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EVERY WEDNESDAY—ONE PENNY.

WEEK ENDING MAY 23, 1908.



Very gently at first they pulled on their line, and Blake began to swing through space, describing a sweeping, regular curve, which grew bigger and longer with each successive pull. It was dizzy, dangerous work for him.





# The Cliveden Gardeners

A Grand, Complete Tale of School Life.

BY CHARLES HAMILTON.

## The 1st Chapter. The "Plot."

**P**OINDEXTER!

Monsieur Friquet, the French master at Cliveden, rapped out the name of the American chum, and Lincoln G. Poindexter came with a start out of a brown study.

"Yes, sir!"

Poindexter, zat is ze zird time zat I speak viz you, and you answer me not."

Poindexter coloured.

"I am sorry, sir. I was thinking—"

"Zen you learn not to zink in class," said Monsieur Friquet grimly. "You will write out fifty lines of Racine, Poindexter."

"Certainly, sir."

"And now you pay me more attention viz yourself."

"I guess so, sir," said Poindexter ruefully.

Poindexter's chums, Neville and Flynn, looked at him sympathetically. Monsieur Friquet was taking the Fourth Form in French, and he did not approve of juniors going off into reveries while he was attempting to drive his beautiful language into their heads.

"Faith, and kape yer eyes open, Puntpusher darling," murmured Micky Flynn. "Mossoo is wide awake this morning."

"I guess he is."

"What were you thinking about, Punt?" asked Dick Neville, while the French master was finding his place in the book, which he had snapped shut while speaking to Poindexter.

"Oh, I was thinking about the plot—"

"Poindexter! You talk!"

Monsieur Friquet had one eye on the book, and the other on the American chum, apparently.

"I, sir!" exclaimed Poindexter.

"Yes, you! You talk viz Neville."

"Really, sir—"

"You make zat fifty lines hundred lines," said Monsieur Friquet. "I will keep order in ze class or I know reason vy. Ve vill now proceed viz ze lesson vich ve have not yet commence. Commencez-vous, Poindexter."

"Yes, sir. The place—"

"You not hear me when I talk, or you know ze place," thundered Mossoo.

A red-headed junior leaned over the desk behind Poindexter, and whispered:

"First chapter, Puntpusher; you've got to begin."

"Thanks, Panky," murmured Poindexter.

And Poindexter opened his book and began.

Pankhurst and Price, the red-headed chums of the Fourth, grinned at one another as Poindexter started. Panky had just done Poindexter a good turn. He was always willing to do that, though he was the American chum's rival for the leadership of the Fourth Form at Cliveden. The Old Firm whispered together as Poindexter started.

"You heard what he said to Neville, Pricey?" muttered Pankhurst.

"Quite so."

"He said that he was thinking about the plot."

"That's it,"

Pankhurst chuckled silently.

"He doesn't know we heard; but we're up to the little game now, Pricey. Those bouncers are getting up a plot, and, of course, it's up against us."

"Of course," agreed Price.

"We'll keep our eyes open, rather," said Pankhurst. "I've thought several times the past few days that those three had something on their minds, they've been so serious, and jawed so much among themselves. It's a plot, of course, and against us. We're on to this, Pricey."

"Quite so," agreed Price.

Poindexter, meanwhile, was ploughing through the opening of the school edition of Madame de Staël's "Considerations upon the French Revolution." But there was something else in Poindexter's mind, which led to confusion. Perhaps he was still thinking about the "plot" which had so interested Pankhurst and Price.

"On ne sait comment approcher des quatorze mois qui ont suivi la proscription de la Gironde," said Poindexter. "One does not know how to approach the Head to ask for a—"

"Vat!" screamed Monsieur Friquet.

Poindexter turned red.

"I beg your pardon, sir, I—"

"Zere is nozzing about Head in zat passage. One does not know how to approach ze fourteen months which follow ze proscription of ze Gironde!" shrieked M. Friquet. "How can you make such mistake as zat?"

"I guess I was thinking of something else, sir."

"Ah, you are zinking again! Perhaps two hundred lines instead of vun hundred teach you not to zink, Poindexter."

"Perhaps so, sir."

"Zen you take two hundred. Now go on."

"Il semble qu'on descende, comme le Dante, de cercle en cercle, toujours plus bas dans les enfers—"

"Go on!"

"It seems as if one descends, like Dante—er—"

"Go on, Poindexter."

"Yes, sir. It seems as if one descends—"

"Vy you not go on?"

"I guess I haven't got the grip on it yet, sir," said Poindexter. "It seems as if one descends—"

"Cannot you zink?" exclaimed Monsieur Friquet sarcastically.

"Think, sir?"

"Oui. Cannot you zink, I say?"

"Oh, yes, sir," said Poindexter calmly. "I could, sir, but I'm not going to."

"Ciel! Vat?"

"You told me not to, sir."

"Vat!"

"You gave me two hundred lines for thinking in class, sir," said Poindexter, with an injured air.

Micky Flynn chuckled, but Poindexter was as grave as a judge. Monsieur Friquet adjusted his glasses and stared at him.

"Poindexter!"

"Yes, sir."

"I say zat you zink out zat passage."

"But you told me not to think in class, sir. If I thought out that passage against your orders, you might give me another hundred lines."

The French master breathed hard through his nose.

"Poindexter, I not know vezer you ze most impertinent boy or ze most stupid boy in ze class," he said.

"No, sir!"

"Zere are some zings zat you must not zink of, and some zings zat you must zink," said Monsieur Friquet. "You zink about ze lessons, and you not zink about ozzer matters. Comprenez?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"Zen ven I say zat you not zink, I mean zat you zink only of ze mattair in hand, and not zink of anything else, Poindexter."

"My hat!" murmured Dick Neville. "Zink is cheap to-day."

Poindexter beamed as if with a new comprehension.

## The 2nd Chapter. The Old Firm Do Not Score.

**P**ANKHURST and Price were first out of the Fourth Form-room when the lesson was over, and they disappeared immediately. The Cliveden Combine walked down the passage more slowly, deep in conversation.

"Sure and ye've got into trouble already over the new idea, Puntdodger," Micky Flynn remarked.

"Oh, I guess I don't care," said Poindexter. "Mossoo will very likely never ask for the lines. You see, the thing will want some thinking out."

"Let's get into the study and talk it over," said Neville. "We don't want it to get about among the fellows till we're fairly started."

"I guess you're right."

The three chums went up to their study—No. 4 in the Fourth Form. Poindexter closed the door.

"Now, the first question is about the plot," he said. "Shall we go direct to the Head and ask him?"

Micky Flynn chuckled.

"Faith, and sure, as ye told Mossoo, one does not know how to approach the Head on the subject, Puntpusher."

"I should think he'd back us up," said Neville. "We shall have to be circumspect about it, if we don't want those rotters Panky and Price to get on to the wheeze. Of course, they will have to know, but we want to be fairly started first. What was that noise?"

"I didn't hear any noise."

"It's that ass Simpson's dog got into the study again, I suppose. I found the beast in here yesterday, smelling round the cupboard."

"I can't see any dog."

"He's under the table."

"Kick him out!"

"Faith, and he ought to be taught to kape out of a respectable study," said Micky Flynn.

"Hould on, Dicky darling! I'll just let out my foot under the table, and send him flying, as a lesson to the baste."

There was a sudden movement, and a gasp under the table. The long table-cover to the floor prevented the Fourth-Formers from seeing what was underneath; but Neville and Poindexter knew at once that the sound was not made by a dog.

But Micky Flynn's somewhat large foot was already kicking under the table.

There was a fearful yell.

"Ow!"

Flynn gave a jump.

"Howly mother av St. Patrick! That's not a dog!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Neville. "I fancy I know Panky's voice!"

"My hat! They're under our table!" exclaimed Poindexter, in amazement. "Just a minute. I'll squirt some ink under there."

Two forms came rolling out from under the table, and the red-headed chums of the Fourth Form jumped to their feet.

Pankhurst was rubbing his leg where Micky Flynn's boot had smitten him.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted Poindexter. "What are you doing in our study, you copper merchants?"

"Ow! I'll wring that silly Flynn's silly neck!"

"Sure, and how was I to know that it was yez under the table?" exclaimed Flynn. "Sure, I thought it was a dog!"

"You've nearly broken my leg!"

"Faith, ye've a lot to be thankful for! It might have been quite broken," said Flynn consolingly. "Sure, a merciful man is merciful to his baste, that's why I kicked so gently. I didn't want to hurt the baste under the table."

"You've hurt me, you ass!"

"Well, I kicked the wrong baste."

"You confounded—"

"But what the dickens are you doing under our table?" exclaimed Dick Neville. "I hope you didn't come here to listen, Panky. That's not like you."

Pankhurst turned red.

"It's not listening!" he exclaimed hotly. "It's scouting in the enemy's country, that's what it is."

"Oh, I see! And what did you want to come scouting here for?"

"You fellows have got something on," grunted Pankhurst, still rubbing his leg. "I heard Poindexter speaking about a plot in class, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Cliveden Combine went off into a roar of laughter.

Pankhurst and Price stared at them in amazement.

"What are you cackling at?" demanded Pankhurst. "I tell you I heard you say distinctly that you were thinking about the plot, so it's no good trying to pull the wool over our eyes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You've got some plot up against us, and, of course, we're going to get on to it," said Pankhurst. "I don't see what you are chortling about."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, come along, Pricey!" said Pankhurst crossly. "It seems that we've got into Colney Hatch by mistake."

"Quite so," said Price.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Old Firm turned again in the doorway. They were puzzled. The merriment of the Combine was evidently genuine. They were laughing till the tears ran down their cheeks; but for the life of him Pankhurst could not guess what there was to laugh at.

"You utter asses," began Pankhurst.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly cuckoos!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You howling duffers! Where's the joke? What is there to cackle at?"

"Two silly japs!" replied Poindexter, wiping the tears from his cheeks. "So you know about the plot? The plot! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Flynn and Neville.

"You shrieking idiots!"

"We haven't got the plot yet," chuckled Poindexter. "We're going to the Head to ask him for one."

Pankhurst stared at him blankly.

"Off your silly rocker?" he inquired.

"I guess not."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, come on, Pricey. Leave 'em cackling!" said Pankhurst, and the Old Firm marched off in high dudgeon.

The yells of laughter from No. 4 Study followed them down the passage.

"My only panama hat!" ejaculated Poindexter. "I guess this is about the richest joke of the season. Fancy Panky getting on the track of the plot—that plot! Oh, dear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess he'll feel several sizes smaller when he knows it's a garden plot we were talking about," grinned Poindexter. "I say, it's a good idea to ask the Head at once. We shall catch him before lunch if we go now. Come on!"

## The 3rd Chapter. Neville Imparts Information.

**C**OME in!"

Dr. Rayne, the Head of Cliveden, called out the words as a tap came at his door.

The door opened, and the Cliveden Combine presented themselves to view.

The doctor smiled.

Many circumstances had at various times brought him into contact with the chums of the Fourth, and he liked them.

His smile gave the Combine a feeling of encouragement.

"If you please, sir," began Poindexter.

"Faith, and—"

"Shut up, Micky!" whispered Poindexter.

"But sure, I'm goin' to explain to the doo-ther!"

"Quiet, you ass!"

"Well, my boys, what is it?" asked the Head mildly.

"Faith, and I—"



"Let's see you—ow! ow! You're pouring the water on me!" yelled Pankhurst. Poindexter grinned. "I'm watering the crops," he remarked. "There's a fine crop of idiots here, and I'm watering them. Have some, Pricey? You, too, Gatty! And you, Philpot."



**THE CLIVEN GARDENERS.**  
(Continued from the previous page.)

"I guess we've a favour to ask of you, sir," said Poindexter.

"You may go on."

"We've lately taken up gardening, sir—"

"Taken up what?"

"Gardening."

"I should hardly imagine that you have had many opportunities, Poindexter," the Head remarked, with an amused smile.

"Well, sir, I guess we haven't. We've talked it over, and sized it up so far, but haven't started the practical side of the matter yet. That's what we want to do. If you would be kind enough to let us—"

"Faith, if ye'd have the great kindness to let us have—"

"To let us have a plot—"

"Of ground—"

"Somewhere where we could dig, and sow, and so on," said Dick Neville.

"Then we should be able to go ahead, sir," said Poindexter. "I guess we should be able in a short time to supply the school kitchen with vegetables at very low rates, so Cliveden College might do well out of it in the long run."

The Head smiled.

"I hardly think that is likely to come to pass, Poindexter," he replied; "but if you really have a taste for gardening, there is no reason why you should not have a small plot of ground to cultivate."

"Thank you, sir," said the Cliveden Combine gratefully, with one voice.

"I will speak to my gardener about it," said the Head. "He will inform you further. I am very glad to see you taking up such a healthy and wholesome hobby."

"Thank you, sir."

And the Cliveden Combine retired from the Head's study in high spirits.

"A jolly old sport, that's what he is!" said Poindexter. "We might have known he would back us up. What have you got there, Neville?"

"Oh, it's my new gardening-book!"

"Sure and I can tell ye enough about gardening, Dicky darling, without the trouble of referin' to a book."

"Rats!" was Neville's polite reply. "We're nearly in the middle of May. The average rainfall in May is one point ninety-seven inches."

"Is it really?"

"Yes," said Neville, looking into his book. "The average temperature is fifty-two degrees."

"Go hon!"

The sunshine is fifteen and a half hours daily.

"How interesting!"

"I'll read you some more about it," said Neville, stopping in a deep window recess to get the light on his book. "It's all awfully interesting, and it's very useful to fellows who are taking up gardening in May. Don't interrupt me."

"I guess we won't," said Poindexter, winking at Micky Flynn.

"Faith, and I'll promise not to, Dicky darling," said Flynn, winking back at the American chum.

"In May the beds are full of fresh green foliage and early flowers," went on Neville, reading out from his valuable book. He had his back turned to Poindexter and Flynn, and did not notice that they were stealing away on tiptoe. "May is essentially the spring month, as far as the garden is concerned. During this month there is a considerable rise in the temperature, but the danger of late frosts at night is not yet over, and in late seasons young plants still require protection in the open. The increasing power of the sun will render shading necessary in the greenhouse—"

Poindexter and Flynn had promised not to interrupt, but the stilly silence awakened Neville's suspicions at last, and he glanced round from the book.

He was quite alone.

"My hat! Where—how—"

Poindexter and Flynn had disappeared. Dick closed the book with a wrathful snap, and put it under his arm. When he emerged into the Close he found his chums on the junior cricket pitch, and he put his book in his pocket and joined them.

**The 4th Chapter.**

**Back to the Land.**

MR. McNAB, the gardener of Cliveden, put his head into No. 4 Study at Cliveden after afternoon school that day, and the chums looked at him eagerly. They knew what he had come to tell them, and they were on their feet at once.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. McNab," said Poindexter. "Will you have a cup of tea with us?"

The gardener looked at the study tea-table. The fire was out, and the American chum was adding tepid water to the leaves in the pot, which had been drained dry. Perhaps the sight did not tempt Mr. McNab. At all events, he shook his head.

"Heh, no!" he said. "Thank you, Master Poindexter, I've had my tea. If you young gentlemen will come with me, I'll show you the plot which the doctor has told me to allot to you."

"We'll come at once, McNab."

The Combine eagerly followed the gardener. Pankhurst and Price spotted them in the passage, and looked amazed at the sight of the gardener with them.

"Hallo, what's on?" exclaimed Pankhurst. "Are you going weeding, Poindexter?"

"You'll see soon," said Poindexter loftily.

"I'm going to show the young gentlemen the plot," said Mr. McNab.

Pankhurst stared.

"The plot! What the dickens—"

The Combine walked on with the gardener, leaving the Old Firm staring at one another.

"What was he driving at, Pricey?" said Pankhurst.

"Blessed if I know," said Price.

"McNab can't be in a plot with those rotters."

"Quite so—I mean, of course not."

Pankhurst made a sudden gesture.

"My Aunt Jane Jemina! Of course! I've got it!"

"Got what?"

"The wheeze!" exclaimed Pankhurst. "Those kids are going in for gardening, and they've got a plot of ground."

"By Jove!" said Price. "I shouldn't be surprised. Then that was the plot Poindexter was talking about in class this morning."

"Ha, ha! Yes. No wonder the rotters cackled," exclaimed Pankhurst. "We were on the wrong track—it was the wrong kind of plot we were after, anyway. So they're going in for gardening, are they? Let's follow on."

The Old Firm hurried out on the track of the Combine. Pankhurst's eyes were gleaming with the light of combat.

"They fancy this will take a rise out of us," he exclaimed. "I suppose Poindexter reckons he'll raise vegetables to cook in the study, and so on. He's conceited enough for anything. We're on in this act, Pricey."

"Quite so."

"They think they'll take a rise out of us, and get a lot of praise," said Pankhurst, with a sniff. "Well, we'll see. Perhaps their amateur gardening won't be a howling success, after all. Hallo, there's Neville."

The Fourth-Formers had entered the garden at the upper end of the old Close. In the distance McNab could be seen talking to Poindexter and Flynn, but Neville had stopped under a tree and was reading. The Old Firm joined him. Pankhurst tapped him on the shoulder.

"Hallo," said Neville, without looking up, "is that you, Punt? I say, this is worth knowing, old chap. In May there is a great deal to be done by the amateur gardener. Watering will be required as the weather becomes dryer, and with the quick growth of the young shoots there will be a great increase in the insects that prey upon them, and of the weeds that choke their growth. The young gardener must be watchful for greenfly and slugs, and never—Hallo!"

Pankhurst's chuckle made Neville look up.

"Hallo, what are you ginger-merchants doing here?" he said. "I thought it was Poindexter. Why don't you go and get some cricket practice, you two? You need it."

"Oh, that's all right," said Pankhurst carelessly. "We're the best bat and bowler in the Form now, and—"

"Quite so."

"You're the what?" exclaimed Neville, with a withering look. "Come to think of it, I believe you did take a wicket once, Panky."

"Hallo, Neville," called out Poindexter. "Come on!"

Neville hurried away to join his chums. Mr. McNab had shown them the allotted plot, and had gone about his work. It was a pleasant little piece of ground, in a rather obscure corner, Mr. McNab perhaps thinking that junior gardening would not be ornamental, and wishing to keep the efforts of the Combine out of public view. But there was no fault to be found with the ground.

"This is ours," said Poindexter, waving his hand over it. "All within the chalk-lines is for us, and we can grow what we like—cabbages and camellias and vegetable-marrows and orchids—"

"Faith, and I think a crop of orchids would be a good idea," exclaimed Micky Flynn. "Some orchids fetch a guinea each, you know, and we could soon pay our expenses with them, and have something left in hand."

Poindexter grunted.

"Do you think we could raise that kind of orchid, ass?"

"I don't see why we shouldn't! I don't believe in wasting one's time raising potatoes when orchids sell at a guinea each—"

"We should want glass, and expensive things of all sorts."

"But there would be a big profit—"

"Oh, rats!"

"You can have your own way, Puntdodger, as it's your idea," said Micky Flynn. "But if you ask me, I think we ought to raise orchids, and sell them at a guinea each. It would pay best in the long run."

"Panky and Price were talking to you just now, weren't they, Dick?" asked Poindexter, changing the subject.

"Yes; they seem to have got on to the wheeze."

"Well, it doesn't matter now. We're first in the field. If they take up amateur gardening, we can chip them about imitating our ideas, and make them sit up, I guess."

"Faith, and ye're right."

"McNab has lent us these spades and things. The first job is to dig the ground well, and turn it over. May as well start now."

Poindexter and Flynn threw off their jackets and took the spades. Neville hastily opened his valuable book on gardening.

"Half a mo, Puntdodger. I'm not quite sure that that's the best thing to do—"

"Oh, chuck that pesky book away!"

"There's a jolly lot of valuable information in this book," said Neville. "Listen to this: In this month—May—lawns should be closely cut—"

"I guess we haven't any lawns."

"Gravel walks carefully weeded and swept—"

"If you'll kindly point out our gravel walks."

"Blanks in the borders must be filled in with perennial stock—"

"But the whole plot's a giddy blank," exclaimed Poindexter.

"Shrubberies should be thinned and cut back—"

"We haven't any shrubberies, fathead."

"I don't care! I know that in amateur gardening you can't do better than get a good book and follow the directions."

"Ass!"

"Fathead!"

"We haven't any garden till we make one."

"That's all very well—"

"Oh, chuck that book over the wall, and take a spade," said Poindexter. "I guess all that will come later. At present we've got to dig."

"Oh, well, have your own way, Poindexter, as it's your idea; but, mind, you're responsible for how it turns out."

Poindexter grunted. The three juniors, in their shirt-sleeves, grasped the spades and began to work industriously. Pankhurst and Price had disappeared. But not for long! In a momentary pause from labour the Combine looked up, and found the Old Firm on the spot again, with about a dozen fellows from the Fourth Form and the Remove, looking on with great interest at the proceedings.

**The 5th Chapter.**

**The Gardeners.**

PANKHURST nodded to the Combine with a grin.

"Behold the amateur gardeners, gentlemen," he exclaimed. "There is absolutely no charge whatever for looking at them, though they're funnier than most of the things you pay to see at a show."

"Quite so."

The Combine turned red. They were red already with manual labour in the warm May sun, but now they grew redder. Their audience was a large one, and increasing every minute. Fellows came from near and far to watch the efforts of the amateur gardeners.

"Oh, clear off, you silly ass!" exclaimed Poindexter.

"Oh, come now," said Pankhurst. "Don't deprive us of an exhibition that beats a monkey-show into a cocked hat."

"It's all right, Puntpounder," said Gatty. "We're interested."

"Yes, rather," exclaimed Greene; "keep it up for a time while I go and fetch my camera, and I'll take a snap of the Cliveden Gardeners."

"If you bring your camera near here I'll bash it with this spade!" roared Poindexter.

"Oh, that's all right! I can take a snap from a distance, and we'll have it in the next number of the 'Rag,'" said Greene. And he bolted.

"Good!" said Pankhurst heartily. "That's a really ripping idea of Greene's. What's the good

of a school magazine without a picture of the Cliveden Gardeners in it? I say, Puntpounder, what are you going to grow there?"

"Find out."

"Well, I'm only asking for information, to send you some Chicago tinned beef to put for that purpose." It would be simply ripping.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors. Any little joke at Chicago beef always tickled them, as Poindexter's father had made his fortune in the canning trade.

"Oh, shut up!" growled Poindexter.

"Well, if you haven't done so, it's time you did," said Pankhurst, with a shake of the head. "Tinned beef is cheaper than guano, and it's just nothing. You could let Neville stand by with a spade to kill it when the tin was opened—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you ass!"

"We're looking. We're awfully interested in amateur gardening."

Poindexter bent towards Neville.

"Go and borrow McNab's water-can," he whispered. "Mind you bring it full of water."

"What-ho!" grinned Neville.

He darted away. The Old Firm glanced after him, and then resumed the cheerful and congenial occupation of chipping the gardeners.

"Go it," said Pankhurst encouragingly. "You're resting from your labours too soon. You haven't half dug up the ground yet, and we shall expect a big crop of vegetable marrows next week. Of course, you'll supply fellows in the same Form on very reasonable terms, won't you?"

"Quite so! We shall expect oranges and bananas cheaper than we get them at the tuck shop," said Price.

"To say nothing of grapes," exclaimed Philpot. "Grapes are expensive, and if Poindexter raises a really good crop—"

"And figs and dates," said Medway. "I'm awfully fond of figs and dates, Puntpounder. Do you think you'll have any ripe next week?"

"Hallo! Here's Neville with the watering-pot," said King. "Now we are going to see the Chicago Combine really at work."

Poindexter smiled grimly.

The speaker was quite right, but not exactly in the way he meant.

"Go it!" exclaimed Pankhurst encouragingly, as Neville handed the large green water-can, nearly full of water, to Poindexter. "Let's see you water the crops—"

Poindexter swung round the can.

"Let's see you—ow! ow! You're pouring the water on me!" yelled Pankhurst.

Poindexter grinned.

"I'm watering the crops," he remarked. "There's a fine crop of idiots here, and I'm watering them. Have some, Pricey! You, too, Gatty! And you, Philpot."

"Ow! ow!"

"Stop!"

"Chuck it!"

"You beast!"

"Ow!"

But Poindexter did not stop. The large rose of the water-can was sending a sweeping spray of water over the juniors, and the whole crowd came in for some of it. There was a quick movement of retreat. The juniors dodged and ducked to avoid the water, but there was no escaping it.

Pankhurst and Price fairly cut and ran at last, and the rest of the jeerers followed them. Poindexter rushed in pursuit, and did not desist till almost the last drop of water was gone from the can.

Then he returned grinning to his chums, who were roaring with laughter.

"I guess Panky and Price won't come and look on at our gardening again in a hurry," Poindexter remarked.

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

"I fancy they won't!" said Dick Neville.

"Ha, ha, ha! It was rather a cold douche for the Old Firm. Hallo! Here comes Greene with his camera."

"Get some more water in the can, quick."

Dick rushed off with the empty can. Greene came up smiling, with his camera under his arm. He seemed surprised to find the crowd gone.

"Hallo! Have they left you alone so soon, Puntdodger?" he exclaimed. "I thought they took more interest in amateur gardening than that, I did really."

"Your mistake, you see."

"Never mind, I'm going to snap you for the mag. Stand there in your shirt-sleeves, holding the spades. You look rather dirty and disreputable, but that won't matter a bit. It will really add to the local colour. But where's Neville?"

"Here he comes."

"Good; I'll take him carrying the water-can. Buck up, Neville, come and—ow! Gerrold! What on earth are you doing with that water-can?"

"Watering a cranky photographer," said Neville calmly, as the stream of water played over the astounded Greene.

"Here, chuck it—I—ow—you—oh!"

The amateur photographer took to his heels, followed by a yell of laughter from the chums of the Fourth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We shan't be bothered any more," said Poindexter. "But I guess we'll keep that can handy in case we should be! Now to work."

And the Combine resumed spade-work, and as darkness fell they had got through an immense amount of labour, and their clothes were sticking to their skin. But it was healthy labour, and they felt all the better for it, though a little tired in the evening. And Poindexter promised his chums that the morrow should see the first sowing.

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"YOU MUST EARN MORE MONEY!"



The 6th Chapter.

Pankhurst Has an Idea.

It was all very well for the Old Firm to laugh, but the Combine were not to be laughed out of their new hobby. It was quite possible that the amateur gardening idea would catch on at Cliveden, and, in that case, the Combine would score a big point over their less enterprising adversaries. Pankhurst and Price knew that very well, and they were not idle. Of course, the wheeze is going to be busted," said Pankhurst. "I hear they're sowing seeds to-day, and Neville is gassing bosh out of his book all over the place. He's bored nearly to death everybody who will listen to him, and a hundred lines from the Form-master for spouting that piffle in class when he ought to have construed Virgil. He forgot himself."

"Quite so."

"We're going to show them up and make them look asses," said Pankhurst. "As they are asses, you know, that ought really not to be very difficult. Suppose we go down and have a look at them again."

"What price the water-can?"

"H'm! Well, perhaps it would be as well to give them a wide berth. No good getting soaked as we did yesterday. Pointpusher is a reckless beast with a water-can. I've still got a pair of trousers hanging up to dry. Hallo, there are the diffusers! They look as if they had been through it."

The Combine were coming in from the direction of the garden. They looked very warm and dusty, and the thick boots they were wearing were encrusted with mud. But there was a healthy flush in their faces, and a sparkle in their eyes. Gardening seemed to agree with them.

"We've got the wallflower seeds in now," Pankhurst remarked as they came by. The Old Firm were lounging under the elms, and the Combine did not notice them. "I don't know exactly how long it takes for them to come up, but I think we can look for them pretty soon, kids."

Neville stopped and took his book out of his pocket.

"Wait a minute, Poindexter; I'll tell you—"

"Oh, never mind," said the Chicago chum. "We've had enough of that book. I verily believe you've read out half of it to-day."

"You can't do better than get a good book and follow the directions, when you take up amateur gardening," said Neville obstinately. "Lemme see—in May you sow aster, antirrhinum, carnation, calceolaria, marigold—"

"Are you coming along?"

"No hurry. It is now time to attend to the climbing plants, which should be trained so as not to become tangled—"

"Well, we're going in to tea," said Poindexter. "You can read that out to the trees. Hallo, here's Panky and Price; perhaps they'd like to listen."

"Faith, and it's hungry as a hunter I am," said Micky Flynn. "Shut up now, Dicky darling, and be ather comin' in to tay."

Dick Neville grunted and snapped his book shut.

"You chaps won't make much of a success of gardening if you don't go in for it scientifically," he said.

"Rats!" said Poindexter cheerfully. "You're becoming a holy terror with that pesky book. Come on."

The Old Firm grinned as the Combine walked on and entered the house.

"So they've been planting wallflowers, have they?" said Pankhurst. "Let's go and have a look at the place, Pricey."

Price hesitated for a moment.

"I say, Panky—"

"Well?"

"It wouldn't be quite the thing to damage the garden."

Pankhurst slapped him on the shoulder.

"Quite right, Pricey. Who's talking about damaging the garden?"

"Oh, that's all right, then!"

"Come along, kid. I've got an idea working in my brain, and it wants thinking out. Come and have a look at the garden."

The Old Firm strolled away towards the plot of ground cultivated for the last two days by the Cliveden Combine.

It was really beginning to look very nice. It had been dug up and smoothed down, and the planting had been done carefully—so far as it had proceeded. It had not gone very far yet; a garden was not made in a day. The plot looked very neat and tidy.

"They're getting on," said Pankhurst thoughtfully. "You heard them say that they had put in wallflower seeds, Pricey?"

"Quite so."

"I don't know exactly when they come up, but there's no sign of them yet."

Price stared.

"I suppose they couldn't be expected to come up in half an hour, Panky."

Pankhurst grinned.

"Well, no; but it would be very pleasant for the Combine if a crop of wallflowers sprang up in a single night."

"But they couldn't."

"Yes, they could—if we helped them," said Pankhurst coolly. "Those three chaps know absolutely nothing about gardening. I'll wager here to-morrow, all a-growing and a-blowing, they would think it was due to their careful gardening."

Price cackled.

"Oh, Panky!"

"It's rather a good wheeze, whether they tumble to it or not," chuckled Pankhurst. "We could get the plants from Blum, the florist in the

village, and tell him to call and see the Combine about supplying more. He's anxious to deal with Cliveden fellows, and he'd jump at the chance."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's take a stroll down to the village now," said Pankhurst; and the chums walked down to the gates of Cliveden. From the windows of Study No. 4, the Combine, who were having their tea, saw Pankhurst and Price go down to the gates.

"We've done those copper merchants," Poindexter remarked, with a grin. "They don't know anything about gardening, and they can't keep level with us this time."

"Faith, and ye're right, Puntdodger darling. But we should go ahead a bit more, I'm thinkin'. If we made a profit out of the garden—"

"I guess I've no objection to that, if it can be done, Micky."

"Well, then, why not adopt my illigant suggestion and grow orchids, and sell them at a guinea apiece?"

"Ass! I tell you it can't be done."

"I don't see why it can't be done. Where there's a will there's a way, and sure it's worth thryin', intoirly, when there's so much to be made out of it."

"You're an ass, Micky!" said Dick Neville, opening his famous book. "Listen to this—"

"Faith, and I'd rather not."

"But I want to convince you."

"Sure, I'd rather not be convinced—I give in now."

"Oh, ring off, and listen. 'Orchids, especially Epiphytes—'

"Faith, and I—"

"—require considerable heat, and are only suitable for culture where considerable attention can be paid to the requirements of each individual plant. The Cypripediums are the hardest class, requiring the least refinement in their cultivation—"

"Cheese it!"

"Faith, and sure ye—"

"—But they can only be grown in a special soil of fibrous peat, under glass. They must always be kept moist and warm—"

"Ow! Cheese it! I give you best."

"—In summer they require an abundant supply of water—"

Poindexter grasped the teapot.

"Are you going to chuck that, Neville, or shall I chuck this?" he demanded.

"Oh, all right; if you prefer to remain in ignorance—"

"I guess we do."

"Faith, and I don't see, ather all, why we can't cultivate orchids and make a fortune," Micky Flynn remarked, as if he had not heard or heeded a word of Neville's reading.

"If you say the word orchid again, you get this teapot on your chest," said Lincoln G. Poindexter darkly.

"Sure, and—"

"Shut up, and pass the jam!"

And no more was heard of either Neville's book or Micky's orchids during tea.

The 7th Chapter.  
A Wonderful Crop—The Old Firm's Little Joke!

"GARDEN getting on all right?" Pankhurst asked carelessly the next morning. The Combine had just come in from an early morning visit to the plot, and they were looking extremely pleased.

"I guess so," said Poindexter. "We haven't had much experience in this sort of thing, but I must say that we're getting a ripping success."

"Anything come up yet?"

"Yes; the wallflowers just showing."

"Eh? When did you plant them?"

"Yesterday."

"And they're coming up already?"

"I guess so."

Pankhurst closed one eye significantly.

"You can come and look at them if you like," said Neville testily. "I know it's wonderfully quick work, but I attribute it to the careful way we manured the ground."

"Oh, I suppose you used Chicago tinned beef."

"No, we didn't," said Poindexter. "But I can give you a Chicago thick ear if you don't give us a little less of the tinned beef."

"Faith, and ye can come and see the garden for yerself, Panky," said Micky Flynn. "I was surprised to see them coming up, but there's no doubt about it."

"Well, I don't want to doubt your word," said Pankhurst, with a shake of the head; "but I must say I'll believe that when I see it."

"Come and see it, then."

"Certainly, if it's to be seen. Come on, Pricey. We'll believe this when we see it, eh?"

"Quite so," said Price.

The Old Firm followed Poindexter, Neville, and Flynn to the garden plot. Poindexter, with a lofty smile, pointed out tufts of green showing above the soil where the wallflower seeds had been put in the previous day.

"I guess that settles it," he remarked.

Pankhurst nodded dubiously.

"Yes, I suppose so," he assented. "Unless you fellows have shoved those in there just to take us in."

Poindexter snorted.

"Yes, I guess we're likely to muck up our garden on your account," he said. "Anyway, you'll see the wallflowers themselves soon."

When the Old Firm were alone again, they hugged each other in unspeakable mirth.

"Not a suspicion," murmured Pankhurst.

"Not in the least."

"They wouldn't dream that we paid the plot a visit over-night and stuck those sprigs in there."

"Hardly."

"My hat! This gardening wheeze grows funnier every day," said Pankhurst. "There's a big laugh coming; but it won't be for the Cliveden Combine, I fancy."

"Quite so."

The Combine paid another visit to the flower-bed after morning school. They worked there for some time, carefully avoiding disturbing the wallflowers. After they had left the spot, two red-headed youths appeared from behind the nearest cover, with huge grins upon their faces, and paper parcels in their hands.

Pankhurst and Price were late for afternoon school. Mr. Lanyon, the Form-master, was heavily down upon them, and the Old Firm received impots of a hundred lines each. But



The Irish junior was back in a few minutes, and he burst into the study so suddenly that Neville dropped the teapot he was holding, and there was a crash of breaking china. "You ass!" howled Neville. "Look at that!" "Never mind looking at that. Come and look at the wallflowers!"

they took those impots cheerfully. Perhaps they thought the game was worth the candle.

After school, Micky Flynn ran down to the garden plot to see how the wallflowers were getting on, while Poindexter and Neville were getting tea in the study. The Irish junior was back in a few minutes, and he burst into the study so suddenly that Neville dropped the teapot he was holding, and there was a crash of breaking china.

"Arrah, then—"

"You ass!" howled Neville. "Look at that!"

"Never mind looking at that. Come and look at the wallflowers!"

"Anything wrong with them, Micky?" asked Poindexter anxiously.

"Wrong! No! They're out!"

"Out of the ground?"

"Arrah, no; out in blossom!"

"Impossible!"

"I tell you it's so."

"Now, don't rot, Micky."

"Faith, and I'm not rottin' intoirly. I tell ye the wallflowers are in full bloom, all a-growin' and a-blowin'!" exclaimed Micky Flynn excitedly.

"It can't be."

"Come and see them!" exclaimed Flynn; and he caught his chums by the arms and dragged them by main force out of the study.

"I say, the kettle will boil over."

"Blow the kettle!"

"But—"

"Come on!"

Poindexter and Neville were catching Flynn's excitement. It seemed impossible that the wallflowers had come up already, yet the early springing from the ground had been unusual. Who could tell what might not come of careful gardening, such as they had bestowed upon the plot?

The three juniors hurried out of the house.

"Hallo! what's the row?" exclaimed Pankhurst.

But they ran on without heeding him. The Old Firm followed, and the sight of the juniors

running excitedly naturally drew other fellows after them, and quite a crowd arrived on the scene with the Combine.

Poindexter and Neville uttered exclamations of amazement. True enough, the wallflowers were in full bloom.

The border planted with them was in a blaze with brown and yellow, all of them quite fresh and lively and in the best condition.

"My hat!" gasped Poindexter.

"Splendid!" said Pankhurst. "I think that's a record—unless you fellows are having a joke on us."

"Of course they are," said Gatty. "Wallflowers couldn't grow up in that time."

Poindexter turned upon him.

"I guess they have. I swear we put nothing but seeds into that border. It's the ripping way we manured it, I guess. We've accidentally made a great discovery in gardening, that's what it amounts to. It must be the way we manured the bed that made the plants spring up in this wonderful way, and I'm going to make notes of the method, and send them to the gardening papers. Everybody ought to know."

"Sure, and ye're right, Puntpusher. We can't be selfish enough to keep a discovery like that to ourselves, though perhaps we might patent it."

"It's marvellous, that's what it is," said Dick Neville. "Yes, you fellows can cackle. Great discoverers always get cackled at. I think none of you ever knew us to tell lies, and we give you our word, honour bright, that we planted the seeds only yesterday, and haven't touched them since."

"Then it's a blessed miracle," said Gatty.

The juniors, some believing and some disbelieving, all puzzled, moved away, leaving the amateur gardeners to admire their wonderful crop of wallflowers. The news spread, and fellows came from all parts of Cliveden to look at them. Seniors and juniors alike came to look, and the Combine deemed it advisable to remain on the spot, in case curious fingers should pluck specimens up, and denude that flower border. They explained to successive comers how they had put the seeds in only the day before, and in most cases were rewarded with bursts of ribald laughter. Apart from the wallflowers, the visitors to the garden plot seemed to have some joke up amongst themselves, and at last Crane of the Fifth gave the Combine the clue to it.

"There's something that concerns you chaps on the notice-board," he remarked, after listening with a broad grin to Poindexter's explanation of the way he had manured that border, which accounted for the wonderful growth of the flowers.

"The notice-board!" exclaimed Poindexter, puzzled. "How—"

"Better go and look at it."

The fellows standing round roared. A sudden sense of something in the wind smote the Combine with a chill of dismay. They walked away quickly, leaving the fellows yelling. They entered the hall quickly. A crowd was gathered round the school notice-board, chuckling, and grinning, and cackling. There was a shout.

"Here they are!"

The Combine were allowed to approach the board.

A paper was pinned up along with the notices—a paper that caught Poindexter's eye at once. It was a bill made out by Blum, the florist, and ran as follows:

"To wallflowers supplied to Master Pankhurst, on account of L. G. Poindexter, Esq., 6s."

Poindexter gasped.

"Faith and phwat—"

"Done!" groaned Dick Neville.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Pankhurst and Price.

"It cost six bob, but it was worth it."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the crowd of juniors.

The Combine stood absolutely speechless for a minute or so. The truth sank into their minds. The wonderful growth of wallflowers was not due to their marvellous gardening, but to the joking propensities of Pankhurst and Price. The flowers had been planted there over the seeds, and that was why the Old Firm had been late for afternoon school that day.

"My—my only hat!" muttered Poindexter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Grand old gardeners!"

"What price wallflowers?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You rotters!" yelled Poindexter, and he made a rush at the convulsed Old Firm. But the crowd closed round, and bore the furious Combine back.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

With the loud laughter ringing in their ears the Combine moved away. The utter ridicule was too much even for their nerves. But roars of laughter followed them up to their study. There they looked at one another in grim silence for some moments.

"I guess it's a do," said Poindexter. "We ought to have known better."

"Sure and it would have been all right if ye'd taken my advice and grown orchids instead of wallflowers," declared Micky Flynn.

"It all comes of not following the directions in the book," said Dick Neville, pulling the precious volume out of his pocket. "Here's the chapter on wallflowers—if you had read it carefully it would have been all right. Listen to this."

"I guess not. Cheese it, both of you. We're done, and we can't wriggle out of it. Hark! they're still laughing."

Faintly from below came the merry echo.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Poindexter rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"I guess I'm done with amateur gardening for a bit," he remarked.

And Neville and Flynn "guessed" the same.

THE END.

(Flynn, the Golfist, another humorous Cliveden story, next Wednesday.)