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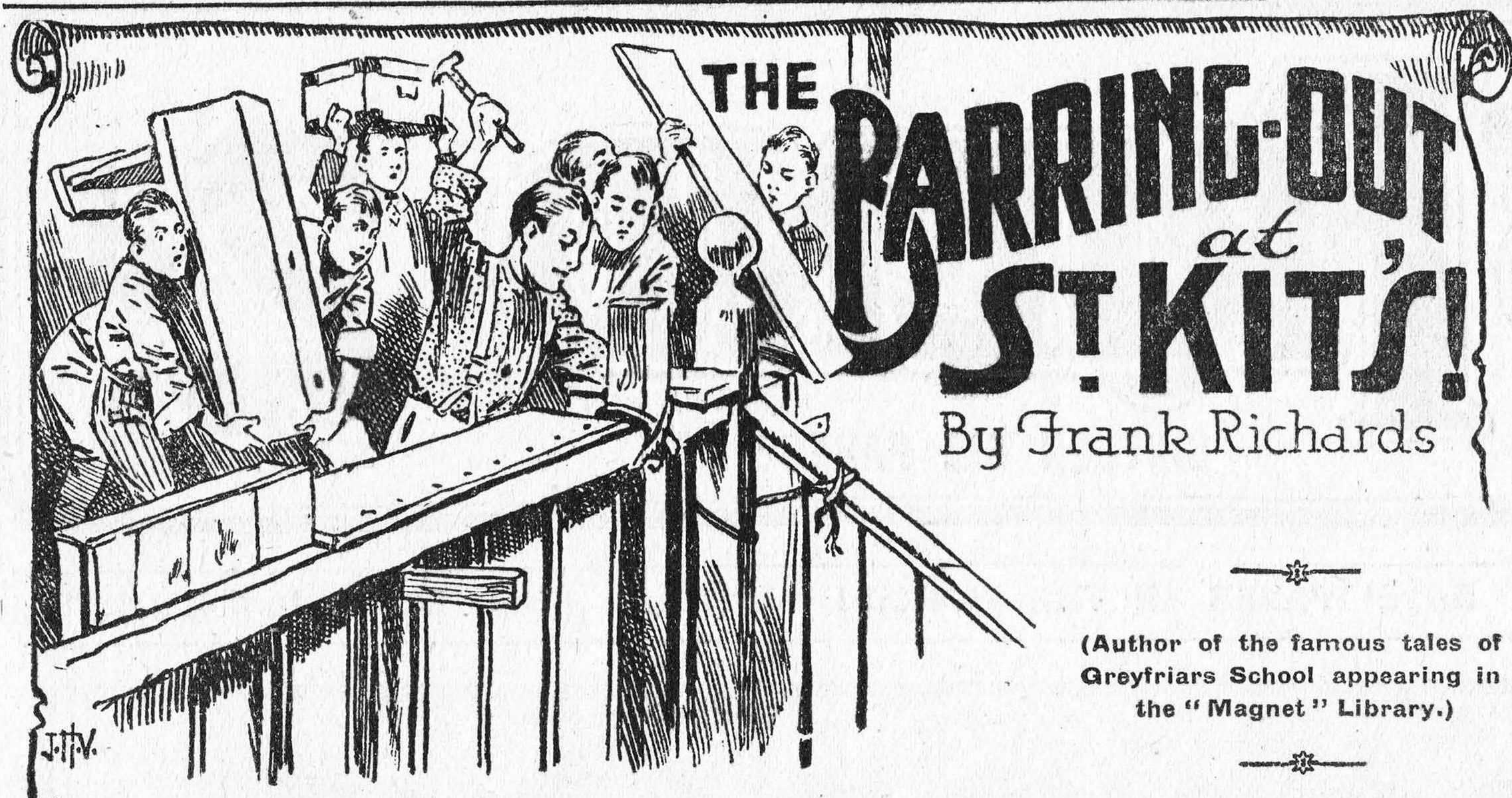
[Week Ending April 4th, 1925.



The Deserters Return to the Fold Hotly Pursued by Mr. Carker, the Tyrant of St. Kit's!

(An exciting incident from Frank Richards' great school story in this issue.)

OUR LIVELY STORY OF THE REBELS OF ST. KIT'S SCHOOL!



The prefects of St. Kit's make a gallant attempt to dislodge the rebels of the Fourth from their stronghold!

The 1st Chapter.

One day whilst Dr. Chenies, the headmaster of St. Kit's, is walking through Lynn Wood he is brutally attacked by a footpad, and, as a consequence of the injuries he receives, he is ordered away from the school by his doctor. To take his place a Mr. Carker comes to St. Kit's, and the new Head quickly upsets the school with the tyrannical way in which he deals with the boys. Harry Wilmot, the captain of the Fourth, suspects Mr. Carker of being connected with the attack upon Dr. Chenies for he had seen him in conversation with a man named Slaney, who is wanted by the police for the crime.

Later, the Fourth Form decide to stand Mr. Carker's tyranny no longer and they determine upon a barring-out. They take possession of the Fourth Form passage, and barricade the stairs leading up to it with innumerable pieces of furniture.

When all persuasion has failed to get the rebels to return to their work Mr. Carker decides to take drastic measures with them, and he instructs the Sixth Form prefects to eject them at once by forcible means.

The 2nd Chapter.
Holding the Fort!

The Sixth-Formers tramped up the stairs, Carsdale bringing up the rear. Carsdale was the only St. Kit's prefect who was keen to back up the new Head, and approved of his methods; but his keenness did not give him any desire to appear in the forefront of the battle. He was quite content with a humble place in the rear when it came to exchanging hard knocks.

With glum faces the prefects reached the landing at the foot of the Fourth Form stairs.

Bob Rake waved a cheery hand to them over the barricade.

"You fellows want some more?" he called out.

"By gad!" remarked Algernon Aubrey. "Some fellows never know when they've had enough. Where did you pick up that nose, Beauchamp?"

"Where did you get that eye, Wake?" inquired Stubbs.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cheeky young rotters!" growled Oliphant. "Come down out of that at once, or you'll be fetched."

"You've tried fetching us once," grinned Scott. "Try it on again as soon as you like."

"Come on!" roared Stubbs, brandishing a fives bat.

"This way for a licking!" howled Wheatford.

Oliphant set his foot on the stairs. There was some hesitation among his companions. Never had they felt so "fed-up" as they did at this moment—looking up at the

barricade and the grinning faces above it, and the variety of weapons brandished ready for them.

As a matter of fact the St. Kit's prefects were not in sufficient force to carry the barricade by assault if the defenders stood to their guns. And the magic of the prefects' name had departed—accustomed authority had broken down. A few days before no mob of Lower boys would have dreamed of entering into a scrap with the Sixth Form prefects; now they were not only ready to do so, but quite keen on it. They had beaten the Sixth once, and could beat them again.

"Look here, Oliphant," muttered Beauchamp. "It's not good enough. What I say is, chuck it!"

"I've told Mr. Carker we'll do our best," muttered Oliphant.

"We jolly well can't get over that barricade unless they let us."

"We'll try."

"Oh, come on," said Rupert Wake. "We've got to make those cheeky young sweeps respect the Sixth!"

"Back up!" said Oliphant.

He marched up the stairs. The prefects followed him, with many misgivings. Carsdale trailed in the rear.

"Fire!" shouted Bob Rake.

Whiz! Whiz! Whiz! Crash!

Missiles rained on the Sixth Formers as they came on. Empty sardine-tins, and cushions, and books, and boots, all sorts and conditions of things, showered on them. A Greek lexicon landed on Carsdale's head—though he was farthest out of range—and he was swept over. He crashed down on the landing—and stayed there.

The rest of the seniors rushed up resolutely.

They reached the barricade and clambered savagely over it, lashing out right and left with their ash-plants.

There were wild yells from the rebels as the hefty blows fell on arms and heads and shoulders. Bunny Bootles made a hurried bolt for the top study, and one or two other fellows followed him. But most of the Fourth stood firm, with Harry Wilmot & Co. Lashing ash-plants were opposed by all sorts of weapons with reckless energy, and Oliphant made the discovery that a golf club was a more formidable weapon than a cane. He rolled off the stacked furniture as Algernon Aubrey St. Leger landed him with a golf club.

"Oh!" roared Oliphant.

"Sorry, dear boy, but you've got to go—"

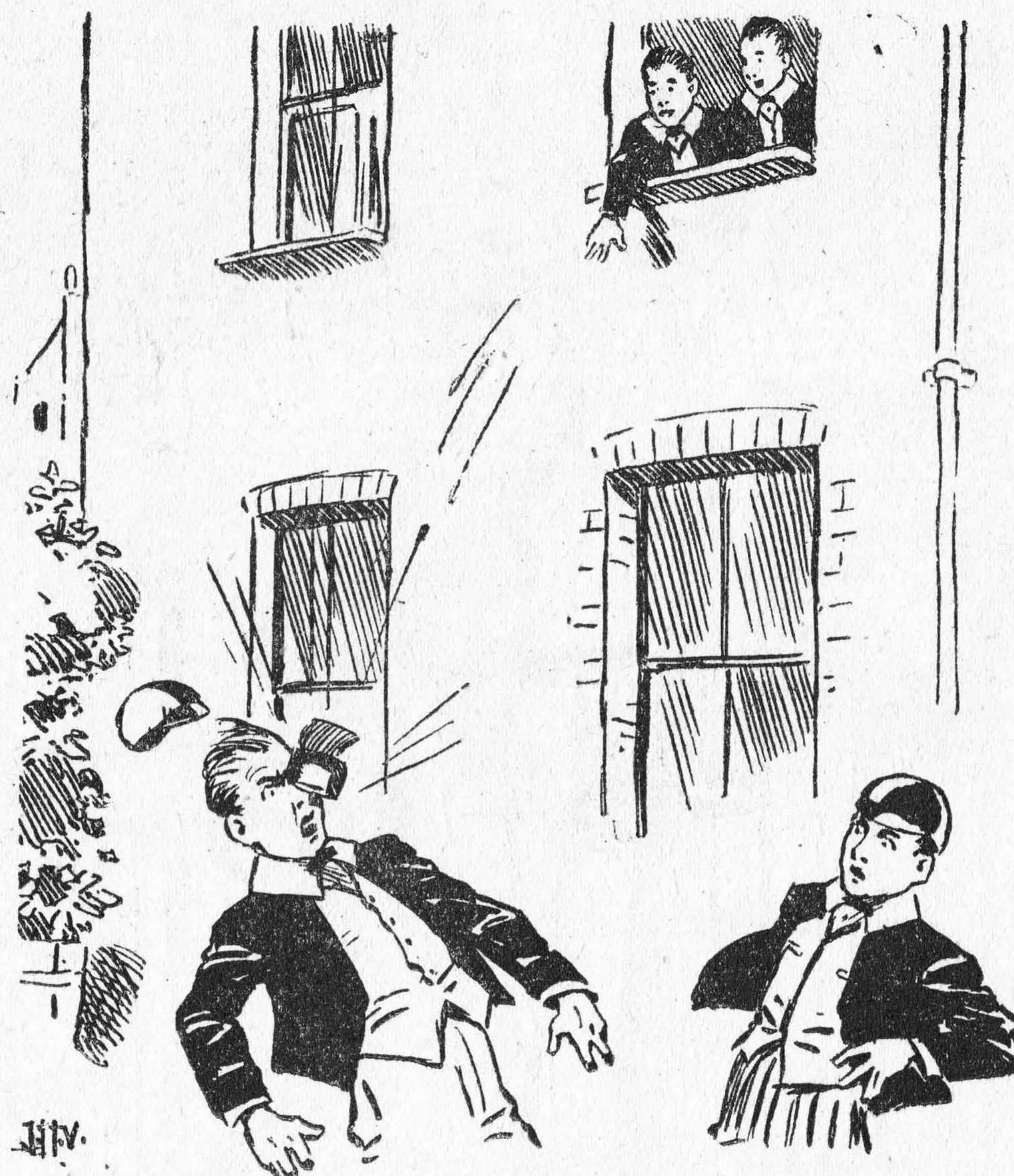
"That's for you, Beauchamp!"

"Oh, gad!"

"Down with the Sixth!" roared Stubbs, lashing at Wake with a fives bat—a terrific lash that Rupert Wake just escaped by falling back and rolling on the stairs.

Oliphant came on again desperately. He was in a furious temper now, and he threw prudence

to the winds. The vigorous defence drove back the rest of the assailants, but Oliphant clambered on desperately and sprawled across the barricade. There his leg slipped into an opening of the stacked tables and chairs and desks, and as he strove to drag it out the other leg slipped into another crevice. He was held a



WELL ON THE TARGET!

"Don't be an ass, Gunter!" exclaimed Harry Wilmot impatiently. "What?" roared Gunter of the Fifth. "Ass!" Gunter shook a wrathful fist up at the window. A sardine tin dropped from the top study and it landed on Gunter's nose as he shook his fist. There was a yell from Gunter. "Oh! You young villain!" he roared.

prisoner, within reach of a dozen lunging weapons.

"Give him jip!" roared Stubbs.

"Mop him up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Oliphant struggled desperately. His comrades rushed on once more to his assistance, but again the defence drove them back and one or two of them rolled down to the landing.

"Stop it, you young scoundrels!" gasped Oliphant.

His ashplant had been wrenched away, and Licke of the Fourth was belabouring him with it in great excitement and with great energy. Scott was jamming a poker into his ribs, and Bob Rake fairly hammered him with a shovel. The captain of St. Kit's realised that it was not good enough.

"Get going, then!" said Harry Wilmot, laughing.

"You—you—you—"

"Travel, dear man," said St. Leger, shoving the business end of the golf club under Oliphant's chin.

"Oh! Ow!"

"Down with the prefects!"

"Oh, gad!" gasped Oliphant, dazed and dizzy.

He made a desperate effort and wrenched himself free; but he was no longer thinking of coming on. He scrambled back to the stairs and went staggering down to the landing to join his comrades there. A roar of triumph from the rebels followed him.

"Licked!" shouted Rake.

"Our win!" chortled Algernon Aubrey.

"Give them some more."

"Hurrah!"

Missiles whizzed down on the prefects and they were glad to seek the shelter of the lower staircase. Carsdale was already gone.

"Come back, Oliphant!" yelled Scott. "Come back and have some more."

"Funks!" shrieked Licke.

"Licked to the wide. Ha, ha, ha!"

On the lower staircase the prefects gasped for breath and looked at one another with deep feelings.

"I'm done!" growled Beauchamp, and he tramped away. And the others followed him.

Oliphant lingered a moment or two, but it was clear that if he made another attack he would have to make it "on his own." With a moody brow he tramped after the others. And deafening

Three members of the Fourth Form were in the room—the three deserters—Tracy, Howard, and Lumley. They did not look as if they were enjoying life. They had been licked—severely—by the new Head; their submission had not saved them. Already they had repented of their desertion, feeling that they would have been better off sharing the risks of the rebels. The look on Mr. Carker's face roused their dimmest anticipations. Tracy, indeed, had not so far shared in the revolt at all; but that little circumstance seemed, in Mr. Carker's eyes, a trifle light as air. He had caned Tracy as well as Howard and Lumley; perhaps as a warning to him, or perhaps because he felt such an intense desire to cane somebody. And in the Form-room, with Mr. Carker, the wretched trio felt a good deal like three Daniels in the den of lions. Really, there was no telling whether Mr. Carker might not turn on them at any moment.

But for the present, at least, Mr. Carker did not heed them. His gaze was fixed on the doorway. If the rebels were brought to heel, doubtless the submissive three would escape further wrath. But if Mr. Carker was disappointed—Tracy & Co. were dismal, and they had reason to be dismal.

There was a footstep in the corridor, and Oliphant of the Sixth appeared in the doorway.

Mr. Carker stared at him. Tracy & Co. blinked at him. Oliphant was in a parlous condition.

He was dusty and dishevelled, his hair was like a mop, his coat was a torn rag, his nose streamed red, and one of his eyes was closed and fast blackening. Obviously, the captain of St. Kit's had been through it—badly.

"Well," exclaimed Mr. Carker angrily, "I see you are alone, Oliphant. Where are they?"

"Where I left them, sir," gasped Oliphant. "They beat us off—"

"What?"

"We did our best," said Oliphant.

Snort, from Mr. Carker.

"Do you seriously mean to tell me, Oliphant, that the Sixth Form prefects are incapable of dealing with a handful of rebellious Lower boys?"

"Yes, I do," growled Oliphant. His temper had suffered much, and he was in no mood to be "slanged" by Randolph Carker.

"What? What? Answer me a little more respectfully, Oliphant. Do you mean to tell me that you have left the juniors alone?"

"Yes."

"I gave you orders—"

"We've done our best, Mr. Carker," said Oliphant doggedly, "and we're not doing any more."

"What? Go back at once, Oliphant, with the other prefects, and bring those young scoundrels here by force!"

"Force is no good, sir; they mean business, and they're too many for us."

"Are you a coward?" bawled Mr. Carker.

Oliphant's eyes gleamed at him. It was the last straw.

"No, sir! I think a man a coward who raises a storm like this and then keeps out of the trouble and leaves it to us!"

Mr. Carker gasped.

"What! Oliphant, how dare you—how—"

"We've never had this trouble with the juniors before!" exclaimed Oliphant. "The ringleader, Wilmot, is one of the most decent juniors in the school. We've backed you up because you're headmaster, not because you're in the right. And now we're done! Finished! See?"

And with that Oliphant of the Sixth tramped out of the Form-room, turning his back deliberately on Randolph Carker.

"Oliphant!" roared Mr. Carker. The captain of the school did not heed. He tramped away and disappeared, leaving Mr. Carker panting with rage.

Tracy and Howard and Lumley sat tight at their desks. They

cheers from the victorious rebels followed him as he went.

The Vials of Wrath!

Mr. Carker was waiting in the Fourth Form room.

His cane lay ready on the Form-master's desk.

Had the Sixth Form prefects succeeded in overcoming the resistance of the rebels, and marched a defeated Fourth into the Form-room, there would have been an administration of punishment which would have been a record for St. Kit's—even under Mr. Carker's rule.

Whether Mr. Carker expected his prefects to succeed is doubtful. He hoped, at least. His gaze was on the door in the hope of seeing Oliphant and his merry men arrive with the defeated Fourth, shepherding them in to punishment.

hoped that the new Head would follow Oliphant. They trembled at the thought of catching his eye.

But Mr. Carker did not follow Oliphant. It was clear, even to his dull and obstinate mind, that he had gone too far, and that he could no longer rely on the support of the Sixth. As for punishing Oliphant, that was out of the question—the captain of St. Kit's could have handled Randolph Carker with ease, and certainly would have done so had Mr. Carker laid a finger on him. Mr. Carker's last resource had failed him, and he was left to deal alone with the outbreak he had provoked.

His glance turned on the quaking three. They had done little or nothing to offend him, and what little they had done had been punished severely. But Mr. Carker was in want of a victim. He picked up the cane from the Form-master's desk.

"Tracy!"
"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Tracy.
"Come here!"

The wretched Tracy dragged himself out before the desks.
"I—I've done nothin', sir," he panted. "I—I was against the barrin' out, sir—I haven't joined in it—"

"Hold out your hand!"
Swish!
Tracy gave a wild yell as he received the cut. Howard and Lumley jumped up. They felt that their turn was coming, and they raced for the door.

"Stop!" shouted Mr. Carker.
But the two nuts of the Fourth were vanishing out of the Form-room. Mr. Carker rushed after them.

Tracy squeezed his hand frantically, almost weeping with anguish. He went to the Form-room door and looked out. There was a sound of flying feet in the distance. Howard and Lumley had fled to join the rebels—the Fourth-Form passage was the safest place for them, with all its risks, as they realised rather late.

Tracy hurried out of the Form-room with the same intention. But Mr. Carker was in the way, and he dodged into a recess in the passage, still squeezing his hand.

Lumley and Howard were racing desperately up the stairs, with Mr. Carker behind them. There was a shout from the Fourth-Formers above as they sighted the fugitives.

"Ha, ha, ha! The jolly old deserters!" roared Bob Rake. "Are you fed-up with Carker already, you chaps?"

"Rescue!" panted Howard.
"Let us in!" howled Lumley.
"For goodness' sake let us in. That beast is after us! Wilmot, old chap!"

"Come on!" exclaimed Harry Wilmot; and he gave Lumley a helping hand over the barricade, while Scott and Wheatford dragged in Howard. The two nuts rolled breathlessly among the garrison, panting with relief. Mr. Carker was not far behind.

As he appeared on the landing a tomato-tin whizzed and landed on his chin, well-aimed by Bob Rake.

Crash!
"Oh!"

Mr. Carker disappeared again. He hurried downstairs to the Fourth Form-room. He passed Tracy in the recess in the corridor without observing him, and hurried into the Form-room only too clearly to visit his vengeance upon the junior he supposed to be there. Tracy's heart almost ceased to beat as he passed, and the moment he was gone Tracy raced for the stairs.

"Stop!"
It was Randolph Carker's voice behind him.

Tracy panted and tore on. After him came the infuriated Mr. Carker. Tracy ran desperately, but as he reached the upper landing he felt the grasp of the tyrant of St. Kit's on his shoulder. He spun round and in sheer desperation hit out at the angry face with all his

force, and Mr. Carker, with a gasp, sat down on the stairs. Tracy tore on, panting up the Fourth Form staircase, and helping hands from the rebels drew him into safety.

Mr. Carker picked himself up. He dabbed his nose with his hand—his fingers came away red. In a frame of mind that could only be described as Hunnish, Randolph Carker stamped down the stairs again.

Nothing Doing!

"Oh, dear!"
Thus Cuthbert Archibald Bootles.

Generally speaking, the rebels of St. Kit's were in great spirits. Victory had had an exhilarating effect on them.

Not so Bunny Bootles.
It was tea-time.

Tea-time was always a serious occasion for Bunny Bootles. It was always a doubtful point whether he would get enough to eat—Bunny's idea of "enough" being extensive. And it was very important that Bunny should have enough to eat. Nothing else within

Wheatford did not even trouble to answer.

"Myers, old man—"
"Roll away!" snapped Myers. Myers was also conscious of a deep vacuum within, and he seemed crass. "Give us a rest!"
"Catesby, old top—"
"Go and eat coke!" snarled Catesby.

"Jones, old man—"
Jones minor did not speak; he reached out with his boot, and planted that boot upon the fat person of Cuthbert Archibald Bootles.

Cuthbert Archibald sat down suddenly.

"Ow!"

Dismally Bunny picked himself up and rolled away. He rolled along the Fourth Form passage, looking into study after study, searching cupboard after cupboard, in the lingering hope of discovering some morsel that had been overlooked. It was not a new task for Bunny; study cupboards never were quite safe from him at the best of times; he was well-known as a snatcher-up of unconsidered trifles.

any of the rebels and the rest of the school. There was no more crowding of the fellows up the stairs to talk to the rebels over the barricade. They were cut off from the rest of St. Kit's now.

Wilmot, Bob Rake and Algernon Aubrey St. Leger held a sort of council of war in the top study. On one point there was absolute agreement; they were not going to give in to Mr. Carker. But other matters were not so easily settled.

"You see, old beans," said Algernon Aubrey, "somethin's got to be done about grub. I don't eat much myself, but I own up that I'm feelin' a sort of sinkin' feelin'. If we'd had time to get ready for this jolly old bizney we could have laid in supplies. But we hadn't."

Bob Rake rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"I suppose Carker's idea is to starve us out," he remarked.
"That's his jolly old idea—and it looks as if there's somethin' in it, old bean."

Wilmot knitted his brows.
"We've got to stand it!" he said.

"Oh, yaas!"



REBELS v. PREFECTS! "Fire!" shouted Bob Rake as the prefects marched up the stairs. Whiz! whiz! whiz! Crash! Missiles rained on the Sixth-Formers as they came on. They reached the barricade and lashed out right and left with their ashplants. There were wild yells from the rebels as the hefty blows fell on arms and heads and shoulders. But the Fourth stood firm. Lashing ashplants were opposed by all sorts of weapons, with reckless energy.

the limits of the universe was quite so important as that, in the fat Bunny's opinion. And to-day it was not a question of a thin tea, or even a very thin tea—it was a matter of no tea at all, after an extremely thin dinner.

No wonder Bunny Bootles' lamentations were like unto those of Job—and he was worse off even than Job of old, for he had no comforters—not even Job's comforters!

The other fellows, in the most heartless way, as it seemed to Bunny, disregarded the fact that he was hungry.

Possibly the fact that they were hungry themselves outweighed in their estimation the severe sufferings of Bunny Bootles.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Ow! I say, Wilmot!"

"Shut up, Bunny!"

That was all the sympathy the fat Bunny received from the captain of the Fourth.

"I say, Rake—"

"Cheese it!"

"Algy, old man—"

"Blow away, Bunny!"

"I'm hungry!" roared Bunny indignantly. "I say, Wheatford, have you got any toffee left?"

But there were no trifles left now to be snatched. Hungry juniors had cleared out every morsel. Like the celebrated Mrs. Hubbard, Bunny found the cupboards were bare.

Meanwhile, less ravenous fellows than Bunny were beginning to think that the situation was getting serious. Every fellow in the garrison was hungry; and there was nothing for tea, and no prospect of anything for supper—and nothing for the following day so long as they remained barred in their quarters. Elliott remarked that they couldn't live on air; and the other fellows agreed that they couldn't.

It was up to Harry Wilmot to find a way out of the difficulty; but so far he had not found one.

Stubbs desperately suggested a sortie, and a raid on the school shop; but that suggestion was much too desperate to be adopted. The prefects had refused to make a further attack on the barricaded passage. But they were ready to collar any stragglers from the garrison; and Mr. Carker was undoubtedly on the watch. On the lower staircase Carsdale of the Sixth was lounging, placed there to prevent communication between

"We've got friends outside," went on Wilmot. "Most of the fellows are on our side, though they won't join up. But some of them may lend a hand in getting in tuck. We've got cash—"

"Yaas, that's all right!"

"We could let a bag down from a window on a rope if—if some chap outside would take the risk of filling it for us."

"If!" murmured Algy.

Wilmot crossed to the window. There were two windows to the top study, and one of them gave a view on the quad. Fifty fellows at least were in sight—classes were over at St. Kit's. Groups of juniors and a good many seniors were staring up at the Fourth Form windows. Gunter of the Fifth, with his chum Price, was standing quite near, within call. Harry Wilmot shouted to him.

"Gunter!"

The Fifth Former glanced up.

"Hallo!"

"Come a bit nearer, will you—I want to speak to you."

Gunter stared. Apparently he regarded it as rather a cheek for a fag of the Fourth Form to want to speak to him. However, he came nearer, and stood under the window, looking up.

"Well, what is it, young Cheeky?" he asked.

"We want some grub."
"I dare say you do!" grinned Gunter.

"Will you get some from the tuckshop if we let down a bag?"

"Well, of all the cheek!" exclaimed Gunter indignantly. "Do you think Fifth Form chaps are going to fetch and carry for you? Upon my word, Wilmot, I believe that you're the cheekiest fag that ever came to St. Kit's."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" exclaimed Harry impatiently.

"What?" roared Gunter.

"Ass!"

Gunter shook a wrathful fist up at the window.

A sardine-tin dropped from the top study, and it landed on Gunter's nose as he shook his fist. There was a yell from Gunter.

"Oh, you young villain!"

A lump of coal followed. Gunter promptly backed out of range and Price followed him, grinning.

But two or three Shell fellows came towards the wall below the windows. Babbie waved his hand to Wilmot.

"Anythin' we can do for you?" he called up.

"Good man! We want some grub here—"

Eric Babbie chuckled.

"That's what I thought. Let down a bag or something and we'll manage it for you. You can square afterwards."

"You're a white man, Babbie," said Bob Rake. "The sooner the quicker, old scout—we're famishing."

"Right-ho!"

Babbie of the Shell cut off and Bob sorted out a large bag, to which a cord was attached. The juniors stood ready to lower it from the window as soon as Babbie and his friends returned with supplies.

The news spread among the garrison that relief was at hand. There was a crowding of fellows into the top study in eager expectation. The lamentations of Bunny Bootles ceased. His fat face was bright with anticipation.

"All serene, after all," said Durance. "But if Carker happens to be on the watch—"

"He can't be on the watch all the time," said Harry.

"No, that's so."

"Hurrah, here comes Babbie."

A crowd of eager eyes watched the Shell fellow, from the window of the top study. Verney major and Parker of the Shell came back with him. But, to the surprise of the watchers above, their hands were empty.

"Hallo!" roared Bob Rake.

"Where's the tuck?"

"Sorry—"

"Never mind that—where's the tuck?" shouted Stubbs.

"Can't be done!"

"Well, you silly Shell-fish—"

"Awfully sorry!" called up Babbie. "Carker's been too much for us. The school shop's closed."

"Closed!" howled Stubbs.

"That's it! Mrs. Coote has strict orders from the Head not to serve anybody in the giddy school, except on a written order from a prefect."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Nothin' doing," said Babbie. "Awfully sorry, and all that. But there you are!"

And Babbie & Co. walked away.

The rebels of the Fourth looked at one another. There was a deep and dismal groan from Bunny Bootles. He sank down in Algy's armchair. The dreadful news quite overcame him.

"Tuckshop closed!" murmured Bob Rake. "Oh, my hat! Carker's a wary old bird! Of course, he foresaw this."

"Yaas," said Algernon Aubrey sadly. "We might have guessed that he would. He's an awful rotter, but he's no fool."

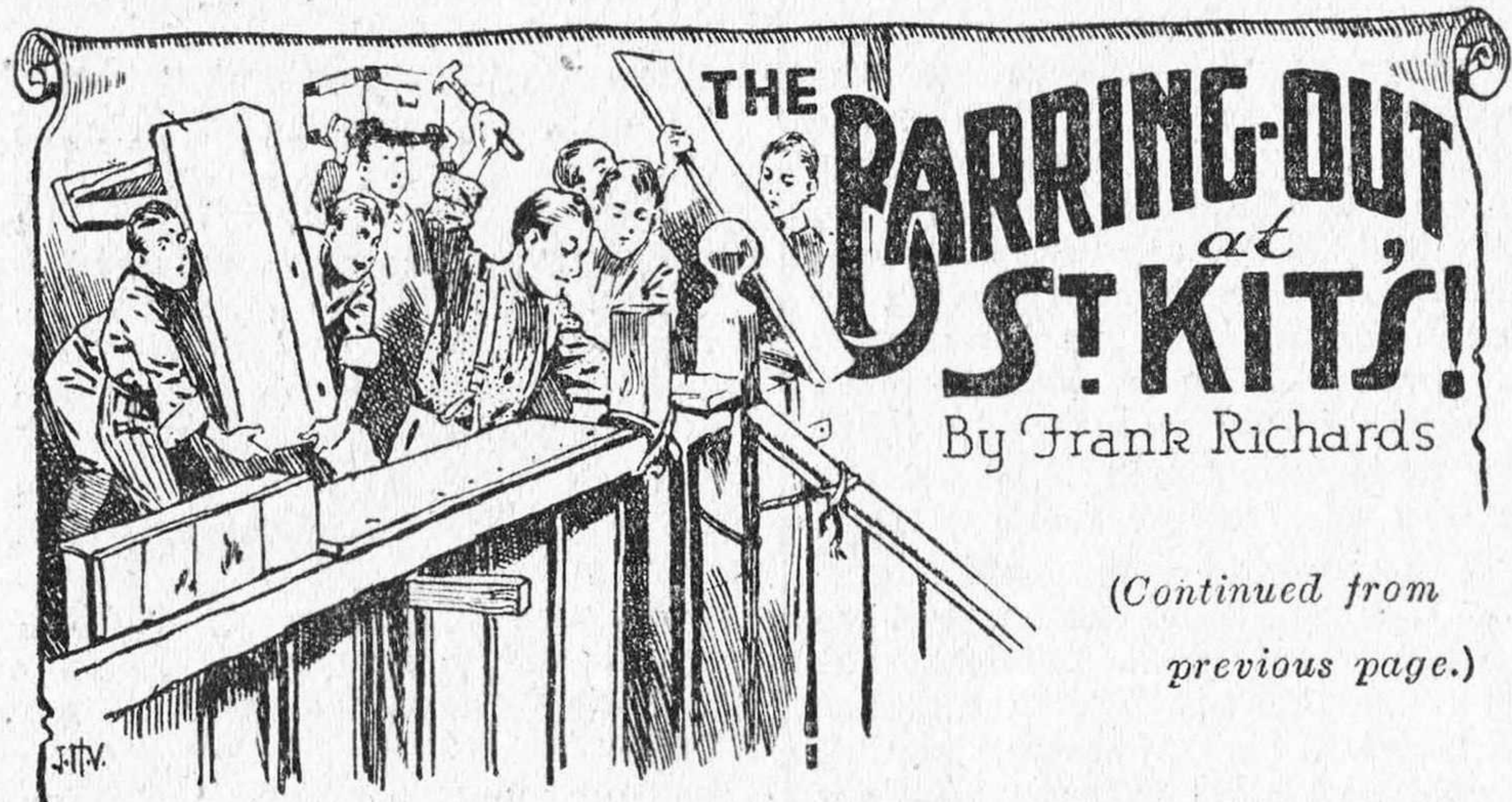
"What on earth are we going to do?" said Stubbs blankly.

Groan, from Bunny Bootles.

"Shut up, Bunny!"

Groan!

(Continued overleaf.)



By Frank Richards

(Continued from previous page.)

"It's up to you, Wilmot," said Tracy maliciously. "What's goin' to be done, I'd like to know."

Wilmot looked at him. "We're holding out," he said. "Grub or no grub, we're holding out! Any fellow who doesn't like the prospect can cut as soon as he likes. You seemed rather keen to get away from Carker a little while ago, Tracy. But you can go back as soon as you like."

Tracy sneered and was silent. "It's goin' to be a frost if we can't get anythin' to eat, though," said Verney minor.

"While there's life there's hope."

"Are we goin' to stay barred up here till we come to eatin' boot-leather?" exclaimed Leigh savagely.

"Yes, if necessary," answered the captain of the Fourth coolly. "Hear, hear!" said Bob Rake.

"Yaas, begad."

There was a deeper groan from Bunny Bootles. Keen as his appetite was, the prospect of coming down to boot-leather seemed to have a discouraging effect upon him.

"Well, I think it's all rot!" exclaimed Lumley.

"You can think what you like, of course," assented the captain of the Fourth, shrugging his shoulders.

"If we all give in we get a

floggin'. We can keep on Carker's right side by bein' civil to him and givin' him his head."

Wilmot's lip curled. "We're holding out!" he said. "Nobody's coming over the barricade from the other side; but any funk who chooses can get over it from this side and clear. That's final!"

"Hear, hear!" murmured Stubbs; but it was rather a dismal murmur. The St. Kit's garrison were dismayed; there was no mistake about that.

Indeed, with a rather less vigorous leadership it was probable that the barring-out of St. Kit's would have "fizzled" out very soon after tea-time, and that Randolph Carker would have triumphed. But there was no lack of vigour on the part of the rebel leaders. Harry Wilmot was firm as a rock; Rake was determined to fight to a finish, and Algernon Aubrey St. Leger, with all his fastidious ways, was of the stuff that heroes are made of and he had not the remotest idea of giving in. And the resolute three held the rebels together. And Tracy & Co., though they murmured and grumbled and groused, shuddered at the bare thought of facing Mr. Carker's vengeance on their own; and even Bunny Bootles preferred to groan in safety rather than offer himself up as a victim to the

tyrant of St. Kit's. So, although the spirits of the garrison gradually sank down to zero, the barring-out was still going strong when night fell on St. Kit's.

Mr. Rawlings' Request.

Mr. Rawlings tapped at the Head's door late that evening. "Come in!" snapped the voice of Randolph Carker.

The Form-master entered, to meet a grim stare from Mr. Carker. The hour was late; all the junior Forms—excepting the Fourth—were in their dormitories; the Fifth and the Sixth had gone to bed. Some of the masters were still up, in masters'-room, discussing the unprecedented state of affairs in the old school.

Mr. Carker had not deigned to consult them in the matter; he knew that he had no help to expect from them. Indeed, he would scarcely have expected a set of middle-aged Form-masters to join in an attack on a barricaded staircase. Certainly he would have been disappointed had he expected it. But he had not even moral support to look for from his staff. Every member of the staff disapproved of his methods and disliked him personally. Every one of them longed for the return of Dr. Chenies and the departure of Randolph Carker from the school. Indeed, in all St. Kit's there was no one who wished him well; even Carsdale, the bully of the Sixth, his toady, was growing "fed-up" with him.

"You!" said Carker, staring at the Fourth Form master. "What do you want?"

He had no civility to waste upon Mr. Rawlings.

"A few words, sir, on the present state of affairs," said Mr. Rawlings.

Mr. Carker held up his hand. "That is enough! I have no intention of taking advice from a master who has, I am convinced, encouraged his Form to rebellion."

"That is untrue," said Mr. Rawlings, "and I insist upon speaking, Mr. Carker."

"I will not hear you." "You will hear me, sir," said Mr. Rawlings quietly.

"Take care, sir!" snapped Mr. Carker. "I have already told you that your services are no longer required at St. Christopher's. You are, in point of fact, dismissed—dismissed, sir, for negligence and dereliction of duty. I object to your remaining in this building."

"I shall not heed your objections, sir," said Mr. Rawlings, "and, as I have already told you, I will accept dismissal from Dr. Chenies or from the Board of Governors, and certainly not from you. The other masters are of the same opinion."

"I shall consider how to deal with you, Mr. Rawlings. In the meantime, kindly leave my study."

"I have not yet said what I came to say, Mr. Carker. To my mind, it is a very serious matter that the boys of my Form are now going without food."

"That is their own fault!" "It may be so; nevertheless, it is a serious matter, and if prolonged may affect their health."

"They have only to return to their duty, Mr. Rawlings. You may tell them so, if you wish," sneered Mr. Carker.

"It is a state of affairs that cannot continue indefinitely, Mr. Carker."

"That is my affair."

"Some reasonable concession to the boys—"

"Enough!" "I understand, sir, that you have announced your intention of expelling three of my boys—Wilmot, St. Leger, and Rake."

"That is my fixed intention," said Mr. Carker, with bitter emphasis.

"St. Leger's father, Lord Westcourt, is chairman of the governors," said Mr. Rawlings. "Wilmot's father is also a governor. I am assured that they will allow

you to carry out no such intention."

Mr. Carker smiled sneeringly. "Lord Westcourt and Colonel Wilmot both opposed my appointment here," he said; "I owe them no regard. Their sons are a bad influence in the school, and I am determined that they shall go."

"Once more, Mr. Carker, I suggest softer measures. A reasonable concession to the boys—withdrawal of the sentence of expulsion on their leaders, a lighter punishment than a flogging, and, after that, leaving them in my hands without interference—on those terms, I am assured that this rebellion could be ended at once."

"I will make no concession, sir—none whatever," said Mr. Carker, "and as for leaving the boys in your hands, you shall never be allowed again to act as a master here. I shall take steps to regularise your dismissal, and deprive you of your pretext for remaining here; in the meantime, you will kindly mind your own business."

Mr. Rawlings breathed hard. He was a peaceable gentleman; but he felt an almost irresistible desire at that moment to knock down the new headmaster of St. Kit's.

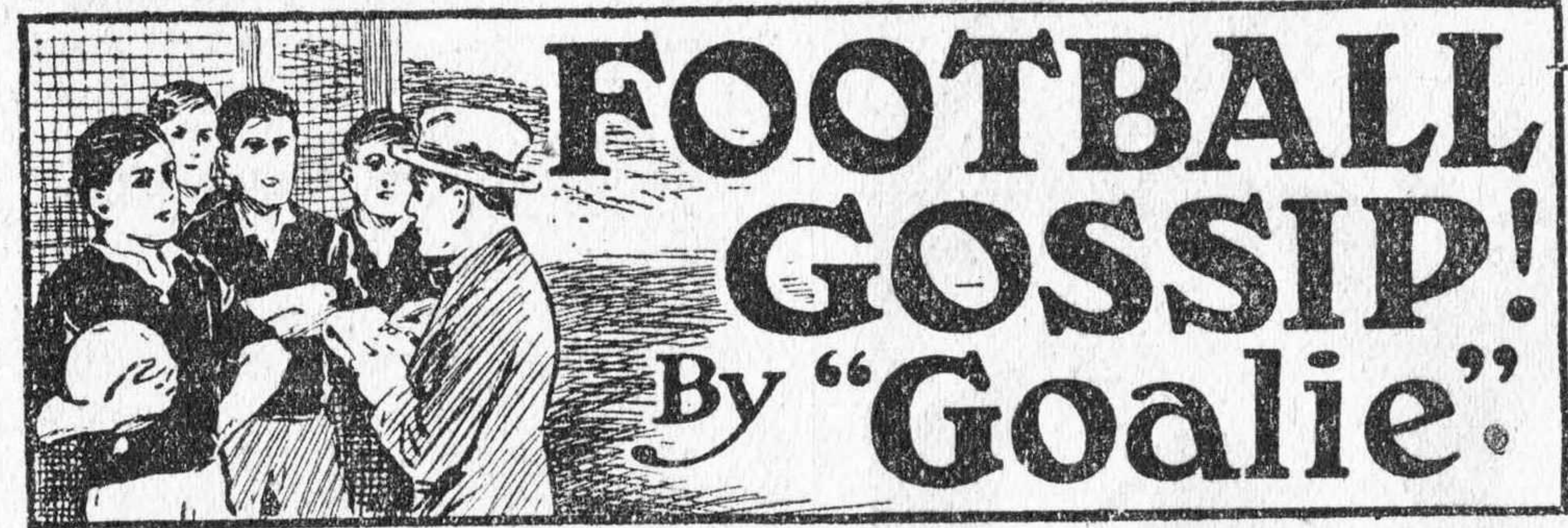
Mr. Carker doubtless read the thought in his flushing face, for he added hastily:

"We are wasting time; it is useless to bandy words. Mr. Rawlings, I request you to leave my study."

"Very well, sir," gasped Mr. Rawlings. "Very well! For the present, sir, I do not see my way to interfere, but I do not answer for the future."

And the Fourth Form master went out, closing the door hard behind him.

(Look out for many startling developments in this great school story. On no account must you miss next Monday's long instalment. Order your BOYS' FRIEND in advance and avoid disappointment!)



FOOTBALL GOSSIP!
By "Goalie"

England v. Scotland.

There is a great day for Scotland this week-end—the match between the chosen of that country and the best that the English selectors can produce. Somehow or other, international matches in England never seem to grip to any remarkable extent, and the attendances are usually no greater than can be found at many ordinary League games, and smaller than the average for big Cup ties. But in Scotland the day on which they play England is the biggest event of the football year, and when I mention that at Hampden Park, Glasgow, over 127,000 people have attended to witness an international match it will be realised that the desire on the part of the Scottish people to pull through successfully assumes big proportions. This week-end Scotland is the home of the great fight, and there is sure to be a huge crowd.

Scotland Still Leads.

In these games Scotland still has a decided advantage. Leaving out the "Victory" Internationals, which are not included in the official records, Scotland has won twenty; England, fourteen; and the remaining fourteen have been drawn. So clearly there is a considerable amount of leeway to be made up, but whether England will produce a good enough side to hold their own is very doubtful. For the past few years the England team has been in what might be called the transition stage—very few fellows have shown such outstanding ability that they have "chosen themselves," as the popular phrase has it. By way of illustrating this fact it may be mentioned that only two players who represented England against Ireland last October found a place in the England eleven which played against

Wales in February. My own opinion is that the English selectors try too many experiments, instead of finding



J. HILL (Burnley).

a team and sticking to it until the men have a real chance of getting to know each other's methods.

Fewer Anglo-Scots.

There is, however, one thing to be said in favour of England. The selectors always confine their choice to men who are at that time appearing with English clubs, whereas the other countries usually call upon players who are connected with clubs outside the country. All the same, there has been an increasing tendency on the part of the Scottish selectors keeping more and more to the "home" material, and the number of Anglo-Scots has steadily decreased.

The Most Memorable Struggle.

Of the five matches played between the two countries since the war Scotland has won two, two have been drawn, leaving England just a solitary victory. But what a victory that was—the most amazing international game I have witnessed in the whole of my experience! It was played at Hillsborough, the home of the Wednesday club, at Sheffield, in April of 1920. The pitch was in rather a dreadful state, and this may have accounted in a measure for the riot of goal scoring. Anyway, the business of finding the net started early, and inside a quarter of an hour England were leading by two goals to one. Then the match swung round in favour of Scotland, who put on three goals in rapid succession before the interval, and were leading by

four goals to two when the teams crossed over. The match certainly seemed as good as over, but it demonstrated the truth of the old adage that a game is not lost until the final



A. L. MORTON (Glasgow Rangers).

whistle has sounded. England buckled on her armour in resolute fashion, scoring three goals, and retired winners of what was perhaps the most memorable contest of the whole series by five goals to four. Practically the whole of the England team of that day have now retired from the limelight, though men like Jack Cock, the centre-forward; Kelly, of Burnley; Grimsdell, of the

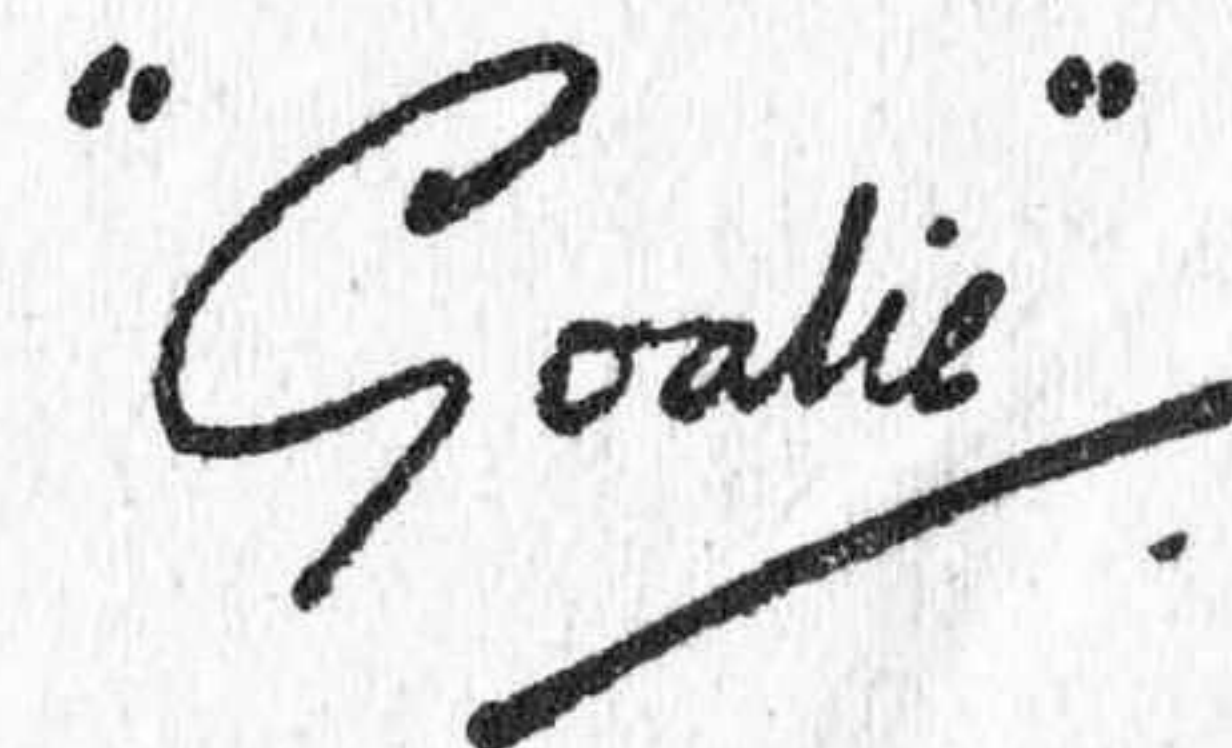
Spurs; and Longworth, of Liverpool, are still very active.

A Fine Big One.

Of necessity I must write these notes before the names of the men who will play for the opposing countries are selected, but I am giving you the photographs of a player of each side who, very likely will be in the teams if they are fit. Long John Hill has during the last few months gained a lot of admirers as a right half-back, and he will probably be called upon to face a flying wing-man from Scotland named Alan Morton. Hill plays for Burnley, and my readers may remember that some time ago the Turf Moor authorities gave what was nearly a record fee to obtain his services from Plymouth Argyle. Hill was then a centre-half, but early in the present season he was hurt, and a substitute in Armitage played so well in the Burnley side that he could not be moved even to make room for the big-fee man. So by way of experiment Hill was tried at right-half, and there are a lot of people who think that he is better in this position than ever he was at centre-half.

Little, But Very Good.

Alan Morton, the outside-left of Glasgow Rangers, is only five-feet-five, but he is without doubt one of the finest exponents of the art of the wing game to be found in the world to-day. Morton is a Glasgow man, and in his school days showed signs of developing into a good one. For years he played with Queen's Park as an amateur, but eventually—in 1920—the Rangers persuaded him to become a "pro," and whenever there has been a Scottish team to choose since then Morton has never been left out of consideration. If Hill and Morton are opposed to each other the onlookers should see some fine duels.



("Goalie" will contribute another top-notch footer chat to our next issue. Don't miss it!)

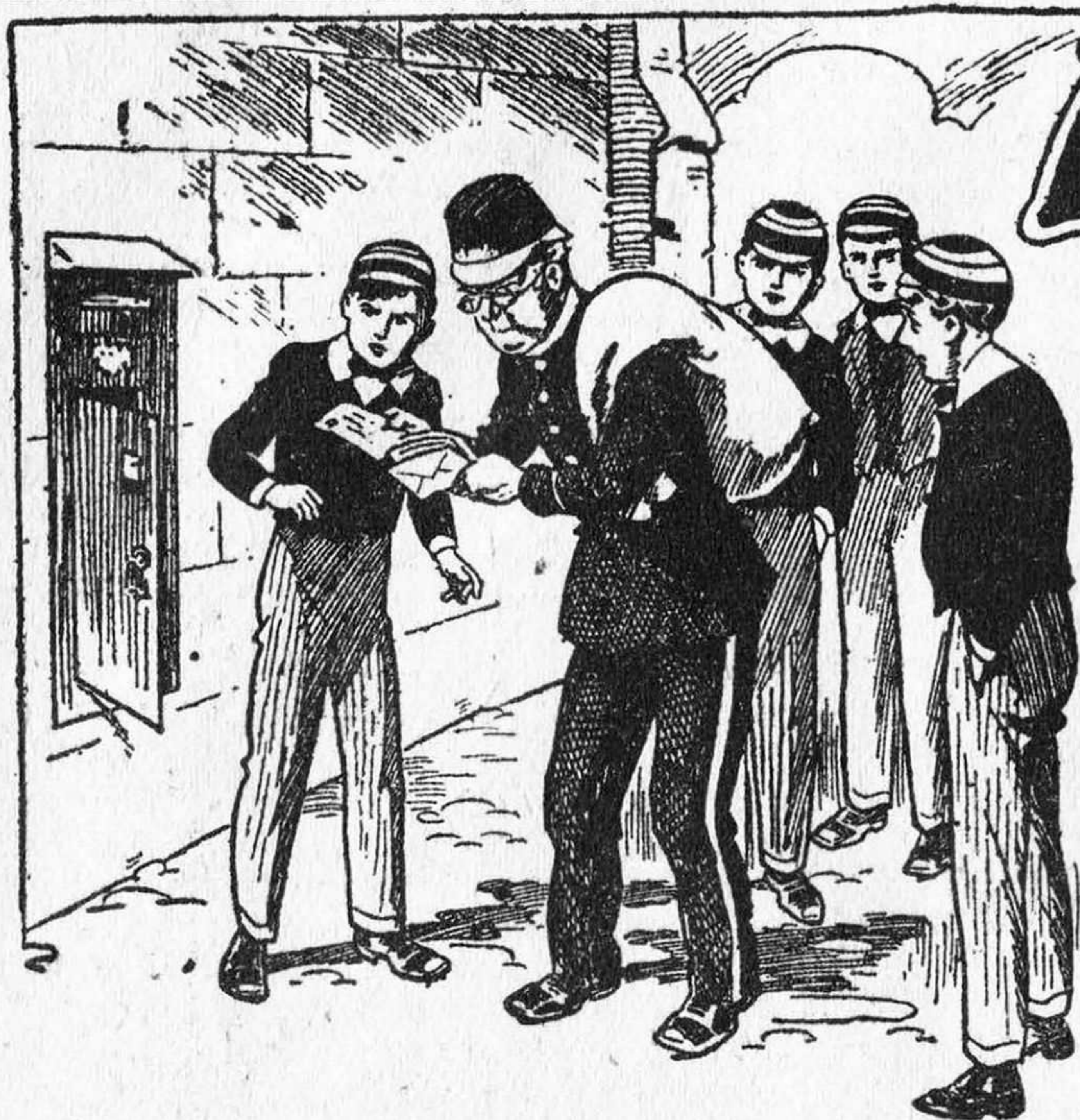
WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN ON SATURDAY.

Below will be found our expert's opinion of the probable results of the big games to be played on Saturday, April 4th. The likely winning side is printed in capitals. Where a draw is anticipated, both clubs are printed in smaller letters.

First Division.	Second Division.	First Division. Scottish League.
Arsenal v. Cardiff City.	Barnsley v. CLAPTON ORIENT.	ABERDEEN v. Hearts.
ASTON VILLA v. Sunderland.	Blackpool v. LEICESTER CITY.	Ayr United v. Falkirk.
BLACKBURN ROVERS v. Notts County.	Bradford City v. Chelsea.	COWDENBEATH v. Hamilton Acads.
BURY v. Burnley.	Derby County v. Manchester United.	DUNDEE v. Hibernians.
HULLERSFIELD TOWN v. Everton.	FULHAM v. Oldham Athletic.	MORTON v. St. Johnstone.
LIVERPOOL v. Birmingham.	HULL CITY v. Stoke.	MOTHERWELL v. Kilmarnock.
MANCHESTER CITY v. Preston N.E.	Middlesbrough v. Crystal Palace.	Raith Rovers v. Partick Thistle.
Newcastle United v. West Bromwich A.	PORTSMOUTH v. Coventry City.	ST. MIRREN v. Queen's Park.
Notts Forest v. Leeds United.	Port Vale v. Southampton.	
SHEFFIELD U. v. Tottenham Hotspur.	SOUTH SHIELDS v. Stockport County.	
West Ham United v. Bolton Wanderers.	WOL'HAMPTON W. v. The Wednesday.	

How do you like "The Barring-Out at St. Kit's!"—Frank Richards' great new story? Write and let your Editor know.

FUN GALORE IN THIS RIPPING STORY OF JIMMY SILVER & CO. OF ROOKWOOD SCHOOL!



April Fools at Rookwood!

By OWEN CONQUEST.

(Author of the tales of Rookwood appearing in the "Popular.")

Peter Cuthbert Gunner tricks his Form-mates in splendid fashion!

The 1st Chapter.

The Hour and the Man!

"Ha, ha, ha!" Dickinson minor jumped. Prep was going on at Rookwood School; and in Study No. 1, in the Classical Fourth, Dickinson minor and Gunner sat on either side of the table, hard at work.

Dickinson minor, at least, was hard at work. Gunner should have been hard at work also. But it seemed that his mind was straying from the delightful pages of Virgil, for all of a sudden Gunner burst into a laugh that rang through the study.

"Ha, ha, ha!" Gunner roared.

It was no wonder that Dickinson minor jumped. Everything about Peter Cuthbert Gunner was emphatic. He was burly in figure, his feet were large, his mouth extensive and in constant use. His voice loud and imperative, and his laugh was quite a hefty one. Indeed, a fellow who heard Gunner laugh, without seeing him, might have fancied that it was the roar of a train in a tunnel.

Moreover, there was nothing to laugh at that Dickinson minor could see. Nothing whatever of a comic nature was to be found in the pages of Virgil. At all events, any humour that might have lurked in that great Latin poet was hidden from the ken of Dickinson minor. Yet Gunner, looking up from the pages of P. Virgilius Maro, burst into that roar of merriment which almost shook Study No. 7.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"For goodness' sake, old fellow, be quiet, and let a fellow get on with his prep!" said Dickinson minor.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gunner chortled gleefully.

"I've got it!" he said.

"You'll get it in the Form-room to-morrow if you don't mug up this stuff!" said Dickinson minor. "Mr. Dalton is getting fed-up with the way you do your con, I can tell you!"

"Blow Mr. Dalton!"

"Well, you can blow him, if you like, but I'm not chancing it. What the thump are you cackling at, anyhow?" asked Dickinson minor crossly.

"I've thought it out," said Gunner. Dickinson minor brightened a little.

"Thought this out? Then you can lend me a hand. The stuff must mean something, or I suppose Virgil wouldn't have written it down. Look at this, Gunner! Is it ablativus or dative—if you've thought it out?"

"I don't care which it is! It may be both, for all I care!" retorted Gunner. "I'm not thinking about prep. Do you know that to-morrow is the First of April?"

"I thought it might be as to-day is the last of March," answered Dickinson minor sarcastically.

"All Fools' Day, you know," said Gunner. "There will be a lot of flat-catching to-morrow. I've thought it out. That ass, Putty of the Fourth, thinks he's the only fellow at Rookwood who can jape a chap. The fact is, when it comes to a real catch, this study is the goods—what? What do you think?"

"I think we'd better do our prep."

"If you actually want me to punch your nose, Dickinson, you've only got to say so plainly," said Gunner. "Don't beat about the bush."

"Look here, Gunner—"

"I've thought it out. The best thing ever thought of in the japing line," said Gunner. "I'm going to fool the whole of the Classical Fourth to-morrow—every fellow in the Form, from Jimmy Silver to Tubby Muffin. See?"

"I don't quite see, but I'll take your word for it!" said Dickinson minor, with a lingering eye on Virgil. Gunner's conversation, no doubt, had its attractions, but prep was prep.

"At eleven," said Gunner, unheeding. "we clear out of the Form-room for the quarter. Lots of the fellows buzz over to the sergeant's shop for tiffin in morning break. You know that?"

Dickinson minor knew it—knew it so well, in fact, that he did not see any necessity for Gunner to mention it.

"Now, I often stand a spread," said Gunner. "Often and often. Suppose I ask all the fellows to a spread in the sergeant's shop. Think they'll all come?"

"I know they will," said Dickinson. "I will for one."

"And when they get there—Ha, ha, ha!" Gunner broke off into a roar of merriment.

"Well?" said Dickinson.

"When they get there—"

Gunner broke off again. The contemplation of his own irresistible humour was too much for him. He was quite unable to continue, and he roared again and laughed till he almost wept.

Dickinson minor gazed at him stonily. He did not join in Gunner's merriment, but was only, obviously, waiting patiently for Gunner to shut up. He had quite a long time to wait.

"When they get there," resumed Gunner at last. "When they—ha, ha!—get there—ha, ha, ha!—instead of a spread. I shall tell them—ha, ha!—that it's the First of April. Ha, ha, ha!"

Gunner roared again.

"My hat!" said Dickinson minor. "Surprises you a bit, what?" chuckled Gunner.

"Yes, a bit," said Dickinson, gazing at his study-mate in wonder. "Is it a joke?"

"Is it?" hooted Gunner. "Yes, you ass! Yes, you burbling duffer! It's a joke—the joke of the term!"

"Oh, all right!"

"Fancy their faces!" chortled Gunner. "They'll all roll up, expecting a royal spread, and there will be old Kettle rubbing his hands, thinking it's a terrific rush of custom, and then—ha, ha!—then it will turn out to be a First-of-April catch!"

Gunner yelled.

Obviously Peter Cuthbert Gunner regarded himself as "some" humorist, and his intended "catch" as the catch of the season. Dickinson minor wrinkled his brow, as if in a great mental effort to see the joke. He failed, and continued to look quite serious.

"Fancy their faces!" howled Gunner. "What?"

"And fancy your face—when they've done with you!" said Dickinson minor.

"Don't be an ass, Dickinson! I suppose the fellows will be able to see a joke, especially such a splendid joke as that. There never was such a catch at Rookwood before!"

"I'm sure of that!" agreed Dickinson.

"And never will be again!" said Gunner.

"I'm quite sure of that. No fellow would jape the Form like that a second time—after what he'd get first time," said Dickinson.

"If you're only going to talk silly rot, Dickinson, you may as well shut up!" said Gunner. "I'm accustomed to jealousy and detraction in the Form, but it's a bit too thick in a fellow's own study."

"But—"

"Shut up!"

Dickinson minor shut up. Gunner gave him a glare and turned his attention at last to his prep, and,



GETTING EVEN WITH GUNNER! "Keep clear," said Valentine Mornington. The fellows who were holding Gunner on the floor kept clear. Morry up-ended the jar of treacle. "Ooooooh!" spluttered Gunner. "Ha, ha, ha!" Treacle flowed down in a steady stream upon Peter Cuthbert's upturned countenance. He struggled frantically, and jerked his head from side to side, but there was no escaping that steady, sticky stream.

The 2nd Chapter. Catching Lovell!

"Jimmy!"

"Hallo!"

"What the thump have you come down without your necktie for?" demanded Arthur Edward Lovell.

Jimmy Silver's hand went up to his collar.

"My tie's on all right," he answered. "What the dickens do you mean, Lovell?"

Arthur Edward Lovell chuckled.

"I meant that it's the First of April, old bean," he answered.

Raby and Newcome chuckled, and Jimmy Silver grinned. The Fistical Four, of the Fourth, were walking out into the quad after breakfast, on that sunny April morning. Jimmy had forgotten, for the moment, that it was the first day of April, when catches were the order of the day.

"Muffin!" bawled Lovell, as Tubby of the Fourth came rolling along.

Tubby Muffin blinked round.

"Did you leave that bag of tarts on the window-seat in the passage?" asked Lovell.

"No—I mean yes! Where?" asked Tubby eagerly.

"In the Fourth Form passage—"

Tubby Muffin did not wait for Lovell to finish. He bolted for the House like a rabbit for his burrow.

"Well, you must be an ass, Lovell," said Newcome. "Tubby will bag those tarts now, and they're jolly well not his."

Lovell shook his head.

"Tubby won't bag any tarts," he answered. "You see, there aren't any tarts. First of April, old son."

"Oh! I—I see."

"Blessed if I knew you were such a jolly old humorist, Lovell," said Jimmy Silver. "But if you've taken to leg-pulling instead of Cross Words, all the better. I was going to tell you I'd thought of a word of six

were two or three words that persisted in escaping him—and he was now hung up, so to speak, for a word of three letters beginning with X and ending with Z, with J in the middle.

Having failed, so far, to find a word that would fill the bill, Lovell had had to leave his masterpiece unfinished for the present.

"You meant it to go?" asked Putty.

"To go!" repeated Lovell.

"I hope I haven't made a mistake," said Putty anxiously. "Looking into your study, I saw your Cross Word puzzle on the table, with the envelope addressed to the 'Evening Despatch.' Naturally, a fellow would suppose that you had forgotten to post it—"

"It's not finished yet, you ass!"

"Goodness gracious! Then you didn't want it posted?"

Lovell jumped.

"You footling ass!" he roared. "Do you mean to say you've posted my Cross Word puzzle when it's not finished?"

"Well, I only meant to be obliging."

"You—you—you crass idiot!" gasped Lovell. "What the thump did you want to mess about in my study for? The thing's no good if it isn't finished. It won't get a prize. They won't even look at an unfinished puzzle. You—you footling chump! Can't you mind you own silly business?"

Teddy Grace looked pained.

"I don't call that grateful, when a fellow has been doing you a good turn," he answered. "Suppose you'd forgotten to post it over-night, you'd be jolly glad I'd caught the early morning collection for you."

"You ass!" howled Lovell. "If that letter's gone, I'll jolly well punch your silly head!" He looked hurriedly at his watch. "It's not gone yet. Old Tuke doesn't collect the letters from the school-box till nine."

Lovell rushed away towards the gates.

"Hold on, Lovell!" shouted Jimmy Silver. "You'll be late for class."

Lovell did not even answer.

Being late for class might cause trouble with Mr. Dalton, but that was a minor consideration now.

Lovell had laboured long and hard over that Cross Word puzzle, and all his labour was wasted if it went off by post unfinished. Somehow or other, Lovell had to get back the letter addressed to "Cross Word Puzzles, 'Evening Despatch.'"

"Well, you must be a thumping ass, Putty!" said Newcome. "Didn't you look at the puzzle to see whether it was finished?"

"Didn't look at it at all—only noticed it lying on the study table," said Putty. "Lovell doesn't seem to feel obliged. I sha'n't do good-natured things like this again."

"Better not, if you don't want your nose punched," said Raby.

Putty of the Fourth walked away, with quite a clouded brow. Jimmy Silver & Co. followed Lovell, and found him mounting guard over the school letter-box. In the distance, on the road from Coombe, the plump figure of Mr. Tuke, the village postman, was already in sight.

"You can't get the letter back now, Lovell," said Jimmy. "It's a goner! Postmen aren't allowed by the rules to hand a letter back."

"I've got to have it, fathead!"

"Old Tuke won't dare to give it you, even if he wants to," said Raby. "Don't be an ass!"

"I'll jolly well make him!"

"Now, look here—" began Newcome.

"Oh, dry up, you fellows!"

Arthur Edward Lovell seemed quite cross. Mr. Tuke came up with his bag on his shoulder and nodded good-morning to the Rookwood juniors. He unlocked the box and proceeded to collect the letters.

"There's a letter of mine that was posted by mistake, Tuke," said Lovell. "I want it back."

Mr. Tuke shook his head.

"Sorry, sir; can't be done. Once a letter's in the box—"

"It was posted by mistake."

"As much as my place is worth, sir," said Mr. Tuke.

"Look here, you know my fist," said Lovell impatiently. "Look! Here's some of my writing. You can compare it with the address on the envelope. It's a Cross Word puzzle that's been dropped into the box by a silly ass who couldn't mind his own business."

"Sorry, sir; but—"

"Look here, you can show it to my Form master, if you like, and he'll tell you it's all right," urged Lovell.

Mr. Tuke hesitated. He was an



April Fools at Rookwood!

(Continued from previous page.)

expressed in any language—even German. Putty of the Fourth gave him an agreeable smile as he sat down.

The 3rd Chapter. Catching the Fourth!

Tubby Muffin was the first to hear the glorious news. As he sat in class Tubby beamed. Generally Tubby did not beam in class. He did not like class; he had an inborn dislike for anything in the shape of work. That morning, too, Tubby's con was a little worse than usual—not very much worse than usual, for that was impossible, Tubby generally getting it nearly as bad as a construe could be. Mr. Dalton had rapped out wrathful words at Tubby, and given him a hundred lines. So really it did not seem that Reginald Muffin had any great cause for beaming that morning in the Fourth Form-room. Yet he beamed—he beamed like

obliging old gentleman, and a shilling slipped into his hand by Lovell decided him.

"Very well, sir," he said. "If Mr. Dalton answers for it—"

"Oh, he will!" said Lovell confidently. "You see, I've taken a lot of trouble over that puzzle, and it's not finished, and an awful chump posted it for me by mistake. See? Just look over the letters, and I'll point it out to you—without touching it, if you like."

"All right, sir." Mr. Tuke took the letters from the box one by one, and Lovell glanced at each as it was transferred to the bag.

There were a good many letters; but the last was transferred, and still the letter addressed to "Cross Word Puzzles, 'Evening Despatch,'" had not come to light.

"Don't seem to be here, sir," said Mr. Tuke.

"You must have left one in the box."

"Look for yourself, sir."

Lovell looked, and had to be satisfied. Mr. Tuke locked up the box and plodded on his way, the richer by a shilling easily earned.

"That idiot Putty must have made a mistake, after all," said Lovell, in great perplexity. "I suppose he intended to post the letter, and left it in his pocket all the time; he's that sort of a footling ass."

The Fistical Four hurried back to the House. It was time for morning classes now, and the Fourth were going into their Form-room. Lovell spotted Teddy Grace in the corridor and rushed up to him.

"Putty, you chump, what have you done with my Cross Word puzzle?"

"Eh? Nothing!"

"Where is it?"

"Where you left it, I should think!"

"What?" roared Lovell.

"Didn't you leave it on your study table?" asked Putty innocently. "If you did, I should think it was there now. My hat! Did you gather from what I said to you in the quad that I had posted it?"

"Of course I did!" shrieked Lovell.

"Ah! You should have remembered!"

"Remembered what, you ass?"

"That it was the First of April, old man!" answered Putty affably, and he strolled into the Form-room.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jimmy Silver & Co.

Lovell stood rooted to the floor.

He had watched and counted the letters in the box, and tipped Mr. Tuke a shilling, and all the time—as he now realised—his famous Cross Word puzzle was reposing where he had left it—on the table in the end study!

"Why, the—the silly ass! The cheeky chump! I—I—" spluttered Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?" howled Lovell. "I don't see anything funny in this!"

"Isn't it as funny as sending Tubby up to the Fourth Form passage to look for a bag of tarts that isn't there?" inquired Jimmy Silver.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fathead! I'll jolly well—" Lovell rushed into the Form-room after Teddy Grace with his fists clenched.

"Putty! You silly chump! I'm going to—"

"Lovell!"

It was Mr. Dalton's voice. In his excitement Lovell had not noticed that the master of the Fourth was already at his desk. Mr. Dalton gave him a very stern look.

"Lovell! What does this mean?"

"Oh! I—I—" Lovell stuttered helplessly.

"You will kindly behave yourself in the Form-room, Lovell," said Mr. Dalton severely. "Take fifty lines, and go to your place!"

Lovell went to his place with feelings that could not have been

dropped in if he had any money, and did not leave while any money was left. But Tubby's financial resources did not equal his appetite—they were extremely limited, and his appetite was practically unlimited. So the news that Gunner was standing this magnificent spread was tidings of great joy to Reginald Muffin.

He proceeded to spread the glad news.

Mr. Dalton undoubtedly noticed an unusual amount of whispering in his Form during the lesson.

Once or twice he rapped out at whispering juniors, and there was silence; but always the whispering started again.

From end to end of the Classical Fourth the glad news spread.

Every fellow was glad to hear it.

Even Jimmy Silver & Co., leaders of the Form, were quite prepared to back up Gunner on such an occasion.

Gunner, of course, was every sort of an ass—he was hot-headed, he was obstreperous, he had a ludicrous belief that he could play games, he was cheeky, and insufferably satisfied with himself. But even Gunner was tolerable at times—such times as this, for instance. The Fistical Four nobly resolved that they would back up Gunner, and help him to make this great function a success.

Even Mornington, the rather

There was perhaps one fellow who did not share in the general feeling that Peter Cuthbert Gunner, for once, had deserved well of his country. That fellow was Dickinson minor.

Dickinson minor, mindful of what Gunner had told him in the study the previous evening, realised that this was Gunner's colossal jape—that his fatuous study-mate really had the nerve to spoof the whole Form in this absolutely idiotic and unpardonable manner.

Dickinson minor wondered rather dazedly what would happen to Gunner. He was quite sure that it would be something startling.

He did not venture to breathe a hint to the other fellows of what they might expect. He did not want to draw down Gunner's wrath upon his own devoted head. Gunner's punch was far too hefty for Dickinson minor to face it unnecessarily. Certainly Gunner would never have forgiven him for spoiling that colossal jape. So Dickinson minor sat tight and did not speak—only making up his mind not to be present when the spoof came off. He did not want to be in at the death, as it were.

Lines fell unusually thick in the Classical Fourth that morning; the inattention of his class rather irritated Mr. Dalton. But lines might have fallen as thickly as leaves in

success. Jimmy Silver, captain of the Form, was there—Arthur Edward Lovell, who never made a secret of the fact that he regarded Gunner as a clown, was there. Putty of the Fourth, the practical joker of the Form, was there—to have his leg pulled with the rest. Mornington, the dandy—Towmy and Toppy, the immaculate nuts—Rawson, Flynn, Oswald—almost every fellow in the Form—Tubby Muffin prominent, with his mouth watering. Really, it was a gigantic success already; not a fellow seemed to remember, for the moment, that it was the First of April. Gunner was going to remind them.

"You fellows coming?" he asked.

"Yes, rather!"

"What-ho!"

"Good old Gunner!"

"Rolling in it—what?" asked Raby, with a smile. Everybody at Rookwood knew that Gunner was rich; nobody, indeed, had much chance of forgetting it. It was a circumstance to which Peter Cuthbert constantly alluded. Nobody at Rookwood could fail to know that Gunner's World-Famed Hardware had turned Gunner's pater into a millionaire, and that Gunner senior handed out liberal remittances to Gunner junior.

"Oh, yes!" said Gunner carelessly. "I believe I've got a few fivers in my pocket. I generally have."

"Lucky bargee!" said Newcome, with a laugh.

"I say, we're all ready, Gunner," said Tubby Muffin, breathlessly. Tubby felt that time was being wasted.

"Lead on, Macduff!" said Mornington.

"After you, Gunner!" grinned Flynn.

"Every fellow's welcome," said Gunner, with a chuckle. "Glad to see you all round the festive board—every man of you—ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha!" echoed some of the juniors. They did not quite see what there was to laugh at; but they laughed because Gunner laughed; a fellow who was standing that record spread was entitled to be given his head.

"Walk in, and call for what you like," went on Gunner categorically. "I'll be really obliged if every fellow will do his very best. I want this spread to be a record."

"We'll see to that," said Oswald.

"Rely on me, Gunner!" gasped Tubby Muffin.

"Come on!" said Gunner.

He led the way briskly across to the tuckshop, behind the beeches. Like one man, the Classical Fourth followed on.

That Gunner was an ass, a rather swanking ass, that he had more money than was good for him, and did not know how to spend it—all this, no doubt, was clear enough. Nevertheless, the Classical Fourth felt quite kindly towards Gunner just then; and if he found pleasure in standing that royal and imperial spread, they were prepared to contribute to his pleasure by fairly exhausting Sergeant Kettle's supply of good things.

Peter Cuthbert Gunner marched into the school shop, with his army at his heels.

Sergeant Kettle came out of his little parlour and stared a little as the Classical Fourth fairly crammed his shop. He was accustomed to doing a little business in quarter; but this really looked like a shipping order. The tuckshop swarmed—Shell fellows who wanted to come in for a ginger-pop or a bun found that there was no room—even two or three of the Fifth could not come in. The Classical Fourth were in possession.

Gunner stood at the counter, leaning on it, and surveyed his Form-fellows with a joyous grin.

"Gentlemen!" he said.

"Right-ho, Gunner, cut out the speech!" said Tubby Muffin. "We don't want to waste time!"

"Gentlemen, you've come here for the biggest spread ever stood in the history of Rookwood—"

"Hear, hear!"

"There's only one little thing you've forgotten—"

"Eh? What's that?"

"That it's the First of April!" said Gunner cheerily.

"Eh?"

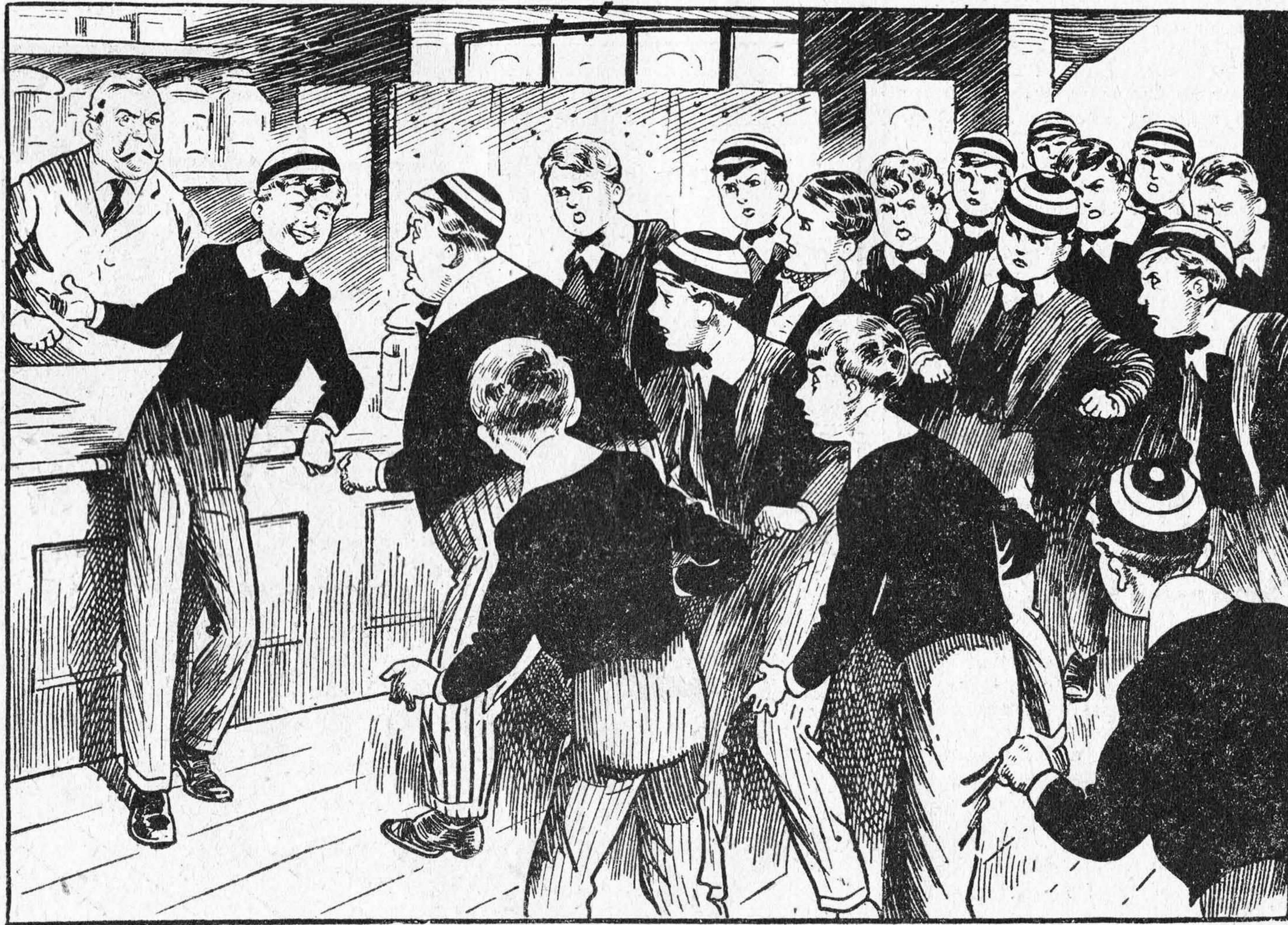
"What?"

"Which?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gunner. "First of April—April Fools, you know. The whole lot of you! There isn't going to be any spread! It's a catch, see? No giddy spread this journey! I've pulled your leg, see! Ha, ha, ha!"

Gunner roared with laughter.

The other fellows did not roar. Really, having been treated to so



GUNNER'S APRIL FOOLS! Gunner stood at the counter of the school tuck-shop, leaning on it, and surveyed his Form-fellows with a joyous grin. "Gentlemen," he said, "you've come here for the biggest spread ever stood in the history of Rookwood—" "Hear, hear!" "There's only one little thing you've forgotten—" "Eh? What's that?" "That it's the First of April!" said Gunner cheerily. "Eh?" "What?" "Which?" "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gunner. "First of April—April Fools, you know! The whole lot of you! There isn't going to be any spread! It's a catch, see?"

unto the sun at noonday. Fat satisfaction irradiated his plump face.

It was because he had heard the news!

It was great news!

Whispered by Gunner, it had reached Muffin first, and his fat face came out in smiles like the sun through the clouds.

The news was that in quarter—as the Rookwood fellows called the morning break of a quarter of an hour before third lesson—in quarter there was to be a royal feed in the school shop. It was not to be a common or a garden feed, so to speak—it was to be a royal and imperial spread. Gunner, well-known to be the happy possessor of plenty of cash, was standing it—standing it royally to all the Classical Fourth. Every member of that happy Form was welcome to come along, to range himself at Sergeant Kettle's counter and to call for what he chose.

There had been other occasions when such a spread had been stood by some fellow in happy possession of large cash resources—some fellow with more money than sense, as it were. But such occasions, naturally, were very rare. Tubby Muffin could remember one or two such.

The glorious news quite bucked Tubby.

In morning break he was wont to feel hungry. Many fellows dropped into the sergeant's shop in quarter to fortify themselves for third lesson with buns or tarts. Tubby always

supercilious dandy of the Fourth, was on.

Townsend and Topham gave Gunner quite kind and friendly glances. The two nuts did not as a rule conceal their opinion of Gunner as a heavy-handed, uproarious sort of a ruffian. Still, it was clear now that Gunner had his good points, and Towmy and Toppy admitted it freely.

Tubby Muffin, indeed, was in an ecstatic state—almost exalted. He was to roll up to the sergeant's counter and order what he liked—and not to leave off the feed till his gargantuan appetite was satisfied—or till quarter was up. It was a question of how much tuck Tubby could stow away in fifteen minutes. It was quite certain that every minute of the fifteen would be crammed with effort on Tubby's part. Often and often had Reginald Adolphus Muffin distinguished himself as a trencherman. On this occasion he was going to break all records.

Tubby received, without heeding, a hundred lines from Mr. Dalton; he scarcely heeded even a rap on his fat knuckles from the pointer. In his exalted state Tubby was far removed from the common things of the earth—he was almost in a delightful trance.

Never had the signal to dismiss been so eagerly awaited by the Classical Fourth.

It came at last, and the juniors swarmed out of the Form-room.

Like an army, they gathered round Peter Cuthbert Gunner in the quadrangle. Gunner looked round him with a cheery smile.

The colossal jape was already a

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stupendous a joke, free of charge, they ought to have roared. But they didn't! They stood and stared at Gunner.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gunner. And when Gunner had finished roaring, there was dead silence—a silence that was positively painful.

The 4th Chapter. Not a Success.

Peter Cuthbert Gunner looked about him. He seemed rather puzzled.

The joke of the term had failed, somehow, to catch on. Apparently Gunner had expected great merriment. No merriment was to be observed. Indeed, in Tubby Muffin's fat face there was something like tragedy. It was no joke to Tubby.

"No spread!" said Muffin faintly. "No!"

"Let's have this clear," said Jimmy Silver soberly. "You've asked us all here for a spread, and now you say there isn't any spread."

"It's a catch," explained Gunner.

"I don't see the catch. Any fellow could tell whoppers, I suppose—telling fibs and getting them believed isn't a catch. Is that your idea of a joke, Gunner?"

"It's jolly well the biggest joke ever heard of at Rookwood, and chance it," said Gunner warmly. "I've spoofed the lot of you! You've come here for a spread, and there isn't any spread."

"Is this where we laugh?" asked Arthur Edward Lovell, with deep sarcasm.

"Look here, Lovell—"

Mornington pushed his way forward. There was quite a grim expression on Valentine Mornington's face. The dandy of the Fourth considered Gunner's spreads rather below his lofty dignity, at any time. Now, after he had condescended to take part in this particular spread, there was no spread—only an extraordinary effort at humour on the part of Gunner. Mornington was wrathful.

"Gentlemen," said Mornington, "Gunner brought us here for a record spread. Now he says it's a joke. Possibly there may be something funny in it—Gunner seems to think so; that noise you heard just now like an air-raid was Gunner laughing. But we didn't come here to see Gunner doing a funny turn. Collar him!"

"What-ho!" "Here, hands off!" roared Gunner, in alarm. "Can't you take a joke?" "We'll take you instead!" said Morny.

"Hear, hear!" Gunner struggled as six or seven irritated fellows grasped him. He was a hefty fellow, and his struggles were powerful; but they did not avail him. He came down on the floor of the tuckshop with a bump.

"Keep him there," said Mornington, who had evidently taken upon himself the leadership in the proceedings. "Sit on him, Muffin."

"What-ho!" gasped Muffin. And there was an agonized squeal from Gunner as Reginald Muffin's avoirdupois came down on him with a bump.

"A jar of treacle, please, Mr. Kettle," said Mornington.

"Yes, sir."

"Keep clear," said Morny.

The fellows who were holding Gunner on the floor kept clear. Morny up-ended the jar of treacle.

"Ooooooch!" spluttered Gunner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Treacle flowed down in a steady stream upon Peter Cuthbert's up-turned countenance.

He struggled frantically, and jerked his head from side to side; but there was no escaping that steady, sticky stream.

It flowed over his face, it flowed over his hair, it flowed into his collar and down his neck and over his waistcoat.

Sergeant Kettle looked on blankly. He was not unaccustomed to pranks among the cheery young gentlemen of the Rookwood Fourth. But this seemed to Mr. Kettle really the limit.

"Gug-gug-gug!" came faintly from Gunner.

"Have you any cheap eggs, Mr. Kettle?" asked Mornington politely.

"New-laid, Master Mornington."

"New-laid eggs are no good. The older laid the better."

"I've got some at ninepence a dozen that I've had in stock some time, sir," said the sergeant doubtfully. "But they ain't any good, excepting for cooking."

"That's all right. We're cooking Gunner."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, young gentlemen—"

"Hand over those eggs."

"I—I say!" gasped Gunner in anguish. "I—I say! Lemme gerrup! I say! I'll smash you! Grooogh! Oooooch!"

Mornington proceeded to break eggs on Gunner's prominent nose.

The sergeant had said that the eggs were no good, excepting for cooking. But to judge by the scent that arose from them only a very hardy cook could possibly have used them.

But they were good enough for Gunner.

Ancient egg after egg cracked on his nose, and Gunner spluttered, and gasped, and squirmed in a state of horror and misery. The fellows who were holding him coughed and gasped, but they did not let go. Gunner had asked for this, and Gunner was going to have it.

"This is where you laugh, Gunner," said Mornington. "The joke of the term, old chap. You caught all of us, and now all of us have caught you. See?"

"Grooogh!"

"Like a few more?"

"Gug-gug-gug! Oooooch!"

"I think he's had enough," said Jimmy Silver laughing.

"Well, it's up to Gunner to say so if he has," said Mornington. "Have you had enough, Gunner?"

"Ow! Oooch! Groogh! Yes."

indignantly. "We came here for a spread, didn't we? Well, then—"

"Now then, what's all this?" It was the voice of Bulkeley of the Sixth at the door. "Make room, there! Is this a riot?"

The captain of Rookwood shoved into the crowded shop with a frowning brow. Prefects of the Sixth took their light refreshments in the inner room, in great state, and they were accustomed to walking through the other shop loftily, with respectful fags making way for them. On this occasion Bulkeley of the Sixth had to push his way in, like a fag of the Third of Fourth, which considerably ruffled the great man.

"You young rascals! Why, what—what—what—"

Bulkeley fairly stuttered as he caught sight of Gunner. The treacly and eggy youth was scarcely recognisable.

"What on earth—" gasped Bulkeley.

"Grooogh! Oooop! Ug-gug!"

"Is—is that Gunner?"

"Gug-gug-gug!"

The crowd in the tuckshop melted away. Even Mornington felt that it was time to go when the captain of the school took a hand in the proceedings. In a remarkably short space of time the swarm of Fourth-Form fellows had cleared off, leaving Gunner to face the captain of

Mr. Dalton gave him a stern look.

"Gunner, you are a quarter of an hour late!"

"Yes, sir; I—" began Gunner.

"Take two hundred lines."

"I—"

"Go to your place!" said Mr. Dalton, frowning.

Gunner sat down indignantly.

During the remainder of the third lesson he cast indignant glances at his Form-fellows, and scowled at Dickinson minor, upon whose face he fancied he detected a lurking grin.

Gunner felt that he was a much misunderstood youth.

That fellow Putty of the Fourth was always japing somebody, and the fellows generally laughed over his jests. And here was Gunner, springing the catch of the season on the Fourth, and getting the ragging of his life by way of reward. Gunner felt that it was unjust, and he reflected bitterly that a fellow of his intellectual powers was wasted at Rookwood. He had bagged a terrific ragging from the Fourth, and he was booked for "six" from Bulkeley's ashlant; that was his reward for seeking to add to the gaiety of existence at Rookwood with his colossal jape. No doubt it was the reward he deserved, but Gunner failed to understand that. Indeed, the things Gunner failed to understand were

Classical Fourth came out, Gunner stalked away by himself—refusing even to speak to Dickinson minor. He was angry and he was indignant—though not so angry and indignant as Tubby Muffin. Muffin rolled out after the Fistical Four.

"I say, Jimmy, old man, that beast—that ass—that villain—that—that Hun, Gunner—he ought to be jolly well licked—"

"He's been jolly well ragged," said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "I fancy he will think twice before he plays silly tricks again."

"What's a ragging?" said Tubby contemptuously. "What he wants is a thumping good licking! I say, Jimmy, do you think I could lick Gunner?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jimmy Silver. "Perhaps you could, old man, if his hands were tied, and he sat down and let you do it."

"Well, you lick him," said Tubby. "You're captain of the Fourth, and it's up to you. I'll hold your jacket."

"Oh, give Gunner a rest."

"He hasn't had half enough!" roared Tubby. "Not a quarter! Look here! If you're afraid of him, Jimmy— Yarooooooh!"

Reginald Muffin suddenly found himself sitting down in the quad; and Jimmy Silver & Co. walked on and left him there.

The fat Classical picked himself up and shook a plump fist after the chums of the Fourth, and rolled away in wrath. Until dinner-time Tubby Muffin was quite busy interviewing various fistical members of the Fourth Form, such as Conroy and Mornington and Erroll and Rawson, urging that Gunner should be given the licking of his life. But the general opinion seemed to be that Peter Cuthbert had had enough. Indeed, Morny, on reflection, wondered whether he had not given him a little too much. Tubby was sent bootless away, only comforted by the knowledge that Gunner was to go to Bulkeley's study at four o'clock to take "six." That was something; but in Muffin's opinion it did not nearly meet the case.

Even dinner did not placate Tubby Muffin. He had only enough for three fellows, so he was still hungry when he finished. He eyed Gunner morosely as the colossal japer stalked away after dinner. Never had Reginald Muffin so deeply regretted that he was not a fighting-man.

Gunner had to be punished. Ordinary offences Tubby could have forgiven. Had Gunner kicked him, Tubby would have forgotten the matter as soon as the ache had worn off. He was not unaccustomed to kicking. But to ask a fellow to a magnificent spread, and then to tell him that it was only a catch, was unpardonable! It was beyond the limit! It was what some novelist has called the Thing-too-Much.

Tubby Muffin was not used to thinking, but now he thought and thought, and though his fat brain did not work easily, it worked at last. From the depths of his wrath and resentment was born a scheme that irradiated his fat face with a cheery grin.

He rolled along to Gunner's study in the Fourth.

Peter Cuthbert Gunner had retired to his study, like Achilles to his tent, in the same sulky humour as that Grecian chief. He did not look pleased when Tubby Muffin's fat face looked in.

In fact, he scowled, and reached for a Latin dictionary, with the obvious intention of "buzzing" it at Reginald Muffin.

"I say, Gunner," exclaimed Tubby hastily, "hold on! I've got a message!"

Gunner paused, dictionary in hand. "Cough it up!" he snapped.

"Bulkeley—"

"Blow Bulkeley! I haven't got to go to his study till four!" growled Gunner. "Tain't four yet. And I've a jolly good mind not to go, anyhow. Who's Bulkeley, I'd like to know!"

"The 'six' is off," said Tubby. "Eh?"

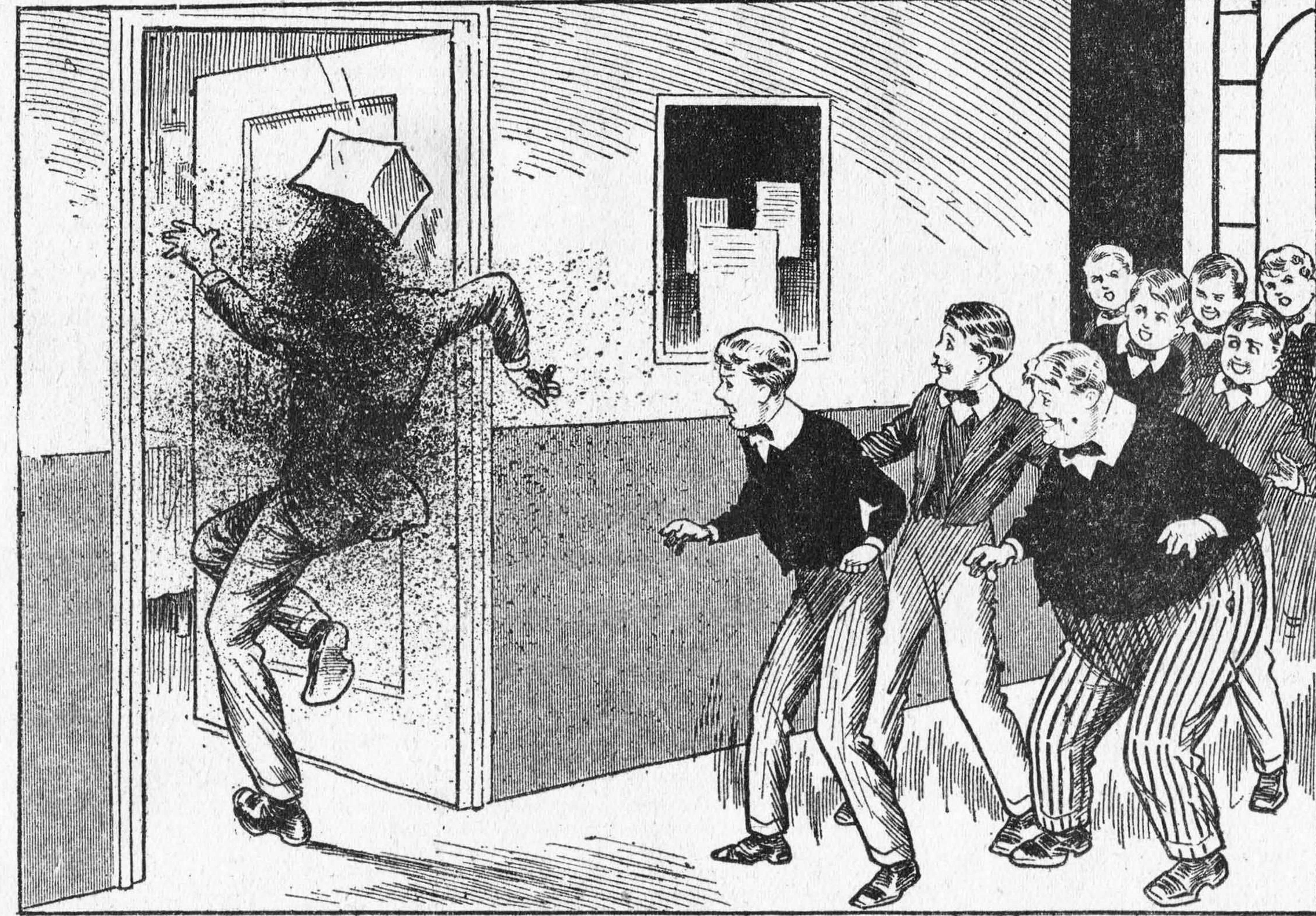
"You see, Bulkeley didn't understand," said Tubby airily. "He didn't catch on to your ripping jape, you see. Now he knows, he's no end tickled. He thinks it's the biggest First of April catch ever thought of."

Gunner's brow cleared. He smiled.

As it was still the First of April, and Gunner was so keen on flat-catching himself, it might have occurred to him that Reginald Muffin was pulling his egrégious leg.

But it didn't! So convinced was Gunner that admiration was his due.

(Continued overleaf.)



GUNNER'S BOOBY TRAP! Bulkeley of the Sixth reached his study door, and, finding it ajar, pushed it open and entered. Crash! "Whooop!" roared the startled Sixth-Former. Right on Bulkeley's head came the cardboard box, shooting out its contents as it landed. Floods of soot flew round Bulkeley, and smothered him from head to foot. "Groogh! Hoooh! Oooooch! Mmmmmmm!" came in choked accents from the captain of Rookwood. There was a shriek from the Fourth. "He's done it!" "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Are you ready to stand the spread?"

"What?"

"We're ready, if you are."

"You silly ass—groogh!—there isn't any spread. Oooooch! Don't I keep on telling you it's a catch? Oooooohhh!"

"Dear me! He wants a few more," said Mornington. "Another dozen eggs, sergeant, if you please! Older ones, if you have any."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hold on!" shrieked Gunner.

"Are you ready to stand that spread?" asked Mornington amid yells of laughter from the Fourth. The juniors could see now what Morny was driving at.

"Ow! Yes—anything!" shrieked Gunner. "Oh dear! I'll stand anything you like! Oooooch! Leggo! Keep off! Ow! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let him get up," said Mornington. "Mind, Gunner, the eggs are ready. Tell the sergeant, and hand over the cash in advance."

"I—I—I—"

"What a jolly good idea!" chortled Tubby Muffin. "He brought us here for a spread; make him stand it."

"I'm jolly well going to," said Mornington coolly.

"Hold on! That's rather too thick, you know," said Jimmy Silver. "Gunner's had enough. Let him rip."

"Rats!"

"Yes, rats!" roared Tubby Muffin

Rookwood, spluttering treacle and eggs.

"What have you been doing, Gunner?" demanded Bulkeley. "Did you fall into a box of eggs, or what?"

"Groogh! I—I— Oooooch!"

"You horrid young ass! Go and get yourself clean at once," exclaimed Bulkeley. "Do you hear? Go and clean yourself!"

"I—I—"

"And come to my study at four o'clock," said Bulkeley. "I shall give you six for this. A pretty state for a Rookwood fellow to be in!"

"I—I—" spluttered Gunner.

"Cut!" snapped Bulkeley angrily. And the unhappy Gunner cut, fairly streaking across the quad, and bolting into the house, and not slackening pace till he was in a bathroom.

The 5th Chapter. Sauce for the Gander.

Third lesson was in progress in the Classical Fourth room, when Gunner reappeared there.

He was very late for class.

With all his efforts, with steaming water and plenty of soap, he had not quite succeeded in cleaning off all the treacle and eggs. His hair was still sticky, and an aroma of ancient eggs clung about him lovingly. He was only imperfectly swept and garnished when he reappeared in the Form-room, though his face was crimson with his efforts.

too numerous to enumerate. This was only one of them.

Gunner sat and glowered, while the rest of the Classical Fourth grinned. Only one fellow glowered like Gunner. Tubby Muffin was burning with resentment. He had dreamed ecstatic dreams of that unlimited spread which, after all had never come off, and never was to come off. His imagination had wandered at large among unnumbered cakes and tarts, piles of dough-nuts and mountains of meringues. And it was only a catch—and that idiot Gunner thought it funny!

Had Tubby Muffin been a fighting man, like Jimmy Silver, or Lovell, or Conroy, Gunner would have been booked for a battle royal after class. Unfortunately, Tubby was not a fighting man. Sometimes he related to the Fourth deeds of derring do that had occurred in the holidays, but at Rookwood these bold deeds were never in evidence. Tubby yearned for drastic vengeance on Gunner, but was painfully aware of the fact that he was quite unable to tackle Gunner's little finger in actual combat. But he wanted vengeance, and he wanted it badly. Even the worm will turn, and it was generally considered in the Rookwood Fourth that Tubby was a good deal of a worm. That royal and imperial spread, which was gone from his gaze like a beautiful dream, haunted Tubby's fat mind, and his wrath grew and grew.

After third lesson, when the

APRIL FOOLS AT ROOKWOOD!

(Continued from previous page.)

that he was not in the least surprised to hear that Bulkeley—now he knew the facts—regarded him with the merited admiration.

Not for a second did it enter his self-satisfied mind that so insignificant a person as Tubby Muffin was giving him a First of April jape—handing him out a dose of his own medicine, as it were.

"Well, want to hear the message?" asked Tubby, affecting to turn to the door.

"Get on with it!" "Tea in Bulkeley's study," said Tubby. "He's gone out with Neville now; but he will be back at four to tea. I say, Gunner, I wonder if Bulkeley would mind if you took me with you?"

This was really a master-stroke of diplomacy on Tubby's part. He knew what the answer would be.

Gunner snorted. "Catch me taking you, when I'm asked to tea by a friend in the Sixth Form!" he said contemptuously.

Tubby winked at the ceiling. "Well, as a pal, Gunner, you know—"

"Cheese it!" said Gunner. "Oh, all right!" said Tubby sulkily. "I don't want to come!"

"You jolly well do, but you won't!" said Gunner coolly. "Is there anything more? Cough it up and take your face away!"

"I've a jolly good mind not to tell you—"

"Out with it!" snorted Gunner, with a threatening motion of the Latin dictionary.

"Well, you're to wait for Bulkeley in his study, and he wants you to help him in a jape on Neville of the Sixth—you being such a japer, you know." Tubby paused, wondering just how much Gunner's credulity would stand.

But Gunner's credulity was proof against anything. He rubbed his hands and grinned.

"I'm the man!" he said. "I'm on! Bulkeley isn't half the ass I've always thought him!"

"The idea is a booby-trap," said Tubby. "You rig it up over Bulkeley's door, and when he comes back he gets Neville to come in first—see?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gunner. "Shall I come and help you, Gunner, and—stay to tea?" asked Tubby, still masterfully diplomatic.

"You silly owl! Do you think I want your help? Get out!"

Tubby Muffin got out.

That Peter Cuthbert Gunner was every imaginable kind of an ass, all the Fourth Form knew by experience. But that he would "fall" to so palpable a catch as this was really too good to be true, and Tubby Muffin, with a lingering doubt, hung about the passage, till Gunner came out of Study No. 7.

The cheery smile on Gunner's face showed that all was well.

He walked away to the Sixth Form passage in a bright mood, and Tubby trailed him as far as Bulkeley's door.

Gunner went into the Rookwood captain's study, and the door closed after him; and Tubby rolled away grinning.

He joined the Fistical Four in the quad, gurgling with merriment.

"You fellows like to see a lark?" he asked. "Gunner— He, he, he—"

"Gunner at it again?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"He, he, he!"

"What's the merry jape this time?" inquired Arthur Edward Lovell.

"He, he, he!"

Tubby Muffin got it out at last, and Jimmy Silver & Co. simply gasped.

"Great pip! Even Gunner couldn't be such an ass!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"He is—he are— Ha, ha, ha! He, he, he!" squealed Tubby. "He's keen on First of April catches, you know. Now he's getting one himself! He, he, he!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

In about ten minutes most of the Classical Fourth knew where Gunner was, and what he was doing, and quite an army of juniors gathered to watch for Bulkeley of the Sixth to return from his walk.

Meanwhile, Peter Cuthbert Gunner was busy in Bulkeley's study.

He was very keen to help in that supposed jape on Neville, and to show the Rookwood captain that he was an ally to be relied upon. Never for a moment did a doubt cross his mind. The booby-trap in Bulkeley's study was quite a masterpiece in its way.

Gunner set the door a few inches ajar. On top of it he carefully balanced a cardboard box he had scouted out of a cupboard. The cardboard box was nearly filled with soot industriously scraped out of the chimney.

Having completed his preparations, Gunner sat down in Bulkeley's armchair to wait with a cheery satisfied smile on his face.

At a short distance most of the Classical Fourth were waiting. There was a buzz of excitement among the juniors when Bulkeley of the Sixth was observed crossing the quad from the gates.

"Here he comes!" murmured Putty of the Fourth. And Putty regarded Reginald Muffin, for once, almost with envy. This was a jape after his own heart, and he was not the perpetrator thereof. That distinction was Muffin's.

"It won't work!" murmured Lovell. "Even Gunner can't be such a crass ass—such a blinking idiot—"

"He's idiot enough for anything," grinned Mornington, "and if it works he will be fed-up with First of April catches."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bulkeley of the Sixth came into the House, and seemed rather surprised to see so many of the Fourth hanging about the end of the Sixth Form passage. However, he walked on to his study without taking any particular notice of them.

The juniors watched him breathlessly.

Was it possible? Was Gunner really so egregious an ass?

He was. That was soon clear.

Bulkeley of the Sixth reached his study door, and, finding it ajar, pushed it open and entered.

Crash!

"Whoop!" roared the startled Sixth-Former.

Right on Bulkeley's head came the cardboard box, shooting out its contents as it landed.

Floods of soot flew round Bulkeley and smothered him from head to foot.

Soot filled the air in black clouds and floated over the study and out into the passage.

In the midst of it Bulkeley staggered, suddenly transformed into a black man of the deepest dye.

"Grooogh! Hooohh! Ooooooh! Mmmmmmmmm!" came in choked accents from the captain of Rookwood.

There was a shriek from the Fourth.

"He's done it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mmmmmmm!" spluttered Bulkeley.

He staggered into the study, fairly blinded and suffocated with soot.

Gunner jumped up from the arm-

chair, chortling. In that black and sooty figure he did not recognise the captain of Rookwood. He supposed that this was Neville, caught as per programme.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gunner. "Caught! What? First of April, you know! Ha, ha, ha!"

Bulkeley gouged soot from his eyes. He gave Gunner a sooty glare of the most intense ferocity.

"You—you! Did you do this, Gunner?"

"Yes, rather! Ha, ha, ha! Where's Bulkeley?"

"What! Don't you know I'm Bulkeley, you young idiot? Are you mad?" yelled the captain of Rookwood.

Gunner jumped.

"You! Oh! I thought—I—I— what—oh my hat! Here, leggo! Leggo my collar! I meant—I—I— you see— Yaroooh! Whoop! Help!"

Bulkeley had scraped away enough soot to see his way about. He grasped Gunner with his left hand, with his right he grabbed up his ashplant from the table. Why Gunner had done this, how a Lower boy had found the nerve to jape the captain of the School in his own study, were questions Bulkeley did not bother to find an answer to just then. All he thought about was dealing with Gunner in the way he deserved.

Whack! Whack! Whack! Whack! Gunner roared and squirmed, and collected a good quantity of soot from Bulkeley. But there was no escape for him. Whack! Whack! Whack!

Bulkeley seemed to think that he was beating carpets.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

Gunner had been booked for "six" from the ashplant. But it was probably nearer sixty that he collected.

Bulkeley did not leave off till his arm was tired—and he had a hefty arm. When he was finished he hurled Gunner from the study, and the colossal japer of Rookwood went sprawling along the passage. Even then the sooty prefect seemed disposed to come out after him, and Gunner had just enough energy left to pick himself up and flee for his life.

It was acknowledged by all the Fourth that this was the biggest catch of the First of April at Rookwood. The juniors roared over it.

Gunner had undoubtedly brought off the biggest jest of the term, though quite unintentionally.

When the hapless Gunner learned the facts of the case, Tubby Muffin stood in need of vigorous protection.

The Fistical Four rallied round him. They explained to Gunner that a fellow who was so keen on First-of-April catches had no right to complain of being caught, and that what was sauce for the goose was sauce for the gander. And as argument did not satisfy Gunner, and he still sought vengeance they bumped him in the Fourth Form passage until he gave up that idea.

And for quite a long time afterwards, in order to rouse Gunner of the Fourth to a state of Hunnish fury, it was only necessary to whisper in his ear "First of April!"

THE END.

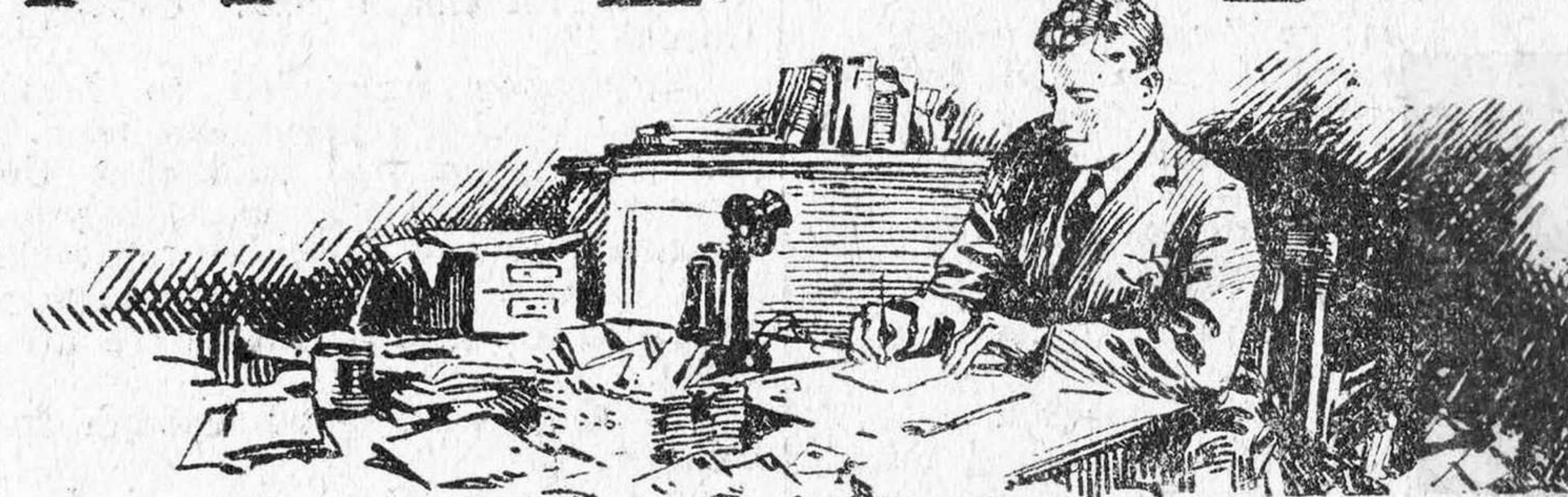
(Owen Conquest contributes "Lovell's Revenge!" another magnificent story of Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood School to next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND. Don't miss it. Order your copy of the "Green 'Un" to-day, and thus make certain of obtaining it!)

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"THE BARRING-OUT AT ST. KIT'S!"

Next week's grand instalment of Frank Richards' serial sees hostilities in full swing. It's a ding-dong struggle between Mr. Carker and the rebels. Full sympathy will go to the insurgents in their revolt. They had been stung into rising against the enormities of the temporary Head, vice Dr. Chenies, who was the victim of a somewhat mysterious assault. At present Mr. Carker is almost alone in his glory, and there is very little of it. There is plenty to grip you next Monday in the stand-up fight of Harry Wilmot & Co. against oppression. It will be a fight to a finish.

"POSH AT THE WHEEL!"

There are brisk doings at the Wick in the new instalment of David Goodwin's story. Cyril Babbit once again shows himself to be a thoroughly enthusiastic sportsman, and he and Posh play very striking parts at the great fixture. This is a gathering for costers' donkeys, and the moke races are the limit. But when feeling runs high, trouble may be expected, and Ike, the Basher, makes mischief. It is a topping instalment.

"LOVELL'S REVENGE!"

It may be that Lovell is too clever by half. You can judge of this next week when you have the new Rookwood yarn in your hands. It happened like this. The ponderous Mr. Greely, not at all a bad old sport, but heavy in his style, fell foul of Lovell. Lovell could not stick the punishment meted out to him, and determined to lead Mr. Greely a dance. This was entirely unsuitable. It stands to reason that Mr. Greely is no dancer. He is neither light nor fantastic, and report has it he runs to gout. There are heaps of curious happenings in Mr. Owen Conquest's latest. Don't risk missing this treat!

"THE WAY OF THE WEST!"

In company with his bright young pard, Dick Tozer, Arizona Jim, the Indian agent, strikes a pretty amazing adventure in next Monday's issue. "Bad" Phil Hicks and "Left-Hand" Britton are in it, and you get a rousing and A1. thrilling yarn of the Western wilds.

"THE FLIGHT OF THE GLORY HOLE GANG!"

Gaskho Bey & Co. are inveterate plotters, and we get a taste of their quality in Duncan Storm's splendid new story of the Bombay Castle. These Oriental rogues stick at nothing to gain their ends, and their determination is to maroon Dick Dorrington & Co., leaving the young adventurers safely tucked up on a desert island. This nefarious job is to be carried through by the aid of a

crafty Chink, who is willing to act in any capacity if he is well paid. Gaskho risks little. Naturally he knows there is some risk, and that, if failure comes, hidings will be handed round generously. Still the Bey takes the chance, and the result of the fell conspiracy will occasion some surprise. Scorcher Wilkinson takes a hand in this sensational and ingenious yarn. I am constantly getting requests for more adventure stories. Here you have one of the very best ever devised.

"GOALIE'S" MIXTURE!

Our smart little football feature every week puts the gilt on Monday. "Goalie" touches on the great subject of the winter game with the talent of the true expert. He is a man with an all-round grasp of the game, and he is a daisy for detail. I am certain his coming article will get there with all footer enthusiasts.

LOOK OUT FOR THIS!

Our list of Results in the recent Competition will be forthcoming very soon. "Sporting Favourites" was a roaring success, and the entries were exceptional. This explains the heavy work of the judges.

ANOTHER BIG OFFER!

In two weeks' time you will have our Grand New Competition. Six J. B. Hobbs Autographed Cricket Bats figure on the Prize List. These bats will be there waiting for winners every week. Tell all your pals about this fresh chance. Summer is coming and those bats will be handy. You can manage this special new competition like pie, off your own bat, and then get a Hobbs one to make all square.

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Your Editor.

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