

grappled with him. Pankhurst was red in the face from the effects of the tart. Two to two Dick Neville did not interfere. Two to two was fair play, and Dick was busy with a currant cake. The four grappling juniors reeled to and fro, and Pankhurst and Micky came with a crash against Neville. "Here, get off, you asses!" roared Dick, as the cake was dashed off his knees. "Arrah, now—" "Get off!" "Sure and I—" Neville gave Micky a shove, and he went reeling away with Pankhurst, and collided with Poindexter and Price. At that moment the train gave a sudden, shivering jerk! The four combatants reeled over, and went down in a heap in the bottom of the carriage, and Dick Neville was shot forward on to the opposite seat, from which he rolled upon the other juniors. "Hallo!" exclaimed Pankhurst, in a muffled voice. "What's the matter?" "Faith, and it's an accident!" "Qu-quite so!" gasped Price. "I guess the train's stopped." The juniors sorted themselves out and scrambled to their feet. The train was certainly at a standstill. Poindexter, with his hair unkempt and his collar hanging by one end, opened the window and put his head out. Many other windows had opened, and excited passengers were looking out upon the line. The guard was coming along the train. "Hallo!" called out Poindexter. "What's the matter?" "The train's stopped." "Snowed up?" "Yes!"

The 4th Chapter. Snowed Up!

WHEW!" The Cliveden juniors gave a simultaneous whistle. The row in the carriage stopped at once, and the lads put themselves to rights as well as they could. Price had a stream of red flowing from his nose, and Poindexter a blue ring round one eye. Micky Flynn was ruefully rubbing the back of his head, where it had come into contact with a seat. Pankhurst did not seem to be hurt. "Phew! Snowed up!" The juniors did not look alarmed. On the contrary, it was clear enough that the untoward happening was by no means unwelcome to them. To be snowed up in a train was an adventure which would make them the envy of all Cliveden, and as yet they thought nothing of the privation and danger it might entail. "I guess I'm glad we took this train," said Poindexter, rubbing his hands. "It will make us late for the snow fight at Cliveden—" "Oh, so long as we get in before dark, that will be all right, I reckon." "We may not get in before dark," said Neville, "or before morning either, for that matter, my son!" "Oh, don't croak, kid!" said Pankhurst. "We're not hurt yet, anyway. I suppose they will try to back the train, but if the snow's too thick in front, it will be too thick behind, I should think." "I guess so." "Keep your seats," called out the guard. "That's it; they're going to back the train." With a jerk the train was set in motion again. It was going backwards now, but ere long it came to a stop with a sudden jerk. The juniors were prepared for it this time, and kept their footing. "Stopped again!" said Pankhurst. "Again the train moved forward." "Full steam on!" grinned Pankhurst. "But they won't get through the snow, I fancy." Pankhurst was right. The speed slackened, and became slacker and slacker. Finally the train came again to a halt, and it was evident that further progress was impossible. Poindexter opened the door, and the Cliveden juniors scrambled out. Other passengers were leaving the carriages. The guard was in consultation with the engine-driver. It was evident that they were helpless to deal with the matter. The passengers surrounded them in an excited crowd. The train was a local one, and carried no more than a dozen passengers all told, most of them country people returning from the market town of Carbury. There were several women among them, some of them inclined to be extremely frightened. The Cliveden juniors, as a matter of fact, seemed to be about the coolest there. Poindexter would have been cool and level-headed under any imaginable circumstances, and the others followed his cue. "I guess that train's fixed there for a bit!" Poindexter remarked, and then he glanced up the line. Snow had rolled down from the laden embankment into the cutting which lay before the train, and a huge mass of white rose to a height of several feet. "That will want a lot of digging away, kids!" "By Jove, rather!" said Pankhurst. "The question is, how to get help. It won't be easy for anybody to get away through this." It was certainly true. Before and behind the train the cutting was blocked, and the heavy flakes coming steadily down added every moment to the depth of the pile. On either side rose a steep embankment, crammed with snow, piled so thickly that it looked as if any moment masses of it might come tumbling down upon the track.

The faces of the juniors grew very grave. The matter was more serious than they had imagined at first. If it was impossible to get away through the snow, it might be equally impossible for help to reach them. That might mean imprisonment in the blocked train for days—perhaps longer. They had heard of snow-bound passengers dying of hunger and cold, but never had they dreamed of such a peril being brought so terribly near to themselves. "We shall have to get help," said Poindexter resolutely. "I say, guard, what are you going to do?" The guard shook his head helplessly. "They'll soon know at Clivedale that we're blocked in," he said, "and they'll set a gang to work to clear away the snow." "And when do you think we shall get away?" "We may get away by morning," Poindexter whistled. "That's not good enough," he said coolly. "We've got a snow fight coming off at Cliveden this afternoon, and we've simply got to get in." The guard shrugged his shoulders and turned away. "You're right, Poin," said Neville, "we're not going to stick here till the morning, if I know it. We should be giddy heroes, of course, by the time we got in to Cliveden, but we should be too jolly cold and hungry to fully appreciate it." "I guess so." "Faith, and what are we goin' to do intirely?" "Get out, somehow. I say, guard, I guess you'd better go for help." "Can't get through the snow, you young idiot!" growled the guard, with scant courtesy. "But somebody must go for help." "It can't be done, I tell you!" "Well, if you can't do it, I can—" "You can, eh?" said Pankhurst. "What do you can? I know you can all sorts of things

I suppose you don't want to have your head snowballed off, do you?" "Exactly!" chimed in Neville. "You see, we are circumstances over which you have no control. Come along, kids!" And, leaving the guard still puzzled and doubtful as to what he should do, the juniors marched off to make their forlorn attempt to get through the snow to Cliveden.

The 5th Chapter. Through the Snow. **G**IVE me a bunk up!" "I guess you'd better give me one." "Rats! Of course a member of the Old Firm is to lead the way!" "My dear kid, the Combine is always at the front. First in the field, first in the study, first in the—" "In the canning trade—" "Oh, dry up—" "Well, you set the example, and leave off arguing!" "Now, look here, Panky—" "I'm looking, and I can see a conceited ass—" "First time I knew my face answered the purpose of a looking-glass," said Poindexter. Pankhurst had no reply quite ready for that; and Dick Neville struck in. "It stands to reason we must lead the way, Panky. We'll put it to the vote, though, if you like. Fair play's a jewel." "Why, you rotters, you're three to two—" "Quite so." "Well, someone must give in," said Neville. "The inferior party ought to do so, and so I call upon you to shut up, Panky and Price."



STORMING THE FORT!

Biff! biff! came the whizzing snowballs from the fort, and Monsieur Friquet received as many as anybody. Thick and fast they fell; but the assailants were not to be denied. They swarmed around the snow walls, and fought a way through the defences, in spite of the efforts of the defenders within.

in Chicago—rats, and horses, and other nice things—" "Oh, cheese it!" "My dear Puntbuster, you started talking about canning—" "Look here," said Poindexter, "we're not going to stick here all night, that's certain! Besides, we must have help. There's some women here, and we must get word to Clivedale at once for help for them. Who's game to try?" "All of us," said Pankhurst. "Quite so." "Faith, and it's meself that's with you intirely, Panky. As for the grub we've got left, sure and it must be handed over to the ladies, in case the poor dears get hungry while they're waiting to be rescued." "Good for you, Micky." The remains of the provisions were fetched out of the carriage; and the quantity was still considerable, for the shopping had been extensive in Carbury. Poindexter took the bundles to the guard, and explained to him. The man gave him a puzzled look. "That's very kind of you, young gent, but you can't go through the snow!" "I'm going to try." "But you can't, and I can't allow it." "My dear chap, I don't want you to allow it. I can manage it all right without that. The only difficulty is the snow. I can—" "You can't!" "I can—" "You're quite wrong, guard," said Pankhurst, "he can. He's in the canning trade, you see, and his father canned before him." "Oh, shut up, Panky! Let's get along!" "You mustn't go!" exclaimed the guard. "I am responsible—" "I hereby, thusly, and therefore relieve you of all responsibility," said Poindexter. "You see, you can't stop us. We're five to one, and

"I call upon you not to be a silly ass!" "You'll call upon me for a black eye if you don't take care, Panky." "Faith, and it's a set of silly spalpeens, ye are!" exclaimed Micky Flynn. "Sure, I'll lead the way. Ireland always leads the way, doesn't she? Here goes!" And Micky Flynn scrambled up the bank. The Cliveden juniors had been searching along the bank for some favourable spot to climb, and, after a long search they had found one. In this spot the embankment was less steep, and under the snow straggling bushes grew, which afforded some hold for hands and feet; and also held the snow more securely. The climb was certain to be a matter of difficulty, and might lead to an avalanche coming down. "Here, come back, Micky!" exclaimed Poindexter. "Faith, I'm not coming back! I'll show you how to do the trick." And Flynn went plunging up the steep bank. Perhaps he was in too great a hurry to be careful. At all events, he came rolling down the next moment in the midst of masses of snow. He sat up, looking quite bewildered, amid the fallen snow, and stared round him. The juniors burst into a roar. "Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Pankhurst. "If that's the way you're going to show us, Micky Flynn, you needn't trouble." "Sure and I—" "Ha, ha, ha!" "Faith, the snow must have slipped—" "Go hon! Here, stand aside, and let me try." "Me, you mean, I guess," said Poindexter. "Rats! Get out of the way." "No fear." "I'll jolly soon shift you if you don't." "I guess I'm ready to see you try." Pankhurst laid hold of the American at once, and they staggered away, and fell over Micky, who

was getting up, jamming him down into the snow again. "Arrah, ye howlin' spalpeens, sure and it's crushed I am intirely!" roared Micky. "Get off my chest, Puntbuster, or sure I'll bite ye!" Neville grinned, and leaving the others to scramble up as they could, he tackled the ascent of the bank, Price turning to his chum to help him rise. Neville clambered up the steep side, sending down showers of snow upon the juniors. As the snow slid and rolled away under his feet, he grasped at the bushes growing under it, and held on. He was caked with snow and slush, wet and wringing from head to foot; but he stuck to it with dauntless pluck. Before the other juniors had sorted themselves out, so to speak, Dick Neville had made good progress up the bank. Poindexter looked up after him. Neville was half-way to the top, and still going strong. "I guess he takes the cake!" exclaimed the American chum. "But I'm next." And Poindexter essayed to climb. Pankhurst reached out and grasped his ankle, and they went down together in a heap of snow. Flynn, giggling, followed Dick, and then Price followed him. "Make it pax, ass," said Pankhurst, as he scrambled up, "we shall be left behind at this rate, and I don't enjoy your company enough to stay here for it." "Head or tail?" said Poindexter, clasping a penny in his hand. "First guess does it." "Righto! Head!" "Head it is!" grunted Poindexter. "Get on." "Right. Don't growl; it's only proper that I should go first, as head of the Fourth Form at Cliveden—" "Rats! Get on." "Here goes!" Poindexter sprang up the bank. The chief of the Old Firm followed. By this time Dick Neville had nearly reached the top, but the higher he rose the more difficult he found the ascent. And suddenly, as he was almost at the level, his foot slipped, a tendril he was grasping broke in his hand, and he fell. Away he slid down the way he had come, gathering snow and speed as he rolled down the slope. "Arrah, ye gossoon!" roared Micky Flynn, as Dick rolled into him, and sent him flying too. Price was the next to suffer. He had no time to get out of the way, and he went down with the other two, rolling and gasping. Poindexter and Pankhurst were a dozen feet from the start when the three flying juniors rolled into them, carrying them away as if they had been smitten by an avalanche. Down they went, five juniors with flying legs and arms, amid a cloud of snow. It was fortunate for the Cliveden juniors that there was a deep carpet of snow in the cutting, or there might have been broken bones as the result of that wild slide. As it was, they plunged into the snow, nearly burying themselves, and lay there helplessly gasping for several minutes. Poindexter was the first to scramble up. "My Panama hat!" he exclaimed. "What the dickens did you do that for, Neville?" Dick Neville spluttered the snow out of his mouth. "Ass!" he ejaculated. "Do you think I did it on purpose." Pankhurst rubbed the snow out of his eyes. "This is what comes of allowing one of you bounders to lead the way!" he exclaimed. "I'm going first this time." And Panky sprang up the bank. "After him!" exclaimed Poindexter. "I guess he's not going to get ahead of us!" And the juniors scrambled after Pankhurst. The chief of the Old Firm was making good speed up the slope. As a matter of fact, the juniors, in rolling down, had almost cleared it of snow in that particular spot, and the bushes underneath were exposed to the falling flakes, and easy to hold. Pankhurst was not long in reaching the spot where Dick Neville had lost his footing, and he here exercised great caution, feeling his way inch by inch. Higher he rose, and higher, till at last he stood breast-deep in the snow on the high level, and waved his hand. He would have waved his cap, but it was buried somewhere in the deep snow of the cutting. "Hurrah! It's done!" "And we've done it!" shouted Price. "Hurrah for study No. 10!" "Hurrah for the Old Firm!" shouted Pankhurst. "Oh, dry up!" grunted Poindexter. "There'll be another avalanche if you make that row, kids. Still, I'm glad we've got out." One by one the juniors dragged their weary limbs upon the summit of the embankment. The snow was deep around them and before them but, after a brief pause to recover their breath, they plunged on through it, and reached the road. "A mile to Clivedale!" said Poindexter. "Here's for a long tramp. Come on!" And the juniors, shivering and shuddering with the cold, were glad to get into rapid motion again to keep from freezing.

The 6th Chapter. Welcome Home! **T**HE snow was thick on the road, and was still falling in heavy flakes. The five juniors tramped on doggedly. Exactly how long that tramp took them they did not know, but the February sun was sinking behind snowy clouds when they reached the village. "The railway-station first," said Poindexter. "I dare say they don't know yet that there's anything wrong on the line; and anyway, we can tell them exactly where the train is snowed up."

