

THE FAVOURITE HALFPENNY STORY-BOOK.



THE POPULAR NEW STORY BOOK

EMPIRE

ENLARGED LIBRARY Vol. 1. No. 22.

1/2

THE POPULAR SCHOOL TALE.

Readers are informed that the characters in the following Serial Story are purely imaginary, and no reference or allusion is made to any living person. Actual names may be unintentionally mentioned, but the Editor wishes it to be distinctly understood that no adverse personal reflection is intended.

Pupil Against Master.

I DO not think I ought to be caned for nothing, sir. You have caned me without cause several times in the few days I've been here," said Pen.

"You—you dare to say so to me—your Form-master!" stammered Mr. Bush.

"It is the truth, sir. The fellows all know it."

Mr. Bush gave a general glare round. The fellows were not likely to bear witness for Pen. There was silence.

"Penwyn!" said Mr. Bush, with a stern calmness, "for the last time, under you to hold out your hand."

Pen did not speak. His hands remained behind him.

"You will not do so, Penwyn?"

"No, sir."

"My hat!" murmured Newcome. Then I shall thrash you, Penwyn!

I shall thrash you like a disobedient child," said Mr. Bush, striding towards the junior, and grasping him by the shoulder.

Pen's eyes gleamed at him.

"You had better not touch me, sir," he said.

"What? You threaten me?"

"I have done nothing to be thrashed for, and I will not be thrashed," said Pen quietly, firmly.

He was a little pale, but hard as iron.

"Don't touch me with that cane!"

Mr. Bush gazed at him speechlessly for a moment. Then the cane rang through the air, and descended striking across Pen's shoulders.

Lash! Lash! Lash!

Mr. Bush seemed possessed by a demon—he was lashing like a madman, and the blows of the cane rang and echoed through the room. The juniors stared speechlessly. There was a sudden cessation of the lashing.

Three savage blows had fallen, and Pen's face was wrinkled with pain.

But now the grip of the Cornish lad was upon his master. Pen grasped Mr. Bush's wrists, and held them, and the Form-master could not use the cane. Pen was but a lad, and Mr. Bush was a man, twice his age.

But the grip of the Cornish lad was like iron; the flabby, ill-conditioned man in his grip was helpless, powerless even to loosen his wrists from the grasp of the boy.

"Boy!" gasped Mr. Bush, in a choked voice. "Penwyn! Let me go!"

Pen's grasp did not relax.

"Not till you promise not to use that cane again, sir!" he said quietly.

Mr. Bush gasped for breath.

He had made one tremendous wrench to get his wrists free of the grasp of the Cornish lad, and he had failed.

Some sense of dignity prevented him from struggling further. It was too absurd for a Form-master to be seen, by his whole Form, struggling with a Lower School boy.

Mr. Bush's face was perfectly white, and his eyes burned from it like live coals.

"Penwyn!" he gasped. "Penwyn!"

"Faith, and it's a broth av a boy, he is!" murmured O'Donovan.

"Sure, and he's a darling intirely! I'm sorry for him."

Mr. Bush found his voice.

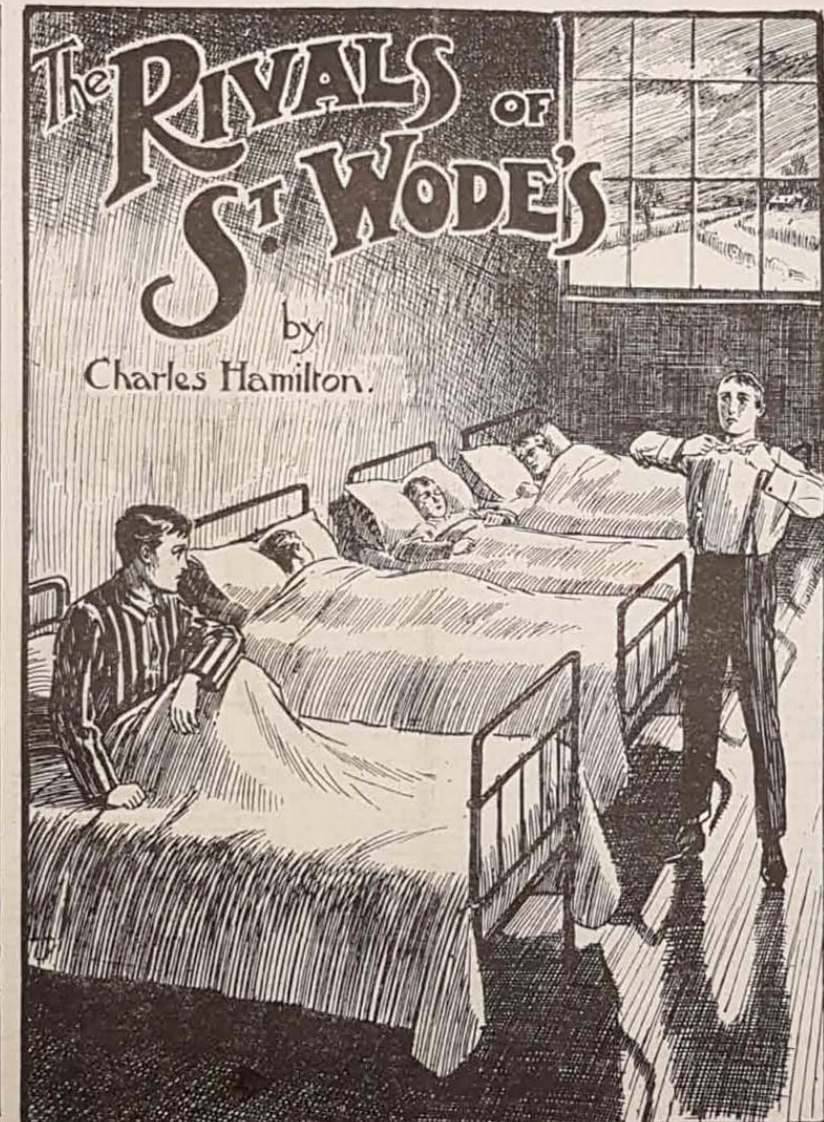
"Boys," he panted. "I—I am attacked by this cowardly ruffian from the Council School. I call upon the boys of my Form to help me. Blagden! Bamford! Corton!"

Blagden & Co. needed no more than that.

Willingly enough they rushed forward to attack their old enemy under the orders of the Form-master.

Three or four pairs of hands were laid upon Dick Penwyn, and he was dragged off.

Mr. Bush jerked his wrists away at last. They were blue from the hard grip of the muscular lad. He grasped his cane.



"Don't go!" said Pen desperately, sitting up in bed. "Do you think it's playing the game, Bunny?"
"Oh, rats," said Lord Lovell, going on dressing. "Crawcour's expecting me, you know."

Boy! How dare you! Release my hands at once, sir!"
Dick Penwyn did not reply.
But his grasp did not relax, it tightened, and the meagre Form-master gasped with pain under the iron grasp.
"Penwyn! I shall report this to the Head."
"Very well, sir."
"Will you release me?"
"Not until you promise not to use that cane."
Mr. Bush cast a wild glance round. The Fourth Formers were watching breathlessly. Even those who disliked Pen the most could hardly help admiring his nerve and courage.
"He'll be expelled for this!" muttered Rake.
Newcome nodded.
"Faith, and it's a broth av a boy, he is!" murmured O'Donovan.
"Sure, and he's a darling intirely! I'm sorry for him."
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ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:
THE SCAPEGRACE OF THE REGIMENT.

Pen's help under the very eye of Mr. Bush. Newcome had no desire to be expelled for the sake of the scholarship boy.

Mr. Bush came towards the struggling Pen with an ominous tightening of the lips, and the cane grasped firmly in his hand.

"Hold him!" he said viciously. But Pen's blood was up now.

He saw the Form-master approaching, and he exerted his great strength. How great the Cornish lad's strength was, was a surprise to the ends of the Fourth.

Blagden, who was holding him, received an upper cut under the chin, which sent him reeling backwards, feeling as if a sledge-hammer had struck him. Bamford was whirled round and sent flying against the wall. Corton lost his nerve and his hold at the same moment as his comrades fell, and retreated; but he was not to escape lightly. Pen's fists were dashing out, and Corton had both of them full in the face.

He dropped like a log.

Mr. Bush was raising his cane when Pen thus rid himself of his enemies and turned towards the Form-master.

The master sprang back with ludicrous haste.

Pen, standing erect, with blazing eyes, his fists clenched, his breath coming thick and fast, did not look safe for anyone to tackle.

There was no doubt that at that moment he would have knocked the Form-master flying if Mr. Bush had laid a finger on him.

But the Fourth Form-master did not do so. He lacked the courage!

"Penwyn!" he gasped.

"Hands off!" said Pen.

"I—I shall not punish you now," gasped Mr. Bush; "I—I shall—I shall report this lawless conduct to the Head! I say to the Head, Penwyn!"

"Do so!" said Pen recklessly.

"Report what you like! I don't care! I'd rather be turned out of the school than put up with your cruelty!"

"Boy!"

"I don't care!"

And Pen did not care at that moment.

Mr. Bush drew in his breath in little gasping jerks.

"You—you outrageous young ruffian!" he gasped.

"Report me to the Head!" said Pen fiercely. "I'll report at the same time; and, if Dr. Wimperis is just, I shan't have anything to be afraid of. I don't believe he would let you use any boy like this if he knew."

Mr. Bush stammered.

He knew that very well himself. He knew he had exceeded his authority in the way he had dealt with Penwyn. The danger of an appeal to the Head—a recognised right of the St. Wode's boys—was over him—and he knew that Dr. Wimperis was a just man.

"I—I cannot talk to you any longer, Penwyn," he stammered.

"You would be a disgrace to any school—a reformatory, in fact! I say you would be a disgrace to any reformatory! I—I will deal with you to-morrow."

But three juniors were hanging upon Pen, and Newcome, daring as he was, could not venture to go to

Continued on the next page.

The Most Popular School Story.

THE RIVALS OF ST WODE'S



(Continued from the previous page.)

Mr. Bush strode from the room with rustling gown.

He wanted to retire with dignity. But that was scarcely possible. He had made a foolish exhibition of temper—

He had driven a quiet life into a quiet life, and had had the worst of the contest.

There was no concealing that fact. It was plain to himself, and plain to every lad in the Fourth Form.

Pen stood silent as the Form-master retired. Blagden, Bamford, and Corton were on their feet now. Blagden was rubbing his chin.

Pen gave them a hard and a scornful glance.

"Do you want any more?" he said savagely. The quiet, kind lad had been stung into bitterness now.

"Come on, if you've got any, now, or three—I don't care!"

"I don't fight with a Council-school lad!"

"Take that, then!"

Smack! Pen's open palm rang on Blagden's cheek. The bully of the Fourth staggered back. Across the white check was a deep red mark.

That was enough—more than enough—for Blagden. Bully he might be, but coward he was not. He sprang at Pen like a tiger.

Pen's eyes blazed. He was letting himself go now. His long self-control was gone. The ends of the Fourth had been pitiless to him. It was their turn now.

Smack! Crack! Crash! Right and left Pen's fists beat upon the face of the Fourth Form bully. Blagden had no chance; his defence was nowhere. Right and left—left and right—till Cecil Blagden went back with a heavy crash upon the floor.

He lay there, dazed and gasping. Pen gave him one look, and turned away. Blagden was evidently finished; and Bamford and Corton did not venture to utter a word.

New School Tale. By CHARLES HAMILTON. Author of "THE RIVALS OF ST. KIT'S."

Pen strode back to his seat by the fire and sat down quietly. His temper was passing; indeed, he was beginning to wonder how he had let himself loose so far from his usual self-control.

Bamford helped Blagden up, and they left the Common room. Newcome came over to Pen.

The Cornish lad looked up quietly as Newcome tapped him on the shoulder.

"I'm sorry," said Newcome. "You think I shall be expelled?"

"I don't care much."

"It's hard chess," said Newcome. "Rotten bad on you! I'm afraid that's what it means though. There's one chance—Bully may not want to show himself up to the Head—

"You'd be able to make out a good case in your defence. Bully may decide to take it lying down, instead of going to the Head, and take it out of you some other way."

"I hope he will."

"You want to stay at St. Wode's?"

"I don't know that I do," said Pen bitterly. "It's not a pleasant place for me. But it would be a disappointment to my father if I were kicked out, that's all. He never knew of anything till I should most with here—I never knew it myself, for that matter. When I was grinding for the scholarship exam. I didn't know that this was what I was working for. I wouldn't have cared worth it, you see."

And he laughed mirthlessly. Newcome nodded, but was not speaking. He was sorry for Pen, as he had said; but there was nothing of comfort to be said.

The question was—had Mr. Bush gone to the Head's study? If so, Pen would be called there in a few minutes, and the great probability was that he would be informed that his presence was no longer desired at St. Wode's.

The juniors all knew it, and they waited. Were they to be rid of the scholarship-boy so easily, after all? Pen waited, and every footstep in the passage made his heart beat painfully. As the reaction set in, Pen felt sick and miserable, and it needed but the summons to the Head's study to fill his cup to the brim.

study. He slammed the door, and Hawke came out of his study and asked what the row was. I told him it was old Bushy in a wack.

"Then he's gone into his own study!" exclaimed Newcome. "He didn't go to the Head?"

"No."

Newcome turned to Dick Penwyn. "You're all right, Pen, my boy! He's not going to report it to the Head, after all. I dare say he knows it would be risky, and he might get caught over the cost himself. Dr. Wimperis is a decent old boy—not much like Dashy-whiskers."

He drew a deep, deep breath. He felt as if he had had a narrow escape. It had seemed to him that Mr. Bush would not raise himself in the estimation of the Head by reporting such an occurrence. But there was no telling what the Fourth Form-master might do in his fury.

He felt as if he had done so, and it was a relief. That he would follow the scholarship-boy with a hatred more intense and bitter was certain. Pen had made the interested enemy of his life—an enemy who would stop at few things to injure him. But he felt that—that was what he had occurred in the Common-room, Mr. Bush would keep his hands off a rival.

The master of the Fourth was a coward, if ever man was a coward. Pen felt that he would not fear the Form-master; the danger, indeed, was the question of the Head, but he might grow impatient and cocksure after such a victory over authority, and so place it in Mr. Bush's power to make out a convincing case against him to lay before the Head.

But Pen was a quiet and level-headed boy, and he was not likely to place himself in Mr. Bush's power in that way.

"Faith, and you're all right, kid!" said O'Donnan. "Buck up!"

Pen nodded without speaking. He sat by the fire, looking into the red embers. He wondered how long it would be before he knew whether the game of bridge was over yet.

Many of the fellows looked very curious at Pen, and of course, the story was all over St. Wode's in a few minutes, and seniors looked into the junior room, to see the junior who had laid his Form-master's wrists and prevented him from using his cane.

Pen took no notice of them. He was, in fact, he hardly saw them. He was busy with his own thoughts. He was in a brown study when bed-time was announced, and Bunny came into the common-room. Crawcrow and Brey had argued with him as far as the door, and they said good-night to him in the passage.

Bunny tapped Pen on the shoulder. "Bed, old fellow!" he said. Pen rose.

"Have you had a good time, Bunny?" he asked.

"Did you win?"

"Amen! Sometimes."

"And then lost?"

Bunny laughed again. "That's all you know, Pen. A cousin of mine lost a hundred pounds one evening, in the wack, to a chap I knew."

"A hundred pounds!"

"Bunny!" chucked. "You should have heard the pater rave," he said to me afterwards. "The old man was all thunder and lightning."

"No wonder!"

"It's all right, Pen—I've got lots of tin. Besides, I shall beat them hollow, yet. You don't understand those things, you know," explained Bunny. "Now, you're a jolly brick, you know—you stand by me like anything. You're far above my weight in fighting, and that sort of thing; but I'm a fellow of the world, you know, and in that line I can show you round, don't you see. What?"

"It's gambling, Bunny."

"Oh, rot! Of course, I wouldn't gamble!"

"But what do you call it, then?"

"A little flutter."

"But what is the difference between a flutter and gambling, if both mean that you play cards for money?" asked Pen, perplexed.

"My dear Pen, what peters you do put to a chap!" said his lordship. "Let me go up to Locke's. You sleep!"

"That really, Bunny, you know."

"Fair play, Pen. Don't preach at a chap when he's sleepy," said

Pen grasped Mr. Bush's wrists, and held them so that the Form-master could not use the cane. Bunny gasped. "Bush! Let me go!"

Bunny, laughing good-humouredly. "I've been warned to look out for your sermons."

"Ah! I might have guessed that Crawcrow would speak against me."

He hasn't, Pen. Crawcrow spoke of you in jolly high terms," said Bunny. "He said it was to you credit, you know, that you had won that scholarship, and so on, and that a chap like you might be a credit to any school, don't you see. Crawcrow spoke of you jolly well, I can tell you, and so did that chap Burnley—I mean Verney. I forgot his name."

And they went up to bed. But it was a long time before Dick Penwyn got to sleep.

He was not thinking of himself. His trouble with Mr. Bush had been blown over for the time.

He was not thinking of himself. His trouble with Mr. Bush had been blown over for the time.

Pen felt a serious impotent anger at the impossibility of helping Bunny. That the influence of helping black sheep of the Fifth would lead Lowell well into trouble, he had felt only too assured.

But nothing he could say seemed to have any chance of affecting the issue. Crawcrow was too cunning for him.

So long as the Blades contended themselves with winning Bunny's money, he was not to be serious. Bunny, after all, had plenty of money. But worse was probably in store—Pen had heard whispers in the corridors of the Blades' use of breaking bounds at night to visit questionable resorts to play cards and of visits to the racetrack unheeding to the masters, and similar escapades. Was Bunny to be dragged into all that? The kind, soft-hearted Bunny seemed not engaged from such experiences, unless—

But what could the scholarship junior do to save him?

The Road to Ruin. PEN found classes in the Fourth Form-room a great deal more tolerable during the next few days. Mr. Bush seemed to have dropped the petty persecution which had made classes an incessant worry to Pen. Pen knew that it was due to the scene in the common-room, and his respect for the Form-master was not increased by the knowledge. It was impossible to respect a man who would bully what he had driven his victim into resistance, and would then cease to bully. Pen would have respected him more, indeed, if he had kept on in the same way. But it was a relief to get rid of the carrying tongue for a time.

One day Mr. Bush seemed to have made up his mind to ignore Pen, as if he were not in the Fourth Form at all. As a matter of fact, he was growing a little afraid of the Cornish lad. Since he had driven Pen to revolt, and learned what the lad was capable of, he was uncertain what might be his next step. At such a time, he gave the scholarship junior a rest.

Many of the Fourth, too, gave Pen a rest, though in a friendly way. Blagden and his friends were more hostile to him than ever. They had learned that listless were of no use against a lad who could beat them part quite easily. That line of attack was dropped. But a quieter and more cutting attack could be made, and Blagden made it. He used to influence, let Pen severely alone. They ignored the scholarship boy—perhaps taking the cue from their master.

Pen's life would have been solitary indeed but for Bunny.

Newcome, and Rake, and O'Donnan, and some others, persisted in treating him in a friendly way. They were "up against" Blagden & Co., and that was partly their reason. Some of them liked Pen, too. But they did not speak of him with him; and as they had their own interests apart from his, he could not depend upon them for companionship in solitary hours.

Pen's life with Lord Lovell it was different.

Lovell had chummed with him, and Lovell was true to his friendship. Though he no longer stayed at St. Wode's the more clearly he realised the truth of what Pen had warned him of at first—what his friendship with the scholar-in-be would mean things awkward for himself.

But Bunny did not seem to mind that.

And as there were many fellows in the Fourth to whom a viscount and a rich fellow was a valuable acquaintance, many of them had to stand time in his debt.

Pen's chief worry at this time was Bunny's friendship with Crawcrow and the Blades. Pen was not



Pen grasped Mr. Bush's wrists, and held them so that the Form-master could not use the cane. Bunny gasped. "Bush! Let me go!"

"THE BOYS' REALM" FOOTBALL & SPORTS LIBRARY. Permanently Enlarged! 12,000 Words Extra 1/2. Every Week! The Blue Crusaders and Teddy Lester. Stirring New Sporting Serial. Only a Stable Lad, Starts in THIS WEEK'S ISSUE. Now on Sale. One Halfpenny every where.

GLANCE OVER THIS FIRST.

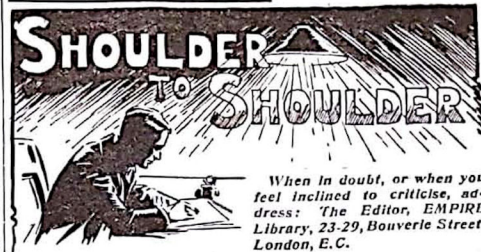
bitter enemies of both the new juniors who had been chosen. To the disgust of his Form-fellows, "Bunny" Lovell is taken up by Crawcrow & Co., of the Fifth, whose contempt for Pen seems plainly, in doing the easy-going young viscount no good. Newcome, of the Fourth, is talking to Pen about Mr. Bush, the stobbiest master of the Fourth Form, having been a scholarship boy himself when the master strides up. He determines to rane Pen, but the lad keeps his hands to his side. "You refuse to obey me!" shouts Mr. Bush. (Now go on with the story.)

THE RIVALRY OF ST. WODE'S.

Blades of Bunny's other friends—it was not that. He realised how much he had to do. The Blades were doing much better than the vicar.

A word to the Head—but it was impossible. It would have been sneaking! Sneaking was hated—even a sense of duty! Of old, it was said that one should not do evil that good might come of it.

BETWEEN OURSELVES.



WELLI
Once again I greet you, and, as they used to say, I hope this finds you as well as it leaves me at present.

When in doubt, or when you feel inclined to criticise, address: The Editor, EMPIRE LIBRARY, 23-29, BOUVERIE STREET, LONDON, E.C.

TAKE CARE, JONES!
Scout Hooper (examining footprints): "What do you make of it, Jones?"

PLUS ONE.
Teacher: "How many bones have you in your body?"



She: "Am I the only girl you ever loved?"
He: "Yes, but I'm young yet."

A "RIPPING" LETTER.
The following appreciation from Adelaide naturally gives me great pleasure, and although the contents of this paper have changed somewhat since A. B. wrote his letter, I publish it as evidence of the good feeling that I am happy to say exists between my readers and me, not only in the good Old Country, but also beyond the seas:

"Dear Sir,—I was pleased to note my name among other names in the Postcard Exchange column, and am glad to say that I have received four or five postcards already from the country that I wished to exchange with, and am much obliged to you."

"Now, I would like to say a few words about your paper. I am very much satisfied with the four stories that are now appearing."

"Firstly, I am very fond of the detective yarn which, I think, is the best of this paper. And then I am very fond of reading about Cousin Ethel, and I like very much to follow Cousin Ethel. And the story I think everybody must like is 'Land of the Black,' which I think is a grand adventure story, and will be finished by the time that you receive this letter, but I hope you will not cut any of the other stories for some time, but in place of this grand tale I hope you publish up to the standard of the other stories. The last tale of P. Dowdrip I do not care much about, but I expect others may like it very much, so I cannot complain."

THE "EMPIRE" LIBRARY WORLD-WIDE POSTCARD EXCHANGE

All desiring to exchange postcards should fill in the form below, and address: Editor, EMPIRE LIBRARY, 23-29, BOUVERIE STREET, LONDON, ENGLAND.

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48th LIST.

- W. C. Patrick, York House, York Street, Grahamstown, S. Africa, wishes to exchange postcards with readers in Austria-Hungary, Gibraltar, British East Africa, Japan, Italy, Egypt, Mexico, Algeria, Siam, Brazil, Venezuela, South America, Scandinavia, Borneo.

A CABBAGE JOKE.



Black: "Is your friend Brown a vegetarian?"
White: "I believe he is."
Black: "What makes you think so?"
White: "Well, I've smoked one or two of his cigars!"

- R. G. Badcock, Gawler Station, South Australia, with Birmingham, England.
F. E. Abbott, 153, Elizabeth Street, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia, with France.
P. F. Turner, 9, Wellington Street, Newtown, New South Wales, with Pacific Islands, N. Queensland, Newfoundl.,

NEXT WEDNESDAY
you will find "Panther" Grayle again, this time under the name of "The Boys' and Co.,"—this latter being an extremely funny story.

ALSO NEXT WEDNESDAY
I shall have something definite to tell you about our new story of

TOM MERRY.
FREE!
A magic word, and one that will appeal, I know, to readers of the EMPIRE Library. Such is the offer made by the Editor of "The Boys' Herald," the popular story-paper out to-day.

The free offer is one inviting six British boys, between the ages of nine and twenty, to London in Coronation week.

All expenses will be paid, and all that the competitors are asked to do is to

COLLECT COUPONS.
This is simple enough, and my readers should start to-day without fail. Each coupon collected counts as ten votes, so the sooner you start the better.

The readers who gain the most votes will have their return railway expenses paid. They will have free board and lodging, free seats to view one of the two historical Coronation processions, free visits to places of interest in London, and free attendance by Messrs. Cooks' most able guides.

Here is a good chance for my readers! Such an offer has never before been made, and I am sure Empire's will require very little urging to participate in such a

SIMPLE COMPETITION
as coupon collecting. Everybody can help you—your father, mother, brother, sister, or friends. You will come to London as guests, and as such you will not be expected to spend anything. So

COLLECT YOUR COUPONS.
This week the half-a-crown goes to E. Hiam, a Highgate reader, who sent in the following batch of jokes:

TOOLS OUT OF DATE.
Father: "Have you found that screwdriver yet?"
Son: "No, dad. It isn't anywhere."

Father: "Well, how am I put on the door-hinge?"
Son: "Oh, no! It's better about that, dad! I am sure mamma can lend us a hairpin and a button-hook."

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES.
What are weights and measures!—Weights and measures, when at Christmas time, and measures are what papa says he will take to stop them.

Another long instalment of this absorbing tale in next week's EMPIRE Library. Order in advance. Price One Halfpenny.

[Our Readers are informed that the characters in the following Story are purely imaginary, and no reference or allusion is made to any living person. Actual names may be unintentionally mentioned, but the Editor wishes it to be distinctly understood that no adverse personal reflection is intended.]



THE RYLCOMBE ROLLER SKATERS

An Amusing, Complete Tale of Gordon Gay & Co. By PROSPER HOWARD.

CHAPTER 1.

A Parcel for Gordon Gay.

HERE'S a parcel for you, Gordon Gay. I saw it down in the hall, so I brought it up with me.

Thus spoke Harry Wootton, of the Fourth Form, at Rylcombe Grammar School, as he came into Study No. 13—the famous apartment shared by the four inseparables known as Gordon Gay & Co.

Jack Wootton, Harry's brother, looked up with a grin at his minor. "Trust you to look after the tummy, Harry!" he remarked, glancing at the bulky parcel which formed Harry's burden. "I guess you wouldn't have bothered to bring that parcel up if it had been marked 'boots'."

Harry Wootton glared at his brother.

"You ass, how do you think I know it's tummy?" he demanded indignantly.

"Blessed if I know," said Jack, "unless you've sampled it already."

"You—you dummy! The blessed parcel may be boots, or—or anything, for all I know!" said Harry, with an air of scornful indifference.

"Looks jolly like grub to me, anyhow," said Jack critically.

"Of course—I mean does it?" said Harry, correcting himself hastily.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jack Wootton, and Gordon Gay joined in the laugh.

"You cackling dummies!" said Wootton minor, with a red face.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Harry.

"Perhaps you'll kindly hand me my parcel when you've quite finished discussing its contents with your blessed brother," remarked Gordon Gay at last. "As a matter of fact, I haven't an idea what's in it myself."

"Here you are, then."

And Harry Wootton heaved the bulky parcel up on to the study table.

There was a curious tinkle from the parcel as it bumped on the table, and the three chums pricked up their ears.

"What the dickens is it, I wonder?" said Jack Wootton curiously.

"Doesn't sound quite like grub, after all!"

"Perhaps it was jam-pots clinking together," suggested Harry hopefully.

"Well, we'll see!" said Gordon Gay, cutting the string.

"Good!"

The parcel was hastily unwrapped, and there was a chorus of exclamations as the contents were brought into view.

"My hat!"

"Great Scott!"

"Roller-skates!"

Gordon Gay stared at the roller-skates in absolute amazement.

"Two—four—six pairs!" he

gasped. "Who on earth can have sent me six pairs of roller-skates?"

"Here's a letter! This'll explain, perhaps!" exclaimed Jack Wootton, picking up a letter addressed to Gordon Gay, Esq., which had fallen on the floor.

"Hand it over, Jack!"

Gordon Gay hastily ripped open the envelope, still in a state of astonishment.

"Don't know the writing, either!" he remarked. "Hallo! Well, I'm blessed!"

He read the letter, which was typewritten, out aloud to his chums. It ran as follows:

"Dear Sirs:—In connection with our great advertising scheme, we take the liberty of sending, herewith, six examples of our Rollasy Skates. We guarantee these skates to be the finest on earth, and genuinely worth ten dollars a pair; but as an advertisement, and to introduce them to the notice of English schoolboys, we are prepared to sell the enclosed samples at one dollar—five shillings—per pair. We shall be greatly obliged if you will do us the favour of kindly giving them a trial, and helping us by inviting your schoolfellows to do likewise."

"If, after a thorough trial, the skates prove satisfactory—as we are confident will be the case—kindly remit thirty shillings at your earliest convenience. If, for any reason, you do not wish to keep any or all of the skates, please return them to our London depot.—Yours faithfully,

THE PORKVILLE ROLLASY SKATE CO.

"Porkville, Mass."

"What do you think of that?" finished Gordon Gay.

"My hat! What a wheeze!" exclaimed Harry Wootton.

"It certainly is a jolly smart dodge," said Jack Wootton. "Just like their Yankee cheek! They don't look bad skates, though!"

"No; they look worth a dollar—though one dollar is nearer four bob than five," said Gordon Gay. "What beats me is, how the bouders got my name!"

"Oh, there's lots of ways of getting chums' names!" said Jack wisely.

"They've probably got local agents everywhere."

"Well, anyway, I vote we oblige the Porkvillers by giving 'em a jolly good trial—eh?" grinned Harry Wootton.

And the chums responded with one voice:

"Rather!"

CHAPTER 2.

A Chapter of Accidents.

WHIR-R-R! G-r-rind! Whir-r! The great school-room at Rylcombe Grammar School resounded with the roar and whirl of skates.

The juniors had not been long in "obliging the Porkvillers," as Harry Wootton termed it, and trying the roller-skates.

Gordon Gay, Jack and Harry Wootton, Frank Monk, and Nicky O'Donnell, the Irish lad, were grinding round the school-room at a great rate, while an admiring crowd of juniors looked on. The user of the sixth pair of skates was Horace Tadpole, the fourth member of Gordon Gay & Co., and the genius and general nuisance of the Junior School.

Tadpole was not getting on very well on his skates. He had insisted on trying them, as he explained that he regarded the motion of skating as graceful and artistic. Before he realised he was on a lunge, however, he realised that it is possible to be ungraceful, to say nothing of unartistic, on roller-skates.

"Really," he gasped, after having sat down with a bump that jarred every bone in his body for the fifth time in two minutes, "it—is most extraordinary! There must be something wrong with these roller-skates! But I will try again."

And he raised himself up painfully, supporting himself with his hand against the wall.

There was a yell of encouragement from the onlooking juniors, many of whom were openly expressing the opinion that it was as good as a play to watch him.

"Go it, Taddy!"

"Stick to it!"

"You're getting on fine!"

Tadpole shoved himself cautiously off from the wall, and wobbled unsteadily towards the centre of the room.

Instantly there was a roar of warning.

"Look out, you duffer!"

"Breakers ahead!"

There was a howl from the onlookers.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Encore!"

"Look out, Monk!"

The warning came too late. Frank Monk was grinding along straight for the two fallen juniors. He made a desperate effort to avoid them, but in vain.

There was another crash, and Monk sprawled headlong over them, and there were fresh yells.

"Oh!"

"Groo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wootton was the next victim.

He was skimming past, when one of Frank Monk's waving feet tripped him up, and he added himself to the struggling heap, head first.

The din was now terrific. Some of the watching juniors were on the verge of hysterics, and groans both loud and long came from the fallen heroes.

Gordon Gay and Jack Wootton continued to grind round alone on their erratic courses for some time, and speculation was rife as to which of them would be the first to join their comrades on the floor.

A sudden yell of laughter announced that the expected had happened.

Jack Wootton's feet flew up in the air and he crashed down right on the head of his brother, who was just attempting to get on his feet again.

With a wild roar the two brothers rolled on the floor, leaving Gordon Gay master of the field.

But the leader of Study No. 13 was having an anxious time. He continued to whirl round the school-room, but he found it increasingly difficult to keep his feet from carrying him into the struggling mass on the floor. The perspiration started to



"Look out, Monk!" yelled the onlookers, but the warning came too late. There was a crash, and Frank Monk sprawled headlong over the two fallen juniors.

his brow—as the novelist would say—as he found himself rapidly losing all control over his flying feet. He had just swooped past within an inch of a pair of struggling feet, and now felt himself being irresistibly drawn towards the very centre of the disturbance. His feet seemed to fly on without any effort on his part.

Just as he had almost given himself up for lost, and the grinning juniors were watching his wild gra-

duation with bated breath, he made a last violent effort to avoid disaster, and succeeded in executing a fearful swerve towards the door.

As he was about to crash into the oak, the door suddenly opened, and with a terrific gasp Gordon Gay flew through like a thing possessed.

The next moment there was a heavy bump, and a gasp of dismay from all the juniors.

Gordon Gay had charged full into the reverend Head of the Grammar School—Dr. Monk himself!

To quote Harry Wootton again, "that did it."

When Dr. Monk, who had been attracted to the school-room, had been terrific din proceeding thence, had recovered sufficiently from the shock of the impact—fortunately the old gentleman was not seriously hurt, no uncertain voice, an explanation with

Fortunately, besides being a very mild old gentleman, Dr. Monk was gifted with a keen sense of humour, and when the whole story of the skates was unfolded to him by the shaken and dismayed juniors, he took a more lenient view of the situation than they dared to hope for. A caning, or a flogging, or round, with perhaps a flogging for Gordon Gay, was the very least most of them expected to happen; but

Dr. Monk, at the conclusion of a short homily which he read them, being extremely not to say certainly, likely to be inflicted in the event of a repetition of such an outbreak of enthusiasm for roller-skating among the juniors of the Grammar School.

The only parties who had cause to congratulate themselves upon the own activities had taken some of the terrifying business gentlemen of

Porkville, Mass., who had seen the roller-skates to Gordon Gay. After the rough usage to which they had been subjected, the skates were scarcely in a fit condition to be returned to the Rollasy Skates' shop.

Gordon Gay gave a whistle of dismay as he looked at them.

"My hat, you chaps, I can't send the things back like this!" he said.

"You're right," agreed Wootton, ruefully. "But anyhow, the skates are worth five bob apiece—or they were when they were new, anyway."

"I shall be pleased to keep mine," put in Tadpole. "I feel that with a little practice I shall be expert at roller-skating."

"Ha, ha!" Hand over the five bob, then," grinned Gordon Gay.

Tadpole coughed.

"About—As a matter of fact, Gordon Gay, I don't happen to have that sum on me just now. But I will have a sale of some of my masterpieces before long, which ought to easily realise that sum."

"I'll let you owe me the five bob for the present, Taddy," gasped Gordon Gay. "I dare say the couple of dozen masterpieces you have stored up in the study might fetch that for the paint on them alone."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors. "Here's five bob for mine," said Frank Monk, having down two half-crowns. "I've had that amount of fun out of them already, I guess."

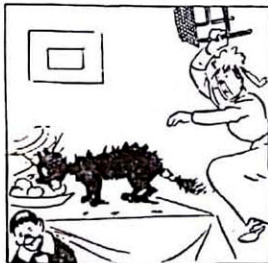
"Ha, ha, ha! Reiter!"

The requisite thirty shillings was made up between the six juniors who had used the skates, and duly dispatched to the 'cute merchants of

Porkville, Mass. But enthusiasm for roller-skating, at any rate, as practised in school-rooms, died down as quickly as it had arisen in the breasts of the Rylcombe roller-skaters.

THE END.

WANDERING WILLIE TURNS (OUT) AN HONEST COPPER THIS WEEK!



1. While Willie was partaking the other day of a nice hot dinner that had been offered him by Master Tommy Tucker, he was rudely interrupted by Jane, who laid claim—with a chair—to the dinner herself. But—



2. Tommy unfortunately bobbed up at the wrong moment, and the chair of the avenger missed Willie, and alighted with considerable force on the son of the house. Then—



3. Things began to hum, and Wandering Willie (who never could stand a row) made a bolt for the pantry in double-quick time. But—



4. Judging from the melodious sounds which were wafted from behind the pantry door, Willie failed to find any peace and quietness there. Tommy's ma arrived on the scene, and—



5. The discovery was made that Jane's pet Robert was in attendance. The thing, however, to hum again, and Willie thought it was time to retire.