

"Three!" said Frank Richards.

"Four, you mean!" put in Chunky Todgers.

"Oh, yes, four!" said Frank. "May as well take them all at once. Hand over your dollar, Chunky."

"Right-ho!"

Chunky Todgers felt in his pockets, and Frank paid down four dollars for four tickets. He handed one of them to each of his companions, and waited for Todgers to produce his dollar.

"Blest if I know where that dollar's got to!" exclaimed Chunky at last.

"Oh, squeeze it out!" said Bob. "We shall be getting back seats if we hang around here much longer."

"Back seats may be better," said Beauclere, with a smile. "It depends on the tenor. Some are safer at a distance."

"Buck up, Chunky!" said Frank.

"I—I guess—"

"You fat fraud!" exclaimed Frank, suddenly suspicious. "I don't believe you've got a dollar at all!"

"I—I guess—I—had a dollar!" stammered Todgers. "I—I—I remember now, I spent it on maple sugar last week—"

"Last week! Why—you—you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Lawless. "Chunky's done you for a dollar, Frank! You ought to have tumbled to that. That's why he was so jolly anxious for us to come to the show."

"Oh, I say!" gasped Chunky. "I—I—"

"Mr. Gunten will take back the ticket," growled Frank Richards.

"I—I say, Frank—"

"No tickets taken back here!" said Mr. Gunten. "Now, then, make room for the next galoot. Move off."

"Leave it till to-morrow, Frank, and I guess I'll square," said Chunky. "You—you see—"

"Oh, come on!" growled Frank Richards.

And the chums of Cedar Creek took their tickets and headed for the galvanised Assembly Room, Chunky Todgers following, with a fat grin of satisfaction on his face. The fat youth had been determined to see and hear Signor Malvolio, but the lack of a dollar had stood in the way. Now that problem was solved quite unintentionally by Frank Richards. But it was solved, and Joseph Todgers was satisfied.

The 2nd Chapter.

A Little Entertainment!

"Plenty of room," remarked Beauclere.

"Heaps!" yawned Bob.

And Bob rested his boots on an empty seat before him. Certainly there wasn't anything like a crowd to hear the signor.

It was close on time for the concert to begin, and already a long-haired young man, with a far-away eye, was strumming on the piano. The long-haired young man was the tenor's accompanist, and he was playing the audience into their places. Sometimes a spasm passed over his face, apparently caused by Mr. Gunten's piano. That piano had seen service—hard service—and Mr. Gunten, too, did not believe in wasting money on piano-tuners, rather expensive luxuries in the Thompson Valley.

So the long-haired young man was rather pained. When he was losing himself in a dreamy rhapsody he would be brought up sharp by a key sticking down or a chord failing to respond—very disconcerting incidents to a musician. But the Thompson citizens did not find fault; they were not accustomed to high art in the performances they saw, and the long-haired young man extracted sweeter music from the battered instrument than the bar-keeper of the Occidental, who was the usual performer thereon.

Frank Richards glanced round the room, and felt rather sorry for Signor Marco Malvolio.

There were not more than thirty people in the place; notwithstanding the paucity of entertainments, a recital by an Italian tenor did not exercise much attraction upon the Thompson folk.

At the back of the hall, a group of cowboys were smoking and talking, and a dozen or so people sat about the long, wooden benches.

"Hard luck on his Nibs!" said Bob Lawless. "He won't take more than thirty dollars this evening, and I reckon old Gunten has stuck him for twenty for the hire of the hall. Must have been a jay to come rooting along the Thompson Valley at all! He would do better in the railroad towns, where there's a boiled-shirt population."

"It's a nobby programme," remarked Beauclere. "A bit above the heads of the cowboys, though, I think."

Frank Richards glanced at the programme, which was typed, evidently on the storekeeper's typewriter.

Signor Malvolio's selection of songs was ambitious, and much more suitable to Quebec or Montreal than to a Western settlement. "La Donna e Mobile," and the "Prieslied" from "Die Meistersinger," certainly were not calculated to appeal to the cattle-men. They were more accustomed to such artistic productions as "Flanagan's Flannel Trousers!"

"Here he comes!" said Chunky Todgers.

A fat gentleman in evening clothes, with a brilliant diamond glittering on a brilliant shirt-front, rolled upon the stage.

Signor Malvolio was very fat, and his face was rather purple. But, as Frank Richards remarked, tenors generally were fat; so it was possible that the signor's voice was sweeter than his looks.

The signor ran a disapproving eye over the more than half-empty room. But some hand-clapping greeted his appearance—proceeding from the good-natured Frank Richards. Then the long-haired young gentleman started on the prelude of "La Donna," and Signor Malvolio butted in with his tenor solo.

"Jumping Jehoshaphat!" Buster Bill was heard to ejaculate.

The cattlemen stared and grinned. The operatic artist was quite beyond their comprehension or appreciation.

"La donna e mobile,
Qual pium' al vento,
Muta d' accento,
E di pensiero.
Sempre un amabile,
Leggiadro viso,
In pianto in riso,
E menzognero."

That was not much "use" to the cowboys of the Thompson Valley, as they would have expressed it.

And Signor Malvolio, though doubtless a great tenor in his day, had long passed that day. He was a throaty gentleman, and when he rose on a high note, his purple face was squeezed into an expression of suffocating anguish.

Buster Bill & Co. gurgled with merriment, unrestrained by considerations of courtesy. Doubtless they "reckoned" that, having paid their money, they were entitled to laugh at the show; or, perhaps, they supposed that the throaty tenor was doing a comic turn. Undoubtedly it had a comic element, though that was quite unintentional.

"My only hat!" murmured Frank Richards, when "La Donna" had suffered. "I—I rather think we won't see this through to the finish."

"I guess I've heard bull-frogs squeeze out better music than that galoot!" said Bob.

"Oh, give him a chance!" said Beauclere. "The poor man has come to the wrong shop; and he doesn't know that his singing days are over! Clap him!"

Chunky Todgers, on the other hand, looked delighted.

Chunky had not a musical ear, though he flattered himself that he had. And the fact that the song was sung in Italian impressed Chunky mightily.

"I say, isn't it ripping?" he ejaculated.

"Ripping!" said Bob. "Not unlike a wire fence ripping."

"Oh, you're a jay, Bob!" said Chunky disdainfully. "Look here! I guess I could do it! I've often thought I had a tenor voice—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Shuf up! There he goes on the second lap!" said Bob.

The second lap was "Libiamo," from "La Traviata," a work quite unknown in the Thompson Valley.

The cattlemen blinked as Signor Malvolio pitched it at them.

The signor's voice was sometimes a full-throated bark, and sometimes it trailed away into a feeble squeak. But he seemed quite satisfied with it. And he barked and squeaked his way through "Libiamo" from beginning to end. There was a dead silence when he finished. Frank Richards started clapping, and his chums backed him up. And then Buster Bill & Co., for the joke of the thing, clapped, too, and roared applause.

Signor Malvolio smiled, and grinned, and perspired, and bowed. Evidently he was pleased.

It did not penetrate his fat mind for a moment that his audience were pulling his leg.

The more he bowed and smiled, the more the humorous cowboys clapped and roared and stamped, till the din they made could be heard half the length of Main Street.

It was with difficulty that silence could be obtained for the "Prieslied." This came in German, and was even a more deplorable display than the easier Italian arias. The cowboys grinned and stared, wondering that any "galoot" could be jay enough to stand up on a platform and bark such things at an audience. But when "Prieslied" was finished, a storm of ironic applause broke forth, quite deafening Frank Richards & Co. And the signor, perspiring more than ever,

bowed and bowed like a jack-in-the-box.

"Oh dear!" gasped Bob Lawless, trying to suppress his laughter. "The awful old donkey! He hasn't a suspicion that they're pulling his silly leg! Oh dear!"

"Bravo! Bravo!"

Clap, clap, clap!

Stamp, stamp, stamp!

"Hurrah!"

And the fat signor, delighted, elated, and streaming with perspiration from his vocal efforts, plunged into another Italian aria, to the intense entertainment of his audience.

The 3rd Chapter.

Todgers' Latest!

Frank Richards & Co. were chuckling as they came out of the galvanised iron hall. Politeness had restrained their merriment so long as they were within; but outside, they felt entitled to chuckle. And they chuckled. But upon the fat face of Chunky Todgers there was an ecstatic expression. The stars were shining down upon Main Street, and the chums of Cedar Creek started for the Occidental to fetch their horses; but Chunky Todgers lingered.

"Aren't you coming, Chunky?" called out Frank Richards.

"Hold on, you galoots!"

"Got to get home," said Bob.

"Hold on a minute! I tell you, I've been thinking," said Chunky Todgers eagerly. "Come here and listen to me."

"What on earth is it, then?" asked Bob rather impatiently. But the three schoolboys came back.

"Just hear me do a scale!" said Chunky.

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Which?"

"Listen!"

Chunky Todgers opened his rather extensive mouth, and sang a scale in which he cheerfully believed to be a rich tenor. The chums of Cedar Creek stared at him blankly.

"There!" gasped Chunky. "What do you think of that?"

"Think of it!" stuttered Frank Richards.

"Yep! Did you notice the richness of tone—"

"Eh?"

"The flute-like quality of the voice?" said Todgers eagerly.

"My hat!"

"I know now!" continued Todgers. "I'd never quite decided what I should be when I grew up; but I know now. I've got a tenor voice—"

"Phew!"

"It would be a sin and a shame to waste it," said Chunky, blinking at his astonished schoolfellows. "As I was listening to that chap, it dawned on me. I've often wondered what I'd really better set my mind to, and now I know. I'm going into opera."

"Into opera!" said Frank Richards dazedly.

"That's it! Some day," said Chunky impressively, "the world will ring with the name of Joseph Todgers, the Canadian tenor!"

Frank Richards & Co. stared at the fat youth, and burst into an irrepressible roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Co.

Chunky had a new stunt! Chunky never could read a new novel or see a new show without getting a new stunt into his fat brain. Now he had suddenly discovered that he was a gifted tenor! He had discovered on previous occasions that he was a born painter, and a born poet, and a born ventriloquist, and lots of other things. Chunky's stunts never lasted long; he met with too many disappointments. But his latest stunt was richer than any previous ones. Chunky Todgers as a tenor singer was really beyond the limit, and Frank Richards & Co. roared at it.

The fat youth eyed them indignantly.

"I don't see what you jays are sniggering at!" he exclaimed warmly. "Look here, I'm quite serious—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, the music-lessons we get at Cedar Creek don't do me justice," said Chunky. "Miss Meadows just jogs us along on tonic sol-fa. No use to me. With a voice like mine, I need training. Not much, of course, because it's really a born gift, but some—"

"Some!" chuckled Bob. "Some sure! Ha, ha, ha!"

"And now there's a chance," said Chunky eagerly. "Signor Malvolio would give me lessons if he were paid for it; and he knows the ropes. He's a real operatic tenor, you know!"

"I dare say he was once!" said

Frank, laughing. "But he's past it now, and that's why he's honouring us in the Thompson Valley."

"Well, perhaps he's got a bit of a squeeze too now," admitted Chunky. "But he knows the game, and he could give me a few tips—I want some tips. You fellows agree that it would be really wicked to waste a voice like mine, don't you?"

"Oh crumbs!"

"The question is, what terms would the signor accept to give me some training?" said Chunky. "He might take a dollar a lesson, perhaps. The only question is, then, where to get the dollars?"

"That all?" asked Bob sarcastically.

"That's all!" said Chunky, with a nod. "A mere detail! You've got some money in the bank, Richards—"

"Oh dear!" groaned Frank.

Frank Richards could not have counted the number of times Chunky had desired to raid his "money in the bank." Whenever Chunky wanted cash—which was fairly often—he made pointed references to the fact that Frank Richards had money in the bank.

"I say, Frank, old chap—"

"I guess I know what," said Bob Lawless, winking at his chums. "Look here, Chunky, a voice like yours will make Mr. Malvolio sit up when he hears it; it would anybody—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Isn't he likely to jump at training you, simply for the glory of producing such a tenor on the stage?" asked Bob, with great gravity. "Think of the fortune he would make, booking your engagements! Try him. Get him into a quiet corner and sing to him. He will jump at the chance of training you for nothing."

"Think so?" asked Chunky dubiously.

"With your—your flute-like voice, you know—"

"And its richness of tone—"

said Beauclerc.

"It's the chance of a lifetime for Signor Malvolio," said Frank Richards. "Catch him as he comes out, Chunky! Strike the iron while it's hot!"

"Blessed if I don't!" said Chunky.

"Good man!"

And Frank Richards & Co. hurried away for their horses, leaving Chunky Todgers watching the Assembly Room for Signor Malvolio. The chums of Cedar Creek mounted for the ride home in a merry mood. What reception Marco Malvolio was likely to give the budding tenor of the Thompson Valley they could hardly surmise; but they did not think that the signor would welcome Chunky with open arms on account of his flute-like voice. They were very far indeed from thinking that. Indeed, they rather looked forward to the morrow at Cedar Creek, to hear what had happened in the interview between the signor and the Thompson Valley tenor.

The 4th Chapter. A Promising Pupil!

"Skuse me, sir!"

Signor Malvolio, muffled up in a greatcoat and a scarf, was making his way towards the Occidental Hotel, where he had his quarters, when a fat youth pulled at his sleeve.

The fat gentleman glanced down inquiringly at Chunky Todgers.

Signor Marco Malvolio was not in the best of humours. Probably it had dawned upon him, towards the end of his show, that the humorous cattlemen had been "guying" him. And in any case the evening's takings had been barely sufficient to cover his expenses. One evening had been enough to teach the hapless tenor that the voice which was rejected in the railroad towns, was not likely to make him a fortune in the frontier settlements.

His intended tour in British Columbia had started at Thompson; and it was probable that it would end there. So his expression was hardly benevolent as he blinked down at the fat youth of Cedar Creek.

"What zen?" he asked sharply.

"What is eet?"

"I want to speak to you, Mr. Malvolio—"

"It is late," said the signor. "I have no time to speech. Buona notte!"

He would have rolled on, but Chunky Todgers was determined. He hung on to the sleeve of the signor's coat.

"I—I was at the concert, sir," he said hurriedly. "I was—was delighted! I've never heard anything like it!"

The signor stared down at him sus-

piciously. But his face cleared as he saw that Todgers was in earnest.

"Va bene," he said. "But—"

"I've got a tenor voice, sir—"

"Come?"

"I—I don't know what co-may means; I don't know Italian," said Chunky. "But I've got a splendid tenor voice; all the fellows at my school simply rave about it. Mr. Smiley would give anything to have me sing in his choir at the mission. He hasn't asked me, but I know he would. I—I want to know whether you'd train me—"

"Come?"

"Give me lessons, you know," said Chunky. "I shouldn't need many; it's really a gift with me."

Signor Malvolio paused.

His takings at Gunten's Assembly Room had just about covered his expenses there. But he had his bill to pay at the Occidental. If an ambitious youth in want of singing lessons could pay enough to cover that little bill—which was not really little—it was a good thing for Signor Malvolio. The signor was a specially good customer in the bar-room at every hotel he stopped at, which was perhaps partly the reason why his voice had taken unto itself wings and flown away. He had the prospect before him of going thirsty during his stay in Thompson unless something turned up—a very arid prospect to a gentleman of the signor's tastes. And Chunky Todgers had turned up. A sweet smile illumined the dusky, shiny face of the Italian gentleman.

"I should be willing to let you have a percentage of my fees when I appeared on the operatic stage," explained Chunky.

Signor Malvolio blinked at him. He did not know Chunky so well as Frank Richards knew him. Possibly he suspected that the fat youth was a little deranged.

"I teach not for nozzings," he said coldly. "Buona notte, signorino."

Chunky did not know that buona notte meant good-night; but the signor was pointing to the door, and even Chunky could not fail to guess what that meant. But he lingered.

"What—what's your fee for teaching?" he gasped.

"Feefty dollar a lesson."

"Oh Jerusalem!"

"But sometimes I take ze pupil for twenty dollar!" said the signor, relenting.

"Oh dear!"

"In special case, when ze voice is verree good, I take him for ten dollar."

Chunky brightened a little.

he said. "But you shall sing. Oh, si, si! You shall sing!"

"You recognise the unique quality of my voice?" asked Chunky eagerly.

"Dio! Oh, yes! Certo! Certo! I give you some lesson—you pay me for zat—yes!"

"I—I guess I—I was thinking that—that considering the quality of my voice, you'd be willing to take me on for nothing," said Chunky diffidently.

"Per bacco!"

"I should be willing to let you have a percentage of my fees when I appeared on the operatic stage," explained Chunky.

Signor Malvolio blinked at him. He did not know Chunky so well as Frank Richards knew him. Possibly he suspected that the fat youth was a little deranged.

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The 5th Chapter. Pay Up!

"I want you fellows to come with me."

"Whither, my fat pippin?" asked Frank Richards. It was after morning lessons the next day at Cedar Creek, and the fat and fatuous Chunky rolled up to Frank Richards & Co. in the playground of the backwoods school.

"My singing-lesson!" said Chunky carelessly.

"What?"

"You don't mean to say that old Malvolio has taken you on!" roared Bob Lawless.

Chunky Todgers nodded.

"Why not?" he answered. "He recognised the wonderful quality of my voice at once. He was eager to take me as a pupil. He's going to give me ten lessons, for which he usually charges fifty dollars each. In my case he's making an exception, owing to my wonderful voice."

"Great Scott!"

"I'd like you fellows to come," said Chunky. "It will be an experience for you, anyhow."

"Oh, we'll come!" said Frank Richards, in great wonder. "If you're pulling our legs we'll rag you!"

"Honest Injun!" said Todgers.

And the chums of Cedar Creek led out their horses to ride to Thompson. Chunky Todgers looked very smiling and satisfied; but the Co. were greatly puzzled. They arrived at the

"What?" roared Frank.

"Ten dollars."

"So that's the game?" ejaculated Bob Lawless. "That's why you wanted us to come to the lesson, you fat fraud?"

"Same old game!" chuckled Beauclerc. "One dollar yesterday, and ten to-day. Is it going to be fifteen to-morrow, Chunky?"

"No, only ten. I—I mean—"

"I am waiting, signorino!" said Marco Malvolio.

"Richards, old chap—"

Frank Richards knitted his brows. Chunky had done him for a dollar the previous evening, on the Assembly Room ticket. Ten dollars was rather a larger order; and Frank had no intention whatever of being "stuck" for that sum. He rose.

"Come on, you fellows!" he said. "We shall have to push to get back in time for dinner, anyhow. Good-morning, Mr. Malvolio!"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Chunky, in alarm. "You—you're not going to leave me in the lurch, Franky. I brought you here specially— I—I mean, I relied on your friendship— I say, you've got money in the bank, you know—"

"Ta-ta!"

"I—I'll stand you a thousand dollars out of my first season's fees. There, you Shylock, is that good enough for you?"

"Not quite! Good-bye!"

Frank Richards & Co. walked out. A decidedly unpleasant expression was coming over the signor's face. Chunky backed towards the door.

"I—I guess I'll bring the dollars to-to-to-morrow," he stammered.

"G-g-good-morning!"

"Stop!" yelled Signor Malvolio.

With a jump, he caught Chunky's fat shoulder.

"You pay ze ten dollars!"

"I—I guess—"

"Pay, zen!" shouted the signor.

"I—I can't!" gasped Chunky. "I—I thought Richards—I mean, I've left my gold and notes at home—I—I—"

He spluttered. "D-d-don't shake me like that, you cheeky jay!"

"You have no money!" gasped the signor. "You make one fool of me, zen! You waste my time and you have no money to pay. You are one swindler!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" spluttered Chunky. "You—you know I've got a voice—a splendid tenor voice. I'll pay you anything in reason—out of the profits of my first operatic season—yaroohoo!"

"You are one rascal! Your voice—you have no voice—ze voice of ze crow—ze howl of ze wolf—ze bark of ze dog!" roared the signor. "Corpo di bacco! I am swindle! I make you pay!"

"I—I guess—yarooh—help—"

The sounds that followed did not sound like a singing-lesson. They sounded something like a Red Indian jamboree—certainly much more like a Wagner music-drama in full blast, than a tenor-solo. Chunky Todgers developed unsuspected vocal powers as the enraged signor proceeded to deal with him. The howls, yells, and shrieks reached the ears of Frank Richards & Co. as they stood outside the Occidental, and they looked round at the doorway as a dishevelled, fleeing figure came tearing forth.

It was Chunky Todgers—in wild and frantic flight.

Behind him came the enraged signor in hot pursuit. Chunky reached the doorway as the signor reached him. A fat foot in a heavy boot smote Chunky rearward, and fairly lifted him out into Main Street.

"Yarooh!"

Chunky Todgers landed on his hands and knees in a puddle, almost at the feet of Frank Richards & Co.

Signor Malvolio shook a furious fist after him, and turned back into the building. Chunky rolled over and sat in the puddle and spluttered.

"Ow! Ow! Wow! Groooh! Yooooooggghh!"

"Hallo! Is that how you take leave of your singing-master?" asked Bob Lawless.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groooh! Ow! Wow! Oh dear! Oh! Ah! Oooooop!"

Chunky Todgers crawled out of the puddle, gasping and spluttering. He had had his first—and last—lesson from Signor Marco Malvolio.

Chunky Todgers wore a tired look in Miss Meadows' class that afternoon. He was still looking tired the following day. He did not make any references to his future brilliant career on the operatic stage. There had been too much discouragement for Todgers the Tenor.

THE END.

(Next Monday's grand, long complete Cedar Creek tale is entitled "The Robbery at Cedar Creek!" Order YOUR copy of the Boys' FRIEND just as soon as you can!)



CHUNKY'S MUSIC LESSON! Frank Richards & Co. were pained. For half an hour Chunky alternately squeaked and barked, his voice cavorted about apparently of its own free will, like a wild bucking broncho. There was evidently no stopping Todgers the Tenor!

He smiled benignly upon Chunky Todgers. All was grist that came to the signor's mill when he was hard pressed.

"Lezione!" he repeated. "Si, si, capisco! It is so; I do give ze lesson in to sing. You come wiz me and we speech togezzor."

Chunky Todgers' fat little legs went like clockwork to keep pace with the signor.

They arrived at the Occidental, and Chunky was introduced to the signor's room—a small and very barely-furnished apartment. In the glimmer of a lamp the signor scanned Chunky. He was wondering how much the fat youth was worth, and it was hard to judge.

"I give you first voice trial," he said. "I see vezzer you can sing."

He produced a tuning-fork and struck it. "No piano qui; you sing to zis. Zat note he is A. You sing him."

Chunky squeaked.

"Per bacco!" murmured the signor. "Now you sing him an octave higher."

Chunky gave an agonised squeak.

"Corpo di bacco!"

Chunky did not know what corpo di bacco meant, but he hoped that it was an Italian way of expressing admiration.

With the aid of the tuning-fork the signor extracted several more notes from Chunky Todgers, enduring them with considerable fortitude.

Then he smiled.

"You shall need some lessoning,"

"How many lessons should I need before I could go on the concert platform at Winnipeg?" he asked hopefully.

Signor Malvolio seemed to suffer from some internal convulsion for some moments. But he recovered and grinned. He was greatly inclined to turn the asinine youth out of his room; but he thought of his little bill. He did not really want to quit the Occidental in the middle of the night by a back window, leaving behind a heavy trunk packed with stones. And he did not want to spend thirsty days and nights there—which was the only alternative—unless a windfall came. So he was very polite to Master Todgers.

"Say ten lesson!" he answered.

"That's a hundred dollars in all!" said Chunky.

"Si, si!"

"When can I come for the first lesson? You see, I go to school, Midday-to-morrow suit you?"

"Si, si! Yes, yes!"

"Say half-past twelve," said Chunky. "You give me ten lessons, and I will pay you a hundred dollars for the lot."

"You pay for each one lesson as he come."

"Oh, all right!"

And Chunky departed—and the signor descended to the bar-room, and proceeded to quench his thirst on the strength of the ten dollars he was to receive from Chunky Todgers on the morrow—if he was lucky.

Occidental Hotel in Main Street, and found Signor Malvolio ready to keep his appointment in the room where there was a piano. Chunky presented his friends, and stated that they wished to be present during the lesson, and the signor greeted them very cordially—perhaps with a secret hope that they might turn out to be future pupils. Frank Richards & Co. sat down to watch the lesson.

Whether Signor Marco Malvolio could teach or not, it was pretty certain that his lessons would not be of much use to Joseph Todgers. Chunky had an ear for music like a mule's, and a voice that "cavorted" about apparently of its own free will, like a bucking broncho; alternating between a rugged bark and a shrill squeak. How the signor was to make an operatic tenor of it was a deep mystery; a mystery that Marco Malvolio probably did not think of taking the trouble to solve.

For half an hour Chunky Todgers alternately squeaked and barked, and then the lesson was over—much to the relief of Frank Richards & Co. They mentally determined that they would not accompany Chunky Todgers for another lesson in singing.

"Lezione secondo to-morrow at ze same hour," said the signor. "Now you pay me ten dollar, signorino."

Chunky Todgers ran his hands carelessly through his pockets.

"Blessed if I haven't come out without any money!" he exclaimed.

"I say, Richards, lend me ten dollars!"