

220
MOMENTOUS ANNOUNCEMENT INSIDE!

The
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236.

Three Complete Stories of—
HARRY WHARTON & Co.—JACK, SAM, & PETE—TOM MERRY & Co.



THE SIGNAL OF DISTRESS!

(An Exciting Scene from the Splendid Long Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.,
Contained in this Issue.)

HARRY WHARTON'S PLUCK!

A
Magnificent Long Complete
School Tale, dealing with
the Early Adventures of

**HARRY
WHARTON
AND CO.**
OF
GREYFRIARS

BY
**FRANK
RICHARDS.**



The breakers came creaming over Harry Wharton's feet as he stood there and looked towards the wreck, waiting for another flash to fix the position of the ship firmly upon his mind before plunging in.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Remove Meeting—And the Minute Gun.

"MY hat, how it blows!" It was Bob Cherry who uttered that ejaculation, as he looked out of the window into the Close at Greyfriars.

It was a wild night. The old trees were groaning under the force of the wind, and the gale shrieked furiously round the old roofs and chimneys.

Through the roar of the wind had sounded, more than once, a crash of falling masonry, as some fragment hurtled down from the shaky walls of the old tower.

"How-it blows!"

"By Jove, it does!" said Frank Nugent. "I shouldn't care to be at sea to-night. Bunter says he can hear the waves breaking on the shore from here."

Bob Cherry grinned.

"He must have jolly long ears, then. But it must be a rough night in the bay, and jolly dangerous for any vessel that comes too near the Shoulder. I'd like to have a run down to the shore to-night. There hasn't been a gale like this since I've been at Greyfriars."

Nugent shook his head.

"It's too rough, even if we could get out without being spotted. Besides, there's Wharton's meeting just coming off."

"Jove, I'd forgotten that!" Bob Cherry looked at his watch. "It's just on seven. Come along!" And the two Renovites turned away from the window.

Every window and door at Greyfriars seemed to be straining or shaking under the buffets of the wind, and the old building was full of sound and echo.

Bob Cherry and Nugent hurried on to the Remove Form-room, in which direction a number of juniors were streaming.

There were a good many fellows in the Form-room when Bob Cherry and Nugent entered.

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Harry Wharton was standing by the master's desk, talking to Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Hindu junior, when Bob and Nugent joined him. Wharton glanced at the class-room clock.

"Just on seven!" he said cheerily. "Most of the fellows are here, so we may as well begin. By Jove, how the wind roars!"

"The roarfulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Singh, in his peculiar English.

"I say, you fellows—"

Harry Wharton rapped on the desk. "Gentlemen," said Wharton, "I've been thinking out a rather good idea. It has occurred to me that Greyfriars is not quite up to date on some points. When it comes to football, we can hold our own pretty well with most schools, I think."

"Hear, hear!"

"Yes, rather!"

"The rafterfulness is terrific!"

"And in the summer, when it comes to cricket, I think we can keep things going pretty well."

"Hear, hear!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Go it, Wharton! On the ball!"

"But in some other respects we lag behind. It has occurred to me—"

"Hear, hear!"

"That Greyfriars has no cadet corps. I suppose you chaps have heard of the Volunteers?"

"Well," said Skinner sarcastically, "I think I've heard the word somewhere. It has a familiar sound."

And there was a laugh.

"Well," said Wharton, unheeding the laugh, "that's the idea. What price a volunteer corps for Greyfriars? Suppose England were invaded, what would Greyfriars do? Suppose we saw the German troops advancing from the sea-shore up the road to Greyfriars, what should we do?"

"Bunk!" suggested Skinner. And the meeting giggled again.

"We might do something better than bunk," said Harry Wharton. "In these times, every Briton ought to join a Volunteer corps of some kind, and learn how to handle a gun and face an enemy. A Volunteer corps for the Remove is the idea, and I think it's a ripping one myself."

"Good wheeze!" said Bob Cherry heartily.

"What about the outfit?" said Bulstrode. "That costs money. Chaps like Linley, for instance, haven't any tin."

Mark Linley, the lad from Lancashire, turned red. Wharton's eyes gleamed for a moment.

"Don't be a cad, Bulstrode, if you can help it. As for the tin, there would have to be a Form subscription, and the things would be the property of the whole corps. But—"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Look here, you fellows, I'm not going to shut up. I've got something important to say. While you're all gathered together like this, it's a splendid opportunity—"

"Ring off!"

"I say, you fellows, it's a splendid opportunity, if Wharton's done talking, for me to give a little ventriloquial entertainment."

There was a general groan.

"Chuck him out!" growled Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Silence! Order!"

"Gentlemen of the Remove—" said Harry Wharton.

"Hear, hear!"

"I've got a book here to take down the names of all who feel inclined to join the Remove Cadet Corps. Now, first man in."

"You can shove me down," said Bob Cherry.

"And me," said Nugent promptly. "I say, you fellows, will grub be provided for members of the Cadet Corps?"

"No, you young cormorant!"

"Then I don't see the use—"

"Hark!" cried Mark Linley suddenly. Through the roar of the gale outside came a deeper and more sombre sound. A hush fell upon the meeting of juniors, and even Billy Bunter was silent.

"Wh-what was that?" muttered Hazel-dene.

"Some of the old tower falling," said Nugent.

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"What was it, then?"

"A gun at sea!" He held up his hand. "Hark!"

It came again, booming heavily through the gale, and this time there was no mistaking the sound.

It was the minute-gun—the signal from a ship in distress upon a rocky coast.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Out of Bounds.

THE boys were silent. The deep sound from the sea had sent a chill to every heart. From the summit of the tower of Greyfriars, in fine weather, the sea could be seen—the wide bay, the great Shoulder jutting out into the German Ocean. Well, the boys knew what the scene must be like now, with the breakers crashing on the pebble ridge, and the great Shoulder almost hidden in lashing spray and foam.

"By Jove!" muttered Bob Cherry. "The minute gun!"

"A wreck!" said Nugent, in a hushed voice.

There was no doubt about it. A minute more had elapsed, and then the boom of the gun came heavily through the shriek of the wind once more.

The meeting broke up. No one had the heart to go on with the business that had called them together, after that deep and chilling sound from the tempest-tossed ocean.

Wharton, Nugent, Bob Cherry, and Hurroo Singh left the room together.

There was a thoughtful expression upon Harry Wharton's face, which showed that he was turning over some idea in his mind. As soon as he was out of hearing of the rest he stopped.

"It's a ship in the bay," he said. "If she's near the Shoulder on a night like this, Heaven help her. I'm thinking—" He paused.

"I can guess what you're thinking," said Bob Cherry. "We might be able to help."

Wharton nodded.

"Yes. Half the countryside will be there, and I don't see why we shouldn't go, too."

"The Head wouldn't allow it."

"I wasn't thinking of asking the Head," said Wharton, laughing. "We can break bounds for once in a way. We might be of use there. Hallo, there's Wingate going!"

Wingate of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars, had come downstairs with a waterproof on, and a cap with flaps drawn down over his ears, and thick gaiters. North and Westcott, similarly attired, were with him. The Sixth-Formers were evidently going down to the shore. Wingate opened the door, and a terrific gust of wind came roaring in.

"Shut this door, you youngsters!" called out Wingate.

"Right you are, Wingate!"

The chums of the Remove rushed to the door. The Sixth-Formers went out, and Wingate pulled the door from outside, and the juniors put their shoulders to it within. Even then it was hard work to shut it against the wind.

It was slammed at last.

"My hat! How it blows!" gasped Bob Cherry. "It won't be easy to get along in a wind like this, Harry."

"Are you chaps game to try?"

"Yes, rather."

"The ratherfulness is terrific!"

"Then let's get off."

The Famous Four hurried up to the Remove dormitory. It did not take them long to prepare for the excursion. They came out of the dormitory in coats and scarves, and made their way to a window at the back of the building by which they intended to gain egress into the quad.

One by one they dropped to the ground, and the window was silently closed. Outside, the gale was raging furiously, and the chums crouched against the wall to allow the fierce wind to sweep by.

"My hat!" muttered Bob Cherry. "This won't be easy to get through."

The others did not reply. They did not hear his voice in the hoarse roar of the wind.

Harry Wharton led the way.

Crouching low to avoid the wind as much as possible, the chums of the Remove stole along the wall, and reached a spot where the clinging ivy made it possible to cross the outer wall into the road.

In five minutes or less they were outside the school wall.

There, amid the roar and the groaning of the trees, they listened for the sound they had heard in the Form room in Greyfriars.

Clearly it came to their ears.

Boom!

From the blackness towards the shore came a glimmer of light, that shot athwart the sky and died away.

"A rocket!" muttered Harry Wharton.

Keeping close together, the chums plunged on through the lane that led down to the shore, fighting their way step by step through the buffeting of the furious wind.

Boom!

Still through the black night came the dull, sombre sound of the minute gun.

The breaking waves of the German Ocean were audible now to the ears of the Greyfriars chums—the thundering of huge billows on hard rocks.

Spray borne by the wind lashed their faces as they drew nearer to the sea. Lights twinkled in the gloom on the shore. Fisherfolk and country people from all quarters had gathered there, to see what was to be seen, and in the hope of lending aid to the vessel in distress.

More than one good ship had come to grief on the Shoulder, the great rock that jutting out on the north side of the bay. High on the summit of the cliff gleamed the light of the lighthouse, gleaming far over the wild waters.

The foot of the rugged cliff was buried in darkness, save where the foam of the breaking waves showed with a stray gleam.

Under the rushing breakers the sand was churned and tossed, and occasionally a wave came rushing higher and higher up the strand, and the spectators crowded back wildly from the clutch of the angry waters.

"Here we are at last!" Bob Cherry shouted in Harry Wharton's ear. "Can't see anything!"

Wharton shook his head.

There was blackness on the sea, blackness on the shore, and he could see nothing of the distressed vessel. But the sound of the gun, which was still fired at intervals, showed that she was near the shore.

"Look!" exclaimed Nugent suddenly. A rocket shot up from the vessel at sea.

For a moment the chums caught a glimpse of the outlines of the vessel. She was a small schooner, with two masts, and the mainmast had gone by the board at the mainmast. The topmast and the rigging clung round the ship. The schooner was terribly near to the great, towering Shoulder. Nugent, who had often swum in the bay in the summer, and who knew it well, gave a groan.

"She'll be on the rocks! It's only a matter of minutes now!"

"If she could get round the Shoulder—"

"She can't—she'll be on the sunken rocks in a couple of minutes! There's no chance for her now!"

The chums watched and listened with painful intensity.

It was impossible to aid the doomed vessel. There was no lifeboat for miles along the coast, and none of the fisherfolk would have put off in such a sea for untold gold. No boat could have lived long in the raging billows.

"Hark!"

Through the dash of the waves and the roar of the wind came a dull, grinding crash!

"She's struck!"

It was a shout from the fisherman. The juniors of Greyfriars echoed it.

"She's struck! It's all up now!"

A flash of lightning darted across the inky heavens.

Harry Wharton was watching keenly. In the flash he caught sight of the doomed schooner—jammed by the rush of the billows upon the sunken rocks at the foot of the towering cliff.

Round her the wild waves were roaring and tossing, breaking over her sloping deck as she lay jammed on the rocks.

Wharton set his teeth hard.

The vessel was not fifty yards from the shore, but between the shore and the sunken rocks was deep, deep water, raging and tossing in fury.

"There's a chance for them!"

"What's that, Wharton?"

"There's a chance yet," said Harry, shouting to make his voice heard.

"She's not gone down—she's jammed fast! Look when it flashes again!"

"But—"

The lightning came again, and showed the position of the ship more clearly.

The thundering waves seemed to be hammering her still more firmly upon the rocks, and she showed no sign of sliding off into deep water.

"She'll stick there till she breaks up," said Nugent.

The sea was breaking clean over the schooner, and it was clear that whether she broke up or not, no soul on board could long survive.

There was a look of grim determination on Harry Wharton's face.

"There's a chance for them yet."

"But—but what—"

"If a rope could be got out to them—"

"Impossible! No boat could live in that sea."

"I wasn't thinking of a boat."

Nugent laughed nervously.

"You weren't thinking of a swimmer, I suppose?"

"Yes," said Harry quietly.

"But—why, there's not a man on the coast would enter that sea for a thousand pounds!"

"I wasn't thinking of a man."

"Look here, I can see what you're thinking of, and you're not going to do it!" shouted Bob Cherry. "You'll just stick here."

Wharton shook his head.

"You know I'm a good swimmer—" "I know it jolly well," said Nugent. "You fished me out of the Sark the day you came to Greyfriars, and saved my life. But you couldn't swim that water, and you're not going to try it."

"It's no good talking, kids! I'm going to try it!"

"You can't! You sha'n't!" "Look!" said Wharton quietly.

The lightning was blazing again. The deck of the wrecked schooner could be seen, and three or four dim forms clinging to the rigging. One of them was that of a wooden-legged man. The flash passed, and the scene was blotted out as by a curtain falling.

"There are men there doomed to death," said Harry quietly. "We should be onwards not to try to save them."

"It's impossible!" "Well, I think I can try. We must get a rope, and you can tie it round my waist, and hold it. Come on!"

The Removites were accustomed to following Wharton's lead, and his determination carried the day.

Keeping a wary look-out for Wingate—who would certainly have stopped the enterprise immediately—the Removites prepared to carry out Harry's desperate plan. Harry had not come unprepared for such a contingency, having foreseen that something of the kind might happen, as it had happened before on the rocks of the Shoulder. He had a coil of cord in his pocket, and it was only necessary to obtain a strong rope from one of the fishermen.

Wharton's idea was to tie the cord round his waist and swim out to the Shoulder, and then to pull the heavy rope after him to the deck of the schooner.

If he passed the raging waters alive, the plan would succeed. If not—But he did not think of failure, and his comrades dared not think of it.

The fishermen at first demurred, and in fact, refused point blank to supply the rope, having no doubt that the brave lad would be going to his death. But when they found that he was determined to go, they lent their aid at last.

Brave men they were, and yet they did not venture. They had their wives and families to think of, or even the risk of death would not have deterred them. A coil of strong rope was brought from one of the boats lying high up on the sand, and the end of it was fastened to Wharton's cord.

The brave lad threw off his coat and jacket and boots, and walked down to the sea. The breakers came creaming over his feet as he stood there, and looked towards the wreck, waiting for another flash to fix the position of the ship firmly upon his mind before he plunged in.

Perhaps, at that moment, he faltered a little; but, if so, it was only for a second, and it never showed in his calm, handsome face.

Nugent and Bob Cherry were pale as death.

They felt that their chum was going to his doom—that the chances were ten to one that in a few minutes more his body would be dashed, broken and disfigured, upon the jutting rocks of the Shoulder.

But there were lives to be saved—fellow-creatures clinging to the wreck out there in the hungry maw of the sea!

"Heaven help him!" muttered Bob Cherry. "If—if he doesn't come back, I shall go after him!"

Nugent caught the words, and nodded. "We won't go back without him!" he whispered.

The flash came.

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It showed the schooner jammed on the rocks, the sloping, water-swept deck and three clinging figures. If there had been four—as Harry thought—one had already been swept away.

"Hold on to the rope!" And Harry Wharton, meeting a huge billow as it rolled up the shore, plunged into the water, and was carried out into the darkness by the receding wave.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Harry Wharton's Pluck.

HARRY WHARTON was gone! The roaring waters had swept him out of sight. Nugent grasped Bob Cherry's arm with a convulsive grip.

Hurree Singh was trembling in every limb.

It was a moment of cruel anxiety. The cord was running out between Bob Cherry's fingers, but that told nothing. The boy to whom it was attached might already be a shattered corpse dashing on the savage rocks.

There was a crunching of footsteps in the sand, and Wingate dashed up. He looked angrily at the boys.

"What are you doing here?" They did not answer; they hardly heard him. Wingate shook Nugent angrily by the arm.

"Nugent! You here! How dare you! What are you doing?"

"Wharton's gone!" muttered Nugent.

"Gone! Where?"

"To the wreck!"

Wingate staggered back.

"Good heavens! The fool—the mad fool!"

The lightning glimmered, and the captain of Greyfriars stared seaward. He made out the wreck, and a dark spot in the midst of the lashing waters.

It was blotted out the next moment. But Wingate knew that he had seen Wharton's head, and that so far, at least, the hero of the Remove was alive, and swimming hard.

"Heaven help him!"

Alive still, and fighting the sea—but for how long? As Harry Wharton battled with the waters, he knew that the fight was probably a losing one; his strength was going. Wild waters were swirling round him. He could see nothing, hear nothing, but the thunder of the sea.

He knew that at any moment the swirl of the waters might dash him upon some cruel rock where he would be maimed, and flung back helpless to the devouring waves. He felt his strength giving out with the terrible struggle, and knew that if he failed to reach the wreck, he would never have strength enough to fight his way back to the shore.

Yet he faltered not for a moment now. All his thoughts, all his energies, were bent upon the task in hand—to reach the schooner.

In the tossing waters, the impenetrable darkness, he seemed to be swallowed up—engulfed, and several times he feared that he was being swept from his path; but the lightning came again to glimmer on the rigging of the wrecked schooner, and to show him that he was right.

Something struck his hand in the rough water, and a chill ran through him. His whole body shuddered in the horror of a crash upon the rugged rocks.

But it was not the rocks of the Shoulder that his hand had touched. It was a floating spar, and the next moment he caught a rope, and he knew that he was in the midst of the rigging trailing over the side of the schooner.

He clung to it convulsively. The sea tossed him to and fro, but he clung on, and climbed closer to the vessel. Higher out of the water, till he gripped the woodwork of the schooner itself.

A lightning-flash came, and showed him a white, wet face within a yard of his own.

Two pairs of eyes met, staring, in the darkness. It was the wooden-legged man who was gazing at Harry, and his face was blank with amazement.

"Bust my topsails!"

Harry heard the words—an ejaculation of amazement. The next moment, as the darkness closed in, a hand grasped him and dragged him on the sloping deck. A mouth was put close to his ear, and a voice bawled:

"Hallo, my hearty, where did you spring from?"

"I have swum out with a rope."

"A rope! Bust my topsails! And you a kid, too! Bust me!"

Wharton clung with one hand to the seaman, and with the other dragged in the cord. It came freely, and the rope followed. The seaman, with a grunt of relief, caught the rope in his strong hands, and made it fast to a stanchion.

"That's safe, youngster!"

"Good! How many are there of you here?"

A lightning-flash glimmered over the deck, and gave the reply to Harry's question.

Besides the wooden-legged man, there was only one form clinging to the torn rigging, that of a dusky, foreign sailor. The others had been swept away by the thundering seas.

The survivor seemed to be too dazed by fear to see what was happening, or to hear the shouts of the wooden-legged seaman.

He had none of the iron nerve of the British seaman in that hour of terrible peril.

He was clinging to the rigging like a cat, with his hands and feet; now and then engulfed by the surging seas.

"Beppo! Beppo!"

The Italian made no reply.

The wooden-legged man gave a grunt of disgust.

"It's no good yellin' at him!" he growled. "Hang on 'ere, kiddy, while I haul him over!"

Harry only imperfectly heard the words, but he understood.

He clung to the rope while the wooden-legged seaman scrambled away, with surprising agility considering his loss of a limb.

There was a sharp cry in the darkness, and Harry's heart thumped against his ribs.

Did it mean that the wooden-legged seaman had been swept from the wreck? He feared so, and he waited in tense anxiety for a lightning-flash.

The flash came, and it showed the seaman still on the wreck, clinging to the combings of the hatchway; but the other man was not to be seen.

The torn rigging to which he had been convulsively clinging was gone, and the hapless foreigner was gone with it.

He had vanished amid the white foam that dashed round the sunken rocks of the Shoulder.

The English seaman had evidently had a narrow escape of following him. He hung where he was for some time to recover his strength, while Wharton waited anxiously in the darkness.

The seaman scrambled back at last. His wet face was white in the gloom.

"Beppo's gone!" he muttered.

"There is no one else?"

"No. The skipper was the first to go—bust my topsails! Let us try the rope."

"You go first."

"Ay, ay!"

The seaman clung to the rope, and without a moment's hesitation swung himself from the wreck into the tossing sea.

He vanished in the black waters, and Wharton waited anxiously for some minutes. Had the wooden-legged man reached the shore? He could see nothing, and the roaring of the waves drowned every other sound.

At length he commenced to drag himself along the rope; the seaman, alive or dead, must be off the rope by this time.

Round the boy, as he plunged shoreward, the raging waves tossed and foamed, and many times it seemed to him as if he must be dragged from his hold. But he held on like grim death.

His strength was almost spent, and his senses were reeling with the din and the buffeting of the waves, when he felt the shifting sand beneath his feet. A shadowy form dashed through the swirling water and grasped him.

"Here he is!"

"Wingate!"

The captain of Greyfriars reeled through the breakers with Harry Wharton in his arms.

Bob Cherry and Nugent and Hurree Singh rushed to his aid, and in a few seconds more Harry was lying on the wet sand out of reach of the sea. For some minutes he lay breathing convulsively. He was quite spent, exhausted, and his senses were swimming, and he was hardly conscious that he was safe at last. But his brain cleared, and he looked round him in the gloom, and sat up with the help of Nugent's ready arm.

"Thank Heaven you're back!" muttered Nugent; and there was a break in his voice.

Harry pressed his hand.

"But the seaman—where is he?"

"He's safe!"

"But my topsails!" said a familiar voice, as a mahogany-coloured face glimmered close to Harry's in the gloom. "Ere's old Stumpy. He's all right!"

Harry Wharton smiled faintly.

"I'm jolly glad to hear it."

"But my topsails! Old Stumpy's all right," said the wooden-legged man. "Ere I am, wooden leg and all! And all through you, young gent. That ain't many, men or boys, who would have swum out with that rope."

"Right!" said Wingate grimly. "And if I'd been here, I'd have stopped that young beggar doing it. But I'm glad as it's turned out."

"The gladfulness is terrific!" murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

And Stumpy, as the wooden-legged man called himself, was taken into the cabin of a hospitable fisherman, and Harry, leaning on Nugent's arm, turned towards Greyfriars.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Hauled Over the Coals.]

CARBERRY, the prefect, looked into the junior Common-room at Greyfriars, and pointed to the clock. Carberry was in a bad temper, as he usually was, and though it wanted several minutes to half-past nine—the bed-time of the Lower Fourth—the boys thought they had better not stand upon that. There was a general bustle of the Removites. Carberry glanced round the room. He noted the absence of the Famous Four.

"Where is Wharton?" he snapped.

Carberry would willingly have given a week's pocket-money for a chance to catch Wharton in a real fault that could be reported to the Head. More than once he had attempted to damage the boy he disliked so intensely, but somehow it had always recoiled upon himself.

No one replied to Carberry's question.

The prefect scowled darkly.

"Where is Wharton? Where's Nugent and Cherry and the nigger?"

"They're not in my waistcoat-pocket," observed Trevor, feeling there as if to make sure.

And the juniors giggled.

"They're gone out, I suppose," said the prefect, with an unpleasant grin. "Well, get off to bed, you young monkeys. If they don't turn up by half-past nine I shall have to report the matter to the Head."

The absentees did not return by half-past nine. The Remove went up to bed, and Carberry went to make his report. He met Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, in the passage, and mentioned the matter to him.

The Remove-master was startled.

"Four boys absent! You are sure, Carberry?"

"I believe so, sir. They have not gone up to bed with the rest, and I cannot find them anywhere."

"Dear me! This is a serious matter. You may leave it in my hands."

Removites as they came in with Wingate and the other Sixth-Formers.

"Which this is a nice night for kids to be out," he remarked.

"The nicefulness is terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh; while Bob Cherry pretended to warm his hands at the porter's nose.

Gosling grunted, and retired to his lodge.

The boys went into the School House, and Carberry, the prefect, who was on the look-out, met the four Removites as they were going upstairs. He dropped his hand on Harry Wharton's shoulder.

"No, you don't!" he remarked.

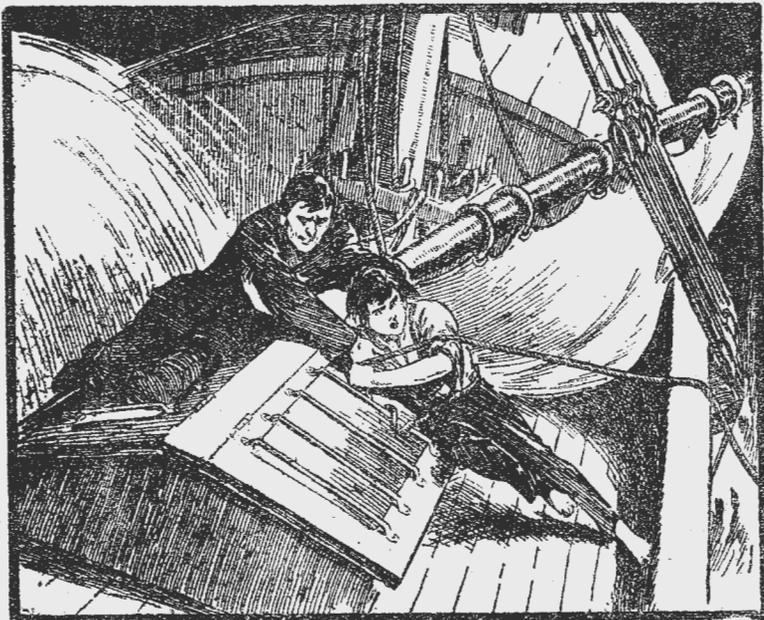
Wharton looked at him quietly.

"Well, what's the trouble?" he asked.

The prefect grinned maliciously.

"You'll soon see. I've reported your absence, and you've got to go before the Head. I've been waiting for you to come in."

"Wharton compressed his lips. He had intended to get back to Greyfriars



"Hallo, my hearty!" bawled the wooden-legged man, dragging Harry on to the sloping deck. "Where did you spring from?"

"I thought it my duty to report it to the Head, sir."

"You may leave it in my hands," said the Remove-master quietly.

Carberry bit his lip, but he had to give in. However, if the juniors did not return soon, Mr. Quelch would have to report the matter to the doctor, he knew that. And, as a matter of fact, half an hour later he saw the Form-master going to the Head's study. The Head looked very worried.

"I am afraid they have gone down to the shore," he said. "Let them be sent in to me immediately they return."

"Yes, sir."

But the juniors did not seem to be in a hurry to return. Half-past ten chimed from the clock-tower, but the Famous Four had not put in an appearance, neither had Wingate and his friends returned.

It was near eleven when a ring came at last at the bell, and Gosling, the porter, rose, grumbling, from his glass of gin-and-water, and went to the gate. He stared in blank amazement at the

before bed-time, but his adventure at the wreck had made that impossible, and the meeting with Wingate rendered it useless to re-enter the school secretly.

He was in for it now, and the prefect's expression showed how much he enjoyed the situation.

"Come with me, all of you," said Carberry.

"Very well."

The prefect led the way, and the four juniors followed him to the Head's study. They were dripping with water, and their boots squeaked on the linoleum as they walked.

"Are you going to tell the doc. all about it?" asked Nugent, in a whisper.

Harry shook his head.

"No."

"But—"

"We broke bounds," said Harry quietly. "We can face the music without making a fuss, I suppose. The Head's quite right if he canes us; as a matter of fact, there's no getting out of that. And Carberry's quite right to

report us; only he mightn't be such a confounded cad about it!"

"But if the Head knew you had saved a man's life—"

"I'm not going to dodge behind a thing like that. It's all right."

Carberry tapped at the Head's door, and entered, followed by the juniors. Dr. Locke laid down his pen, and turned his chair round to get a good look at the culprits. He looked shocked as he saw the state they were in.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed. "You are wet through! How could you be so careless as to get into this state? Where have you been?"

"Down to the shore, sir."

"You broke bounds—at night?"

"We heard the minute-gun, sir, and we thought we might be of some use."

The Head smiled slightly.

"And you were curious to see what was going on?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"You know perfectly well that you have committed a great breach of discipline, Wharton," said Dr. Locke sternly. "I blame you, because I am sure the others only followed your lead. I shall punish you severely in the morning. At present, you must go straight to your room, and get those wet clothes off. You might have an illness as the result of this foolish escapade."

"Yes, sir."

"You have done very wrong, Wharton! I shall cane all of you, but I shall cane you most severely, as the ring-leader. You did very right to report this matter, Carberry. Such breaches of discipline must be put down with a heavy hand."

"Yes, sir," said Carberry.

"You may go, boys. I am very much disappointed in you."

The juniors left the study.

They were very silent as they went up to their room.

"Rotten!" said Nugent at last, as they were stripping off their soaked clothes. "I would rather have a licking than have the doc. talking in that strain. I suppose we were giddy asses to go out."

"The assfulness was terrific!"

"Well, I can't very well be sorry, considering how it's turned out," said Wharton.

"No, that's so, too."

"After all, we can take a licking. The Head's right; but I'm jolly glad we went, all the same."

And the Removites, having been rubbed down with rough towels, turned in, and were soon sleeping soundly. They had been tired out by their adventure, and even the roaring of the wind round the roofs and chimneys of Greyfriars failed to keep them awake.

Ten minutes after they had turned in, Wingate looked into the room with a candle in his hand.

The captain of Greyfriars had changed his clothes, and looked none the worse for his soaking.

He glanced at the juniors, and saw that they were fast asleep, and withdrew quietly from the room.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

An Unpleasant Prospect.

CLANG! Clang! Clang!
The rising-bell rang through the morning air, but the four juniors did not awaken. They were still sleeping soundly. The late hours and the exhausting tramp through the wind the previous night had fagged them out.

Bulstrode, and Wun Lung, and Billy Bunter sat up in bed.

"I say, you fellows," said Bunter, putting on his spectacles and blinking towards the still sleeping chums, "that's the rising-bell, you know."

"Let 'em sleep," said Bulstrode, with a grunt. "There'll be a prefect up presently with a cane to wake 'em."

Wun Lung, the Chinese, blinked sleepily at Bulstrode, and then slipped out of bed and glided towards Harry Wharton. He shook the latter gently by the shoulder.

Wharton's eyes opened.
"Hallo! By Jove, it's time to get up, I suppose?"

"Lising-bell gone."

Harry sat up and rubbed his eyes.

"Hum! I suppose I was tired out. Thanks, kid!"

He jumped out of bed. Bob Cherry, and Nugent, and Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh were awakened, and they turned out reluctantly enough.

The juniors were soon down. As they came downstairs, Carberry met them, with a dark look on his face.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry cheerfully. "Wherefore that sweet and haunting smile, Carberry?"

Whereat the prefect scowled still more darkly.

"Wharton's got to turn up in Hall after prayers," he said grimly. "The whole school's called together to see him put through it."

Harry Wharton started.

"What's that? The Forms called up?"
"Yes. Head's orders; and mind you're there."

And the prefect stalked away.

There was a cloud on Harry Wharton's face.

"What can it mean?" said Nugent. "The school wouldn't be called together for anything but a flogging, and the Head can't mean that."

"I don't know," said Harry gloomily. "He was very ratty last night. He may be going to make a flogging affair of it."

"The rottenfulness would be terrific," said the nabob. "Suppose we go and speak remonstrately to the worthy doctor?"

"No good, Inky. If it's to be a big row, I suppose we shall have to stand it."

But the nabob's face was thoughtful. He felt that if the Head understood the matter, he would never go to such extremes, and the assembling of the school in Hall certainly looked as if Wharton was to be flogged.

The nabob remained standing in the doorway when the chums of the Remove went out into the quad.

It was a breezy morning, the high wind of the previous night having not yet completely died away.

The Removites were punting a football about, holding on their caps in the wind, and Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh stood for some minutes watching them. Then he walked quietly away. There was a determined expression on his face.

It was the Head's habit to spend some time in his study before breakfast, and the nabob knew when he would be coming out.

He waited patiently in the corridor. At last the Head's door opened, and he came out, and looked at the waiting

Hindu in some surprise. Hurree Singh bowed low.

"Salaam, sahib!"

The doctor smiled.

"Good-morning, Hurree Singh! What are you doing here?"

"I was waiting for the serene presence of your worthy self."

"What do you want?"

"To speak to your worthiness with respectable frankness," said the nabob.

"It is about the summonfulness of the school to witness the ordeal through which my esteemed friend, Wharton, is so painfully pass."

"Indeed!"

"The affair of the lastful night was equally shared in by all of us," said Hurree Singh. "Why should all fall to the share of the esteemed Wharton? Why is the callfulness of the entire school upon his account, when there were others who sharefully took part in all the proceedingfulness?"

The Head looked at him intently.
"Do you claim to have taken an equal part in this with Wharton, Hurree Singh?"

The nabob nodded emphatically.

"The undoubtfulness is terrific, honoured sahib!"

"Indeed! I was not aware of that."

"I assert it on the honourable word of a respectable Nabob of Bhampar," said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, with dignity, "and my worthy chums will bear me out."

"I understand that it was Wharton alone who went upon the rope to the wrecked vessel. That, at least, I gathered from Wingate."

"That is correctfully accurate; but the others were all there spotfully on the scene, and all equally shared in the worthy enterprise."

"I do not quite understand you, Hurree Singh, but as Wharton went alone upon the rope, I am bound to believe that the account given me by Wingate is correct."

"The correctfulness is great, but—"

"And I can spare no more time now."

"But—"

"You may go, Hurree Singh."

"Honoured sahib—"

"Will you go at once?"

"Honoured and never-sufficiently-to-be-respected sahib—"

"Go!" thundered the Head.

And the nabob went.

It was evidently useless to push the matter further in that quarter, and Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh departed with a troubled brow. His heart was heavy for his esteemed friend, as he would have expressed it himself.

But his friendly efforts were not over yet. He sought out Mr. Quelch, and opened his heart upon the matter to the Remove-master.

"If I may speakfully address the worthy sahib," the nabob began diffidently.

"You may if you are brief," said Mr. Quelch.

"It is about the honourable Wharton. I am informfully told by the esteemed Carberry that he is called up before the whole school."

"That is correct."

"I wish to respectfully protest, as I had quite as much to do with the matter as the esteemed Wharton, and I think—"

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Quelch. "You did not go out upon the rope."

"But I held it handfully."

"That is nothing. I am surprised at you, Hurree Singh."

"Respectable and honoured sahib, I—"

"You may go."

And Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh gave it up again. He met Wingate in the

Write to the Editor of

ANSWERS

If you are not getting your right
PENSION

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 236.

passage, and at once started on the captain of Greyfriars.

"Respectable captain, may I begfully solicit the honourfulness of speaking to you?"

"Oh, fire away!" said Wingate. "Cut it short."

"The shortfulness is great. I hear that the worthy Wharton is to be called before the whole schoolful assembly."

"That's right!"

"I think it is unjust."

"Do you? Then you're an ass."

"Because we all had equal hands in the proceedingfulness—"

"Bosh! You didn't go on the rope!"

"That is correctful; but really, that only adds to the worthy bravery of the esteemed Wharton."

"Of course it does, ass!" said Wingate, walking away. He left the nabob looking very puzzled.

When the chums of the Remove came in to breakfast, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh joined them, looking very doleful.

"The uselessness of the intercedefulness is great," he remarked.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What have you been up to, Inky?"

"I have intercedefully interviewed the Head, and the honourable Queleh, and the respectable and ludicrous Wingate. They are as hard as the worthy lion."

"You ass!" said Bob Cherry. "It's like your cheek!"

"But could I allow the esteemed Wharton to be flogfully licked when the

reasonable about Wharton. He had broken the rules of the school with his eyes open, knowing what to expect if his escapade came to the knowledge of the Head. He did not grumble at punishment, when he knew that he had been—technically, at least—in the wrong.

But it was the magnitude of the punishment that surprised and disheartened him. A public flogging was a punishment only less severe than expulsion, and it was reserved for the worst offences. Breaking bounds was sometimes punished by lines, sometimes by a caning. Flogging for it was unknown, and it seemed as if the usually kindly Head had changed his nature all of a sudden, and developed into a merciless tyrant. There was hot rebellion in Harry's heart.

His calm, outward aspect gave no indication of it, but his blood was boiling. He had made up his mind that he would not take the flogging—that he would walk out of the room and leave Greyfriars first.

But he was more amazed than angry. He was puzzled, too, by the kindly smile Mr. Queleh gave him when he entered the hall, and the cheery nod from Wingate.

Then he caught Carberry's spiteful eye, and saw the malicious grin on the sour face of the prefect.

Now he stood with his eyes bent down, waiting for the ordeal.

There was a faint murmur as the rustle

The Head listened to it with a smile. He held up his hand for silence.

"Wharton, you broke bounds last night."

"Yes, sir."

"You went down to the shore without permission, for which you naturally deserved a severe caning, which last night I resolved to give you."

"Yes, sir."

"Since hearing the particulars of last night's occurrence from Wingate," said the doctor, "I have changed my intentions. I have called the whole school together to hear what I have to say. For your breach of the rules of this college, I think you will admit that you deserve punishment."

"Yes, sir," said Wharton quietly. "A caning, but not a flogging. I do not admit that I deserve that."

The Head stared at him.

"A flogging! Who is speaking of a flogging?"

"Did you—do you—I—I understood that I was called up for a flogging," stammered Wharton. "Carberry said—I—I mean—"

The doctor's brow darkened ominously.

"You understood that you were called up for a flogging, after your act of heroism last night?" he said. "Am I to understand that Carberry said so?"

"I—I—I—"

"Stand forward, Carberry!"

The prefect, looking a little white, stepped out of the ranks of the Sixth.

- - ON FRIDAY NEXT! - -

JIMMY SILVER & CO.,

The Famous Chums of Rookwood, Will Make Their Appearance in

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micro wordfulness might save him?" said the nabob reproachfully.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, don't bother now, Billy!"

"But, I say, you fellows, I hear that Wharton is to be flogged before the whole school for breaking bounds last night. Bulstrode told me. He had it from Carberry."

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

The chums went in to breakfast, looking very gloomy. They ate little at that meal, and it was with heavy hearts that they turned up in the school hall after prayers, Wharton, looking very pale, in his place at the head of the Remove.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Hero of Greyfriars.

THERE was a hush in the crowded hall.

Most of the fellows were looking towards Harry Wharton, who stood with his eyes on the floor.

He did not meet a single glance. His face was pale, but quite calm. He felt that he was "in for it." It was not the pain he cared for, though that was likely to be severe. It was the disgrace of a public punishment like flogging.

And he could not understand it.

There was nothing illogical or un-

reasonable about Wharton. He had broken the rules of the school with his eyes open, knowing what to expect if his escapade came to the knowledge of the Head. He did not grumble at punishment, when he knew that he had been—technically, at least—in the wrong.

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"I—I—I—"

"Stand forward, Carberry!"

The prefect, looking a little white, stepped out of the ranks of the Sixth.

"I hope, Carberry, that what you scate is correct, and that you did not seek to give Wharton this false impression," he said.

"I assure you, sir—"

"I must accept your word, as there is no proof either way," said the doctor. "It is probably a misunderstanding. You may go back to your place."

Carberry went back to the Sixth. Wingate, who was next to him, gave him a look of contempt that made even the bully flush uneasily.

"I am sorry, Wharton, that you should have entertained this idea for a moment," said the Head kindly. "I understand now why a companion of yours addressed me upon the subject. I presume that Hurree Singh was interceding for you."

"The correctfulness of the worthy sahib is terrific."

"I drew the wrong impression that Hurree Singh was seeking to share in the credit of your heroic action, and I ask his pardon for it."

"It is all rightful; and everything is gardenfully lovely," said the nabob, with a benign smile.

"And now to proceed," said Dr. Locke. "I have, as I said, changed my intentions. Wharton was guilty of a great fault in leaving the college last night, but under the circumstances I overlook that fault."

There was a murmur, which would have swelled into a cheer, but the doctor raised his hand.

"Wharton swam out to the sinking ship, and carried out a rope to the unfortunate men aboard her. Only one man was saved from the crew, I am sorry to say; but that man was saved wholly by the courage and devotion of the head boy of the Greyfriars Remove—Harry Wharton."

"Hurrah!"

This time the cheer could not be held back.

"Hurrah for Wharton!"

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

The room seemed to rock with the sound. Wharton's cheeks were scarlet.

The change from the anticipation to the reality was great, and the junior hardly realised for the moment that he was being cheered by the whole school, instead of being sentenced to a flogging in the sight of all Greyfriars.

Bob Cherry cheered frantically.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

And in the exuberance of his spirits Bob stamped on the floor, till called to order by a severe glance from Mr. Quelch.

The doctor raised his hand at last.

"You are right to recognise the pluck and devotion of your schoolfellow, my boys," he said. "Wharton has acted like a hero. He is pardoned for his breach of discipline, and I tell him before you all that Greyfriars is proud of him."

And again the cheers burst forth. And then Bob Cherry, who never lacked nerve, started "He's a jolly good

fellow" at the top of his voice, and the whole hall took it up.

The great apartment rang and echoed with the sound, and in the midst of it the Head gave the signal to dismiss, and left the room.

There was a rush of the Remove to surround Wharton. He was shaken by the hand and thumped on the back till he was aching all over.

"The Head's an old sport, after all!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "You're a giddy hero, and we're all proud of you."

"Oh, rot!" said Harry. "Let it drop, for goodness' sake!"

"Rats! Here, you chaps, shoulder-high to the class-room!"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Harry, struggling. "Don't be such asses! Let me down!"

"Rats! More rats! Bring him along!"

And Harry's resistance was in vain. The excited Removites raised him shoulder-high, and he was carried to the class-room over the heads of his Form-fellows, and they marched in with him, heedless of the astonished gaze of Mr. Quelch.

The Form-master smiled at Wharton's flushed face.

"It's only a procession, sir," said Bob Cherry.

"Very good!" said Mr. Quelch.

"And now go to your places."

And Wharton was allowed to slide down at last.

THE END.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

A Weekly Chat between The Editor and His Readers.

NEXT FRIDAY'S GREAT ATTRACTIONS!

The issue of the PENNY POPULAR due to appear next Friday will be, I am confident, the very best issue of the PENNY POP. that has ever been published. When I asked my chums their opinions on the suggestion that the Harry Wharton stories should be published in the PENNY POPULAR the response was great, but when I repeated my request with regard to stories dealing with the adventures of Jimmy Silver & Co., I was simply inundated with letters approving of the suggestion.

I know, therefore, that in replacing the stories of Jack, Sam, and Pete with tales of Jimmy Silver & Co., the famous chums of Rookwood, I am satisfying the requirements of every one of my loyal readers. The first story introducing Jimmy Silver & Co., and dealing with their early adventures, will appear in next Friday's issue of the PENNY POPULAR. The title of this magnificent yarn is

"THE ROOKWOOD WAXWORKS!"

By Owen Conquest,

and it is a story full of laughable incidents. Funds are required for a local institution, and Jimmy Silver and his chums resolve to do their bit towards raising the money wanted. They decide to run a waxwork entertainment, but they are not alone in their efforts. Other fellows make up their minds to run other entertainments, and there is keen rivalry. Whether Jimmy Silver's waxworks turn out a success you will learn when you read this magnificent story in next Friday's issue of the PENNY POPULAR.

The second long complete story in our next issue is that dealing with the adventures of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled

"THE GREYFRIARS SAILORS!"

By Frank Richards.

In this fine story Harry Wharton makes a strange purchase. He buys a schooner. But Harry Wharton does not purchase the boat intentionally. An auction is held for the purpose

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of disposing of the schooner to the highest bidder. The Greyfriars chums all attend the auction, and the vessel is knocked down to Harry Wharton.

When the auctioneer asks Wharton to pay up the latter states firmly that he did not bid. There is great excitement for a time, and eventually it is discovered that Billy Bunter, by means of his ventriloquial powers, made the bid in Harry Wharton's name.

In order not to put the auctioneer in a difficult position, Harry Wharton asks his uncle to pay for the schooner. The latter willingly does so, and the boat becomes the property of the junior. The news soon spreads throughout Greyfriars, and there is considerable enthusiasm. I can assure you the Removites have some very exciting times as sailors aboard the schooner, as you will learn when you read next Friday's grand yarn.

I can say without hesitation that next Friday's long complete tale dealing with the adventures of Tom Merry & Co., entitled

"THE CHAIN OF GUILT!"

By Martin Clifford,

is the finest that Mr. Clifford has ever written. The chain of guilt is woven round the hero of the Shell, and he is found guilty of behaviour of which he is absolutely innocent. Tom Merry cannot find sufficient proof of his innocence, however, to convince the Head, and he is expelled from St. Jim's.

However, Tom Merry's chums believe in his innocence, and remain loyal to him. They make up their minds to probe the mystery and set to work. They are eventually successful in bowling out a caddish Sixth-Former and clearing Tom Merry. Much to the satisfaction of his chums, the captain of the Shell returns to St. Jim's entirely exonerated.

In conclusion, I want to utter a word of warning to all my readers. Next week we shall only print the actual number of copies of the PENNY POPULAR ordered through newsagents. Unless you order your copy in advance you are bound to meet with disappointment. Don't think these are idle words, my chums. They are written seriously, and they are meant to be read seriously.

If in the past you have been able to go to your newsagent on a Friday and secure a chance copy of the PENNY POPULAR, you will not be able to do so next week. You must order your copy before Monday, the 16th, otherwise you are bound to be met with those disappointing words, "Sold out!" when you go round to your newsagent.

There is an order-form on page 13 of this issue. Every reader of the PENNY POPULAR, if he wishes to secure a copy of next Friday's magnificent issue, must fill the form up and hand it to his newsagent.

Be warned in time! Don't put the matter off to the next day. It is urgent—very urgent—and should be attended to without delay.

YOUR EDITOR.

D'ARCY, THE REPORTER!

A Magnificent Long
Complete School Tale, dealing
with the Early Adventures of
TOM MERRY & CO.
of St. Jim's.

- BY -

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Arthur Augustus Learns Shorthand.

THREE juniors came out of the New House and sauntered down to the school gates. They arrived there just as Arthur Augustus came down, resplendent in elegant Etons and a topper that gleamed in the sun. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn grinned affably at the swell of St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus ignored the New House fellows, and walked out of the gates with his noble nose very high in the air.

"P, B, T, D, chay, jay!"

Figgins & Co. heard the swell of the School House muttering those mystic monosyllables to himself as he started down the lane, and they stared after him in astonishment.

"The weather!" murmured Fatty Wynn, with a shake of the head. "It has queer effects on people. It makes me hungry—"

"Kay, gay, ef, vee, op, wop—"

"My hat!" said Figgins.

"Pop, chop, kop—no, that isn't wight."

And Arthur Augustus consulted the book again.

Figgins & Co., greatly curious, joined the swell of St. Jim's.

"Are you a Mason?" asked Figgins.

"Certainly not, Figgins! Pway don't intewwupt me with wiculous questions!"

"I thought that might be a pass-word or something," explained Figgins.

"Pway don't be an ass! Chay, kay, gay, hay, way, wop—"

"What is it?" gasped Fatty Wynn.

"Sounds to me like shorthand," said Kerr.

Kerr knew shorthand—in fact, there were few things that the Scottish junior did not know, as a matter of fact.

Arthur Augustus gave Kerr an approving nod.

"Quite wight, Kerr, deah boy," he said; "it is shorthand! I've learned shorthand this aftahnoon, to report the mayor's speech at Wayland Town Hall for the 'Weekly.'"

Kerr gaye quite a jump.

"You've learned shorthand this afternoon!" he ejaculated.

D'Arcy nodded.

"Oh, good!" gasped Kerr. "What speed have you got up—in one afternoon?"

"I haven't twied yet. As a mattah of fact, I haven't quite finished learnin' the consonants so fah," said D'Arcy



"Wefuse that lady!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wefuse to allow this wuff treatment!" The chukkers-out did not pay any heed to the excited swell of St. Jim's. They conducted the lady, struggling and shrieking, to the door.

modestly. "I'm goin' to finish learnin' in the twain goin' ovah to Wayland."

"My only chapeau!"

"P, B, T, D, chay, jay, kay—"

"Go it!"

"Kay, gay, stay, pray, say, hay—"

"Hay!" said Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No, that isn't quite wight. Ef, vee, kee, see, me—"

"That sounds ripping!" said Kerr.

"You'll get the speech down splendidly. We are going over to Wayland to the meeting, by the way. We might be able to help you out with some longhand notes if you don't get it all down."

"Thank you vewy much, deah boy! But I shall get it down all wight. To take down a speech verbatim, a chap only requires to know shorthand, and to have a fountain-pen and a wuled notebook. I've got a wuled notebook, and I've bowwowed Wally's fountain-pen, and I'm learnin' shorthand on the way ovah."

Figgins & Co. shrieked.

"I weally don't see anythin' to cackle at," said D'Arcy, in surprisa. "Ef, vee, ith, thee, see, me, say, pay, hip, pip."

"Hip-pip!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fellows—"

Figgins & Co. chuckled jovously as they walked down the lane with D'Arcy. They had intended to walk through the wood to Wayland, but a keen interest in D'Arcy's progress with shorthand made them take the train with him instead at Rylcombe.

Arthur Augustus looked very thoughtful as they got into his carriage.

"Of course, I'm delighted to have you chaps with me," he said, a little doubtful. "But I twust you will keep quiet, and not intewwupt my studies. If I don't get on to the cowwespondin' style

by the time I weach Wayland I may lose some of Mr. Japp's speech."

"That would be rotten!" said Figgins sympathetically. "Don't say a word if you can help it, you fellows. Better not breathe, I think."

"P, B, T, D, chay, kay, gay—" murmured D'Arcy, as the train started.

Figgins & Co. sat as silent as Egyptian mummies while the train ran on. It stopped in Wayland Junction, and Figgins threw open the carriage door. He jumped out, and Kerr and Wynn followed him, and Arthur Augustus stepped from the train in a more leisurely manner.

"I think we've got lots of time," he remarked, putting his hand to his watch. "Bai Jove! Oh, gwecat Scott! Oh! Ah!"

His delicately-tinted kid glove had come away from his watch deeply stained with black ink. D'Arcy gazed down at his waistcoat. It was a beautiful fancy waistcoat, of light colours; but the light colours were darkened now, in many places by the admixture of thick ink. D'Arcy's preoccupation had prevented him from noticing it before, and he gazed at it now in horror.

"Bai Jove! What—what—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Figgins. "It's the giddy fountain-pen!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus jerked the fountain-pen from the upper pocket of his waistcoat. It was one mass of thick ink from end to end. The swell of St. Jim's gazed at it, and at his glove, and at his waistcoat, in speechless horror.

"That young wascal Wally! I asked him specially if the fountain-pen was all wight, and he said it was all wight if I kept the wight end up—I forget which end."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus hurried the fountain-pen across the platform.

"Bai Jove! How can I possibly go to a meetin' with my waistcoat in this awful state?"

"Take it off," suggested Kerr. "It would be cooler without it."

"You are an ass, Kerr! Bai Jove, this is fearful! I shall give Wally a fearful thwashin' for lendin' me that fountain-pen!"

"I shouldn't wonder if he gives you one for chucking it away!" grinned Kerr.

"I wufuse to cawwy such a howwible thing about with me! Bai Jove! I shall be late for the meetin' if I don't hurry. There goes five!"

And the swell of St. Jim's hurried out of the station, followed by Figgins & Co., in a state of mild hysterics.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

D'Arcy, the Reporter.

WAYLAND Town Hall was crammed.

The juniors of St. Jim's succeeded in getting in, however, and Arthur Augustus looked round for the seats allotted to reporters. An attendant whom he requested to guide him there smiled, and said certainly, and walked away and was not seen again.

Figgins dragged D'Arcy into a seat well up near the platform, however, and he sat down with the Co.

The platform crowd had taken their seats, sitting in that semi-circle of blank faces without which no public meeting in Britain is complete. They faced the audience, each of them trying to look blander than the rest. The Mayor of Wayland, a very short and a very stout gentleman, with a purple face fringed by white whiskers, bowed to the audience, and coughed a platform cough.

There were cheers and catcalls. Arthur Augustus took out his ruled pocket-book, which was quite ready for business, whatever had happened to his fountain-pen or his shorthand.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured. "Can you lend me a fountain-pen, deah boy? Speeches can't be reported without a fountain-pen!"

"Pencil do?" asked Figgins.

Arthur Augustus looked doubtful.

"Well, the book says that a reportah ought to be provided with a fountain-pen and a ruled notebook," he said. "I've got the ruled notebook. I don't know whethah my shorthand would be all wight with a pencil instead of a pen!"

"Just as good, I should say," said Kerr blandly.

"Well, I will try the pencil. Thank you, Figgins!"

Arthur Augustus rested the book on his knee, and prepared for business. He jammed his monocle a little tighter into his eye, and scanned the platform.

"Who's that chap with the bandy legs who's talkin' now?" he asked.

Figgins chuckled.

"Oh, he's the chairman!"

"Ought I to report his remarks?"

"Shouldn't trouble. Besides, we can't hear 'em."

"No; that's vewy true!"

It was not long before the mayor was upon his legs. It was pretty clear that he was anxious to begin, all the time. He stood up, very important and very purple, and was received with loud cheers.

From the conversation round them, the juniors learned that the Mayor of Wayland was opposed to granting votes to women, and that he was seriously alarmed by a Bill that had been intro-

duced into the House of Commons, which, to him, portended that the British Empire was practically on its last legs, and only to be saved by the country rallying and backing up the Mayor of Wayland.

"Is that the mayah, Figgay?" asked D'Arcy.

"Yes; that's the great speaker."

"I weward it as vewy inpwopah of a man in his posish to come to a big meetin' dvesseed so vewy carelessly!" said D'Arcy. "Look at his twousahs! They are a most widedulous shape, and want pvessin' feahfully! There is simply no cwease at all in them!"

"Never mind his bags! Listen to the palaver!"

"Yas; all wight!"

"Ladies and gentlemen," said the mayor, in a deep voice.

"Ear, 'ear!" responded the gentlemen.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I've only got a few words to say—"

"Bravo!"

Arthur Augustus jabbed at his ruled notebook with his pencil, and then turned a worried look on Kerr.

"I—I say, Kerr, how do you make an 'L'?" he murmured. "I sha'n't have time to consult the book, I'm afraid, while I'm takin' down the speech!"

Kerr nearly exploded.

"Haven't you finished learning shorthand?" he asked innocently.

"No; Blake and Digby intewwupted me vewy much, and—and—upon the whole—I believe you know shorthand pvetty well, Kerr?"

"Yes."

"Pewwaps you might take it down for me till I wemembah how it goes?"

Kerr chuckled.

"All serene!" he said. "Hand me the book!"

And Arthur Augustus handed Kerr the ruled notebook and the pencil.

"Thank you vewy much!" he said. "I will give you some tips as we go on. What are you makin' those curious marks in the book for, Kerr?"

"Shut up! I'm taking down the speech!"

"Bai Jove! Is that a P, B, T, D, chay, or gay?"

"Ass! It's three sentences!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"Don't interrupt, or I shall be putting down what you say instead of what the other ass is saying!"

"Wweally, Kerr—"

"Cheeso it!"

Kerr's pencil was going like lightning, and D'Arcy could only watch him in wonder. It dawned upon the swell of St. Jim's that there was more in shorthand than met the eye at first glance.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured. "I couldn't do that, you know!"

"Go hon!" said Figgins.

"I weward Kerr as a vewy elevah chap. It must have taken him hours to learn that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!"

"Harder!"

"Ear, 'ear!"

The mayor was under full sway now. There were constant interruptions from the back of the hall. Some of the gentlemen there seemed to believe in female suffrage, and some did not believe in it; but all, evidently, believed in making as much noise as possible. Half the mayor's remarks were drowned in clamour, but the audience did not seem to mind very much.

"Gentlemen," roared Mr. Japp, "the country is on the 'igh-road to ruin! I repeat it—on the 'igh-road to ruin! I don't care who 'ears me say it, gentlemen, it's on the 'igh-road to ruin!"

"Ear, 'ear!"

"Ooray!"

The shocking state of the country, on the high-road to ruin, did not seem to discompose the gentlemen at the back of the hall. Perhaps they felt that the country would very likely last their time.

"The 'igh-road to ruin!" repeated Mr. Japp, evidently pleased with that phrase. "And wot can save it, gentlemen? I repeat, wot can save it?"

A thin lady in a weird bonnet jumped up in the middle of the hall.

"Votes for women!" she shrieked.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Manly Hearts to Guard the Fair.

"EAR, 'ear!"

"Sit down!"

"Go it, lidy!"

"Chuck 'er out!"

"Votes for women!" repeated the lady, in a very high falsetto. "I demand the right to be heard!" It would have been very difficult for anyone in the hall, or near it, not to hear the lady, as a matter of fact. "Votes for women!"

"Sit down!" The lady cast a defiant glance round the crowded hall. She seemed to glory in the prospect of a possible martyrdom. She was a lady of forty summers, not, to mention the winters, and she was dressed in a style which would have been exceedingly youthful for a girl of twenty-five. But she had a determined, square jaw, and evidently meant business.

"Votes for women! Down with the Government! Down with everybody! Votes for women!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, missis!"

"Is your old man mindin' the kids at 'ome?"

"Pore Mister 'Enpeck!"

"Horder, horder!"

"Shut up!"

"Chuck her out!"

"Go and git yer ole man 'is dinner, ma'am!"

"Pore old 'ubby! Wot a time he's goin' to 'ave when she gits 'ome!"

"Votes for women!"

Several stewards were struggling through the crowd to persuade the lady to retire. They reached her, and wasted eloquence upon her in vain. Then they essayed to assist her gently to the exit. The lady clung to a seat, and declined to move.

Then three strong pairs of hands descended upon her, and she was jerked away. She shrieked wildly.

Up jumped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy like a lion in his wrath.

"Welease that lady at once!" he shouted. "I wufuse to allow a lady to be tweated wuffly in my presence! Welease her at once!"

Figgins dragged him down.

"Shut up!" he said. "She must go out if she doesn't keep quiet, Gussy. The mayor's paid for the use of this hall, and he's entitled to a show!"

"That's all vewy well, Figgay, but nothin' is so important as bein' decent to a lady, you know. It doesn't mattah if the poor gal wuns on, you know. Women ought to be allowed to talk as much as they like. Besides, I cannot respect a man who addresses a public meetin' in twousahs like that!"

"Sit down!"

"I wufuse to sit down!"

And Arthur Augustus broke away from Figgins, and rushed to the rescue of the Suffragette.

There was a roar:

"Chuck him out, too!"

"Ooray!"

"Welease that lady at once! I wufuse to allow this wuff treatment!"

"Stand back!"
 "Welease her, I ordah you, you wuffians, or I shall certainly pvevent you!"

How D'Arcy was going to prevent the stewards from ejecting the lady was not quite clear, as there were now half a dozen of them on the spot, and all of them burly and powerful men. But Arthur Augustus never counted odds when he was excited.

The "chuckers-out" did not pay any heed to the excited swell of St. Jim's. They conducted the lady, struggling and shrieking, to the door. The lady's bonnet was gone by this time, and her hair had come down—some of it as far as the ground. Certain mysterious additions to the head which are called "waves," and "fronts," and "switches," and so forth, peeled off the head of the unfortunate champion of women's rights, and disappeared under trampling feet.

Arthur Augustus hurled himself upon the attendants, and hit out.

"My hat!" gasped Figgins. "He'll get hurt! Rescue!"

And Figgins & Co. attempted to rush to D'Arcy's aid, with the idea of dragging him to safety. But the crowd was too thick, and they could not get through.

Arthur Augustus was wildly fighting with three or four attendants, and he planted several doughty blows, and one of the men was on his back already. Then the swell of St. Jim's and the Suffragette disappeared through the doorway together, in the midst of a pandemonium of shrieks and howls and gasps and flying arms and legs.

"Oh, Christopher Columbus!" gasped Figgins. "We'd better go out and look after him. Never mind the meeting!"

And Figgins & Co. squeezed their way out. As they went there was a wild hubbub behind them, and the voice of the mayor was booming forth again.

"This country is on the 'igh-road to ruin—"

"Ooray!"

Figgins & Co. emerged breathless from the town-hall into the street.

On the pavement outside lay a gasping, woebegone figure. The Suffragette had disappeared, but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remained—what was left of him.

He was hatless, and his hair was wildly rumped. His jacket had been torn into shreds, and his waistcoat was split up the back. His trousers were a wreck, and his shirt was a ruin. He was utterly out of breath, and he lay pumping it in with loud gasps.

Figgins & Co. roared.

"Ha, ha, ha! Poor old Gussy! Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothin' whatevah to laugh at! I wogard this as howwible. And now I sha'n't have a wopert of the speech for the 'Weekly'!"

"That's all right!" said Kerr. "I've got down all the gas that escaped. I've got it all down in shorthand!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But the wost of the speech—"

"That's only the first part over again. The mayor didn't intend to get off the high-road to ruin until the meeting broke up," explained Kerr. "But how on earth are you going to get back in that state?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Better drop into a shop and buy an ulster and a cap," said Figgins. "You can't walk home in rage and tatters, you know."

"Yaas; that's a wathah good idea!" gasped the unfortunate reporter of "Tom Merry's Weekly." "Pway give me the notes of the speech, Kerr! I shall want them for my wopert."

And Arthur Augustus was provided with a cap and an ulster to cover up the

battered state of his garments, and in that guise was taken back to St. Jim's, feeling, as he described it, "wevy wotten indeed!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
 D'Arcy's Report.

TOM MERRY came out of the School House in the gathering dusk. It was a beautiful evening, and Tom Merry felt that he was entitled to a stroll after his arduous labours in the editorial office. Manners and Lowther joined him.

Tom Merry greeted them with a cheerful smile.

There was a shout in the dusk of the quadrangle.

"Good old Gussy!"

"Ain't it warm?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here's my special reporter come back," grinned Tom Merry. "He's got

The Terrible Three stared at him, and grinned.

"What on earth are you wearing that thing for, Gussy?" demanded Tom Merry. "That isn't the style for a special reporter on my staff."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

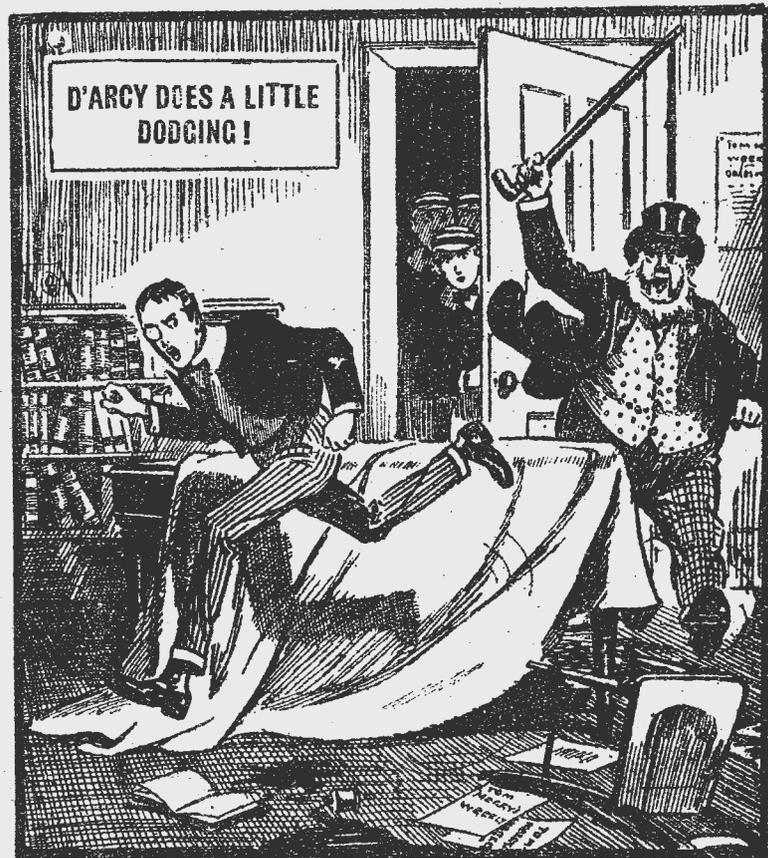
"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Gussy has been in the wars," said Figgins gently. "He is a wreck."

"I suppose he has been wreckless," said Monty Lowther, who never could resist the opportunity of a pun, good or bad.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He fought the whole Hall in defence of a giddy Suffragette," explained Kerr. "It was simply ripping of Gussy, and he has been pretty well ripped. But it shows that the days of chivalry are not past, in spite of the piffle we read in Burke on the subject. Gussy is a giddy hero!"



"'Help, deah boys!' gasped D'Arcy, as he saw the Shell fellows. 'Pway hold Mr. Japp! I wathah think he is off his wockah, you know! He has come heah to serve a writ upon me because of those wemarks about his baggay twousahs in 'Tom Mewwy's Weekly'!"

down the mayor's speech at Wayland this afternoon. He learned shorthand specially to-day.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Quite a crowd of fellows were coming across the quadrangle with the swell of St. Jim's. The reporter of "Tom Merry's Weekly" was attracting a very great amount of attention. Tom Merry saw the reason as soon as he came up to the School House.

The swell of St. Jim's had gone forth to report the speeches at Wayland in elegant Etons and silk hat and fancy waistcoat. He came back wrapped from head to foot in a thick, cheap ulster, with a cheaper cap on his aristocratic head.

"Weally, Kerr—"

"See the Conquering Hero Comes!" grinned Blake. "I never saw a conquering hero in a reach-me-down ulster before, but I suppose it's all right."

"Let's get in to tea!" said Fatty Wynn, dragging Figgins and Kerr away. "I'm hungry. Blake can take Gussy in."

"Oh, all right!" said Figgins. "Good-night, Gussy!"

"Good-night, deah boy!"

And Figgins & Co. disappeared across the quad. Jack Blake slipped his arm through his dishevelled chum's, and led him into the School House, followed by

Herries and Digby and the Terrible Three.

The crowd remained below, laughing, while the chums of the Shell and the Fourth led the swell of St. Jim's to Study No. 6.

Arthur Augustus was very warm and very tired. Immediately he was in the study, he tore open the ulster, and hurled it away from him.

"Bai Jove," he gasped, "I'm glad to be wid of that!"

The juniors looked at him, at his clothes rent and torn and dusty, and shrieked.

"Poor old Gussy!" said Blake. "Have a lemonade, with a dash of soda in it!"

And Blake swamped lemonade into a tumbler, and sizzed soda-water into it from a syphon, and handed it to D'Arcy. The tired and dusty swell of St. Jim's drank it gratefully.

"Thank you vewy much, deah boy!" he said. "I feel bettah now. I have weally had an awful time. You see, they were handlin' a lady wuffly, and, as a gentleman, I was bound to intahfere. The poor gal only wanted a vote, but she wouldn't leave off talkin', and they chucked her out. It was vewy wude. I simply had to intahfere!"

"And you got chucked out, too, I suppose?" said Digby.

"Well, yaas!" admitted Arthur Augustus. "You see, I'm a wathah powahful chap, but I couldn't handle 'twhee or four grown-up men at once! They collahed me vewy wuffly!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It was not at all funnay, deah boys!"

"Seems funny to me!" grinned Blake.

"But what about the report of the speech?" demanded Tom Merry. "We specially wanted that for the 'Weekly,' to show that we can do local and county news as well as the local rags do it. Haven't you got the report?"

"Yaas, as far as the wov. Aftah I was chucked out, of course, I didn't hear any of the speech; but Kerr says the chap was beginnin' again at the beginnin'."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, let's have what you've got," he said.

D'Arcy groped in his pocket, and drew out the ruled note-book, and handed it to his editor.

"In shorthand, I suppose," said Tom Merry, with a grin.

"Yaas, deah boy!"

"What!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Rot!" said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Do you mean to say that you've got a report of the speech there in shorthand?" shouted Jack Blake.

"Certainly, deah boy!"

"Oh, piffle!"

"Pway look at it, then, you ass!"

Tom Merry opened the pocket-book. Tom Merry had a rather hazy notion of shorthand himself, but he could see that the report dotted down in the note-book was done in a business-like way.

He stared at it blankly.

"My only hat, this looks all right!" he gasped.

"It is all wight, deah boy!"

"It's really a report of the speech?" demanded Blake, in astonishment.

"Yaas, the first part of the speech."

"That will do," said Tom Merry. "We can print that much, and a note to the effect that the rest of the speech was lost owing to disorderliness in the audience—Suffragettes and schoolboys, and—"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"We shall want it construed, though," said Tom Merry. "No good sending a shorthand report to the printer. It will have to be written out in longhand."

"Got Kerr to do it, deah boy."

"My dear chap, we can't go over to the

New House asking a fellow to construe your shorthand for you. If you wrote it, I suppose you can translate it!"

"But I didn't write it, deah boy," said D'Arcy calmly.

The juniors jumped.

"You didn't write it?" roared Tom Merry.

"Certainly not!"

"You—you—you—"

"I weally don't know shorthand well enough," D'Arcy explained. "I found that the words wouldn't come, and I asked Kerr to do it. Kerr can do things, you know. He's a wathah clevah chap, and I weally believe he can do ewevythin' f'rom impersonations to playin' the flute. It was quite a surprise to me when he jabbed all that wubbish down there. I suppose it means somethin'. He said it did."

"You ass!" yelled Tom Merry. "I understood that you wrote it!"

"I weally don't see why you should have understood that, deah boy. I certainly did not say so. I said it was in shorthand."

"Ass! Well, if Kerr perpetrated this, Kerr will have to unperpetrate it, and make it ready for the printer," said Tom Merry. "I'll take it over to the New House after tea, and you can get on with an article describing the meeting."

"Yaas, wathah! I have some remarks to make concernin' the carelessness—not to say slovenliness—of a public official appearin' at a meetin' in such twousahs!"

"Oh, good! Keep an eye on the libel laws, you know."

"A twue and conscientious weportah cannot be prevented f'rom sayin' what he thinks, Tom Mewwy, libel law or no libel law. I wefuse to have any of my copy wescinded f'rom a wetch'd feah of consequences!"

"You'd make a big newspaper pay, if you were on the staff!" grinned Tom Merry. "But go ahead! I don't suppose the Mayor of Wayland will read your illuminating remarks on the subject of his bags. Pile in!"

"I'm goin' to change my clothes first, deah boy. But I'll let you have the copy some time to-night," said D'Arcy graciously.

And Arthur Augustus went to clean himself after his painful experiences as a reporter, and then, over tea in the study, he thought out his great article; while Tom Merry went over to the New House to get Kerr to write out the shorthand report in common or garden English.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Two are Satisfied.

TWO days after D'Arcy had reported the meeting at the Wayland Town Hall, a large and heavy package was delivered at St. Jim's for Tom Merry.

The editor found it in his study after morning lessons, and a whole body of sub-editors and contributors accompanied him there to see the number.

Tom Merry cut the cord and opened the parcel, and there was a rush for the numbers.

There were fifty copies in all, that being the number generally printed of "Tom Merry's Weekly." Each of the juniors soon had a copy in his hand, and there was a loud and general shout of disgust as they looked into them.

"Leading article signed 'Tom Merry'!" growled Figgins.

"Article on Swimming, T. M.!" grunted Redfern.

"Correspondence Column, conducted by T. M.!"

"Short Story, by T. M.!"

"Description of Cricket Matches, by Tom Merry!"

"Tom Merry from start to finish!" grunted Blake.

"The more the Merrier!" said Monty Lowther, with a grin.

"Oh, cheese it! Nothing here but Tom Merry's rot and Gussy's piffle, and a bit of a serial by Bishop!"

Bishop gave a yell.

"Look at my serial! It's been mucked up!"

"Well, it wasn't much of a thing, anyway!" said Lowther, by way of being grateful and comforting.

"Look here!" shrieked Bishop, waving the paper in the air. "I've got a scene with a dying child in it, and some idiot has put in a football match!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I had to pad it out," said Tom Merry. "If you leave me without copy, what am I to do? I couldn't let the child die half-way down the column, could I, and leave the rest blank? I put in the footer match, and shifted the death-bed to the end of the next column."

"Oh! You ass! You Philistine!"

"Nothing of mine in here!" said Figgins, with a snort.

"Nothing of mine, either!" said Fatty Wynn. "I was going to do a splendid article on making light pastry, if you'd given me time!"

"Well, I've got a report of a speech, anyway," said Kerr. "Why, my hat, blessed if the Wayland report isn't signed by that ass D'Arcy!"

"Weally, Kerr—"

"D'Arcy's signed my report!" roared Kerr.

"It is signed by A. A. D'Arcy, special reporter for 'Tom Merry's Weekly,'" said the editor, with a worried look. "That's all right, isn't it?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But I took down the report!" yelled Kerr.

"You helped me!" said D'Arcy, with dignity.

"Helped you! Why, it was taken down in shorthand, and you couldn't even construe it for the printer!" shrieked Kerr.

"It was my weport! You offahed to take it down for me, because I hadn't quite finished learnin' shorthand!"

"Well, if I took it down, it was my weport, wasn't it?"

"Certainly not! You took it down for me merely as a shorthand w'itah! You might as well say that this papah is Mr. Tipah's, because he pwints it for us!"

"Well, my hat!"

"The fact of the mattah is, you're hardly up to weportin' speeches, Kerr!" said Arthur Augustus, with a shake of the head. "You are all vewy well as an assistant, but you could hardly do that kind of thing on your own, you know!"

Kerr appeared to be suffocating.

"Yes; that's quite right," said Tom Merry. "A special reporter has a right to get any assistance he likes, of course. Gussy might have employed a typist to type for him, for instance, but it would have been his report all the same."

"Well, of all the cheek—"

"As a mattah of fact, I'm quite willin' to take Kerr wound with me when I go out weportin'!" said D'Arcy generously.

"He can do all the shorthand bizney. But, of course, he will have to undahstand that he is only an assistant, and not weportah!"

"You—you frabjous ass—"

"Well, it's a rotten number!" said Fatty Wynn. "There isn't any New House in it at all!"

"All the bettah for that, deah boy. I wegard it as a wippin' numbah. I have

you wead my article on the meetin' at the town-hall?"

"Blow your article!"

"The wepport is all wright, but the article is bettah. I will wead it out to you chaps, if you care to listen."

"We don't!" roared the chaps, with wonderful unanimity.

But Arthur Augustus had already started.

"Havin' been pwsent at the meetin' in Wayland Town Hall for wepportin' purposes, we venture to make a few remarks. In the first place, we must weally expwess our gweat surprishe that a public official in the position of Mr. Japp should have appeared at a public meetin' in a vevy careless state of attire

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dry up!"

"Cheese it!"

"We must be allowed to dwaw particular attention to Mr. Japp's twousahs

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Surely it is not too much to ask of a gentleman in a wésponsible position that he should appeah in public dwessed in a mannah calculated to set a good exampl to his townspeople. Mr. Japp's twousahs had evidently not been pwsessed for a considerable time—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Undah the cires—"

"Somebody ought to send him a copy," said Lawrence.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall certainly send him a copy myself," said D'Arcy loftily. "My wemarks are intended chiefly as a wepwoof to Mr. Japp."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it's a rotten number!" said Kerr. "If you can't do better than this, Tom Merry, you'd better let the editorship be shifted over to the New House."

"Rats!"

"Yaas, wathah! Wats, deah boy!" Figgins & Co. snorted and took their departure. The other editors remained to give Tom Merry their opinion, at great length, of the paper, and of the kind of editorship it was getting.

"We shall have to alter the obituary notice," said Kangaroo thoughtfully. "Died from a bad attack of editing!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, clear off!" growled Tom Merry exasperatedly. "What's an editor to do, with his staff all slacking? You're jolly lucky to get a number out at all! And there's some really good stuff in it. I don't know about the report, or the article on Japp's bags, but the leading article and the short story are all right."

"Weally, Tom Mowwy—"

"Rot from start to finish, bedad!" said Reilly.

"Rubbish!"

whiskers, and dressed in a frock-coat that did not fit well at the shoulders, and trousers that bagged perceptibly at the knees. He had a silk hat in his hand, and a thick, heavy stick under his arm.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "Mistah Japp!"

The visitor tramped heavily into the study, and puffed for breath.

"Ho!" he said. "Huh! Oh, those stairs!"

"Go-go-good-afthahnoon!" said D'Arcy.

"Afternoon!" said Mr. Japp.

"Pway take a seat, my deah sir!" said Arthur Augustus, with one eye on the big stick. "You must be tired if you have walked ovah fwom Wayland."

"I haven't!" said Mr. Japp.

"Pway take a seat, sir!"

"Before I take a seat I've got something to say!" said the rich, deep, portwine voice of the Mayor of Wayland.

"And I think you're the young chap I've got to say it to!"

"I'm sure I shall be vevy pleased to heah any wemarks you would like to make, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "May I take your hat and—and stick, sir?"

"No!"

"Ahem!"

"My 'at and stick will do vevy well where they are," said Mr. Japp. "I shall want that stick soon."

FILL IN THIS ORDER FORM AND HAND IT TO YOUR NEWSAGENT!

To Mr.....(Newsagent.)

Will you please obtain for me every Friday, until further notice, one copy of the PENNY POPULAR?

(Signed)

"You'll have Japp after you if ever he sees that," gasped Blake, with tears in his eyes. "You should have let his bags alone, you ass."

D'Arcy shook his head.

"I have my duty to the Pwess and the public to considah," he replied firmly. "Ewevy weporthah should considah his duty to the Pwess and the public. I wegard Mr. Japp as havin' failed to act up to his posish, and it is therefore my duty to wag him on the subject."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Suppose he goes for you for libel?" asked Tom Merry.

"I should not care. A newspaper must always be pwepared for libel actions, if it is to do its duty to the public. Some newspaperahs that attack wotten abuses are always gettin' mixed up in libel actions."

"My only hat! I wonder what the Head would say if we had one here?" grinned Blake.

"I twust the Head would appwove of a weporthah doin' his duty to his papah and to his public, deah boy."

"It would be ripping if Japp saw that, and came along to explain things to Gussy with a big stick," chuckled Redfern.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Weddy—"

"Bosh!"

"Piffle!"

"Tosh!"

And, having paid the editor and his chief reporter those kind compliments, the crowd departed from the editorial office.

"Nevah mind, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It's a jollay wippin' numbah, and I'm quite satisfied."

Tom Merry laughed.

"So am I," he said. "And the rest can go and eat coke."

"Yaas, wathah! Shall I wead out the west of my article about Japp—"

"There goes the dinner-bell!" said Tom Merry hurriedly. And he fled.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Japp Looks In.

THE swell of St. Jim's was sitting alone in his study that afternoon, when there came a loud knock on the door.

"Come in!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The door opened.

Arthur Augustus glanced across at the new-comer, and simply jumped as he saw him.

He was a short, stout gentleman with a purple face, fringed with white

"Oh!"

"I asked a young gent outside, and he told me the way up," said Mr. Japp. "This e're is the School House, ain't it?"

"Yaas."

"This 'ere is No. 6 Study—eh?"

"Yaas."

"Then you're Master D'Arcy."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then you're the feller I want to see."

Mr. Japp groped in the pocket of his coat, and produced that fatal number of "Tom Merry's Weekly."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gazed at it with startled eyes. He had suspected from the first what his visitor's object was, and now he knew.

"You see this paper?" exclaimed Mr. Japp.

"Ya-a-a-as!"

"I'm mentioned in this paper."

"We are vevy pleased to mention pwominent public officials in our little papah, sir," said Arthur Augustus, in a faltering voice.

"Huh!"

"As a highly wesppected public official—"

"What about the trousers, sir?" roared Mr. Japp.

And he grasped the big stick and THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 236.

advanced threateningly towards Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who retreated round the table in alarm.

"T-t-t-wousahs, sir!" gasped D'Arcy.

"Yes! Trousers!"

"I—I—"

Mr. Japp paused in his hostile advance, apparently feeling himself a little too stout to follow a slim junior round the table.

"Yes!" he roared, flourishing the school magazine in the air. "Yes! Trousers! You—I s'pose it was you—wrote that article?"

"Ya-a-a-as."

"You dare admit it to my face, you young villain!"

"Weally, Mr. Japp—"

"You say 'ere that my trousers bagged at the knees—"

"It is quite twue, sir."

"That a mayor ought to set an example to his townsmen in dressing carefully at public meetings—"

"Certainly!"

"That you are surprised at me—"

"So I am!"

"And that you recommend me to get a London tailor."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And never appear in public in such trousers again!" roared Mr. Japp.

"Yaas."

"I've come over 'ere," said Mr. Japp, "to thrash the young fellow who wrote that about me and my trousers!"

"Oh!"

"You're the feller—"

"Yaas, but—"

"Come 'ere—"

"My dear sir—"

"I'm goin' to thrash you, sir, within a hinch of your life!" roared Mr. Japp. "And I've got a writ for libel for you, too!"

"Bai Jove!"

Mr. Japp made a rush round the table. Arthur Augustus dodged round and eluded him again, panting.

Exactly what would have come of a combat between the two was difficult to say. Mr. Japp was fat, but he looked a powerful man, and he had a big stick. But D'Arcy was restricted by the evident impossibility of striking a man three times his age. It would be too awfully bad form to lay violent hands upon a gentleman of middle age, and the mayor of a market town.

"Pway calm yourself, my deah sir!" gasped Arthur Augustus across the table. "I do aasualh you that my remarks were meant in a vewy friently spiwit—"

"Come 'ere!"

"I was weally givin' you some valuable tips, you know, on the subject of t'wousahs, which is weally a vewy important subject—"

"Come 'ere!"

"I wufuse to come there. But—"

Mr. Japp made another rush. Once more the swell of St. Jim's darted round the table.

The fat gentleman paused and breathed hard.

"You young raskil!" he gasped. "I'll learn you! Talking to a man about baggy trousers! Huh! I had those trousers before you were born!"

"Yaas, they look as if you did!" agreed D'Arcy.

D'Arcy's agreeable assent did not seem to please Mr. Japp. He gave another roar, and rushed round the table again, and the elegant junior barely eluded him.

Arthur Augustus glanced at the door. As Mr. Japp was a gentleman of too advanced age to be smitten with the fist there was no disgrace in beating a retreat. But it was quite clear that D'Arcy would not be able to reach the

door. Mr. Japp never got far enough from it to give the swell of St. Jim's time to get it open and get away. Now that he paused for breath, he paused between D'Arcy and the door, to make assurance doubly sure.

"You ain't goin' out," he remarked. "You're goin' to take the punishment of your impudence to a gentleman old enough to be your father."

"Gwandfathah, my deah sir," said D'Arcy politely.

"You young raskil!"

"I wufuse to be called a young wascal, and I beg of you to leave my studay immediately," said Arthur Augustus indignantly.

Mr. Japp snorted.

"You know what's got to 'appen before I go!" he remarked.

"I am willin' to express my wegwet if anythin' p'winted in our journal has given you pain, sir," said D'Arcy, on reflection.

"That ain't enough."

"Then really you ought to see the editor."

"Blow the editor!"

"My deah sir—"

"Come 'ere!"

But Arthur Augustus wisely declined to come there. He backed away a little to the window, but stood ready to dodge Mr. Japp round the table again if he should make a rush. D'Arcy was thinking of calling for help, and, fortunately, he caught sight of the Terrible Three near the window. The chums of the Shell were strolling in the quadrangle.

D'Arcy called from the window:

"Tom Mewwy!"

Tom Merry looked up.

"Hallo, Gussy! What's the rumpus all about?"

"Pway come up here!"

"Eh?"

"Help!"

"What's the matter?"

Mr. Japp made a rush. Arthur Augustus had to leave the window and dodge round the table again.

The Terrible Three gazed up in surprise at the window, and simply jumped as they caught a glimpse of Mr. Japp's face, as he passed in pursuit of the swell of St. Jim's. From the open study window came the sound of a crash. Evidently some article of furniture had been knocked over in the pursuit.

The Terrible Three gazed at one another.

"Japp!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Jappy!" gasped Manners.

"The Mayor of Wayland!" said Tom Merry. "He's come!"

"Poor old Gussy!"

"No wonder he wants help!"

"Let's go up!" said Tom Merry determinedly. "We can't have Gussy slaughtered. After all, he was quite right about Jappy's bags."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of the Shell hurried into the School House and up to the Fourth Form passage. There was a sound of the loud trampling of feet in Study No. 6 as they approached that famous apartment.

Tom Merry threw open the door, and the chums of the Shell caught sight of Arthur Augustus tearing wildly round the study table, with Mr. Japp after him, brandishing his big stick. He was making lunges and cuts with the stick; but somehow the blows never reached D'Arcy, though really he was within reach half the time. But the stick reached other objects, and all sorts of things had been smitten over and scattered on the study carpet.

"Help, deah boys!" gasped D'Arcy, as he saw the Shell fellows. "Pway hold

Mr. Japp! I wathah think he's off his weekah, you know!"

"Mr. Japp—"

"Please, Mr. Japp—"

Mr. Japp paused and eyed the juniors, breathing deeply.

"Well?" he snapped.

Tom Merry cudgelled his brains for some means of placating the incensed Mayor of Wayland. The juniors, certainly, could easily have handled the fat gentleman. But if Mr. Japp complained to the Head, it would be worse than if he licked the swell of St. Jim's with his big stick. And very likely that was what he would do, especially if he were ejected from the study.

It was evidently a moment for diplomacy and sweet words.

Tom Merry worked up a most artistic smile of friendship to his face, and bestowed a deep bow upon Mr. Japp, who stared at him.

"It is very kind of you to come here, Mr. Japp!" he exclaimed.

"Eh?"

"We are very much honoured by receiving a visit from a distinguished public official, sir," said Monty Lowther, taking his cue from Tom Merry.

"Huh!"

"We have felt a little hurt, sir, at your never taking notice of us before," said Manners solemnly. "You have been mayor of Wayland for three terms—I mean for a year now—and you have never given us a look-in."

"We felt slighted, sir," said Lowther.

"Bai Jove!"

"We thought that a gentleman in your position, sir, ought to take public schools, and such institutions, under his special patronage," explained Lowther. "But now you've come to visit us at last, it's all right."

"All serene."

"We hope you'll let us show you round, sir, and give you some little refreshment," said Tom Merry. "When Lord Eastwood was here, he had tea in the study with us. If you would do the same, sir, we should all feel honoured."

"Very much honoured," said Manners.

"Yaas, wathah!" gasped D'Arcy.

Mr. Japp's ferocity died away. "What about them trousers, though?" he demanded.

"I am sure Lord Eastwood's son will apologise for any injudicious remarks he may have made," said Monty Lowther, with great cunning.

Monty Lowther was a very observant youth, and he knew the wonderful power of titles, especially upon persons who never come into contact with the same.

And apparently he had hit the right nail on the head.

Mr. Japp showed a new respect towards D'Arcy all of a sudden.

"Lord Heastwood's son!" he exclaimed.

"Yes; Lord Augustus D'Arcy," said Lowther unblushingly.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Lord Augustus will apologise, I'm sure," said Tom Merry.

"I wufuse—"

"My lord!" exclaimed the Terrible Three, in one voice.

"I wufuse to be called—"

"Pile in, Gussy!"

"I am quite willin' to apologise to Mr. Japp for any pain I may have given him, and I twust my remarks may have enlightened him on the subject of t'wousahs—"

"Hear, hear!"

"I'll think about it," said Mr. Japp. "I've got to think of my official position. Look 'ere!" He half-drew a thick, folded blue paper from his pocket. "That's a writ for libel! I come 'ere

To serve it personally on Master D'Arcy!"

"Oh, you ass! What would the Head say?" murmured Tom Merry to D'Arcy.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"I don't want to be 'ard on Lord Augustus," said Mr. Japp thoughtfully.

D'Arcy shuddered. If Mr. Japp had called him the Honourable Augustus, it would have been bad enough; but to make a solecism like that was inexpressibly painful to the swell of St. Jim's. But it was evidently not a time to enlighten the worthy Mayor of Wayland.

"I'll think it hover," said Mr. Japp finally.

And he thrust the thick blue paper back into his pocket.

The chums of the School House exchanged glances. There was only one thing to do—to butter up Mr. Japp and keep him in a good temper, and gradually edge him out of the school, and back to Wayland. And to that delicate and diplomatic task the Terrible Three turned all their attention now.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Treat for Figgins & Co.

MR. JAPP did not appear to be implacable.

He confessed that he was fatigued, and accepted the arm-chair in Study No. 6 with pleasure.

He had graciously accepted the proposal of tea in the study, and the juniors set about at once getting it ready.

Blake and Digby and Kangaroo were called in to aid, and the matter hurriedly explained to them, and they all realised the seriousness of it.

If that terrible blue paper were served on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and a libel action followed, it was difficult to see what would be the end of it.

The juniors of St. Jim's, naturally, did not know very much about law. Kerr of the New House knew something about it, certainly, as he knew something about nearly everything; but Kerr was not available for advice just then.

The sight of an official-looking blue paper gave the juniors a painful shock. At all costs that paper must not be served upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and the only way to keep it in Mr. Japp's pocket was by keeping Mr. Japp in a very good temper.

And that the juniors strove their hardest to do.

Mr. Japp seemed quite to enter into the spirit of the thing.

"Your lordship is very kind," he said, as Arthur Augustus offered him the seat of honour at the table. "I thank your lordship."

Arthur Augustus writhed. "All sewene, deah boy," he said. "I mean, deah sir. Do you like your tea stwong?"

"Half-and-half!" said Mr. Japp absently.

The juniors grinned. Tom Merry poured out the tea. Mr. Japp cast an appreciative eye over the table.

"I think I saw your lordship at the Suffrageite meeting at the town-'all?" he remarked thoughtfully.

"Yaas, watah! I was there as a weportah."

"You had some friends with you?"

"There were some New House fellows there."

"Send for 'em," said Mr. Japp; "as we're all so friendly and 'earty now, let's 'ave 'em all in."

The School House juniors exchanged glances.

"Weally—" murmured D'Arcy.

"I should take it as a very great favour of your lordship."

"Pway go and look for Figgins & Co., deah boy," said Arthur Augustus to Blake.

"Tell 'em to bring their friends," said Mr. Japp.

"All right," said Blake resignedly. And he departed from the study.

He returned in about five minutes with quite a crowd. Figgins and Wynn and Redfern and Owen and Lawrence had, by a lucky chance—perhaps—been standing just outside the School House. They had accepted Mr. Japp's invitation with alacrity, and they came back with Blake with their company smiles on.

Mr. Japp waved his hand to them.

"Glad to see you, young gents!" he said graciously. "You was at the meeting?"

"Wynn and I were there, sir," said Figgins. "We heard you make a splendid speech, sir."

Mr. Japp looked gratified.

"I think I knocked them a bit," he said. "I'm agin all these new movements. I don't care what a movement is, or what it's about—I'm agin it!"

Han was piled on Mr. Japp's plate.

"Don't seem to be enough chairs for you young gents," said Mr. Japp.

"P'raps these young gents won't mind standing?"

Tom Merry & Co. stared.

They had been willing to do anything they could to accommodate Figgins & Co., but to be told to stand while the New House bounders took their seats was, as Blake privately remarked, rather thick.

But it was necessary, above all, to keep Mr. Japp in a good temper, and Mr. Japp's word was law in Study No. 6 just now.

Tom Merry & Co. relinquished their chairs to Figgins & Co. and the New Firm, who sat down cheerfully in their places.

The School House fellows accommodated themselves as best they could, while the heroes of the New House made themselves very comfortable.

"Jolly good of you fellows to ask us in to meet Mr. Japp!" said Figgins affably.

"Oh, it was Mr. Japp's idea!" grunted Kangaroo.

"Glad to see you all together looking so 'appy and 'earty!" said Mr. Japp.

"It's ripping to have you here, sir!" said Monty Lowther hypocritically.

"Trousers and all!" said Mr. Japp facetiously.

Arthur Augustus turned red.

"Oh, weally, my deah sir—"

Mr. Japp wagged a finger playfully.

"Never mind, my lord!" he said.

"Your lordship will have a little joke. We must allow a little licence to the aristocracy, or what would become of the British Constitution? I ain't a believer in this idea of abolishing the 'ouse of Lords. Far from it! I'm proud to shake the 'and of your lordship!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Not that I'd 'ave took you for a lord, if you 'adn't been introduced to me as such!" said Mr. Japp. "But when you come to think of it, wot's the difference between a lord and, say, a waiter?"

"Gweat Scott!"

"Now, you'd make a splendid waiter!" said Mr. Japp, with enthusiasm.

"You've got the figger for it, and that nice, perlitte manner, too!"

Arthur Augustus almost fainted.

"More han, sir?" said Tom Merry, coming to the rescue.

"Thank you, young gentleman! Help my young friend here, too!" said Mr. Japp, jerking a thumb towards Fatty Wynn. "He looks hungry!"

Fatty Wynn looked up from a plate he had cleared at record speed.

"I always get extra hungry in this hot weather," he remarked. "You can't do better than lay a solid foundation. That's what I always say. I'll have some more ham, and some tongue, and pass the mustard, please, and the pepper! And you can give me some of the baked potatoes, and pass the pickles!"

And Fatty Wynn piled in again.

Tom Merry & Co. had expended all their available pocket-money to provide a really tempting feed for Mr. Japp, and the study table was loaded with good things; and the New House juniors had plenty of scope for their gastronomic powers.

And they did full justice to the spread.

The table was cleared at a very good rate, but the School House juniors did not mind that. They only wanted to keep Mr. Japp in a good temper, and to keep that terrible blue paper in his pocket.

Fatty Wynn looked round the table at last, and saw that it was cleared, and sighed, like Alexander, for fresh worlds to conquer.

Mr. Japp rose.

"Thank you, young gentlemen, and especially your lordship, Lord Augustus!" he said.

"Bai Jove!"

"Not at all, sir!" said Monty Lowther. "It's an honour and a pleasure to entertain a gentleman holding a great public office!"

"Quite right," agreed Mr. Japp; "it is!"

"Bai Jove!"

"P'raps these young gents will walk down to the gates with me," said Mr. Japp, looking at the New House juniors.

"With pleasure, Mr. Japp!" said Redfern.

"What-ho!" said Figgins.

And the New House juniors opened the door, and stood ready.

"We'll all come!" murmured Monty Lowther. "Such a pleasure to see you off, sir!"

Tom Merry gave him a warning glance.

"No; don't you fellers come!" said Mr. Japp. "I've got something 'ere for you! I got this 'ero paper to serve on his lordship!"

And he drew the blue paper from his pocket.

"Oh, sir!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Oh!"

The School House fellows looked simply sickly as Mr. Japp drew the official-looking blue paper from his pocket, and laid it on the table.

"For his lordship!" he said.

Then he walked out of the study with the New House juniors. Figgins closed the door. A sound suspiciously like a chuckle came back through the open door; but the dismayed juniors in the study did not notice it. They stood staring at the folded blue paper on the study table in the silence of dismay.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Writ.

TOM MERRY was the first to break the painful silence in Study No. 6.

"My hat!" he said.

Blake gave a groan.

"The giddy writ is served, after all!"

"Poor old Gussy!"

"There will be an awful row!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Mean beast!" growled Kangaroo.

"After we've fed him up to the chin, and told him nice whoppers about himself, and fed his New House friends, too!"

"It's ungrateful!"
 "Caddish!"
 "Beastly!"
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 "Well, you're in for it now, Gussy!"
 said Digby. "Why couldn't you let Jappy's bags alone? His bags ain't your business!"

Arthur Augustus jammed his eyeglass firmly into his eye.

"I wefuse to wecede from my posish," he said. "A weportah is bound to do his dutay to the Pwess and the public. If he is called upon to state unpleasant twuths, he must state them without feah or favah, and trust to public opinion for the consequences. I decline to admit that I haven't been wight!"

"Ass!"
 "How will you look appearing in court in a libel action?" shrieked Blake.

"I twust I shall sustain the dignity of the Pwess!"

"Ass!"
 "Fathead!"
 "Chump!"

"I wefuse to be chawacterised by those opprobrious names!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I am willin' to wesign my posish as special weportah for the 'Weekly,' but so long as I wite I must wite 'accordin' to my conscience!"

"Ass! Fathead! Burbler!"
 "What will the Head say?"
 "We shall have to get round old Japp somehow!"

D'Arcy shook his head.
 "I wefuse to make any attempt to get wound old Japp, as you express it," he said. "I weally considah that I have made too many concessions already. I shall accept this w'it, and appeah in court!"

"We might chuck it into the fire," suggested Digby.

"No good! It's served now!"
 "Jolly queer proceeding for the man to serve it himself, though!" said Kangaroo thoughtfully. "I don't know much about the law, but I don't think that's usual!"

"Well, it's served now!"
 "Yaas; and I am goin' to answah it!" said Arthur Augustus, taking up the writ. "I will look at it and see—Gweat Scott!"

He opened the official-looking paper, and stared blankly at it.

His eyeglass dropped from his eye, and fluttered at the end of its cord.

His face was a study.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured faintly. The juniors looked at him anxiously. It seemed that the writ was of a more serious nature even than they had dreaded.

"What is it?" exclaimed Blake nervously. "I suppose you ain't charged with anything worse than libel?"

"Bai Jove!"
 "What does it say?"
 "Read it out, ass!"

"Gweat Scott!"
 Tom Merry jerked the blue paper from D'Arcy's hand. He looked at it, and then he gave a wild roar.

"Oh! My hat!"

"What is it?" shrieked the juniors.

"Look at it!"

Tom Merry flung the writ upon the table.

The School House juniors crowded round anxiously to look at it. But when they looked, they could hardly believe their eyes. One furious yell arose from all of them.

"Spoofed!"

"Done!"

"Diddled!"

"Dished!"

For the official look of the blue paper was only on the outside. On the inside it was blank, save for a few lines of writing—the neat, clear calligraphy well known as that of Kerr, of the New House. And this is what was written:

"Whereas, it is well known that the New House is cock-house at St. Jim's, and that the School House is simply nowhere, and whereas this well-known fact is disputed by the School House duffers, be it known by these presents that the School House duffers—herein referred to as the Fatheads—are called upon to acknowledge the well-known fact aforesaid—viz., that the New House is cock-house at St. Jim's.

"And whereas the New House fellows—herein referred to as Figgins & Co.—have taken a great deal of trouble to drive the facts into the silly noddles of the Fatheads aforementioned, the Fatheads are called upon to toe the line, and admit that they have been thoroughly, completely, and entirely done, dished, diddled, and spoofed, and that they are required to sing small in the future.

"Given under our hand and seal,

(Signed) FIGGINS.
 KERR.
 WYNN."

The heroes of the School House stared at the paper, and stared at one another.

The inscription on the paper was plain enough proof that they had been done; but even yet they could not understand it quite.

"The New House rotters were in the game all the time, then?" said Tom Merry dazedly.

"They must have got Jappy to come over here—"

"Japp was japing us—"

"Extraordinary thing for a man like Japp—"

"I've got it!" shrieked Blake.

"What?"

"It wasn't Japp!"

"Eh?"

"It was that bounder Kerr—you remember, he didn't come in with Figgins and the rest, and I wondered why he

didn't! I know now; he was here all the time. It was another of his giddy impersonations!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"My only Aunt Sempronia!"

"The awful spoofer!"

"We've been done!" growled Blake.

"It's jolly lucky for Gussy it isn't a real libel action, though."

"Yaas, wathah; but—"

"But we'll make these New House bounders sit up for it!" roared Kangaroo.

There was a shout from the quad outside the window. The juniors rushed to the window and looked out.

Figgins and Redfern & Co. were standing in the quad below, and the unspeakable Mr. Japp was among them.

"Hallo!" said Figgins. "Have you read the writ?"

"You rotters!" roared Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Redfern.

"It's all right," said Mr. Japp, speaking in Kerr's voice now. "I think you have been pretty well spoofed—eh?"

"I—I—We—Oh—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Who's cock-house at St. Jim's?" roared Figgins.

And Mr. Japp and the rest roared:

"New House! New House!"

"Who's been done brown?"

"School House!" yelled the Co.

"School House!" yelled Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The smile of Figgins & Co. could be heard across the quadrangle.

Tom Merry & Co. breathed fury.

They had been done—done brown!

The New House had scored with a vengeance, and all through the swell of St. Jim's.

"Let's collar the rotters!" said Monty Lowther.

But Figgins & Co. were fast disappearing across the quadrangle, and Tom Merry shook his head.

"No good," he said. "They've done us in the eye this time, and all through that burbling fathead Gussy!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, as a special weportah of the 'Weekly,' I wefuse—"

"Oh, bump the idiot!" growled Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs— Ow! Yawwoh!"

The Terrible Three advanced upon the unfortunate reporter.

Bump! Bump! Bump!

"Ow! Yow-ow!"

"Give him another," said Tom Merry.

Bump!

And the Co., feeling somewhat solaced, left the study, leaving Arthur Augustus sitting, dazed and gasping, on the floor.

Needless to say, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was not again requested to act as reporter for "Tom Merry's Weekly."

THE END.

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THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Pete's Errand—The Ride—A Sudden Stop.

ADENSE fog hung over the town where Jimmy Travers' circus was pitched. It was only a little past three in the afternoon, and yet it seemed as though it were night, so dark had it become.

Pete, with his comrades, Jack and Sam, was seated in a booth reading. Jimmy was standing at the door of his caravan, which was quite close to that booth, shouting for Pete at the top of his voice.

"I wish dat man would not dis-interrupt me like dis," growled Pete; "just as I am in an interesting part ob de story, too! Wonder what he wants? Golly! Ain't he making a mighty noise? Must see how dis poor fellow gets on. Hope he don't get killed."

"Why don't you answer when you're called," said Jack. "After all, you're employed by Jimmy to work, not to sit about reading. He may want you very urgently."

"It's no use talking to him," exclaimed Sam. "You know he must always finish what he's doing before he'll attend to anyone else's affairs!"

"Perhaps you'd like to go and see what Jimmy wants," said Pete. "He may hab a little bit ob work dat you would like to do! Yah, yah, yah!"

"Pete! You young rascal!" howled Jimmy. "If you don't come here this minute I'll break your neck, and use your body for feeding the lions!"

"Look at dat, now. I'm in almost as much danger as dis hero. I know all dese wolves will bite him before de tale finishes!"

"It looks as though you'll have something biting you before long," grinned Jack.

"Oh, well," exclaimed Jimmy, in his ordinary voice, "if the lad doesn't care for jam-puffs, of course, I can't help—"

"Hallo! What's dat you are saying, Jimmy?" cried Pete, flinging his book across the booth, and bolting towards the caravan. "Did you want me for anything?"

"Here I have been howling for you for the last ten minutes, and now you want to know if I want you. Do you think I have been howling out of pure, undiluted joy?"

"I don't know, Jimmy, weder it gabe you any pure, unpolluted joy, but I'm



"Don't you tink you hab stopped rader suddenly, old hoss?" inquired Pete, extricating himself.

mighty certain it could not hab giben any ob dat joy to de people who hab been listening to you."

"Why didn't you come?"

"I hab come, Jimmy!"

"Oh, you smiling beauty! I shall have to get my dog whip to you. I want you to go to the bank and pay some money in."

"But about dese puffs, Jimmy?"

"I haven't got any puffs. I thought that the likeliest road to fetch you. Do you think I'm the Queen of Hearts?"

"Nunno, Jimmy! You look more like Old King Cole."

"Well, come in, you rascal! There are a hundred pounds there, and as we are on the road to-morrow I think it will be safer in the bank."

Pete picked up the two bags, and as he gazed at them he shook his head and sighed.

"What's the matter now, you image?" demanded Jimmy.

"It's all right, Jimmy. I'll take the best care I can ob it, but it is an amazing lot ob money to carry all dat way."

"It won't take you more than half an hour there, and half an hour back. I'll have a nice little tea ready by the time you get back."

Pete carefully placed the two bags of gold in his trousers-pocket, then, nodding to Jimmy, started on his journey. Jimmy had often sent him on a similar errand, but never before with such a large amount. He knew that Pete was not only strictly honest, but very cautious when entrusted with money, and there was not one in the showman's employ whom he would have trusted so readily.

Pete might have invited Jack and Sam to go with him, but he knew that they were enjoying a rest and a road, and would probably not wish to go, though they might not have refused.

Truth to tell, Pete was rather sorry

that he himself had been interrupted in his story, but he would never have shown it for one single instant. He was always willing to do anything that was required of him, and never forget what he and his comrades owed to Jimmy Travers, the circus proprietor.

As Pete got outside the gate, he saw a motor-car standing there; while a tall, powerfully-built man, with motor goggles on, was just about to tap at the door in the hoarding.

"Ah, my lad!" he exclaimed. "I was just about to see if I could find anyone to direct me to the town. Perhaps you could help me. I am a stranger in this town—there is a town, I believe?"

"Yes, old hoss! It is about half an hour's walk. Take de first turning on de right, den keep straight ahead down de hill."

"Thanks; and there's a shilling for yourself!"

Then, without waiting for any thanks, the stranger stepped into his car and started it, but he had not proceeded fifty yards when he pulled up again.

"If you are going my way, I will give you a lift, if you like!" he cried.

Pete hesitated for a moment; then he came to the conclusion that it would be safer in the motor-car than walking, so he accepted the offer and jumped in, and away they whizzed.

"What is your name, my-lad?" inquired the stranger.

"Pete."

"Ah! I am Mr. Stanton, and am greatly interested in your race. I am connected with one or two societies who assist negro lads in this country."

"I ain't come across any ob de officials ob dese societies up to now; and always tought negro lads had to assist demselves in dis country, de same as in most others. But ain't you going rader fast, considering it is downhill?"

"I could pull up in a few yards. If you like. I will show you how fast I really could go. See here. Now we are going at about thirty miles an hour, and it would not do to let a constable know it."

"Hi, golly! You hab passed de turning we hab to take!"

"No matter. I can run back in a few seconds. We are going at about fifty miles an hour now, and a fall from the car would be certain death. Still, there is no fear if the driver is competent, and I have had a deal of experience."

"Look here, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "We'm whizzing miles in the wrong direction, and I ain't got much time to spare."

"I would like you to have a little ride, my lad. I was thinking, Pete, that I might be able to find you a more comfortable situation than the one you already have."

"Don't need dat. I am perfectly comfortable where I am, and ain't going to shift till I can help it. But see here. You must turn back now."

"That is not the way to address your superiors, my lad! I shall have to teach you better manners! How dare you tell me what I must do?"

"Well, if you won't turn back, I'm going to make a jump for it."

"You silly young villain! Are you mad?" cried Stanton, seizing him roughly. "You would be going to certain death!"

This might have been; but now, for the first time, Pete believed that Stanton intended to rob him. By some means he must have found out that Pete was in the habit of taking money to the bank on certain days, and had made his plans accordingly.

Pete had had to deal with many classes of individuals in his varied career, and had often run across rogues.

But being always straight and open himself, he was never suspicious of anyone. In the present instance he had had no doubts as to the honesty of the man who accosted him as he left the circus, but now, when it was too late, he could see that he had walked into a carefully-prepared trap.

Pete struggled with a strength that Stanton could not have expected in one so young, while the man was handicapped by having to attend to the steering of the machine, which was dashing along the lane at a terrific pace; and while, in spite of his every effort, it swerved from side to side, and once was nearly in the ditch.

"Perdition!" he panted. "You will kill us both! I will blow your brains out if you don't cease struggling!"

"I hab got to risk dat, do same as you hab got to risk a smash up. And I tell you dis, old hoss—dere's going to be trouble in dis world, when dis ride is ended! You tink to rob Jimmy!"

"I don't know anything about Jimmy!"

"Well, it isn't often dat a nigger comes across anyone who is so anxious to take him for a ride just for pleasure."

"Do you want me to kill you?"

"Nunno! Are you going to stop?"

"No!"

"Don take dat clump over de napper, and see how you like it. Yah, yah, yah! You were nearly ober dat time. I tink we shall stop before we get to de bottom ob dis hill, but we shall soon find dat out."

Pete put forth all his strength, so did Stanton, but the struggle only lasted for a few moments.

With one hand the ruffian made a desperate effort to steer the car, but as he tried to get it round a bend it skidded across the lane, and, dashing into the

ditch, flung the occupants into the hedge, while flames burst from the wrecked car.

"Don't you tink you hab stopped rader suddenly, old hoss?" inquired Pete, exclaiming himself. "Seems to me you would hab done better if you had put de brake on. Oh, it ain't any good yowling like dat! You ought to be very thankful dat you ain't hurt!"

Pete had escaped without the slightest damage, but Stanton was not so fortunate. His face, when he withdrew it from the hedge, was considerably scratched, while his clothes were torn to pieces.

"Rader chilly for de time of de year—don't you tink so, old hoss?" inquired Pete, warming his hands at the blazing car.

This action appeared to infuriate Stanton even more than Pete's words. The miscreant drew a revolver, but even before he could level it Pete sprang upon him, and they both went to the ground; but Pete got possession of the revolver, and, having blazed away every shot, flung the weapon over the hedge.

"You young fiend! I will be the death of you for this!" panted Stanton, struggling to his feet.

"Yah, yah, yah! Seems to me I ought to be de death ob you if dere is any vengeance wanted. I ain't going to gib you in custody, 'cos de magistrate wouldn't be likely to take a nigger's word against dat of a white man. All de same, I am going to punish you, and teach you dat if you try to rob, you are likely to get punished. Dere's one consolation—you ain't got much profit out of dis little excursion. You'm lost your car; least, I tink it will want a lot ob mending after it has done burning. And its wheels don't look as dough dey had been improved."

Now that the critical moment had passed, Pete had regained his usual light-hearted state.

He had certainly thought for a few awful moments, when the car was tearing along at break-neck speed, that he was never going to see his comrades Jack and Sam again.

But now the immediate danger was over, he was at once himself.

Pete had never been known to lose his temper with anyone, and he did not mean to do so on this occasion, but he had quite made up his mind to get even with Mr. Stanton; not so much on his own account, but because he had intended to rob Jimmy, for whom Pete had the greatest regard.

"Fury! But you have not escaped me yet!"

"Nunno! I ain't escaped you yet, my dear old hoss; and what concerns you far more is dat I don't want to escape you. De facts remain dat you hab tried to rob Jimmy, and I'm going to pay you for dat little lot. I'm going to gib you a lesson dat you are likely to remember for two-free days, or else you are going to kill me, and rob Jimmy after all. Dere's going to be a fight, Stanton!"

"What, you stupid young rascal? You mean to say that you would dare to fight me?"

"You'm guessed first time. Dere's going to be a fight, and I'm inclined to tink it will be a big one. It ain't any good you running away, 'cos I'm mighty certain dat I can run faster dan you, and I'm going to take de risk ob getting beaten. I dunno dat Jimmy would say I was wise. I rader tink oderwise, 'cos he has got a good lot at stake; but he is a sportsman, and I tink he would gib five pounds, under de circumstances, to see dis fight. At any rate, it is going to take place. Are you ready for de commencing start? 'Cos if you ain't, you will hab to get ready mighty quick; and you hab got to recollect dat I will gib in directly you kill me, but not before!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Fight—Pete Conquers—Good-bye to Stanton.

NOW, Stanton knew that his evil scheme would prove a dead loss to him. He never expected to get anything like enough to cover the loss of the motor-car, which was still blazing fiercely, and smouldering abominably. But he saw the chance of getting something out of the fire, and so he went for Pete like the proverbial bull at a gate. But he had not that bull's splendid chances, because the gate stands still, and cannot possibly retaliate.

Pete did not follow the gate's example. He didn't stand still, but he did retaliate! Stanton must have noticed that, because he received a smash on the nose; and before he quite realised what had happened, he received a second blow in the chest. Pete knew where to land that blow.

But the worst of it, from Stanton's point of view, was, that though he struck at Pete with all his strength, he did not hit him. Pete was taking special care of that. The way he dodged would have done Jimmy good to see; while his blows, straight from the shoulder, and with a leap to give them emphasis, were really marvellous.

Not only was Pete a well-skilled boxer, but he struck like lightning; and while his left landed in his adversary's face, his right invariably landed in Stanton's chest, while upward and forward springs were matters it was very hard to deal with.

Stanton was, to say the least of it, very much surprised at the fight Pete was putting up.

In fact, he was getting very anxious about it.

He had thought that it was going to be a perfectly simple matter to obtain the hundred pounds in Pete's possession, and now he had already lost his car, and things looked like ending in disaster.

Yet Stanton, who was in the prime of life, and, without doubt, possessed of very great strength, felt confident that he must be able to overcome a mere lad. He fought furiously, relying on strength more than science; and for this reason he received a considerable lot of punishment, because directly Pete became convinced that he was a match for his opponent, he refrained from delivering body blows, and only struck at his face.

"You ain't getting on so badly, old hoss!" cried Pete, landing him a blow on the nose, then two between the eyes. "Ob course, in a fight like dis you'm bound to get two-free little bangs—frinstance, like dat, or eben like dat; all de same, dey don't count—and by de time dis fight is finished you will look berry well. Yah, yah, yah! You don't look so bad eben at its commencement."

Stanton made no verbal reply. He went in with a furious rush, and succeeded in getting past Pete's guard, but that worthy received the blow on the top of his head, because as he always said, it did not hurt there. Then he, too, went in with a rush, and that round was a very hot one. Stanton's face was a sight when it had ended by him receiving a blow beneath the jaw that sent him to the ground.

Stanton was mad with rage and helplessness, and was quite at a loss to know what to do. He felt that he must dash at Pete again out of sheer fury, but his better judgment prompted him to fight no longer.

"Now den, up you get, old-hoss! De fight is just getting into its interesting stage."

"You fiend! I will fight you no more!"

"Look at dat, now. You had best

(Continued on page 23.)

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hab some more; it will do you all de good in de world! Nunno! Don't seem to care for it! Well, you are coming to hab a chat wid Jimmy? I'll just cut a stick."

"You stupid young villain! You can't prove anything!"

"Nunno! But Jimmy will believe me, specially when he sees your face, and knows I ain't lost any money."

"I was only taking you for a drive."

"Dat's all. Now I am going to take you for a walk, and dis stick is for de purpose ob urging you on. I don't tink anyone will steal your motor-car. Yah, yah, yah! You hab made a fool ob dat machine! You might fry a steak and onions ober it! Come long!"

"I will not!"

"Den you'm going to get some ob dis stick—like so! Oh, you can run as fast as you like, so long as you run in de right direction, and I will take mighty good care you do dat! I see you can't run as fast as dis child, and you will notice dat fact, because every time I catch you up I shall gib you one—like so!"

"Stop it, you fiend! I will go where you want!"

"Dea set de pace, old hoss; and, mind, de direction is to de circus!"

With some little difficulty Pete drove his prisoner to the circus, and in a few words Pete described to Jimmy and his comrades, Jack and Sam, what had occurred; while Jimmy took the thing with surprising calmness.

He merely addressed himself to Pete, and quite ignored Stanton's plausible explanation that it was all a mistake, and that he had merely taken the lad for a drive; that he got frightened, and

assaulted him, thereby causing the accident.

Jack and Sam wanted to give the scoundrel another thrashing there and then, for they realised that it was only by a mere chance that Pete had not lost his life.

"Ho's already had more dan he really cares about," laughed Pete. "But if he'd like any more, he's only got to ask for it."

"You have got the money all-right, Pete?" inquired Jimmy.

"In my pockets here, old boss—I was too late to pay it in."

"What's your opinion about the matter?"

"Dat someone in de show told Stanton—I don't 'spect dat is his-right name—I was in de habit ob going to de bank. I dunno who it was, but rader tink-I could guess. Still, dat don't matter."

"The question is—Shall we give this fellow in charge?"

"Don't see how we can prove anything."

"Well, the chances are his past life would show that he is a common thief. But, then, you see, that would mean my staying here, less of time, and probably expenses in lawyer's fees. I am inclined to think that you have punished him enough."

"His machine is punished badly, Jimmy. You neber saw a motor-car worse punished dan dat. All de parts ob it dat ain't burnt must be red-hot by dis time!"

"Do you think you ought to flog the fellow?"

"I hab been doing dat all de way home, Jimmy, and he must be quite tired ob it by dis time. You can see by his

face dat he has been punished pretty freely.

Jack and Sam badly wanted to give the villain a thorough flogging. They thought as much of Pete as though he were their own brother, and they took Stanton's assault on him as a personal affair. It was on this account that they were so anxious to thrash him.

Pete, however, would not hear of it, and they were grudgingly compelled to stand off.

"Then you think we may as well let him go?" said Jimmy.

"I don't see dat he would be any good to de show, Jimmy, unless you were to take him on to-night, and let him take de part ob de foiled burglar, or de man who tried to rob Pete. Or I might use him in de lion's cage. Still, I'm under de impression dat he would be more trouble dan he is worf."

"I think you are right, dear boy! He is neither use nor ornament. Besides, tea is ready. You can go, fellow!"

"I shall—"

"You will go, and the sooner you do de safer you will be."

"Yah, yah, yah! He's off now, Jimmy. Dere's your money. I can pay dat in first ting to-morrow morning, and Jack and Sam can come wid me, to see dat it gets dere safely; den you can stand a nice little dinner down town for all of us."

"Consider it is done, dear boy!" answered the good-hearted showman. "Now, I have got a nice little tea for you."

And Pete fell to, while Jack and Sam went off for a stroll together.

THE END.

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