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The Boys' Herald 1^d

EVERY BOY'S AND YOUNG MAN'S
STORY AND HOBBY PAPER.

No. 250, Vol. V.

EVERY WEDNESDAY—ONE PENNY.

WEEK ENDING MAY 2, 1908.



STIRRING SCENES FROM THIS WEEK'S GRAND CHAPTERS.

feeling ashamed of himself, hastened to do his master's bidding.

"Dad, I'll take all the whacking," pleaded Ronald, clinging to his father's arm. "Horatio's had nothing to do with this. I thought it all out, and made everything, and dragged him into it against his will. I've had my lark, and I'll suffer for it, but please don't thrash Horatio."

"Ronald!" said the major sternly. "I'm ashamed of you. You have carried this joke too far. You shall have your thrashing, I promise you. This boy is dismissed, and must leave the house instantly. Do you hear that, boy?"

"What me—sacked!" cried Horatio, aghast.

"How about him. Is he going to be kept on?"

"What do you mean, boy?" thundered the old soldier.

"Are you referring to my son?"

"Your son!" muttered the orphan in a state of collapse.

"Oh corks! I thought he was errand-boy, or kitchen-boy, or summik."

"It's my fault, dad," said Ronald, as the major looked astounded. "Horatio thought I was a servant, and I didn't deny it."

"I've heard enough explanations," said the major. "Thank you, James. That looks a stout cane. You will follow me to my room, Ronald. You, boy, put on your hat and coat and go before I alter my mind about giving you the thrashing you deserve."

Five minutes later as Horatio, stripped of his coat of many buttons, passed down the staircase, he heard the "swish, swish" of the cane as it was wielded by the muscular major, but never a whimper reached the dismissed page boy's ears. Ronald knew how to take a grueling as befoved a soldier's son.

"Sacked!" muttered Horatio, as outside in the street, with Sneezar at his heels, he set his face in the direction of Cabbage Street, Shadwell.

"I wonder what the old Dutch'll say?"

Nearly three hours later Mr. Blades, the butcher, was standing at the door of his premises talking to Constable X203, when Horatio, tired and dejected, knocked at the door of Mrs. Moulter's.

"More trouble for you, constable," said the butcher, jerking his thumb towards the orphan.

"He's come 'ome again."

"Law, boy, is it you?" cried Mrs. Moulter, as she opened the door with hands covered with soap-suds. "I thought I'd seen the back of you for ever an' ever. Ah me, I s'pose there'll never be any luck for Betsy Moulter! Comes of me havin' been born on a Friday. Well, well; come in, boy!" she added, as she saw the strained, tired look in his face. "I've allus managed to give you a bite to eat since the day I made the mistake of adoptin' you, so I suppose I'll be able to agin."

"Orlright, orlright, Mrs. Moulter!" said Horatio wearily, "don't pile it on. I'll look for another job to-morrow."

THE END.

(Two three-page complete stories next week.)

TAKE CARE OF YOUR STOMACH

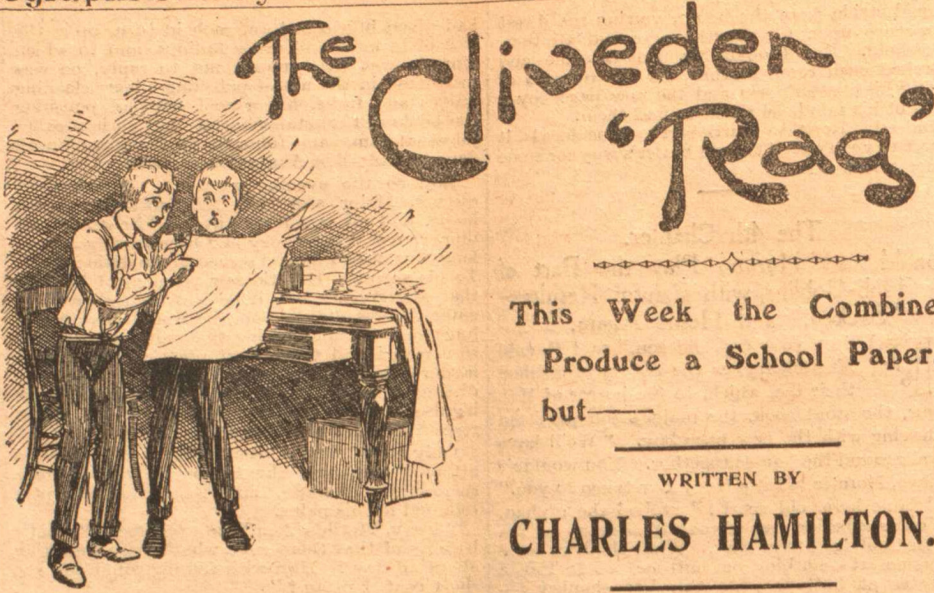
Take care of your stomach and your health will take care of itself. That is the golden rule of correct living. Your stomach is the factory of your body. It is there that the raw material we call food is prepared and made ready to be absorbed into your system and turned into blood, brain, bone and sinew. See to it then, and help it when it fails with Mother Seigel's Syrup, the great stomach healer, and you must be well.

"I could keep nothing on my stomach—not even milk. Head-aches were of almost daily occurrence, and from want of nourishment I became so weak and thin that I could neither attend to my housework nor my children. Not until I tried Mother Seigel's Syrup did I get any better. Every dose did good, and now I am quite well."

—From Mrs. Gibson, 15, Charlton Rd., Plaistow, London. Jan. 1, '08.

MOTHER SEIGEL'S SYRUP IS THE SURE MEANS.

Mother Seigel's Syrup is now also prepared in TABLET FORM and sold under the name of Mother Seigel's Syrup Tablets. Price 2/9—one size only.



This Week the Combine Produce a School Paper, but——

WRITTEN BY

CHARLES HAMILTON.

The 1st Chapter

The Combine's Little Secret!

"I GUESS it will be great!"

It was Lincoln G. Poindexter, of the Fourth Form at Cliveden, who uttered those words, as he came down the passage with his chums, Neville and Flynn. Pankhurst and Price, standing in the doorway, heard them distinctly, and exchanged glances.

"Hallo!" murmured Pankhurst, "something fresh on, Pricey?"

Price nodded.

"Quite so, Panky."

"You see——" Poindexter was going on, when Neville caught sight of the eager two in the doorway, and pulled him by the arm.

"Shut up, kid!"

"What the——"

"Can't you see them?"

Neville jerked his head towards Pankhurst and Price. Lincoln G. Poindexter gave a low, soft whistle, and nodded.

"I guess I nearly—ahem!"

"Sure, and ye nearly gave it away, Punt-dodger," said Micky Flynn severely. "Another minute, and Panky and Price would have known that——"

"Dry up, Micky, you ass!"

"Sure, and it was yerself that nearly gave away the fact that we're going to start a——"

"Shut up!" roared Neville.

"You can trust me to keep the saycret. It was Pointpusher who nearly let Panky and Price know that we——"

Poindexter and Neville seized the incautious Micky by the arms and dragged him away. Pankhurst and Price were looking excited now.

Panky and Price, otherwise known as the Old Firm, were in deadly rivalry with Poindexter, Neville, and Flynn, the Cliveden "Combine," as our readers know. There was evidently some new "wheeze" being planned by the Combine; and the Old Firm were on the track at once.

"Beastly shame that Neville saw us just then," muttered Pankhurst. "We nearly had the secret, whatever it is. I wonder what they are up to."

"Yes, I wonder," said Price, who was always a faithful echo of his chief.

"We are going to find out."

"Quite so."

"If we could get Micky Flynn to talk—he never knows when to shut up——"

"Good wheeze!"

"Come on; let's go after the bounders."

Pankhurst and Price hurried after the Combine. The three chums of the Fourth Form at Cliveden were going up to their study, and the Old Firm overtook them in the passage. Micky Flynn was still talking.

"Faith, and ye needn't have rushed me off; ye can trust me discretion, Puntdodger. It's me that can keep a saycret, and yerself that let it out. Panky and Price would never have learned from me that we're going to start a school——"

"Shut up!" howled Poindexter. "Here they are!"

"Sure, and I didn't see them."

"Come into the study. I guess I shall have to get a gag for you before I trust you outside agin."

"Faith, and sure I——"

"Look here, you asses!" exclaimed Pankhurst, overtaking the Combine at the door of No. 4, "what is the little game, anyway?"

"Little game!" said Poindexter, with a blank stare. "What do you mean, Panky?"

"What little game are you playing now?"

"We've been playing cricket, if that's what you mean."

"That's not what I mean!" shouted Pankhurst. "What scheme are you up to? What does that ass Flynn mean by saying you're going to start a school?"

"Start a what?"

"A school! That was what Flynn said."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at now?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you cackling image! That was what Flynn said. He said you were going to start a school——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Micky Flynn.

Pankhurst and Price glowered at the Combine. Panky had distinctly heard Micky Flynn's words, and yet the suggestion seemed to have sent the Combine into a fit of uncontrollable merriment.

zine. Now, the first question is, what are we going to call it?"

"Flynn's Weekly!" was Micky's modest suggestion.

"Can't name a paper after the office-boy."

"Faith, and I——"

"The Study No. 4 Gazette," said Neville thoughtfully.

"Too much."

"The Combine's News."

"Rotten!"

"Oh, get on, Puntdodger. Sure, I can name you've got some idea in ye're own head."

"Well," said Poindexter modestly, "I've thought of a jolly good title. You see, we don't want to make a mere party affair of it."

"But we want to slate the Old Firm."

"Of course we do; but we're not going to put up the position of a rival party in the Fourth Form. We assume the status——"

"The what?"

"The status of——"

"Well, that's a jolly good word, anyway," commented Neville. "I've no objection to assuming the status."

"We assume the status," went on Poindexter unheeding, "of the heads of the Fourth Form, and we survey the Form, as it were, from the top of a pedestal."

"Faith——"

"Far from the madding crowd," so to speak, explained the Chicago chum. "From this lofty position we cannot take any notice of parties and squabbles in the Form. We cannot, therefore, give the paper a party name. It ought to have some name representing the whole Form—— rather, the whole school."

"I see. Why not the 'Fourth Form Magazine'?"

"You see, we represent the whole of the Lower School, not only our own Form."

"True. The 'Lower School Journal,' then?"

"No good. There's not going to be anything low about our paper, and that title might lead to misconception. Besides, I take it that the Fourth Form, representing the rising generation—the coming race, so to speak—at Cliveden, may really be taken as representing what is best and most up-to-date in the whole college."

"Ha, ha!"

"Faith, and it's right ye are intoirely."

"Therefore, the Fourth Form magazine should have a name representing the whole school. What do you say to the 'Cliveden Magazine'?"

"Good. But the chaps would soon corrupt it to the 'Cliveden Mag.'"

"I guess the 'Cliveden Mag.'s' all right."

"It wouldn't be long before it became the 'Cliveden Rag,' I expect," said Neville, laughing.

"Cliveden Rag," let it be, then," said Poindexter. "We may as well take the bull by the horns and call it the 'Cliveden Rag' from the start. It's rather a taking title, too, and very appropriate, as we shall rag everybody in the school."

"Ha, ha! Good."

"Faith, and it's a janius ye are, Puntdodger!"

"The title's settled," said Poindexter. "We now about the paper itself. There are a good many ways of producing a newspaper. We have it written by hand, and handed about——"

"Too much trouble to turn off the copies."

"Well, I guess that the fellows who were slating would damage the copies, and copying 'em by hand is slow work. But we could do it on a copying press."

"Why not have 'em printed?" suggested Micky Flynn. "We could get a printing-press here, you know, and set it up in the study."

"Ass!"

"Sure, and I think it's a ripping idea. I don't mean a big machine, but one just big enough to turn off the papers."

"And do you think we could do it without being spotted, even if we could get the machine here, which we couldn't!" exclaimed Poindexter.

"Sure, and I never thought of that."

"We could have them done at the litho printers in Clivebank," Neville suggested.

"Costs money."

"Well, a whip round."

"Funds are low just at present; besides, we should have to have proofs, and keep on going to the printer's, and Panky and Price would snaffle the rat. Remember, they're on the alert now. The copying-press would take time, too. What's the matter with having a single copy of the 'Cliveden Rag,' for the first number, at least? When the secret's out, we can produce the second number any way we like, and save our time about it."

"But a single copy would have to be passed among the fellows, from hand to hand."

"Sure and the first chap who found his name slated in it might tear the thing up."

"I'm not thinking of passing it from hand to hand."

"What's the idea, then?"

"We won't have it passed at all," explained Poindexter. "The 'Rag' can be written up on one side of one big sheet and pasted on a board and set up in a frame."

"Sure, and——"

"Then we can have glass in front of it, and hang it up in the Fourth Form-room——no, no, the Common-room, for all the school to read. The way the whole crowd could read it at once, we could be on guard to see that it was not damaged."

"Puntdodger, it's a janius ye are. I see it third, fourth, and pass unanimously the suggestion of our friend Puntbustler," said Neville thoughtfully.

"It's a good wheeze," said Neville fully. "It saves all the expense and the trouble, and the sooner we get it out the less chance is of Panky and Price getting on to the idea."

"That's what I was thinking."

"That's settled, then. We can get the glass and glass in Clivebank, and bring 'em into the study without anybody noticing. What do you say?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, I know it's all rot," said Pankhurst. "You ought to start a lunatic asylum, that's nearer your mark."

"And we'd have you two as our first patients."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, stop that cackling!" said Pankhurst crossly. "You remind me of an alarm clock gone wrong. What do you——"

"I'm afraid we haven't time to continue this entertaining conversation now," said Neville.

"We're busy."

"I guess that's so. Come in, kids."

"Faith, and I——"

"Look here!" howled Pankhurst, as the Combine entered their study. "I know jolly well you are up to something!"

"Go hon!"

"We'll jolly soon find out what it is!"

"I guess you can go ahead."

"And we'll jolly well make you sit up, I can jolly well tell you!"

"You seem to be going to have a jolly time altogether," Neville remarked. "If you've finished, we'll close the door."

"I tell you——"

"No, don't tell us anything more, Pankhurst. Run away and play."

"Sure, and take ye're face with ye, Panky, old man, and bury it somewhere!"

"I tell you——"

Poindexter closed the door. Pankhurst bumped on it, and then the key clicked in the lock. The indignant chief of the Old Firm bestowed a final emphatic kick upon the oak, and retired.

"No good getting excited about it," he remarked.

Price grinned.

"Quite so."

"They're up to some wheeze, and we'll jolly soon find out what it is, and make them sing small."

"Quite so."

"The question is—how?"

"Quite——"

"Shut up a minute, and let me think!"

Price cheerfully shut up; and Pankhurst leaned against the wall and wrinkled his brows in an effort of thinking. Meanwhile, the Cliveden Combine were busy.

The 2nd Chapter

Poindexter's Great Idea!

LINCOLN G. POINDEXTER, the American chum in the Fourth Form at Cliveden, grinned cheerfully as he locked the study door.

"Those red-headed kids are mighty curious," he remarked. "I suppose they were bound to get on the track sooner or later, but Micky nearly gave us away."

"Sure, and it was yerself, Puntdodger!"

"Oh, don't argue! I guess we had better get on with the idea, and lose no time. If Panky and Price could get on to it, they would think nothing of forestalling us."

"My hat! that would be a sell."

"It would—rather!"

"Faith, and we——"

"They've got no suspicion so far, I reckon—of the real facts, I mean. What Panky heard Micky say only leads him to guess that we're going to start a school."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And it hasn't occurred to his mighty brain that the real wheeze is a school magazine," said Poindexter, with a smile of satisfaction. "I say, you know, the wheeze is simply a ripping one. A school newspaper, run by the lower Forms, will go down rippingly."

"Faith, and ye're right."

"It was jolly clever to think of the idea," Dick Neville remarked. "The seniors have had their 'College Notes' for a long time, but nobody ever reads that rag."

"As a matter of fact, the Sixth don't read it themselves," said Poindexter. "I know very well that each chap reads what he wrote himself, and nothing else."

"No wonder, considering what fearfully dry rot it is."

"I guess so. The Fourth Form magazine will knock spots off the Sixth Form rag. I'm jolly glad I thought of the idea."

"Sure, and it's a janius ye are, Puntdodger."

"We've got all the work before us," Poindexter remarked. "There's simply the bare idea so far. We're going to start a school maga-

zine. Now, the first question is, what are we going to call it?"

"Flynn's Weekly!" was Micky's modest suggestion.

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contributions to the 'Rag'? Are we to let in any outsiders?"

Poindexter shook his head.

"Not for the first number. It wouldn't be safe. Somebody would be sure to talk, and if Panky and Price got on to the idea, they would be certain to think out some way of dishing us."

"I suppose that's so."

"We three can turn out all the stuff required," said Poindexter. "I reckon we shall have a sheet about twenty-four inches by eighteen, divided, say, into six columns; so there really won't be much stuff wanted to fill it. We three can write it up."

"Good."

"To-day's Monday," went on Pankhurst. "I don't see why we couldn't get the lot done and the first number of the paper published by Wednesday."

Neville whistled.

"That's rather quick work."

"Oh, we know how to hustle in Chicago," said Lincoln G. Poindexter. "I'm going to show you how an American does these things."

"Good old Tinned Beef!"

"Oh, let the tinned beef rest!"

"Sure, there's no rest for the wicked."

"Dry up, Micky. Now, my idea is that we should take a stroll round the Close, and think out the contributions to the paper," said Poindexter. "Or, better still, we'll walk down to Clivebank and order the frame and glass, and talk it over as we go. There's time before locking-up."

"Good."

And the important discussion being ended, the Cliveden juniors left the study. They put on their caps and walked out of the School-house, and from a window Pankhurst and Price watched them go.

"Now's our chance!" murmured Pankhurst. In a minute, or less, the Old Firm were in No. 4 study. They searched it thoroughly. They hunted high and they hunted low, in quest of some clue to the mysterious proceedings of the Combine. But they found no clue. After a quarter of an hour they gave it up, and retired baffled.

"All the same, they're up to something," grunted Pankhurst, as they left the study, disappointed and exasperated.

"Quite so."

"And we'll find out what it is."

"Quite so."

The 3rd Chapter.

Pankhurst is Hasty.

THE Combine came in just before locking up, with satisfied smiles upon their faces. They had ordered the glass and frame in Clivebank village, and had talked the scheme over in the lane without fear of being overheard. The rough idea was taking definite shape now, and the juniors were eager to get to work.

They stopped at the porter's lodge coming in, and met Rags, who was just coming out with his keys in the April dusk. Pankhurst and Price were watching for the Combine to come in, and they observed the action.

"I say, Rags," said Poindexter, giving the porter a gentle dig in the ribs.

Rags growled.

"You young warmints!"

There was no love lost between the school porter and the heroes of the Fourth. Rags was not the best-tempered of men, and the juniors sometimes "ragged" him. On his side, Rags seemed to take a positive pleasure in shutting out any belated youngster who was a second after locking-up time.

"I want to speak to you, Rags. There's a parcel coming for me to-morrow, and I want you to bring it carefully to my study."

The porter grunted.

"It's partly glass, Rags, and I don't want you to break it," said Poindexter. "I guess there'll be a bob for you when it's delivered."

Rags's face cleared a little.

"I'll take care of it, Master Poindexter," he said quite civilly.

"Good."

The Combine walked on, and the porter fastened the gates. Pankhurst and Price, behind an angle of the lodge wall, looked at one another in the dusk.

"A parcel coming for Puntpointer," murmured Pankhurst.

"Glass in it," said Price.

"What can it be?"

"Blessed if I know."

"It must be something to do with the wheeze they've got on."

"Quite so."

"It's getting thicker and thicker," said Pankhurst, puzzled. "I can't sift it out. But we'll have a look at that parcel when it comes, before it gets to Puntpusher."

"Good."

"If we keep our eyes open we shall be able to spot it, and get a peep inside," said Pankhurst. "I'm not going to be beaten by any rotten Combine. Let's go and see if they are up to any thing in their study."

The Old Firm went into the house.

They ascended the stairs to the Fourth Form studies and went quietly along to No. 4. The light under the door showed that the Combine were there.

"They're in," muttered Pankhurst.

"Quite so."

"If we burst in on them suddenly we should see what they were up to."

"Ye-es; but—"

"But it's a bit thick to burst into a fellow's room without knocking at the door."

"That's what I was thinking."

"Well, it's so. But—"

Pankhurst hesitated. The temptation was strong; but principle was principle. There was another way out of the difficulty.

"We'll knock quickly, and rush in the same instant," he whispered. "Then they can't say we came in without knocking; and we shall see what they're up to all the same."

Price chuckled.

"Quite so."

"Be ready to rush in the instant I fling open the door," whispered Pankhurst, with suppressed excitement. "I'll just knock, then grab the handle and rush in; and you bolt after me. It doesn't matter if we're clucked out, so long as we get on to the secret."

"I'm on."

"Ready?"

"Quite."

"Then here goes! Come on!"

Pankhurst knocked at the door, then grabbed the handle, wrenched it round, and hurled himself forward. But unfortunately the door did not budge. Pankhurst, in his excitement, had not counted upon its being locked. But locked it was! Pankhurst plumped right on the door; and Price, springing forward in the expectation of the door opening, bumped on him and bumped him hard against the solid oak.

"Ow!" roared Pankhurst.

"Oh!" gasped Price.

"You utter us! What do you want to jam me against the door for?"

"Ow! I thought you were going to open it."

"I've barked my nose—"

"I've got all the wind knocked out of me."

"You howling ass!"

"You silly cuckoo!"

"Who are you calling a silly cuckoo?"

"I'm calling you a silly cuckoo. You—"

"If you're looking for a thick ear—"

There was a sound of a laugh within the study. The bump on the door had, of course, warned the Combine that the enemy were at hand. But the lock was strong; and the oak stronger. The loud laugh from within quietened the Old Firm somewhat, and they ceased their recriminations, which were growing warm.

Pankhurst kicked fiercely upon the lower panels of the door.

"Open this door!" he roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You rotters—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You Tinned-Beef Combine"

"Ho, ho, ho."

"Oh, come away, Pricey!" growled Pankhurst. "No good making a row here. We shall have a prefect on our track soon."

"But it was you who were making all the row."

"Oh, don't argue. Come along!"

And the Old Firm wrathfully departed. From within the locked door a yell of laughter from the Combine followed them down the passage.

The 4th Chapter.

The Question of Editorship.

THE Combine chuckled for quite a long time after their rivals were gone. It was another disappointment for Pankhurst and Price, and the secret was still safe.

"Panky will be getting his wool fairly off soon if he doesn't get on to the secret," grinned Neville. "Lucky we thought of locking the door."

"Faith, and ye're right!"

"I guess the secret will be out on Wednesday," said Poindexter. "Mind, we shall have to lock up all these papers carefully when we leave the study. Let's get on with the washing. What do you think of this for a title-page?"

The juniors looked over the title-page which the American chum had sketched out.

"THE CLIVEDEN RAG,
A WEEKLY JOURNAL DEVOTED TO THE INTERESTS
OF SPORT, ART, SCIENCE, AND LITERATURE.
Published by Neville, Flynn, and Poindexter,
at Cliveden College.
"Under Distinguished Patronage."
"What distinguished patronage?" asked Dick Neville, looking rather puzzled.

"Oh, that looks well, you know."

"But if there isn't any—"

"There is! It's under our own patronage, and we're distinguished enough, I guess! It's no good raising difficulties."

"Ha, ha! But there's one item you've left out."

"What's that?"

"The name of the editor."

"Yes, I shall put that in. It goes in under the title—Edited by Lincoln G. Poindexter, assisted by—"

"Eh?" said Micky Flynn and Dick Neville together.

Poindexter looked at them.

"What's the matter with that?"

"There's a slight mistake."

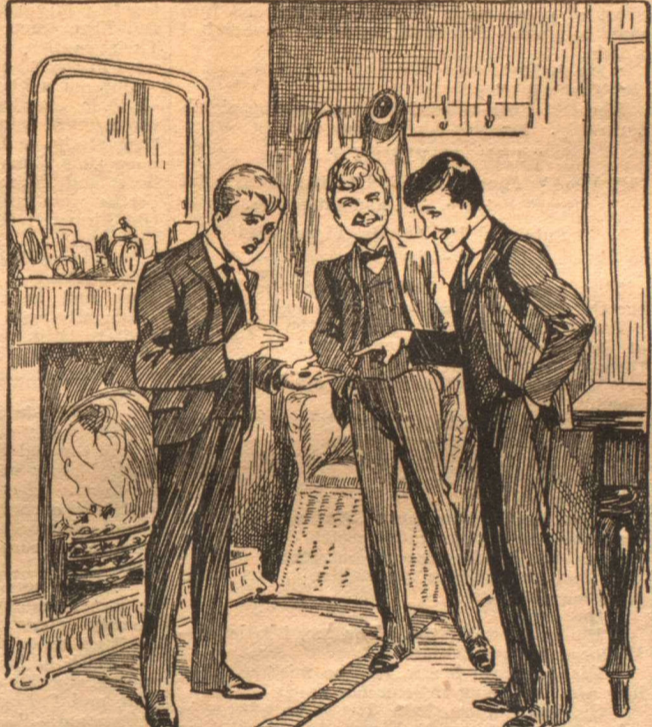
"How?"

"In the name of the editor. It should read: Edited by Richard Neville, Esq., assisted by Michael Flynn and Lin—"

"Faith, and it's wrong ye are, Dicky, darling!"

"You think Poindexter ought to—"

"Sure not at all."



"Tail!" shouted Micky Flynn. "Head," said Poindexter grinning. "I'm Editor; and you might as well have given in at the start. That question's settled. "Sure, it's settled, unless you like to resign the post to me," added the Irish boy.

idea of leaving the conduct of the paper in incapable hands—"

"I guess that's just what troubles me, or else I shouldn't mind you or Flynn taking top place," explained the American junior.

"Oh, that's stuff, Puntdodger!"

"Sure, we'll toss up for it, and the losers shall be made sub-editors."

"Well, that's a good idea."

"Head or tail, Neville, me bhoy?"

"Head."

"Sure and it's tail! Now it's between you and me, Puntpincher. Will you toss up or shall I?"

"I'll do it."

"There's the shilling."

Poindexter tossed the coin.

"Tail!" shouted Micky.

"Head," said Poindexter, grinning as he showed it. "I'm editor; and you might as well have given in at the start. That question's settled."

"Sure, it's settled, unless you like to resign the post to me."

"I don't."

"Sure and I'd be quite willin'—"

"Cheese it! Let's get to work on the contributions," said the editor of the "Cliveden Rag."

And the editorial staff of the new magazine settled down to work.

The 5th Chapter.

The Contributions.

THREE pens scratched away industriously in No. 4 Study. The Combine had never been quite so busy before in that line. Impositions were never written so carefully or so cheerfully. There were blots and scratches and erasures galore; but the satisfied looks of the Combine showed that they considered they were getting on very well with the contributions to the new magazine.

Poindexter looked up at last from his work with an exclamation.

"I say, chaps, I'm hungry. We've forgotten tea."

"My hat, so we have!"

"Sure, and it's peckish I am meself now ye spake of it," said Micky Flynn. "We can't clear the table for tay, though. Better have a snack then and keep on working."

"Good! We won't make tea."

"No, a swig of water's good enough, and there's some lemonade left."

"Hand over some bread and cheese then."

The hungry juniors stopped writing for a little; to snatch a hasty meal. They were in high spirits over the progress of the magazine.

"This is a jolly good way of publishing a paper," Neville remarked. "If you haven't quite enough to fill it, you can make the writing bigger, and fill up space that way. You can't do that in a printed paper."

"I guess that's a big advantage of our system. What have you fellows written?"

"I'm doing the column on cricket."

"Good! And you, Micky?"

"Sure, and I'm contributing a history of the Flynns of Ballylynn, the descendants of the ancient kings of Ireland."

Poindexter made a wry face.

"My only hat! What good is that for a school magazine?"

"My dear chap, it's shocking how little English boys know of Irish history," said Flynn. "I think a school magazine is a fine medium for imparting instruction. The history of the Flynns is raly a history of the kingdom, for, as I believe I've mentioned to you before, the Flynns were the ancient kings of—"

"Rats!"

"No, of Ireland. Rats are more in your line, the tinned beef line, you know."

"I guess—"

"Sure, we have eight columns in the mag, and this history of the Flynn's will only fill up six of them, and that will leave you and Neville one each."

"What!" roared Poindexter.

"Sure, and it's savin' ye trouble I'm after doin'."

"Save yourself trouble, old chap," said Neville, in a friendly way. "I shall want three columns."

"And I shall want three," said Poindexter.

"So a history of Flynns and things will have to be barred."

"Faith, and I—"

"You can do a poem, if you like," said Poindexter, a patriotic Irish poem will go down, and it might fill a column."

"Sure, and I think—"

"No you don't, Micky. Just write a poem."

"Sure, and what are ye writin' y'rsilves, ye omadhans?"

"I'm doing editorial notes first," said Poindexter. "How does this sound? The number of letters from enthusiastic readers that have reached me—"

"But the enthusiastic readers haven't reached ye, Puntdodger."

"Ass! I mean the letters have reached me. The number that have reached me show that the fare we provide for our readers is of the best, and fills a long-felt want."

"Ha, ha, ha,!" roared Neville. "That's no good for a first number. How can the enthusiastic readers get enthusiastic when they haven't seen the paper yet? They haven't anything to enthuse over."

Poindexter wrinkled his brows thoughtfully.

"My hat! I admit I overlooked that."

"Besides," said Micky, "when ye haven't had any letters at all, isn't it something like a whopper to say ye have?"

Poindexter smiled in a superior way.

"That's American journalism, Micky."

"Sure, I've heard a lot about American journalism," said Micky innocently. "I didn't know it was another name for telling lies."

"You don't comprehend."

"Faith, and I don't. Why don't ye devote a column to a description of the great foire at Cliveden, when three of the Sixth were burnt aloive in their beds?"

"There hasn't been any fire. What are you talking about?"

"I know there hasn't. That's some more American journalism."

Poindexter laughed.

"You don't understand the American journalistic idea, Micky, that's what's the matter with you. But seriously, I will leave the enthusiastic readers over to the next number; they'll come in better later. I'll re-arrange the notes. How is your column on the sports going, Dick?"

"Ripping. How does this sound? The opening match of the cricket season was played last week by Cliveden Juniors, and won in a canter. The second match of the season was played by the seniors, and ended in a draw. It is considered as fortunate that the Fourth Form at Cliveden is able to uphold the colours of the college on the playing fields, a task that seems to be somewhat beyond the powers of the Sixth."

"Ha, ha, ha! Good!"

"I'm putting in a good word for Trevelyan, though. I suppose it's all right to call him Cliveden's great and respected captain, or is that a bit too thick?"

"I guess not. That's true, and so it's all right. Better say something nice about the prefects, or they may want to stop the mag. You can lay it on with a trowel for them. I'm thinking of a column of Personal Pars."

"Good!"

"We can rag the enemy in that. 'G'—that's Grahame, you know; initials are always best. Listen to this. We have received information that G— is going to give up smoking in his study. We hope that this wild rumour will be confirmed."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then this. Pankhurst and Price, dealers in copper. Copper tops a speciality."
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Sure, and there ought to be something about tinned beef."
 "Ass! We're not going to slate ourselves."
 "It would be funny, and a school mag ought to have a humorous side."
 "It will have a humorous side if you write some poetry for it."
 "Faith, and I—"
 "Let's get on with the washing."
 The staff of the Cliveden Rag were soon busy again. Micky Flynn, who was the best-tempered fellow in the world, crumpled up his half-written history of the royal family of Flynn, and threw it under the table. He scratched his head, and rubbed his forehead, and chewed the handle of his pen in a paroxysm of poetical fervour. His pen began to scratch, and he blotted and scraped away in fine style.
 "I say, ye gossoons, what do you think of this?" he exclaimed suddenly.
 "Hold on! I'm just giving Panky a slating."
 "I've finished my poem."
 "Shut up a minute!"
 "But I want to read it out to ye. This is how it begins."
 "Hold on!"
 "I think it's really good. But you shall judge for yourselves."
 "Cheese it!"

"Ireland, the Beautiful Isle of the Sea,
 The land of the lovely, the land of the free,
 Nature's best charms to thy valleys are lent,
 And there all my happiest days have been spent.
 Land of the—"

"Shut up!" roared Poindexter. "You're putting me off my stroke—I mean, you're putting me out. Heave that piffle in the fire."
 "If you call my beautiful poem piffle, I shall—"

"Rats! Shut up! Cheese it! I—"
 There was a knock at the door of the study.
 "Bedtime, you kids!"
 Poindexter jumped up in amazement.
 "Bedtime! My only aunt Jane! The evening's gone. Bedtime! Where has the time gone to? All right there, we can hear you."
 "We must clear these things out of sight before we go," said Neville. "Stick them into the table drawer and put those maps over them. That will do. We can nip in here early in the morning and see them safe."
 "Good!"

"Are you coming?" roared an ill-tempered voice in the passage.

"It's Graham," grunted Poindexter. "That rotter sees lights out to-night. Get the papers out of sight while I unlock the door."
 Graham was kicking at the door. But the papers were soon put out of sight, and closed up in the drawer, and the juniors left the study. Pankhurst and Price looked at them curiously as they joined the Fourth Form to go up to the dormitory. But the Combine seemed unconscious of it. Not a word passed their lips as to the occupation of the evening.

The 6th Chapter.

The Old Firm at Work.

BOOM!
 It was the first stroke of midnight. It echoed faintly through the great buildings of Cliveden, and reached at least two pairs of wakeful ears in the Fourth Form dormitory.

Boom!
 As the second stroke pealed out, Pankhurst slipped silently out of bed. He drew on his trousers and a pair of rubber shoes, and then his jacket. Then he stepped to Price's bed and shook him gently. Price woke without a sound; in a minute or less was similarly attired, and the Old Firm crept noiselessly from the dormitory.

Not a sound did the auburn-haired chums of the Fourth make as they stole out. Panky closed the door behind him, and in the passage they chuckled silently.

"They're not awake, Pricey."
 "Not a bit of it. They haven't the faintest idea."
 "They'll be surprised to-morrow. Come on."
 "Righto!"

The chums crept down the stairs to the next floor. The house was dark and silent. Boys and masters were in bed, and mostly fast asleep, at that hour. Dim and eerie were the lonely corridors; but the Old Firm were too excited to think of anything but the matter in hand.

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 Act 3. (Scene 1.) The Old Wharf at Rotherhithe. (Scene 2.) Sexton Blake's Rooms in Baker Street. (Scene 3.) The Library at Cossington Hall.
 Act 4. (Scene 1.) Birdcage Walk, St. James's Park, by Night. (Scene 2.) Interior of a Church in the West End of London.

Monday, May 4th, and during week—

THEATRE ROYAL, SMETHWICK.

They reached the door of No. 4 study. It was, of course, impossible for the Combine to lock the study door of a night, as the maids would be there before the juniors were down. Pankhurst and Price entered the quarters of their rivals, and closed the door.

"Safe!" whispered Pankhurst.
 "Quite so."
 "Light the gas."

There was the flare of a match. The gas was lighted, and turned half up. Pankhurst and Price looked cautiously round the well-known apartment.

They were looking and feeling excited. Pankhurst had remained awake that night on purpose to explore the Combine's quarters at midnight's stilly hour, and discover the unknown "wheeze." The Old Firm were getting almost feverish with excitement and exasperation about the Combine's little secret, and, as Pankhurst said, they had to discover it or "bust" something.
 "Nothing to be seen so far," said Pankhurst, glancing round. "They've been doing a lot of writing, to judge by that blotting-paper and the ink spilt on the table-cover."

"Quite so. I noticed they all had inky fingers when they came up to bed."
 "So did I. What can they have been writing? Not impots."

"Let's have a look round."
 They looked round. Price fished a crumpled sheet of paper from under the table.

"Hallo, look here! What on earth's this? History of the Flynns of Ballyflyn, descendants of the ancient kings of Ireland."

"My only hat! that's Micky Flynn's writing."
 The Old Firm stared at the document in absolute amazement.

"History of the Flynns!" murmured Pankhurst. "Micky might write that rot, but Neville and Puntodger would never waste their time on it. That's not the secret. Let's have a search."

"Hallo, what's this?"

Price turned out the table drawer. A big sheet of paper came to light, marked out into eight columns. Across the top of it was sketched a title.

"My hat!"
 "That's it!"

The Old Firm uttered the exclamation simultaneously. For this is what they read:

THE CLIVEDEN RAG!

"A Weekly Journal devoted to the Interests of Sport, Science, Art, and Literature.

"Published by Neville, Flynn, and Poindexter."

That was not all. But it was enough to tell the Old Firm all that they wanted to know.

Pankhurst and Price stared at the paper and at one another. Pankhurst ran his fingers through his red hair.

"My word! They're starting a school magazine!"

"Ah, that was what Micky Flynn was saying when Poindexter interrupted him."

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes; not a school—but a school magazine! Ha, ha!"

"We're on it."

"The horrid bounders! Starting a school magazine, and keeping the secret all to themselves. We should have looked pretty asses if they had brought this out suddenly, and taken us by surprise."

"Quite so."

"It's quick work, too. You see, it's dated—Wednesday, April 29th."

"It's American hustle, and no mistake. But how are they going to issue the paper?"

"Oh, you can see that. It's to be written in columns on one side of a big sheet, and only one copy. I've seen school magazines done like that before. They might have a frame—My hat!

Of course, that's the parcel which is coming for them to-morrow. You remember they said there was glass in it?"

"A frame and glass for this precious stuff!"

"That's it. Pricey, old son, the Combine won't take the cake this journey. They are going to publish the paper all of a sudden on Wednesday—hang it up in the common room, I expect, and take us all by surprise. I expect the contributions slate us beautifully. I've got an idea."

"You usually have, Panky," said the faithful Price.

"Well, I do think of things," said the gratified Pankhurst. "They're going to bring out their giddy paper with a flourish of trumpets on Wednesday. What's the matter with us bringing out a rival paper?"

"Good! But they'd have had first pull."

"Not if we bring ours out on Tuesday," said Pankhurst coolly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's the idea!" said Panky, grinning. "It's a bit short notice, but it will knock the Combine into a cocked hat."

"But what about the contributions?"

"That's the cream of the joke. We'll collar theirs."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here they are. You can read 'em over and copy 'em down. We must leave everything as we find it, or they'll be suspicious. They won't miss some of this impot paper, and there's pens and ink. We'll get a frame and glass from Clivebank; I'll out over on my bike before school and order them."

"Good! I say, some of these things will alter," said Price, looking over the contributions. "They're slating us here."

"Ha, ha! We'll copy 'em out now, and alter them in our own study to-morrow. We'll take out all the slating of ourselves, and shove in jokes on the Combine."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Quiet, now. It's the joke of the season, but we mustn't be discovered. Get to work and copy out all this piffle as quickly as you can, and then we'll shove it back."

And the pens of the Old Firm were quickly busy. While the Combine were sleeping, in total innocence of what was going on, their rivals copied out the greater part of the contributions—all that was necessary for their purpose. In the dead silence of the night they worked away at express speed, the only sound to break the silence of the study being the scratching of the pens and an occasional chuckle from the youthful copyists. Half-past two chimed out from the school tower before they had finished.

"That will do," said Pankhurst at last. "Put these sheets into your pockets. We must leave these things exactly as we found them. The Combine are not to have a hint of the little game till we suddenly bring out the first number of the paper to-morrow evening."

"Quite so! Ha, ha!"

The Old Firm carefully placed everything as they had found it. Then they stole to their own study, and placed the copies of the contributions in safety. And then, feeling extremely satisfied with their night's work, they went on tiptoe to the Fourth Form dormitory. There was no sound as they entered but the deep breathing of the sleepers; the Combine were slumbering and unsuspecting. Pankhurst and Price chuckled silently and went to bed.

The 7th Chapter.

A Surprise for the Combine—The First Number of the "Cliveden Rag."

PANKHURST and Price were the last up in the Fourth Form dormitory the next morning. They had lost a good deal of sleep, and were heavy-eyed when the rising-bell went. They hurried over their toilet, however, and followed the rest of the Form downstairs.

Neville, Poindexter, and Flynn were talking together in low tones, but they ceased when the Old Firm came near. Pankhurst only grinned. Their caution came too late. The Old Firm were in the "know."

But not a hint did Pankhurst and Price give of their knowledge. After morning school, in the interval before dinner, the Combine went to their study, and after dinner they put in some more time there before afternoon school. Pankhurst and Price did the same in No. 10. Both parties were busy with literary labours, but the Old Firm felt that the laugh was on their side this time.

Pankhurst had sussed down to the village before school on his machine, and the frame and glass had been promised for the afternoon. When afternoon school was over, the Old Firm went to their study, and there sure enough was the package. Pankhurst opened it. Frame and glass, cardboard and backboard, were complete.

"Good!" said Pankhurst. "Now for work."

"Quite so," chuckled Price.

And the Old Firm locked their study door and worked away with the keenness of penny-a-line reporters. They knew that the Combine were similarly occupied, and the knowledge tickled them immensely. The Combine, on their side, were rather surprised by the cessation of trouble from the Old Firm.

"Panky seems to have made up his mind to it," Poindexter remarked, in an interval of literary labour. "I suppose they know they can't get on to the wheeze if we don't choose."

"Faith, and that's thrue for ye, Puntodger!" said Micky Flynn. "But do be careful, kids! Sure and I'm nervous every time I see ye open ye're mouths."

"Well, I like that," said Dick Neville. "It's you that nearly gave the secret away, and if it gets out, I expect you will be to blame."

"Faith, and I—"

"It mustn't get out," said Poindexter. "If it gets out, there will be some scalping done in this study, I guess. But there's not much time now, anyway—the first number of the paper comes out to-morrow afternoon. We shall have the contributions finished to-night, and we can copy the lot out to-morrow while the others are at cricket."

"Good!" said Neville, scribbling away.

"The frame's come from Clivebank, and it is ripping," said Poindexter. "Everything in the garden is lovely, as a matter of fact. Panky and Price will be ready to kick themselves, I guess. Hallo, who's there?"

There was a knock at the study door.

"It's me—Greene," was the ungrammatical reply. "What have you got your door locked for?"

"To keep out silly asses who come and ask idiotic questions."

"Oh, all right. I came to tell you what was on, that's all."

"Anything on?"

"Yes, if you like to come into the Common-room and see."

"Oh, we don't care to come—"

"I tell you, Panky and Price's new school magazine is going strong—"

The Combine jumped up as if moved by the same mechanism.

"What's that, Greeney?"

"Panky and Price's new school magazine is—"

Poindexter tore open the door. The Combine seized Greene, and jammed the amazed junior against the passage wall, and pinned him there.

"Now, then, what do you mean?" asked Poindexter.

"I—I—I—you—you—"

"What's that about Panky and Price starting a new school magazine?"

"It's true! Are you off your rockers? Panky asked me to come and tell you—"

"It's—it's impossible! It can't be—"

"It's up in the common-room, in a frame and glass—"

"Wh-wh-what do they call it?" asked Neville weakly.

"The Cliveden Rag."

"What!" roared three voices. Greene gave a jump.

"I say, let me go—you're staring mad, that's what's the matter with you." And the amazed and indignant junior tore himself away and fairly bolted.

Poindexter looked at his comrades with a sickly expression.

"I guess it's no coincidence, kids! They might have started a paper on their own, but not with the same title. They've found out the secret—and we're done!"

"Let's go and see!"

"I suppose we may as well."

The Combine hurried to the common-room.

There was a thick crowd of juniors in front of a framed sheet hung on the wall. They were reading paragraphs aloud, talking and laughing. The Combine pushed their way forward.

"Hallo, kids," exclaimed Pankhurst affably. "I thought you'd be interested in my idea of a school magazine."

"You—you—you—"

"You mustn't expect too much of the first number. We are going to try and bring out the second in better style. We may let you fellows send in some contributions. Let these kids have a look, you chaps!"

"Ha, ha! Quite so!"

The Combine, with feelings too deep for words, gave the Old Firm one look, and then stepped up to the framed sheet. It was their own magazine, as Poindexter had sketched it out. The title was the same, the contributions were the same—or almost so.

"The Cliveden Rag! A Weekly Journal devoted to the Interests of Sport, Science, Art, and Literature!" murmured Poindexter.

"Published by Pankhurst and Price, the Old Firm!" muttered Neville.

Micky Flynn gave a yell.

"The spalpeens! Look at my poem!"

Micky Flynn's patriotic poem on Ireland was there. But there were changes.

"Oireland, the Beautiful Isle of the Sea,
 The home of the Fenian and moonlight
 free,
 A nice place to live when your cash you
 have spent,
 Because in this island they never pay rent."

There was more of it, but that was enough to make Micky Flynn as red as a turkey-cock. But Poindexter soon found equal cause for wrath. His comic advertisement of Panky and Price as dealers in copper, a reference to their rich auburn hair, had been left out, and in its place was another:

"Poindexter & Co., Dealers in Potted Plants and Canned Cats. Large or small orders for Chicago Carrion promptly executed. N.B.—The tinned beef should be immediately killed when the tin is opened."

"I guess—"

"Look at my sports column!" howled Neville.

There, too, was an alteration. The cricket report read as follows now:

"The opening match of the season was played last week by Cliveden Juniors. Pankhurst and Price, although considerably hampered by Poindexter, Neville, and Flynn, succeeded in securing a victory for Cliveden."

"Faith, and I—"

"I guess—"

"Look here, you rotters—"

"Good number, isn't it?" said Pankhurst blandly. "Ripping idea bringing out a school magazine. We shall keep it up."

"Keep it up! It's our idea—"

"Now don't talk rot, Neville! How could it be your idea when it's us, not you, who have brought out the paper?" exclaimed Pankhurst.

"You rotters—you've boned it—it was our wheeze—"

"You've collared the idea—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And the blessed contributions—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cackling pair of silly dummies—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Trevelyan, the captain of Cliveden, looked in at the door with a frown on his face and a case in his hand.

"Stop that row, you young rascals!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Pankhurst. "We've done you this time, and you can't get out of that!"

"I guess it was a clean do, Panky!"

"Never mind. Look here, the first number of the 'Rag' has gone pretty well—what do you say to combining forces to run the paper, and bringing out a second number between us?"

"Good!" said Poindexter instantly. "I guess that's a bargain!"

And the rivals of Cliveden shook hands on it.

THE END.

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