Two 10,000-word Complete Stories This Week:

RIVAL BLUES.

AGRAND BOATRACE TALE.

# APRIL FOOLS!

A LAUGHABLE CLIVEDEN SCHOOL STORY. B.H. WATCH
OR
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# The BOYS'HERAICE EVERY BOW'S AND YOUNG MAN'S STORY AND HOBBY PAPER.

No. 246, Vol. V.

EVERY WEDNESDAY-ONE PENNY.

WEEK ENDING APRIL 4, 1908.



TWO GRAND SERIAL STORIES ARE JUST STARTING!



### The 1st Chapter, No Takers.

Teddy Trimble, of the Fourth Form at Cliveden College, came into No. 4 study, the quarters of the famous trio of juniors, known as the Cliveden Combine.

as the Cliveden Combine.

Teddy Trimble was the muff of the Fourth; but he regarded himself as a fellow with ideas, and his ideas frequently furnished merriment to his Form-fellows.

"I say, Poindexter!"
But the Cliveden Combine were busy.
They were playing chess, Poindexter against Flynn and Neville.

Lincoln G. Poindexter was a splendid chess player, and he was fully able to hold his own against Neville and Flynn, and all three juniors were intent upon the game, as good chess players should be.

rould be.

Poindexter did not lift his head, his eyes reaining glued to the board.

Teddy Trimble looked at him doubtfully, and en turned his glance upon Dick Neville.

"I say, Neville!"

"Gr.-r.!" was Dick Neville's polite and

was Dick Neville's polite and

"I say, Neville!"

"Gr.r.r.!" was Dick Neville's polite and intelligible reply.

"But I say, Neville I."

"Shut up!"

"Oh, very well! I say, Flynn!"

"Begorra, and if ye speak to me I'll jump on yez!" exclaimed Micky Flynn. "Go and eat coke! Run away and play! Scat!"

Teddy Trimble looked wrathful.

"Well, that's a nice reception to give a fellow who comes to tell you a new idea!" heexclaimed.

"Have you got an idea intoirely?"

"Yes, I have."

"Yes, I have."

"Then take it away and bury it."

"Bury yourself, too, while you're about it," said Dick Neville.

"Vamoose!" shouted Poindexter, looking up at last. "How can I play when you're all jawing like machinery? I fy oud don't travel, Trimble, I guess I shall come to you."

"But I say..."

"Get out!"

"Very well, I'll go to Pankhurst and Price, and

"Get out!"

"Very well, I'll go to Pankhurst and Price, and them into it," said Trimble, with the air of a sellow who was making a dire threat.

As Pankhurst and Price, the Old Firm, were he deadly rivals of the Combine in the Fourth form at Cliveden, this threat might have been expected to move the three chums, and Teddy himble certainly expected it to.

But, as a matter of fact, they were quite unsoved. Perhaps they thought that Teddy himble's ideas were more trouble than they were forth, and would have been glad to see them afficted upon Pankhurst and Price.

"Do you hear, you rotters?" exclaimed trimble.

"I guess so. Get out!"

Do you hear, you rotters?" exclaimed Trimble.

"I guess so. Get out!"

"I'll go to Pank—""

"Go to Jericho if you like! Get out!"

"Oh, very well! If you don't care about the honour of the school, I daresay Pankhurst and Price will look into the matter."

"Eh? What's that?"

"Never mind now," said Teddy Trimble loftily. "I won't tell you. The honour of Cliveden may be at stake, and it may not. You may have a chance to cover yourselves with glory, and you may not. You may let Panky and Price get ahead of you and make you look sick and you may not. You may may not way not way not of this study with your bones unbroken, and you may not, if you don't basperated American chum.

"Oh, very well! I only wanted to say—""

rated American chum.
Oh, very well! I only wanted to say——"

"Certainly, but\_\_\_\_,"
Poindexter reached out for a book, and grasped

it.
Teddy Trimble skipped to the door.
Faster flew the book, and Teddy staggered out
into the passage, with the volume clumping
on the back of his head.
He gave a yell, and Poindexter a chuckle.

Another Humorous, Complete Cliveden School Tale.

-00000-

Specially Written by CHARLES HAMILTON.

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But Teddy was the most obstinate fellow in the Lower Fourth at Cliveden. He popped into the doorway again like a jack-in-the-box. "Look here, you tinned-beef rotter!" "Get. out!"

I think you're a beastly Chicago fraud!"

"Scoot!"
"Sha'n't! I——"
Poindexter jumped up. Unfortunately in his haste he caught his foot in the leg of the chesstable, and sent it flying. There was a scattering of pieces and pawns over the floor of No. 4 study of pieces and pawns over the hoof each and the three players gave a simultaneous yell.

"Faith, and ye've mucked up the game, ye

ass!"

"I guess it was that young villain's fault!"

"Sure and ye—"

"Let me get hold of him, that's all!" exclaimed Poindexter, making a dash towards the door.

But that was precisely what Teddy Trimble did not intend to happen.

As soon as he saw the chess-table going over he sprinted down the passage as if he were on the cinder-path, and before Poindexter could reach the door, Trimble had dashed into No. 10 study and slammed the door behind him.

### The 2nd Chapter. Trimble on the Track.

The crash of the door made the two juniors who were sitting at the table spring to their feet with a simultaneous exclama-

spring to their feet with a simultaneous exclamation.

"I say, Pankhurst!"

Pankhurst and Price, the red-headed chums of the Fourth, glared in wrath at Teddy Trimble. Pankhurst reached out for a ruler.

"You young ass! What do you mean by bolting into my study like that?" howled Pankhurst.

"Quite so!" exclaimed Price.

"Get out, or 1——"

"I say, you know, I can't get out."

"Why can't you?"

"Poindexter's after me."

"Oh, well, you shouldn't have slammed the door like that. You've made me spill blots over my exercise. Never mind, stick there, and be quiet."

"Yes, but I say, Panky!"

"Can't you see I'm busy?"

"Yes, but—"

"Oh, shut up, do!"

"I say, Pricey!"

"Dry up!"

"Look here, you chaps, leave that rotten exercise for a moment, and listen to me. I've got an idea."

"Take it to No. 4

"Take it to No. 4 study. They

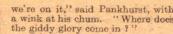
study. The haven't any there "I've been there and Poindexter g and Poindexter got into quite a temper. I think he thought it was my fault that he upset his chess - table. Of course, that was most unreasonable. It was his own clumsiness. But, I say, you fellows, you'll be sorry if you don't hear what I've got to say. The honour of Cliveden may be at stake."

"Oh, I suppose we may as well listen," said Pankhurst, laying down his pen. "Go on with it, Teddy, and

his pen. "Go on with it, Teddy, and cut it as short as you can."

you can."
"It is really generous of me to come here and tell you, Panky, as I might have looked into the matter by myself and reaned myself, and reaped all the glory," said Trimble.

"Oh, if there's any glory going,



we're on it," said Pankhurst, with a wink at his chum. "Where does the giddy glory come in?"

"It's like this. I'm going to take you two fellows into my confidence, because I want you to back me up."

"Yes I can see us beginn you."

"Yes, I can see us backing you up," grinned Pankhurst. "You are so exactly the kind of fellow chaps like us would choose for a leader."

chaps like us would choose for a leader."

"Quite so!" giggled Price.

"I'm glad to hear you speak like that, Panky," said Trimble, unconscious of the irony in Pankhurst's remark. "I know you will back me up all right now. I've often thought that I was really suitable to be the head of the Form, and that would be one way of ending the rivalry between you fellows and the Combine, but I never really liked to put myself forward."

"You're too modest, Teddy; but it's the fault of all really great men," said Pankhurst solemnly. "But what's the idea? What special danger is the honour of Cliveden in at this particular moment? Is anybody going to burgle it that you know of?"

"Be serious about it, please. Pankhurst. It's really no subject for joking. The fact of the matter is, that there is a deep mystery—"

"How deep?"

"You may have noticed," went en Trimble.

"How deep?"
"You may have noticed," went on Trimble, assing the frivolous question over unheeded, you may have noticed that lately I have been

"Off your rocker?"
"No, certainly not. Lately, I have been studying the works of Vidocq, and the memoirs of Sherlock Holmes, and Sexton Blake, and it has

"What has? The memoirs of Sherlock Holmes, or the adventures of Sexton Blake?" asked Pankhurst, with perfect seriousness.
"Don't be an ass, Panky! I say, it has struck me that I am simply born to be a detective."
"My only Panama hat!"
"You can grin if you like, but that's my firm conviction, I can discover clues like a bloodhound."

hound."
"Pve never heard of a blughound discovering

"I've never heard of a blughound discovering clues."

"Well that's only a figure of speech, of course. In a word, I know perfectly well that I could out do Sherlock Holmes in his own line of business, given a fair chance, and as for Sexton Blake, he would be simply not in it with me."

"Well, as I said before, you're too modest, Teddy, That's the only fault I've got to find with you," said Pankhurst.

"It's this faculty of observation in me," continued Teddy, "that has led me to notice what is going on in the college, and which has escaped the attention of everyone else."

"And what is that?"

"The fact that a criminal is in hiding here—"
"Eh!"

Teddy Trimble chuckled.
"Ah. I thought that I should astonish you,

Panky."

"Look here," said Pankhurst, really serious now. "I know you're the biggest muff in the Form, and your faculty of observation generally leads you to discover mare's nests. I know you must be talking rot now. But if there's anything in what you say, it ought to be looked into. So explain, and look sharp."

"I should have explained by now if you hadn't interrupted me. You know, I suppose, that there's a new master of the Third Form."

"Mr. Breakspear? Of course."



"Here—ow—poof—gerrooch!" The American chum gave a fearinlyell. The arm of one of the crouching figures had gone up, and from a paper packet in his hand shot a cloud of pepper. The pepper streamed right into Poindexter's face, and he burst into a hurricane of gasping and

"Do you know anything about him?"
"Only what all the school knows, I suppose He's a quiet fellow, treats the kids of the Third very well, and hasn't much to say to anybody." said Pankhurst.
"That's just it," said Trimble, triumphantly, "And have you noticed that he is always muttering to himself?"
"No, I haven't. I've noticed him doing its once or twice."

once or twice."

"Well, that's near enough."

"Near enough for an amateur detective, I suppose," grinned Pankhurst. "But what on earth are you getting at, Trimble? You don't mean to hint, I suppose, that Mr. Breakspear is a criminal in disguise."

"Yes, I do."

Pankhurst and Price could only stare blankly at him.

Pankhurst and Price could only stare blankly at him.

"And there's more than that," said Trimble, sinking his voice to a whisper, and looking nervously round. "He—he——"

"Well, what?"

"He goes out of the school at night——"

"Does he? Well, why shouldn't he if he wanted to?"

"And he gaves heelt one night—lest night—"

"And he gaves heelt one night—lest night—

wanted to?"

"And he came back one night—last night—with—with—" Trimble faltered and broke off, his face turning quite pale.

"With what?"

"With blood on his hands," said Frimble, in a faint whisper.

Pankhurst and Price sprang to their feet.

The 3rd Chapter. Pankhurst Has an Idea.

RIMBLE was pleased for the moment by the startling effect his words had had on the chums of the Fourth. But it seized him by the shoulders and jammed him against the study wall. Trimble wriggled in the grip of the athletic chief of the Old Firm.

"You utter idiot!" said Pankhurst, "Do you know hat you are saying——"

you know what you are saying—"

"Leg—leg—leggo!"

"You confounded young ass—"

"I tell you it's true."

"You've been reading some lurid rot, and it's turned your brain," said Pankhurst. "I saw you with a beastly New York boy's paper in your hands the other day."

"I tell you—"
Pankhurst shook him.

"Now, just admit that you have been gassing nonsense, just to take us in—"

"But I haven't."

"Then you are making some idiotic mistake!"

"But I haven't."

"Then you are making some idiotic mistake!"

"Let me tell you what I've observed, then."

Pankhurst released him. Trimble's earnestness made some impression upon him, in spite of himself. Trimble gasped for breath and put his collar straight.

"Well, go on," growled Pankhurst. "We'll hear what you've got to say, anyway."

"It was his muttering to himself that first attracted my attention, and roused my faculty of observation," said Trimble. "I had been reading a detective story in the American paper you saw, where a criminal disguises himself as a master of the school, and murders the Headmaster and sets fire to the place—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's no laughing matter, if that were to harpen

master and sets fire to the place—"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"It's no laughing matter, if that were to happen at Cliveden, Pankhurst."
"You young ass, it couldn't happen outside an American detective story," growled Pankhurst. "You ought to be stopped from reading such lurid piffle. But go on."
"Well, and one day when Mr. Breakspear was in the Close, under the elms, I passed, and heard him distinctly mutter to himself—'My hands are red, the stain is on my soul'"
"Perhaps he had been spilling some red ink on his hands," suggested Price.
"Look here, Trimmy, did you really hear him say that, or did you dream it?" demanded Pankhurst.
"I'll swear—"
"Oh, don't! Is there anything else?"

Oh, don't! Is there anything else?"
Well, my faculty of observation being

"Hang your faculty of observation. Get on with the washing."
"Well, I thought that, for the honour of the school, it was my duty to make use of my striking abilities as a detective. So I made up my mind to shadow Mr. Breakspear, and I did. I discovered that he was in the habit of leaving Cliveden at night—"
"Do you mean he gets over the wall like a junior breaking bounds?"
"Oh, no; you know the masters and prefects have keys to the little gate, and can go in and out when they like. He goes out by the gate."
"How often have you seen him?"
"Twice."

"How often have you seen him?"

"Twice."

"And that's enough for an amateur detective, of course. Anything more?"

"When he came in last night, instead of going up to his room, he went to a bathroom and washed his hands. I peeped in, and saw that the water was all red. He was washing blood off his hands. He carefully rinsed out the basin afterwards, so as not to leave a trace of it."

"You're sure of all that?"

"Of course I am. And that's not all. There's something he keeps locked up in his desk, and it's never been left unlocked. Sometimes, when I have gone into his study suddenly, I've found him writing, and he put a sheet of blotting paper quickly over what he was writing, and once he shoved it into his desk and locked it up quickly, and each time he locked awfully nervous. I think it was very likely he was writing a confession, or something of that sert."

"Before he committed the crime?" asked Pankhurst sarcastically.

"Oh, I don't suppose last night's was his first crime," said Trimble, shaking his head. "He may have committed lots of murers, you know, before he came here."

"You unutterable young ass—"
"Do you mean to say that you don't believe me, Pankhurst?"

"Oh I believe you! The matter will have to be

"Oh, I believe you! The matter will have to be looked into, of course," said Pankhurst solemnly, "as I said before, you are just the sort of leader chaps like us want in a matter of this kind. Isn't he, Pricey?"

"Quite so."

"Quite so."

"Buzz off now, Trimmy, and let us get our exercises done, and then we'll put our heads together and see what's to be done about it."

"Good," said Trimble, perfectly satisfied.

"You'll find me in the common-room, Panky."

And he went out of the study and closed the door.

As soon as he was gone, Pankhurst laid back in his chair and roared. Price chimed in, and the Old Firm laughed till the tears coursed

down their cheeks.

"Of course, there's nothing in it?" said
Price, as soon as he could find his voice.

"Ha, ha! Of course not."

"Some of the circumstances are curious, though—"

"Some of the circumstance though—"
"Ha, ha! We all know Trimble! He has been devouring that beastly American trash till he's got nothing but swaggering detectives, and skulking convicts, and bloodthirsty red-skins on the brain! It's a mare's nest, of course! But we might be able to get some fun out of it, all the same. If we could get the Combine to take it up—"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"We've only got to pretend to take it seriously, withing in it.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We've only got to pretend to take it seriously, to make them believe there's something in it, and then they'll go in to cut us out and scoop in the glory," said the chief of the Old Firm gleefully. "You know what the date is, don't you—April First! The very date for a wheeze of this kind."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If I could once see Poindexter, Neville, and Flynn tracking down poor old Breakspear, and playing the giddy goat in the amateur detective line, I should die happy!" said Pankhurst.

"We've got to fix it up somehow."

"Quite so!"

And the

And the auburn-haired chums laughed the prospective jape till they were breathless. But they were as grave as judges when they joined Teddy Trimble in the common-room to talk over the plan of campaign.

### The 4th Chapter.

The Combine Get on the Scent! "HE most important point is, not to let the Combine get the slightest hint that there's anything on."

Poindexter looked quickly at Neville and Flynn as the muttered words fell upon his ears. The chums of the Fourth were standing near one of the windows of the junior common-room, chatting over the cricket prospects, when the voice became audible from without. The window was open, and the words spoken outside were clearly audible within to the juniors standing near the window. And it was Pankhurst's voice!

In an instant the Combine forgot cricket and all its works. There was some plot in hand, something the Old Firm were planning against them. And they were on the alert in a moment.

Poindexter made his comrades a sign to be

still.

The Old Firm were evidently lounging against the wall under the window, talking the matter over. They seemed to have quite forgotten the window of the common-room, just over their heads. Under ordinary circumstances, the Combine would as soon have thought of cutting off their ears as of listening to a conversation not intended for them. But in the rivalry between the two parties in the Fourth Form at Cliveden, a state of war was declared, so to speak, and it was permissible to discover the enemy's plans by any device allowed to a scout. So the Combine stood just where they were, and the talk under the window floated in to their ears.

"Quite so!"

It was, of course, Price who answered. Pank-

hurst's voice went on:
"It seems that Trimble went to them in the first place, and they wouldn't listen to him,

Pricey."

The Combine pricked up their ears.

"Quite so; but they regarded the story as rot, of course, the same as we did at first."

"Well, yes, I admit I was inclined at first to look on the whole thing as a dream of Teddy Trimble's."

"But now——"

"Well, look at the circumstances. Breakspear comes here as master of the Third, and nobody seems to know much about him. He keeps to himself. He's always muttering something or other, and he was heard to mutter something the other day about having blood on his hands."

"Quite so."

The Combine were staring at one another

Combine were staring at one another

blankly now.

"Then he gets into the habit of going out late at night, and last night he came back with his hands covered with blood, and washed it all off

hands covered with olood, that washed it all in a bath-room—".

The listening chums turned pale.

"He was watched while he was doing it. I don't see how any inference is to be drawn but one. I—hallo, Trimble, we're waiting for you."

"Sorry I've kept you waiting, Panky."

"Oh, that's all right. Have you learned anything fresh?"

Panky; but I know my theory is correct."
"Which one?"
"That Mr. Breakspear—

"Hush! Don't mention names. Call him

"Hush! Don't mention names. Call him something else—say, the Suspect."

"Very well. The Suspect is a criminal hiding from justice," said Trimble. "It's as plain as you could wish. What are those papers he keeps locked up in his desk? My idea is that some detective found him out at last, and that he murdered him last night—"

"Well, I must admit that it looks like it."

"The honour of the school is at stake. Suppose the police track him down here, and arrest him in public?"

"Well, it would be a blow for Cliveden, and no mistake."

Better discover his guilt ourselves, and get "Better discover his guilt ourselves, and get him off to the police-station as soon as we have conclusive proofs," said Trimble. "That will prove that there was no complicity in this quarter, at any rate. My faculty of observation——"
"Never mind your faculty of observation now. Of course, as this matter has turned out so serious, you can't expect us to follow your lead. You will have to follow ours."
"I say that's not cricket. Panky"

You will have to follow ours."

"I say, that's not cricket, Panky."

"My dear kid, I couldn't possibly leave a matter of this kind in your hands. You have discovered the clue, and we're going to follow it up. That's an equal division of labour. Besides, we intend this to be the giddy kybosh for the Combine. We're going absolutely to put them in the shade over this affair. Breakspear—I mean the Suspect—has taken them in, same as he has the rest of the school, and they haven't the slightest suspicion that there's anything up."

he has the rest of the school, and they haven't the slightest suspicion that there's anything up."

Just below the open window three juniors exchanged a solemn wink.

"Quite so," said Price.

"But I say, Panky—"

"Otherwise we shall have to wash our hands of the matter, Trimmy."

"Well, in that case I agree; but I think I ought to have my share of the glory."

"Of course you shall; I'll see to that, when the denouncement comes," said Pankhurst. "Don't you worry about that. The great thing is to keep it all secret. You haven't said a word to those rotters in No. 4 study, have you?"

"No. They wouldn't listen to me when I wanted to tell them, and now—""

"Now they're out of it, and serve them right. They'll look rather green when the giddy criminal is arrested, and it's known that the Old Firm tracked him down, while they were thinking about study feeds, and cricket, and so forth."

"Now, as to our plans. I wonder if the Suspect will go out the same as usual to-night?" said Pankhurst thoughtfully.

"Very likely, to see whether the body has been discovered," suggested

Trimble.

"Good. Very likely he'll feel like Eugene Aram about it, and will want to see the dead man to make sure," agreed Pankhurst. "What time does he usually go?"

"You know he has to see the Third Form to bed. He goes out after that—on the occasions when I've shadowed him."

"And he goes out of the little gate with a key?" "That's it."

"Well, we ought to get over the wall afterwards and shadow him," said Pankhurst. "Of course, I don't like the idea of watching anybody; but when it is a criminal hiding from justice it becomes a different matter. You see, he's going to bring disgrace on the name of the school, and make the whole country talk about Cliveden. He ought to be nipped in the bud—I mean, caught on the hop." "Quite so."

"We'll shadow him to the gate, anyway, and then we'll see. Mind, not a word to a soul, especially to the Combine."

"What ho!"

especially to the Combine."
"What ho!"
And the talkers were heard to stroll away.
Poindex er, Neville, and Flynn stared at one another helplessly for a full minute. The chum from Chicago was the first to break the tense silence.

"I guess that's queer!"

"Rather!" said Dick Neville.

"Faith, and it's astonished I am, intoirely," said Micky Flynn. "Sure and I never suspected Mr. Breakspear..." Mr. Breakspear-

"There can't be anything in it."

"I guess not."

"Faith, and Panky and Price seem to think that there is, and they're mighty particular to keep it away from us," Flynn remarked. "That's so. But-

"And faith, but Breakspear is rather a quare bird, anyway. What they said about his always muttering to himself is true enough. He looks like a chap who has something on his mind."

"I guess that's so, too."

"Such things have happened," said Neville, owly; "but at Cliveden—"

"Well, why shouldn't they happen at Cliveden as much as anywhere else, if you come to that," said Poindexter.

"Faith, and it's a janius ye are, Puntpusher. It looks to me intoirely as if there was something in it. Anyway, if there's something up, we're not goin' to allow the Old Firm to get ahead of the Combine."

"I guess not."

the Combine."

"I guess not."

"No harm in looking into the matter?' said Dick Neville. "Of course, if there's anything in it, it's our business to handle it, and leave the Old Firm out in the cold."

"Faith, and ve're right."

"My idea exactly," said Poindexter. "We must talk it over. We can't discuss it here. Come along to the study."

The chums, with serious, thoughtful faces, strolled out of the common room. As they went along the passage, Poindexter suddenly nudged his companions. A tall, spare figure was standing by one of the windows in the corridor overlooking the Close, and the juniors at once recognised the Close, and the juniors at once recognised Mr. Breakspear, the new master of the Third Form at Cliveden.

"Look!" muttered Poindexter.

Look!" muttered Poindexter.

There was certainly something noticeable about the master of the Third. He was looking out of the window in an abstracted sort of way, and mechanically jotting something down upon a piece of paper he held in his hands. He was muttering to himself, a habit many of the juniors had noticed in him when he believed himself to be unobserved, and as the Combine paused, they caught some of the muttered words. the muttered words.

"My hands are red, the stain is on my soul!" The juniors exchanged a startled glance and hurried on. They did not speak till they were in No. 4, and then Poindexter closed the door carefully before he said a word.

"You heard that?" he demanded.

"Faith, and we did intoirely!"

"Yes, Puntpusher. What do you make of it?"
"It's proof enough that there's something in it," said Poindexter, with conviction. "We're going to look into this, kids. When Breakspear goes out to-night—he's going to be shadowed!"

"The old Firm already——"
"They're going to shadow him to the gate and waste time. We shall be ahead of that," said Poindexter. "After lights out, we shall skip out of the house, and get over the wall, and wait for him outside the gate. Then we shall be ready to sheatow him the woment he comes out. See the shadow him the moment he comes out. See the

idea ?"
"Good!"
"Faith, and it's a janius ye are."
And so it was decided.



Front page picture of "The Boys' Friend's" latest successful story. Start reading it to-day.

### The 5th Chapter. A Night Out.

TARS were glimmering in the dark blue heavens. The night was dim, and by the wall of Cliveles C. I. the wall of Cliveden College the overhanging trees cast dark shadows.

"Keep close!"

"Keep close!"

A faint whisper was heard in the gloom, but the forms of the three hidden juniors were invisible. Poindexter, Neville, and Flynn were close to the wall in the thick shadow of the trees at the side of Cliveden Lane. They were near the little gate which the masters and prefects used when they wished to leave the school after locking-up, watching for the master of the Third to come out. After lights out, the Combine had watched Pankhurst, Price, and Trimble leave the Fourth Form dormitory. After waiting till they were gone, the Combine had followed suit, and left the house, and to get over the school wall did not take them long. The Combine were on the track. A doubt was lingering in their minds that perhaps the whole affair was some absurd mistake. But the best way to put that to the proof was by looking into it and ascertaining the real facts. If it was really the case that a fugitive from justice was hiding within the walls of Cliveden in the guise of a Form-master, it was certain that he ought to be exposed, and taken away before he made the name of the old school notorious. And it was equally certain that the honour of exposing him in his true colours ought to fall to the Combine.

And so, on the dim and moist April evening, the three chums were vigilantly on the watch outside.

And so, on the dim and moist April evening, the three chums were vigilantly on the watch outside the walls of Cliveden. If the Form-master really left the precincts of the school at that unearthly hour; it might be taken as something like proof that the suspicion against him was correct.

"Keep close!"

"Did you hear anything?"

"I guess so," whispered Poindexter. "A key in the lock of the gate."

"Then it's true."

"Well, somebody's coming out. I guess any. And so, on the dim and moist April evening, the

Well, somebody's coming out, I guess, any-

key in the lock, and the gate opened,

key in the lock, and the gate opened. A difference out, in hat and overcoat, but the knew at once the master of the Third. The gate clicked shut behind him.

Unconscious of the three breathless favor crouching in the shadows, the Form-master step out into the dim lane, crossed it, and stepped a stile on the other side of the road, which admittance to a footpath through the contraction. a stile on the other side of the road, which as admittance to a footpath through Cliveden Wor He paused at the stile for some minutes, and lob up at the sky. The chums watched him anxious Why should he want to look at the sky purithem somewhat. Presently, in the stillar came the sound of a sigh to their ears, Then new master turned and disappeared up the purither wood.

Poindexter gripped his nearest companion.
"Come on, it's true!"

Poindexter gripped his nearest companion.

"Come on, it's true!"

"Faith, and ye needn't wring my neckitia.
Puntjabber."

"Blow your old neck!"

"Sure, and I—"

"Shut up and follow me."

The Combine crossed the lane, and plums into the black footpath after the master. The were fairly on the track now. Surely there one not be much doubt that the suspicion against he Breakspear was well-founded. For what pessis purpose could he be going into the depths of a damp woods at that hour of the night! and from what they had heard the Olf Firm sy, appeared to be a habit of his, too. There we certainly something mysterious in the malter something that required looking into.

It was very dark on the footpath under the thick trees, and the chums stumbled over the twigs and rough roots, and against one anothe. They had lost sight of Mr. Breakspear, but as might have taken any of the side paths keling away to right and left, or might have plums into the wood, that was not surprising.

Poindexter halted at last.

"Stop a minute, you chaps!"

"Stop a minute, you chaps!"
"Stop a minute, you chaps!"
"Sure and we shall lose him."
"We've lost him already, I guess."
"Faith, and it's a foine leader ye are, Parleader."

pusher."
"How could I help it, fathead?"

"Arrah, and if ye—"
"Oh, dry up. Look here, kids, we've lestim
"Sure you mane hear if we can see up
thin'—"

Do be quiet."

The chums listened intently. They hear it wind murmuring in the thick branches, and faint, indefinable sounds of a wood by night. In The new master had disappeared!

"The game's up!" growled Poindexter. "Emight be anywhere, almost under our ness!

anything we should know in this contour!

darkness."

"Sure it's a foine leader ye—"
"Hush! What was that?"
"It was a sudden sound in the darkess, who the thick trees, not half a dozen yards from who the Combine were standing.

And it was the sound of a heavy groan!

## The 6th Chapter. Pankhurst's Little Joke,

If was Pankhurst who spoke had the gate in the wall of Clircks Pankhurst and Price, and Teddy Trimble ve waiting and watching. The three had left to Fourth Form dormitory immediately after light out, Pankhurst and Price affecting to be wars of the fact that the Combine were awaks awatching them go. Teddy Trimble was mile

unaware of it. He was thinking only of themse in hand, and the tracking that was to be dear the dead of night.

At the gate the three juniors had waited, is had seen Mr. Breakspear come down and seout, fastening the gate behind him. The Trimble was breathless and trembling with answent.

Trimble was breathless and frembling without ment.

"You see, it's all true, Panky!" he muttent.
"Rather," said Pankhurst.
"Quite so," said Price.
"What had we better do now, Panky!"
"Well, I think that Price and I had be follow him, and you can remain here to watch he comes in," said Pankhurst hurriedly. "(no on, Pricey."
"But——" began Trimble.
"No time for talk now. Do as I tell portion on Price."
The Old Firm scuttled away, and in a femoments were over the wall in the lane. Put hurst dropped to the ground lightly, and hely quickly about him. He knew that the Combine were watching outside the wall, for as he within, he had heard the sound of their climbs over at some distance from the gate.
"Sure they're there?" whispered Price.
"Yes, I heard them getting over before hely spear came out."

"Yes, I heard them go."

spear came out."

"I didn't—"

"Well, I did. Quiet now—look!"

Pankhurst clutched his companion and jest him into the shadow of the wall. The form the new master was visible at the stile. Firm, crouching in the darkness, watched to combine cross the lane in pursuit.

Pankhurst gave a silent chuckle.

Pankhurst gave a silent chuckle.

Pankhurst gave a silent chuck "They're on the track, Pricey.

I say, Panky-Well, what?

"Well, what?"

"Is it possible there's something in it? We can Breakspear be doing outside the school, so in that wood, at this hour? There must be something the matter." something the matter!

how."

The chums crouched silent and still. In the quiet night they heard distinctly the click of a now. Our cue is to shadow the shadowers.

a aunt! This is getting very rich!

anly Panama aunt! This is getting very rich!

Jome ou! ""

The Old Firm crossed the lane, and plunged the Old Firm crossed the wood. A little later into the darkness of the wood. A little later the voices of the Combine brought them to a the voices of the Combine brought them to a the voices of the Combine brought them to a the puzzled juniors uttered, and grinned in the darkness. Suddenly Price gave a violent start.

Pankhurst, without the slightest warning, had uttered a terrible groan!

So natural did the sound seem in the gloomy son that Price's blood almost ran cold, and he wood, that Price's blood almost ran cold, and he named quickly and anxiously towards his companion. But Pankhurst's hand on his mouth prevented him from speaking.

"Don't say a word!" whispered Pankhurst glefully. "I'm going to make them sit up."

Price understood, and he chuckleet.

Pankhurst drew him into the thick wood from Pice path. They could still hear the low, awesticken voices of the Combine.

"Did—did you hear that, chaps?"

"I guess so."

"Faith, and it was a groan—somebody is being

I guess so." Faith, and it was a groan—somebody is being

nurdered."

"I guess that's what it sounded like."

"Can it be Breakspear—","
Listen! See if you can hear it again!"

Pankhurst grinned—and groaned! The greates simply hair-raising, and it was no wonder that made the listening juniors shudder.

"Good heavens!" muttered Poindexter softly.

There's no mistaking that."

"I's—it's somebody—","

"Faith, it's somebody dyin'."

Another groan, more deep and terrible than the list!

last!
Then Pankhurst and Price crouched silent in the bushes, rocking with suppressed laughter. Pankhurst's hand was in his pocket, clutching a little paper packet. He drew it out cautiously, and there was a scent of cayenne pepper in the

"Give'em another!" whispered Price.
For the fourth time that fearful groan awoke
the echoes of the dim, mysterious wood. Then
silence—as though death had indeed seized upon
the author of the sound of anguish!

### The 7th Chapter. The Old Firm Score.

The Old Firm Score.

"GUESS I'm going to look into that!"

"Faith, and we can't lave the poor spalpeen, whoever he is, to die all on his lonesome," murmured Micky Flynn.

"Come on," said Neville resolutely.

The Combine, feeling their way cautiously among the trees and bracken, approached the spot whence the awful sounds had proceeded.

They had plenty of pluck, and they needed it now, for it seemed certain that they would find a dying men lying there in the underbrush, and night not the assassin be still lurking in the vicinity?

The damp twigs brushed against their faces, and their feet sank into damp soft soil, as they stumbled over roots and ferns. Poindexter passed, uncertain of the direction.

"Do you know just where it."

Do you know just where it was, chaps? Faith, I—"
s if in answer to the American chu ratth, 1—s it is answer to the American chum's sit in answer to the American chum's tition, came a repetition of the deep groan, it was so near that the Combine jumped.

There it is, Poindexter!"

Come on."

be churs plunged through the bracken that trated them from the spot whence the terrible and came. Through the branches above, a more of starlight here fell into the wood, adexter caught a glimpse of two forms whigh in the bracken.

Here, ow, not, removed, ''

where our means in the bracken.

"Here—ow—poof—gerroooh!"
The American chum gave a fearful yell.
The arm of one of the crouching figures had no up, and from a paper packet in his hand shot cloud of pepper.
The pepper streamed right into Poindexter's use, and he burst into a hurricane of gasping all sneezing.

Neville and Flynn started back in utter amazement.

the heart of the control of the cont

What price April the First?"
Then a nistle of the underwoods, and a sound of reating footsteps.
Choo-choo-atchoo!" sneezed Poindexter

tically.

Ow-wow-girerererooh!" gasped Flynn.

Atch—atch—atch—atchoooooooo!" gurgl

Get-1-rooch!"

Atchoo-choo-choo!"

he chums staggered away blindly towards the path. They had recognised the voice that ed out as the jokers fled, and knew that they been victimised by the Old Firm. But they too choked and distracted by sneezing to ak even of vengeance. They stood in the foothers as they could never stop.

Dear me! What can possibly be the Through that

they moved, he gripped Poindexter by the shoulder, and dragged him back.

"Who are you?"

"Choo-choo-atchoo!" sneezed Poindexter.

"Tell me at once who you are. I know perfectly well that you belong to the school," said Mr. Breakspear, shaking the American chum violently.

fr. Breakspear,
riolently.
"Atchoo—choo—gerroooch!"

"This insolence will not save you. Dear me what a smell of pepper! Atcheo—atchoo Come with me, I will see—ascertain who you—choo-choo-atchoo!"

Breakspear was sneezing, too, as he shool.
The hurried the

choo-choo-atchoo!"

Mr. Breakspear was sneezing, too, as he shook the pepper out of Poindexter. He hurried the junior along to the lane, where in the open starlight he would be able to recognise him. Flynn and Neville had stopped at the stile, on discovering that Poindexter was not with them. They were not the sort to desert a chum, even if they could not help him by staying. Sink or swim together was the motto of the Combine.

Combine.

"Dear me! Here are two more of them Ah, it is Poindexter! And Neville and Flynn What are you doing out of the school at this hour?" demanded Mr. Breakspear,

What are you doing out hour?" demanded Mr. Breakspear.

"Atchoo—atchoo!"

"What is the cause of this strange fit of sneezing? Where does this smell of pepper come from? Choo-choo-atchoo! Has someone been throwing pepper over you?"

"Faith, and we—choo-choo-atchoo!"

"I guess we choo-choo-atchoo!"

"Yes, sir," gasped Neville. "Gr.r-r-roooch!"

"Dear me! But who was it?"

"We didn't—oooch—see him, sir."

"Why are you out of school?"

The chume were getting over the effects of the pepper now, but at that question it seemed only prudent to have another fit of sneezing.

Mr. Breakspear gazed at them dubiously. Finally only prudent to have another fit of sneezing.

Mr. Breakspear gazed at them dubiously. Finally he signed to them

he signed to them to follow him, and walked across the lane to the gate in

the school wall. The Combine, looking and feeling very sheepish, followed the Third Form master. Their suspicions as to his criminal character had almost faded away; there was none of almost faded away; there was none of the manner of a guilty person about him. He, undoubtedly, had some motive for being in the wood at night, but he did not look like a criminal who had found himself watched. He, evidently, did not even suspect that the jumiors had been out of the school on his been out of the school on his account. But a guilty man would, undoubtedly, have jumped to that conclusion at once. And the incident of the pepper really seemed to have brought the juniors down out of cloudand, as it were, o matter-of-fact

unlocked it.

And his chums nodded assent.

Mr. Breakspear pushed the gate open sharply, and the next moment there was a yell. The master of the Third uttered an exclamation, and, darting through the gateway, seized a dim, diminutive figure by the shoulder.

"Ow! Let me go!"

It was Teddy Trimble. He wriggled in the grasp of the angry Form-master.

"Oh, the utter idiot!" muttered Poindexter.

"He was watching inside the gate, of course, and got a clump from it when it opened. Serve him right! I wish it had knocked his silly head off!"

"Faith, and where are the other bounders?"

Faith, and where are the other bounders?" "Safe in bed by this time, I expect. I'm beginning to think that the whole thing was a plant, got up by Panky and Price from start to finish!" growled Poindexter. "You heard what Panky yelled out after he had peppered

About April the First ?'\*

The chums staggered away blindly towards the footpath. They had recognised the voice that had been victimized by the Old Firm. But they ware too choked and distracted by sneezing to think even of vengeance. They stood in the footpath sneezing, and sneezing are to be to part of venture of the footpath with the conjuction of the footpath with the conjuction of the footpath with the first 7."

"Yes. He——"
A yelp from Teddy Trimble interrupted the American chum. The annoyed form-master was shaking him, and Teddy was too bewildered at first to realise into whose hands he had fallen. But as soon as he discovered that it was Mr. Breakspear—who had hold of him, he was simply frantic with terror. In his excited brain he conjured up all sorts of horrors, and already in his mind's eye he saw himself lying stiff and stark under the trees in the Close. In the trashy American detective novels he was fond of reading the favourite motto of the deeply-dayd villains was "Dead men tell no tales," and the same might be supposed to apply to boys. And Teddy Trimble, forgetting that he

as a bold detective on the track of a criminal, riggled and yelped in abject fear.
"Ow! Mercy! Murder!"
"Silence, boy! Are you mad?" gasped Mr.

"Silence, boy! Are you mad?" gasped Mr. Breakspear.

"Help! I wasn't following you! I don't know anything about the murder you committed in the wood last night! Mercy!"

"Dear me, the boy is out of his senses!" exclaimed Mr. Breakspear, in a tone of utter bewilderment. "Trimble, calm yourself! I am not going to hurt you."

"If you murder me you'll be hanged—"

"Trimble! Do you know to whom you are speaking? This matter requires an explanation. You will come with me to my room. Boys, follow me!"

Mr. Breakspear locked the gate, and led

follow me!"

Mr. Breakspear locked the gate, and led Teddy away with a firm grip on his arm. The sight of the Combine had somewhat reassured Teddy Trimble. He realised that he was not, at all events, in immediate danger of death. The faces of the Combine were gloomy enough as they followed the Third Form-master and his prisoner into the house, and up to his room. As they disappeared into the house, two forms came out of the shadows of the trees.

"My hat!" muttered Pankhurst—for, of course, the two watchers were the Old Firm. "The jape has turned out rather roughly for the Combine, Pricey!"

"Quite so!"

Quite so!"
That chattering young ass will tell the

"That chattering young ass will tell the whole story now."
"Yes, but we should have to own up, anyway. to get Poindexter out of it. We couldn't let them face the music alone."
"Righto! Let's get in! It's a case of owning up, and a licking all round, I expect; but we japed the Combine on the First of April, don't forget that!"
And the Old Firm chuckled as they made



"I think you're a beastly Chicago traud!" cried Trimble. Poindexter jumped up. Unfortunately in his haste he caught his foot in the leg of the chess-table, and sent it flying. There was a scattering of pieces and pawns over the floor of No. 4 study, and the three players gave a simultaneous yell. to matter-of-fact lumped up. University of pieces and pawns dawned upon them over the floor of No. 4 study, and the three players gave a simultaneous yell. what an utterly stupid end absurd trail they had been following.

'Not a word!" murmured Poindexter, as they stopped at the gate, while Mr. Breakspear unlocked it.

The 8th Chapter.

Brought to Light.

R. BREAKSPEAR turned up the gas in his room, and then surveyed the four juniors with a grim expression upon his face.

"And now, young gentlemen, kindly explain yourselves," he said. "You first, Trimble. You seem to have been watching for me at the gate. You followed me?"

"Ye-e-e-es, sir."

"Why?"

Why?"

I\_I\_I\_I\_1\_.

I must have the whole A. "

"Answer me plainly. I must have the whole truth,"
Trimble hesitated.
"Look here, sir," he exclaimed, at last, "I—I don't think you ought to punish me—"
"Indeed, and why not?"
"Not if I keep it dark."
"Keep what dark?"
"About you."
"I don't understand you, Trimble. Do you mean about my leaving the school at a late hour?" asked Mr. Breakspear.
"Yes, sir."
"But surely you know that I have a right

"Yes, sir."

"But surely you know that I have a right to do as I like, Trimble. Your strange words will lead me to conjecture that you are not in your right senses. You made some allusion to a murder in a wood. You seem to have feared something terrible when I seized you by the collar. It is evident to me that you have some absurd notions in your head. Explain them at once—"

them at once—"
"I\_I\_\_you see, sir\_I\_\_"
"Will you explain, Poindexter?"
"Yes, sir. I hope you will pardon us for

being such a set of asses," said Poindexter, in his frank, direct way. "We partly fell into a trap laid for us by a set of joking rotters, and partly we were misled by circumstances. We thought you—you——"

"You thought I what?"

"I mean, it seemed possible that—that—"

"Dear me, you are as incomprehensible as Trimble. Can you explain, Neville?"

"Yes, sir. Trimble has been setting up as an amateur detective, and he discovered a mare's nest, and a set of joking beasts tricked us into believing that there was something in it. We thought you—you——"

"We shall never get at the truth in this way. What could you possibly have suspected me of?" said the amazed master. "You tell me, Flynn."

"Sure, and I hardly loike to, sir."

"I command you to do so."

"Faith, and in that case I'll spake. We thought—we thought—"

"Come, come, what did you think? This matter is getting serious. Trimble's words would lead me to conjecture that you suspected me of committing a murder in the wood," said the Form-master, half smiling.

The chums turned crimson, and Mr. Breakspear gave a start.

"Is it possible—"

"Why did you come home with your hands covered with blood, then?" gasped Teddy Trimble.

"Blood! My hands! When?"

"Blood! My hands! When?"

"Last night."

"You unutterable little idiot!" exclaimed Mr. Breakspear. "No: I should not have said that. It was not a proper expression to use. But your stupidity is certainly amazing. As you have taken so much interest in my private affairs, I had better remove misconception by a slight explanation. You may not know that in my leisure moments I have written poetry, and am now engaged in preparing a new volume for publication——"

"My only hat!" muttered Poindexter.

"I find it easier to compose my work at night, alone and quiet," said Mr. Breakspear. "You probably wilf not understand, but I seek inspiration in the solitude and silence of the woods by night. That is the reason why I sometimes leave the school after the boys are in bed, and go for lonely walks in Cliveden Wood."

The chums looked at one another blankly. The explanation was so absurdly simple; and they had not thought of anything of the kind.

"But—but the papers—and what you said!" stammered Trimble. Even upon his dense brain the truth was dawning that he had made a fool of himself.

"What I said—what do you mean?"

"I heard you say you had blood upon your hands—and you washed it off, too, when you came in last night," said Trimble.

The Form-master laughed.

"You—well, well! Last night I wrote some lines down in the wood. I have a pocket-fastening inkpot, and by mistake I hoppened to fill it with red ink instead of black as usual. I used it last night in the wood to write down some lines in my pocket-book, and accidentally spilt some on my fingers. I naturally washed my hands when I came in. I did not know an amateur detective was watching me."

"Oh!" gaspied Trimble. "Red ink! Oh!"

"As for what I said—what was that! I do not remember ever saying that I land anything on my hands—"

"Oh the stain is on my soul!"

The Form-master smiled half-amusedly.

"I heard you say so," exclaimed Poindexter. I remember the exact words. My hands are red, the stain is on my soul!

The stopped to this desk—that mysterious looked desk—

such an absurd suspicion to enter your mind."

"Fm sorry, sir."

"You ought to be! As for Trimble, his stupidity is past anything I could say to him. I shall not punish any of you—"

There was a general breath of relief.

"You may all go back to bed," said Mr. Breakspear, "and I hope that this absurd affair will be a lesson to you. Good-night."

"Thank you, sir."

And the juniors left the room. They went in silence to the Fourth Form dormitory. But as soon as they were there, Pankhurst and Price broke into a simultaneous chuckle.

"I say, Puntdodger—"

"What price April the First, eh?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But the Combine said not a word.

THE END.

(" The Cliveden Minstrels" next week.)