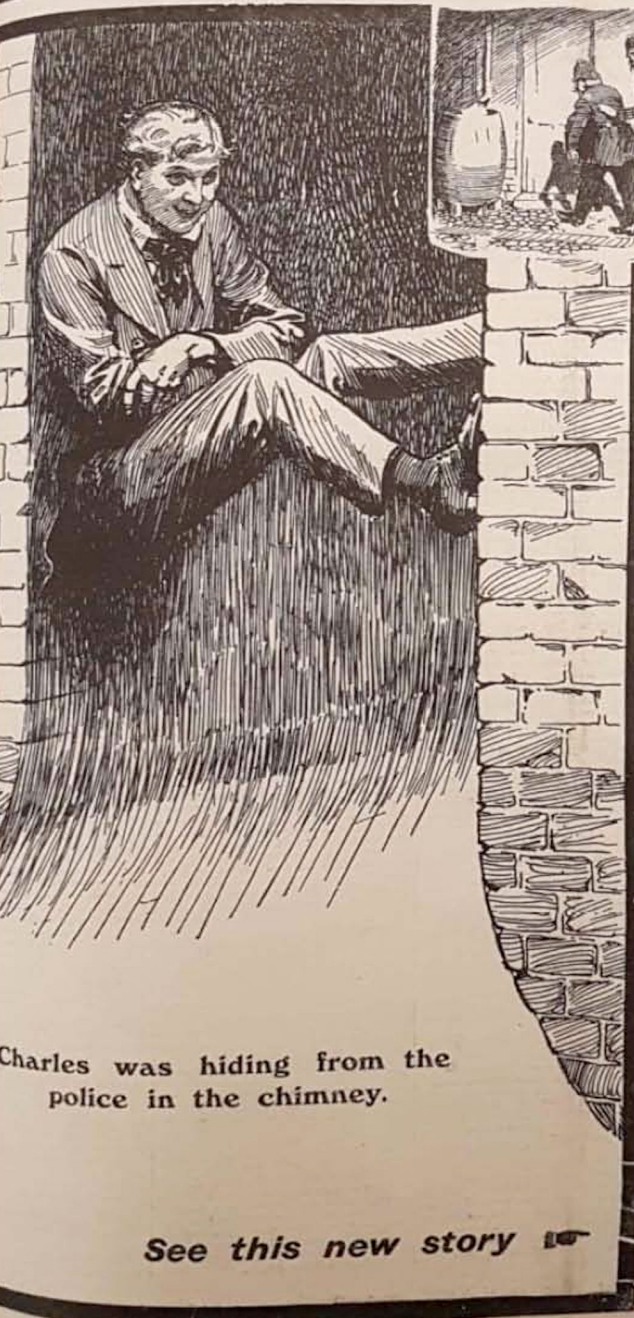


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THE POPULAR NEW STORY BOOK

Vol. 1 (New Series), No. 15.



THE LARK LANTERN

A THRILLING NEW STORY.

A Tale of CHARLES PEACE, showing the Baneful Influence of Bad Companionship on a Young Boy, and the Result of Weakness of Character Coupled with a Clever but Distorted Mind.

In Her Person.

THUMP, thump! thump! "Mercy on me!" cried the woman at the wash-tub.

"What's that?"

Mrs. Peace trembled in every limb. The sound came from an adjoining room, and this room had no window, and only a door opening from the kitchen in which she was now standing. The room was not much bigger than a lumber closet, and she had been in it five minutes before. There was nothing amiss then.

"It's a warning!" she cried, in quivering tones. "Something's happened to my boy. I always felt it would, and the time's come. Charlie's not like other lads. He goes his own way. I don't know what he does, and he never tells me. He's so—so strange, and—"

Another startling noise, this time from the front door, but none the less alarming. Whoever was knocking meant to come to Mrs. Peace heard a pompous, authoritative voice call out!

"Unlock the door, or we'll break it open."

"Wait a minute, please," implored Mrs. Peace. "I'm hurrying as fast as I can!"

"Look sharp, then!" came the quick response.

Poor Mrs. Peace was terribly bewildered. She wanted to satisfy herself about the strange sound from the next room, but she dared not keep the impetuous visitor waiting. Not that she thought he would carry out his threat of breaking in. It could only be a joke—one of the neighbours, perhaps, who wanted to frighten her.

Wiping the soap-suds from her hands and arms she drew back the bolts. The caller was very impatient, and did not give her time to lift the latch. The door was pushed, and a policeman's bullseye flashed in her face, almost blinding her for a second. A fat police-sergeant and a lanky constable strode into the room, and the glare of the lantern went round walls, ceiling, and floor. Both men were breathing hard, as if they'd run very fast, fat Sergeant Tabbs especially.

"Why didn't you?"—puff, puff!—"open the"—puff, puff!—"door directly we knocked? That's a clue, Pike," he added, in an undertone, to his subordinate.

"Right, you are, sergeant," responded the lean constable.

"I opened it as soon as I could," said Mrs. Peace faintly.

"Well, well, where's the boy who?"—puff, puff!—"ran in here just now, eh?"

"What boy? I've seen no boy!" rejoined Mrs. Peace, shaking in her shoes.

"She pretends she hasn't seen a

boy—that's a clue, too, Pike," whispered the sergeant importantly.

"Now, then, woman, don't tell me any falsehoods! You'd better own up, or it'll be the worse for you!"

"But I've nothing to own up to. I don't know what you're talking about," wailed the woman.

"We'll see to that. Keep an eye on her, Pike, while I search the place."

Mrs. Peace sank into a chair, overcome with fright. Those mysterious warning sounds had come in vain. The boy wanted by the policeman could be no other than her Charlie. What had he been doing? She had often thought he had some queer friends, but he had never done anything wrong, so far as she knew.

Meanwhile, Sergeant Tabbs had opened the door leading into the little room. His bullseye showed a couple of lines stretched from side to side, and wet clothes hanging. Mrs. Peace used the room as a sort of drying-ground. Her cottage at the bottom of a narrow alley near Angel Road, Sheffields, had no back yard. The dustbin and the water-but were in the alley itself close to the front door.

"I'll bet the woman's one of the gang," thought the sergeant. "I saw the little beggar turn the corner and dive into any place but this. There's no other cottage, and if that ain't a clue, I don't know what is."

The fat sergeant pushed his way between the clothes; excepting a clothes-basket, there was no article to be seen. Sergeant Tabbs, with a quick effort, squatted on his haunches, nearly bursting his belt in so doing, in front of the small fireplace, let the lantern glare on the stove, and looked up at the chimney.

"Humph!" he grunted. "No much bigger than a rabbit-hole. A squirrel might crawl up, but not that boy! No clue there!"

Puffing and blowing, the sergeant returned to the kitchen. There was the upper part yet to be searched. He groped his way up a rickety narrow staircase, and Mrs. Peace could hear his heavy footsteps over head. Presently he came down, looking very disgusted.

"Any other rooms besides those two upstairs?" he asked.

"No; if there was, I suppose you'd find 'em," returned Mrs. Peace.

She was beginning to pluck up courage now that the sergeant had found nothing. Of course, Charlie wasn't in the place. How could he be? Still—well, she didn't know what to think. The boy had always been such a puzzle to her. If it were really wanted by the police, and chanced to come in while the officers were in the cottage!

Charles was hiding from the police in the chimney.

See this new story

A New and Interesting School Story for All.

THE RIVALS OF ST WODES.



A New School Tale by Charles Hamilton Author of The Rivals of St Kats.

WHAT HAS TAKEN PLACE.

Dick Penwyn, a sturdy Cornish lad, attending a County Council school, obtains a scholarship for St. Wode's. He arrives at the great public school full of doubts as to how he will be received by his future schoolfellows. To his delight and amazement he is received with open arms, six juniors, led by Blagden, the Fourth-Form captain, meeting him at the station in the pouring rain. The truth is that Blagden & Co. take Pen for young Lord Lovell, who is expected to arrive that day, but Dick has no idea of this. The arrival of the real Lord Lovell, however, puts a different complexion on matters, and Blagden comes out in his true colours. Lord Lovell is taken up by Crawcour & Co. of the Fifth, and this rouses resentment against him in the Fourth. In the dormitory the first night, Lovell is teased in a blanket, and only Penwyn raises his voice against the proceedings. The raggers then turn their attention to the Cornish lad, and attempt to give him "cricket-stump parade." "I shall not move," says Pen hardily.

Newcombe Interferes.

"I will be the worse for you if you don't," said Blagden. Dick Penwyn did not reply. He fought hard for his liberty, but he had no chance. They were too many for him. Lord Lovell came towards the raggers. "Stop that, you know!" he exclaimed. "I can't possibly allow it, don't you see, you fellows." "Bagknese, or whatever your name is—stop it, I say!" "Kick that fool out!" said Blagden. "Oh, I say! What?" Lord Lovell was bumped over on a bed, and left there, gasping. "Now then, start!" shouted Blagden, flourishing the stump. "I won't!" said Pen quietly. "Whack!" The cricket-stump came down with cruel force. Dick Penwyn winced at the pain of it, but he did not allow a cry to escape his lips. "Whack!" "Better start!" grinned Blagden. Pen set his teeth hard. "Whack!" Newcombe leaped out of bed. "Stop that, I beg," he shouted. "I won't have it! Do you hear? If you touch that kid again, I'll go for you!" Blagden sneered, and the stump came cruelly down again. "Whack!" Newcombe kept his word. He rushed straight at Blagden. Blagden stopped the stump, and put up his fists, and the two went reeling away in furious combat. Dick Penwyn tore himself loose. He sprang to his feet, and put up his hands as the juniors closed upon him again. "Come on, you cads!" he muttered. "Stop it!" roared Newcombe. "O'Donovan—Rake, can't you chip in?" "Faith, and we will, intirely," O'Donovan, Rake, and several more fellows chipped in, at the word from Newcombe. Dick Penwyn's assailants were, however, back. At the same time, Blagden dropped, with Newcombe's left in his eye. Newcombe stood over him, with blazing eyes.

a mood for criticising a fellow who treated him even with common civility. "Tubber, in cold water, on a winter's morning, was not a pastime much indulged in by the St. Wode's juniors. But Dick Penwyn enjoyed it, and he felt all the better when he dressed in the dormitory afterwards. Rising-bell was going as he dressed, and the juniors were slowly and unwillingly turning out. Bamford looked at the Cornish lad with a sneer. "Early riser, of course," he remarked. "I suppose he's used to taking round milk before going to the Council school in the morning, or something that sort. He, he, ho!" "Nothing to be ashamed of in that," said Newcombe. "You'd be too jolly to get up and do it." "I don't belong to the class that has to work," said Bamford loftily. "Nor to the class that has to wash, apparently," said Newcombe, as Bamford put on his collar, after giving his face the merest dash. And there was a laugh at Bamford's expense, and Bamford turned very red. His assumption of superiority was certainly somewhat amusing, considering that Pen had bathed as a matter of course, and that Bamford had hardly washed himself at all. Pen made no reply to any of Bamford's remarks. He felt that if he answered every sneering remark that was made to him, or at him, he would never have done with wrothy warfare. He finished dressing quietly and left the dormitory. He was the first to see Newcombe was still combing his hair. Newcombe

remained where they were, looking very sheepish. "Ah! I am not surprised to see that you are in the midst of this disturbance," said Mr. Bush, in his most unpleasant tone. "Go to bed, all of you, and I shall inquire into the matter in the morning." Not a word was spoken. The Fourth Form went to bed; but Skeat chuckled gleefully to Corton as he turned in. "It's all right. Old Bushy's down on the cad. He'll get all the row," And Corton grinned assent. When the dormitory was in darkness once more, Blagden called out from his bed: "We'll make you sit up another time, all the same, you scholarship cad!" Dick Penwyn did not reply. His heart was heavy. Surely he could not be said to have done wrong in taking the part of a fellow who was being ragged and bullied! But it had set the whole Form against him, and it was to lead to being punished by the Form-master. Was it possible for him to get anything at all like justice at St. Wode's?

Pen Makes a Friend!

DICK PENWYN was first up in the Fourth Form dormitory in the morning. He was accustomed to early rising in his old home in Cornwall, where his first glance out of the window in the morning fell upon the blue, rolling Atlantic. Things were very different here. He stood and looked round him. Rising-bell had not yet rung, and the juniors were mostly still asleep. Newcombe sat up in his bed and yawned. He was an early riser, too. "Hallo, young shaver!" he exclaimed. "You're up, eh?" "Yes," said Pen. "Morning bath, or tubber?" Pen looked at him. "For what?" he asked. "Tubber." "What's that?" "Tub." "What do you mean by tub?" Pen asked, puzzled. Newcombe laughed. "Morning bath," he explained. "Oh, I see!" "We call it tubber here," said Newcombe. "Once upon a time, so long ago that I can't use the word here in big wooden tubs. That was in the old time, of course, about a hundred years ago. We've got a jolly fine set of bath-rooms now—no more enough to go round, of course no school ever has enough for that. We take our turns for tubber; but if you get up early enough, and care to bath in cold water, you're always sure of it. See!" "I always have a cold bath," said Pen. Newcombe nodded. "It's good for you if you're strong, anyway," he said. "You look as strong as a horse. You must be, to put up a fight as you did last night. Look here, I'll get up now, if you like, and we'll go to tubber." "Thank you!" Newcombe turned out. He put on boots, and a big towel round his pyjamas, and nothing else, and left the dormitory. Dick Penwyn followed him, as he went. He was keenly susceptible to the kindness of Newcombe, and if there was a faint trace of patronage in Newcombe's manner, Pen did not notice it. He was not in



"I think I should like to be your friend, you know," said Lord Lovell. "What do you say?" "I should like it," said Pen. "Then give us your flipper," said his lordship, holding out his hand.

was rather given to being specially nice in his appearance. "Jove, you know!" Lord Lovell remarked, addressing nobody in particular. "That's not a bad chap, you know. He stood up for me, don't you see." "Oh, shut up!" growled Blagden. "Low cad, by Jove!" said his lordship. The juniors chuckled. Lovell seemed to ignore the fact that he was expressing his frank opinion to a fellow who was big enough to eat him. The viscount left the dormitory while Blagden was still considering what he should do to him. "I'll smash his loving cad," said Blagden, looking after his lordship. "I'll show him that he can't swank over us just because he's a man's size." "I haven't seen him swank yet," said Rake. "Oh, you go and eat coke!" "I'll just show that I'm not sucking up to the cad," said Blagden, flushing red. "I'm going out to look for him now, and I'll squash him. He's out for a snower, then." "Hang Crowsour!" "Tell him that to his face!" grinned Rake. Blagden did not reply to that re-

mark. He swung out of the dormitory. A bitter spite against the viscount was burning in Blagden's breast. The more keenly he had desired to charm up with the little fellow, the more bitterly he felt his failure and the ridicule it had brought upon him. He was quite keen enough to see that he never could be a friend of Lord Lovell's. And as he had nothing to gain by being subservient to his lordship, the next best thing was to show a rugged independence. Lord Lovell had strolled out into the quadrangle in the fresh, cold morning air. He was looking for the scholarship boy. Pen was in the quadrangle alone. A few early juniors were punting a footer about, but they did not speak to Pen. Lovell crossed over to the Cornish lad. "I'm sure that the viscount intended to speak, and he nodded and greeted him with a cheery smile. "I want to speak to you, you know," Lovell remarked. "Your name's Penderagon, isn't it—or was it once Bunny?" "Penwyn," said Dick, smiling. "Oh, yes, that's it! I'm always forgetting names. My name's Bunny to my friends. The fellows always call me Bunny. I'm sure I don't know why. I'd like you to call me Bunny." "I was silent." "I want to thank you for sticking up for me as you did last night," said Lovell. "It was deuced plucky of you, and all that, you know; in

ship's simplicity was evident. He did not seem to be able to understand in the least that Pen was endeavoring to explain to him. "What all the better," said the fellows here and there. "You're very poor, that I'm sure," said the Council school, and they took their own way." "Jove!" "You'll get on bad terms with a good many of them if you're not on good terms with me," said Pen. "That's what I want you to understand." "Oh, I understand that," said Pen. "But you don't mind?" "Not in the least." "It may make a bit of difference to your comfort here." "My dear Penwyn, that's all right. I like you, and if you don't mind, we'll chum up here," said Pen quietly. "By Jove!" said Lovell, the chap that would make me go whether I like it or not. I don't see the Council school here, or any school," said Lovell. "It's all the same to me." "I don't want you to think I'm ashamed of it," said Pen. "There's nothing to be ashamed of in it—only a silly dandy is ashamed of such a thing." "Quite so." "And don't think I'm dragging you out just to mention it. I want to refer to your hero," said Pen here, and it's set the fellows against me. I hoped it would be different; but you can see for yourself how things have gone." "I know you're stood by me like a brick, and I'm your friend if you choose." Dick took the viscount's hand. "I should be only too glad to chum with you," he said. "I was thinking I should be horribly lonely here. It will make all the difference to Lovell." "Call me Bunny, old sport; say my friends do." "Bunny, then?" "Oh, here you are!" "It was Blagden's disgraceful voice." The bully of the Fourth stood up to them, with a black scowl on his face. "Now, then, you young cads, you're going through it!" he exclaimed. "Jove!" Pen stepped quietly in front of his viscount. "Hands off!" he said quietly. Blagden gave him a furious look. "Are you going to interfere any, you Council school?" he said. "Yes! You'll have to do it for me before you touch Lovell!" Blagden clenched his hands nervously; but the remembrance of the fight in the common room at a previous day restrained him from obeying his impulse to had himself upon the Cornish lad with sweeping fists.

Bunny's Champion. LORD LOVELL looked from one to the other. He made no attempt to tackle Blagden himself. Lovell was no realist, as he had already shown. But his brain did not work quickly. He had not the keen, sharp discernment of the lad whose wits had been sharpened in the Council school. And Lovell had been brought up to regard himself as something different from the rest of the boys—as a fellow for whom things were to be done. He was in the least surprised at Pen using his quarrel upon himself. It was quite as if it should be quite in the natural order of things, for Lovell's point of view. Blagden fixed his eyes on Pen with a look of bitter hatred. "Will you get aside!" he said, between his teeth. "No, I won't." "I'm not quarrelling with you; I'm going for Lovell." "You're not!" said Pen calmly. "Tackle a chap your own size!" said Blagden, contemptuously. "You're taller than you are." "Jove, you're remarkable for lack of ship," Pen taller than you are, Pen's boy." Pen smiled. "So you are, Lovell—?" "Bunny!" "I'm not Bunny. But I've done more rough-and-tumble fighting than you have, and I want you to leave this chap to me." (Another long instalment of this grand new work)

THE BROAD ARROW.

...the points of the ... behind one of the ... later another ... the Panther, and saw ... a man who held ... in his hand. The ... the wrist ... his fist into ... dashing the re- ... he twisted the re- ... face ... of his hand, and sprang ... the avenue.

... another man was ... the powers of dark- ... at the heels. The Panther ... and aimed low ... a bang, and ... over and lay groan- ... after that follow.

... Panther said, and ... towards the man he ... was beginning to ... the stunning blow he ... the Panther's fist, ... on his chest and kept him

... Panther came back ... and peered closely into the ... "This is Mr. ... whom I ... had a narrow ... calm ... said, ... what has happened."

... understand," he said, ... "I had heard the whole ... Panther would not ac- ... your life to Gaygem, ... of convict," he said.

... had been shot through ... a coward at heart, and ... the state of mind. He burst ... the Panther in ... it was known that ... Shanks' accomplice in ... of the realm.

... as your judge against Sir ... It was ... me help him. He pro- ... on me if I didn't, and ... and hang the ... on to himself!"

... only one thing you can ... with a light sentence." ... assured him, "and that ... truth about that unfor- ... Gaygem, who has been ...

... of Shanks and ... a trial murder and ... on the part of the ... was an inquiry into the ... whom she still remained

... was that the law par- ... for the crime he had ... and he was able to ...

... they got this ten-pound note ... a better friend than Mr. ... the gentleman who ... of the Broad Arrow.

... THE END. ... Panther ... entitled "Justice

A Favourite with All.

COUSIN ETHEL'S SCHOOLDAYS

A TALE OF TOM MERRY'S CHUM

BY MARTIN CLIFFORD

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of St. Jim's, was sending numerous parcels of establish to his cousin, Ethel Cleveland, at St. Freda's, disguising their contents by harmless-looking labels, such as "Soap," "Hats," etc. Ethel, who was in a large parcel for her in the housekeeper's room, Ethel repairs thither, but finds, to her dis- may, that Miss Penfold, the principal, is there.

"No one in there," says Miss Penfold kindly. (Read on from here).

Forbidden Sweets.

"I—I CAME for a parcel," said Ethel, blushing, as she entered.

"What is there a parcel of?" asked Ethel Cleveland, Mrs. Filby. Mrs. Filby gave a slight sniff.

"There seems to be nothing else this afternoon, ma'am," she said, "what with hats, and soap, and books and such! Yes, here's the ink!"

"Ink?" ejaculated Miss Penfold. "Yes, ma'am!"

Mrs. Filby pushed forward a large brown-paper parcel. Miss Penfold looked at it in amazement.

It was labelled "Ink," but it did not bear the remotest resemblance to the shape of an ink-bottle.

"Dear me!" said Miss Penfold. "Have you been ordering a large quantity of ink, Ethel?"

"No!" stammered Ethel. "There must be a large quantity here—at least a gallon jar," said the head-mistress of St. Freda's. "It is very extraordinary."

"May I take it, please?" said Ethel timidly. "Stay a moment. If you did not order a quantity of ink, there must be some mistake," said Miss Penfold, with a puzzled look. "It cannot be for you."

"Miss Cleveland's name is written on it, ma'am," said Mrs. Filby. "Yes, but there must be some mistake, as Ethel has not ordered the ink. Indeed, what use should a gallon or more of ink be to a girl? You had better open the parcel here, Ethel, and let me see what it contains."

Ethel's heart sank. But there was no help for it, and with unsteady fingers she began to remove the cord from the parcel.

Miss Penfold watched her quietly. The head-mistress of St. Freda's was very suspicious. She was surprised; but she thought that some mistake had been made, which could be rectified when the parcel was opened.

Ethel's fingers worked slowly. She knew that as soon as the wrappings were unclosed, boxes of sweets would be revealed, which it was against the rules for the girls to smuggle into St. Freda's. She was hoping against hope that

something would happen to let Miss Penfold away before the contents of the packet were finally revealed.

But nothing happened. "Do you mind the knots difficult," said Miss Penfold. "Mrs. Filby will lend you a pair of scissors."

"Here they are, miss," said Mrs. Filby. "Thank you," stammered Ethel. She cut the string desperately. There was no help for it now. She threw open the brown paper, and disclosed two large card-board boxes.

One of them was labelled "Chocolates," and the other "Mixed."

Miss Penfold looked at them, and her eyes seemed to grow large and



"It is very extraordinary," said Miss Penfold. "There must be some mistake. You had better open the parcel here, Ethel, and let me see what it contains!"

round with amazement. She signed to Ethel to open the boxes. "The girl obeyed."

"Sweets!" ejaculated Mrs. Filby. "Bless my soul!"

Miss Penfold looked at Ethel. The girl was silent, with crimson cheeks.

Very Cautious. "DEAR ME," said Miss Penfold. "This is not—er—ink!"

"No!" stammered Ethel. "Why have you had sweets sent you in this way, Ethel?" asked Miss

Penfold quietly. "You must know that it is not right to have things smuggled into St. Freda's in this way. You are allowed to make purchases to a certain extent at the school shop, but anything of this sort is quite forbidden."

"I—I know," stammered Ethel. Miss Penfold's face grew very severe.

"But you have done it all the same, Ethel?"

"Please explain."

"It—it was not I who ordered these things," said Ethel, seeing that the whole story must come out now. "They were sent to me."

"Oh, I see! Without your knowledge, Ethel? That alters the case completely, of course."

"Without my knowledge at the time they were ordered, certainly," said Ethel. "I was told they were coming, that is all, when it was too late to stop them."

"They were sent in kindness, but very thoughtlessly," said Ethel. "I did not know what to do when I heard they were being sent. There were other things, too—ginger-bread and cakes—now."

"And who sent them?" Ethel was silent.

"You see, Ethel, this is really a smuggling trick, and if a relation of yours has been so foolish as to

"Yes," said Ethel, hanging her head. "The lad I saw in the train the day you came to St. Freda's, who recommended you, if I remember rightly, to put rats in my hatbox if I should not meet with your approval as headmistress?" said Miss Penfold. "Yes."

"Well, I am sure the lad had no intention of being disrespectful to me either in that case or in this," said Miss Penfold. "I shall not take any notice of the matter, Ethel; but you must write to him and tell him that there must be nothing of the sort again. Or if you are seeing him soon, you may tell him."

"Thank you so much, Miss Penfold."

"Not at all."

"And the sweets?" said Ethel hesitatingly. "Shall I leave them here?"

"They must be confiscated," said Miss Penfold, with a nod. "Oh, Ethel, you may leave them here, Ethel."

"Yes, Miss Penfold." And Ethel, glad to escape so cheerily, left the housekeeper's room. Dolores met her in the passage, noticing Ethel's flushed cheeks.

"Dolores laughed softly. "The ridiculous boy!" she exclaimed. "But he has a kind heart, Ethel. I like your cousin very much."

"He has a very kind heart," said Ethel. "But he will get me into trouble, for he is not more careful. I shall write to him."

"How do you mean, Dolores?"

"Dolores unclosed her hand and showed a stone with a note tied round it. 'Miss Ethel Cleveland' was scrawled on the outside in pencil. Cousin Ethel looked at it in amazement."

"Where did you get that, Dolores?" she asked. "It was pitched over the wall into the garden from the road."

Ethel looked distressed. "Oh, dear! The foolish fellow!"

"He is very mysterious," agreed Dolores. "I came to look for you, when I picked it up. It is fortunate Miss Tyrrel did not find it. She might have imagined that you were receiving messages from a boy outside the school."

Ethel looked startled. "Surely none of the girls of St. Freda's do anything like that, Dolores!"

Dolores gave a curious laugh. "That is your first boarding-school, Ethel, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Well, there is a great deal for you to learn then, that is all."

"Read your note," interrupted the Spanish girl, changing the subject. "It means that Arthur wishes to see you, no you are not to come, he may throw over another message."

"Oh, dear!"

"The quadrangle. Cousin Ethel unwrapped the paper from the stone and spread it out, and read the message scribbled on the inner side. 'Arthur.'"

"The foolish fellow!" Dolores eyes sparkled. "What fun!" she exclaimed. (This last story will continue next Wednesday.)

Advertisement for 'FREE 12 PACKETS OF KEW SEEDS' with details on how to obtain them.

Advertisement for 'TEN DAYS' FREE TRIAL' for 'GOVENTRY FLYERS' bicycles, including details on the 'MEAD CYCLE CO.' and 'GOLD WATCH FREE' offer.

Advertisement for 'PHONOGRAPHS, WATCHES, RINGS, Etc., Etc.' featuring 'EMERALD' brand watches and 'MARVEL' brand phonographs.

A CAPITAL LITTLE SHORT COMPLETE STORY.

RAIDING THE RAIDERS

A Tale of Gordon Gay & Co.

By PROSPER HOWARD.



CHAPTER I.

WHICH there's a hamper for Master Tadpole, young sirs, and I dissent 'and it hover to no one else."

Thus spoke old Giles, the Ryl-combo carrier, as three youths accosted him at the entrance-gates of Hylcomb Grammar School.

Frank Monk, Lane, and Carboy looked at one another significantly.

"So there's a parcel for Tadpole, is there, Giles?" said Frank Monk genially. "Good! Hand it over, and we'll let Taddy know it's come."

"Which I dissent 'and it borer, sir, as I said afore," said old Giles stoutly.

Frank Monk felt in his pocket and produced a sixpence.

"Now don't be so beastly suspicious, Giles," said he persuasively, allowing the sixpence to glint in his palm. "We're friends of Tadpole's, you know."

"Which I'm not saying as you ain't, Master Monk," said Giles obstinately. "But this 'ere 'amper is for Master Tadpole."

Frank Monk gave a grunt.

"You're an old ass, Giles!" he remarked. "But take this tanner, anyway, and don't let on that we tried to bag the hamper."

"Right you are, Master Monk!" said Giles, touching his cap with a grin.

Frank Monk & Co. turned away, looking thoughtful.

"We must have that hamper, chaps, of course," said Frank Monk, after a pause.

"Certainly!" said Carboy.

"Of course!" said Lane.

"It would be a waste of good grub to let Gordon Gay & Co. wolf the lot," pursued Monk.

"Ha, ha! Hear, hear!"

"Well, the question is, how are we going to get it?"

Lane and Carboy exchanged looks.

"Blessed if I know what you're leader of this Co. for!" said Carboy, with a sniff.

"Hear, hear!" said Lane. "I suppose a leader ought to know what to do in a simple matter like bagging another chap's hamper."

"Of course!" assented Carboy.

Frank Monk glared at his two friends.

"You couple of asses!"

"Eh!"

"You croaking dummies!"

"Look here—"

"You fatheaded chumps!"

"I tell you—"

"Do you think we're going to let that hamper slip through our fingers just because we've failed—"

"You've failed!" put in Carboy pointedly.

"Failed to get it from that duffer, Giles!" shouted Frank Monk wrathfully.

Carboy and Lane chuckled.

"Then you've got an idea, Monkey?"

"Of course I have!" snorted Monk.

"Good!"

"Put with it!"

And Frank Monk & Co. walked off with their heads very close together.

CHAPTER 2.

MY hat! This looks good, Taddy!"

"Simply ripping!"

Tadpole had received his hamper safely from the faithful Giles, and the contents of it, laid out on the table in Study 13, drew forth the above ejaculations of approval from Gordon Gay and Jack and Harry Wootton, Tadpole's study-mates.

"Yes, it does look like a good feed, you fellows, and I'm sure I'm very grateful to my Aunt Emma for sending it me!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Three cheers for Tadpole's Aunt Emma!"

"Hurrah!"

"At first," went on Tadpole, "I was a little disappointed that the hamper did not contain paints and drawing materials instead of food."

"Shame!"

"Greens."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But, on second thoughts, I'm glad it's a food, because I do not often get a hamper, and I should not have been able to share the contents with you fellows if it had been artist's materials."

"Good old Taddy!"

Tadpole was the genius of the Fourth at the Grammar School, and, in his own opinion, the foremost artist of the day. He had never been able to persuade anyone else to this belief, and he was frequently called the General Nuisance of the junior school, but he had a heart of gold beneath his eccentricity, and though much chaffed, he was generally popular with his schoolmates.

"Now, I think we might start on the grub," said Tadpole genially.

"It's a little earlier than usual for tea, but I dare say we are all quite hungry enough."

"Father," said Harry Wootton emphatically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The four juniors sat down to the table, and in a very few seconds the sardines, the tongue, and the beef-steak pie were being vigorously attacked.

The buzz of conversation had just given place to a steady munching of four pairs of jaws, when a startling interruption disturbed the harmony of the feast.

The door of Study 13 was flung violently open. There was a rush of feet in the passage, and a head—Carboy's head—was thrust into the study, wearing an expression of wild alarm.

"Fire!" yelled Carboy, with starting eyes. "Fire! Quick, you chaps! Fire!"

And the head was withdrawn as suddenly as it had appeared, while the rush of feet passed down the passage in the direction of the stair-head.

"Fire!"

"Gordon Gay & Co. sprang to their feet as one man, and stared at each other in dismay and alarm."

"Fire!"

Carboy's startled face and the rush of feet in the passage carried them away, and they made a rush for the door. The thought that it might be a false alarm crossed Gordon Gay's mind, but with that dread call ringing in his ears, he did not stop to reason. Time enough for that later, he thought. His one idea now was to get to the outbreak as soon as possible.

The studies in the Fourth Form

Snipe gave a yell and turned green.

"W-what!"

"Fire!"

"M-m-my hat! Help! Fire!"

And Snipe fairly bounded down the stairs, his eyes bulging with terror, so that the chums of Study 13 could not help grinning.

"Where's the fire?" said Gordon Gay, as the four hurried out into the quad in the wake of the terrified Snipe.

Two or three juniors, most of them very pale, were grouped in the quad, looking anxiously round them for signs of the fire. The only sign that could be seen was a thin column of smoke floating up from behind the wall of the Head's garden.

"There's a fire!" stammered

And the four juniors made a dash for Monk & Co.'s study, taking the door as they went, and dashed at the handle and got a terrific shock. Of course, the door was locked.

"You burglars!" yelled Gordon Gay. "Open the door!"

A yell of laughter came from within the study.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you rotters! Let us in and we'll serag you!"

"Ha, ha! Thanks! Not much to eat that pie!"

"Fire!" howled Harry Wootton in anguish.

"Fire!" came the mocking echo from Frank Monk & Co. "Quick! Ha, ha, ha!"

Gordon Gay & Co. glared at one another in speechless wrath, and the sounds of their voices were merrily on forlorn came through the closed door.

"We must get in somehow!"

Jack Wootton dolefully, said to Harry: "I've got an idea, chaps."

"What is it? Quick!"

"You're improved in your own tribulation, but let's have your own Harry!" said Gordon Gay, eyeing and speaking in a whisper.

"Rather! But—"

"And you can imitate old Adam's voice?"

"A! But I don't see—"

"Then make old Adam tell them to open the door, you young chums!"

"My hat! I will!"

Harry had no sooner tumbled to the idea than he proceeded to put it into effect.

"Boss!"—it was Mr. Adam's voice to the life—"boys! What are you doing outside Monk's study?"

"Please, sir," said Gordon Gay, "we—were just—"

"Well, never mind!" said Mr. Adam's voice a loud and just going in to have a talk with Carboy."

There was a loud rap on the study door.

Frank Monk & Co. looked at one another in consternation.

"My hat! Here's Adam after me!" muttered Carboy. "What the dickens shall we do?"

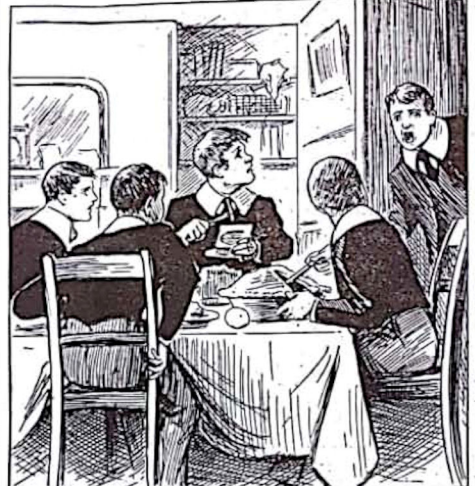
"Open the door, I suppose!" growled Monk, as the door handle was rattled violently. "Eh! A second, sir!" he added loudly, stepping to the door and unlocking it.

With a rush Gordon Gay & Co. dashed into the study. Frank Monk & Co. were so much surprised to make any resistance.

Almost before they had recovered their wits, they were rolling on the floor. Carboy was jammed in the cupboard, and the door locked upon him; Monk and Lane were secured tied to one another with their own braces, and the faces of all three were rubbed in the ashpan.

Then Gordon Gay & Co. looked and triumphant, retired to Study 13 with the receipted feed, which was practically untouched, while they dazed Frank Monk & Co. with wonder how it had happened and what had become of Mr. Adam.

With the aid of the Grammar School ventriloquist, Gordon Gay & Co. had scored again.



"Fire!" yelled Carboy, with starting eyes. "Fire! Quick, you chaps! Fire!"

passage were almost all empty at this time, as it was a little early for the fellows to have come in from the playing fields, so that when the chums of Study 13 rushed into the passage there was only one other junior in it.

And Carpenter did not stay in it long; he was dashing long towards the stairs at top speed, evidently in a state of something like panic.

The sight of his solitary fleeing figure did not tend to reassure Gordon Gay & Co., and they, too, raced for the stairhead at the end of the passage.

"Blessed if I can smell any smoke!" gasped Gordon Gay, as he ran along by the side of Taddy. "I wonder where the fire is!"

"May be in the other wing," said Jack Wootton anxiously, overhearing. "Anyway, there's nobody about here."

"No. Let's get out into the quad first, anyway."

The juniors dashed down the stairs in a body, overtaking another junior, who was proceeding down the stairs leisurely. It was Snipe, the cad of the Fourth Form.

Fire, Snipe! Quick! Fire!" yelled Harry Wootton in his ear, as he charged into him.

Snipe, pointing to the smoke with a shaky finger.

"Ass! That's only old Grubb, the Head's gardener, burning the rubbish!" growled Gordon Gay. "We've been spooked! My hat!"

"What's up?" inquired Jack Wootton, in alarm, seeing the look on Gordon Gay's face.

"The grub!" yelled the leader of Study 13. "Our grub!"

"Phew!"

CHAPTER 3.

Retribution!

JACK WOOTTON glanced round for Carboy, and saw that he was not in the quad. The Co. dashed back up the stairs almost as quickly as they had come down. Along the passage they flew, and into Study 13.

There was a howl of rage and anguish.

Their worst fears were confirmed. Not a vestige of the gorgeous spread remained on the study table. Tadpole's beautiful feed had been raided!

"Monk & Co.!" shouted Gordon Gay.

"The END."

(Another of these amusing Complete Book Stories next Wednesday—Wandering Willie, by Prosper Howard. Order your next week's "Empire Library" for next issue One Halfpenny.)

Wandering Willie Meets a False Friend.



1. While basking upon a dust-hole, wondering how, when, and where to get another home, Wandering Willie was approached—



2. By an old gent, who took quite an interest in him. In fact, he took him home and was so courteous and kind, fed him up—



3. And stroked him down, that Wandering Willie began to think that he was on a very good thing for life, but, overhearing—



4. His kind master drop a chance remark to the lady help, Wandering Willie made a few inquiries, took a walk on the tiles—



5. And discovered that his kind master's kindness had been an art and an—