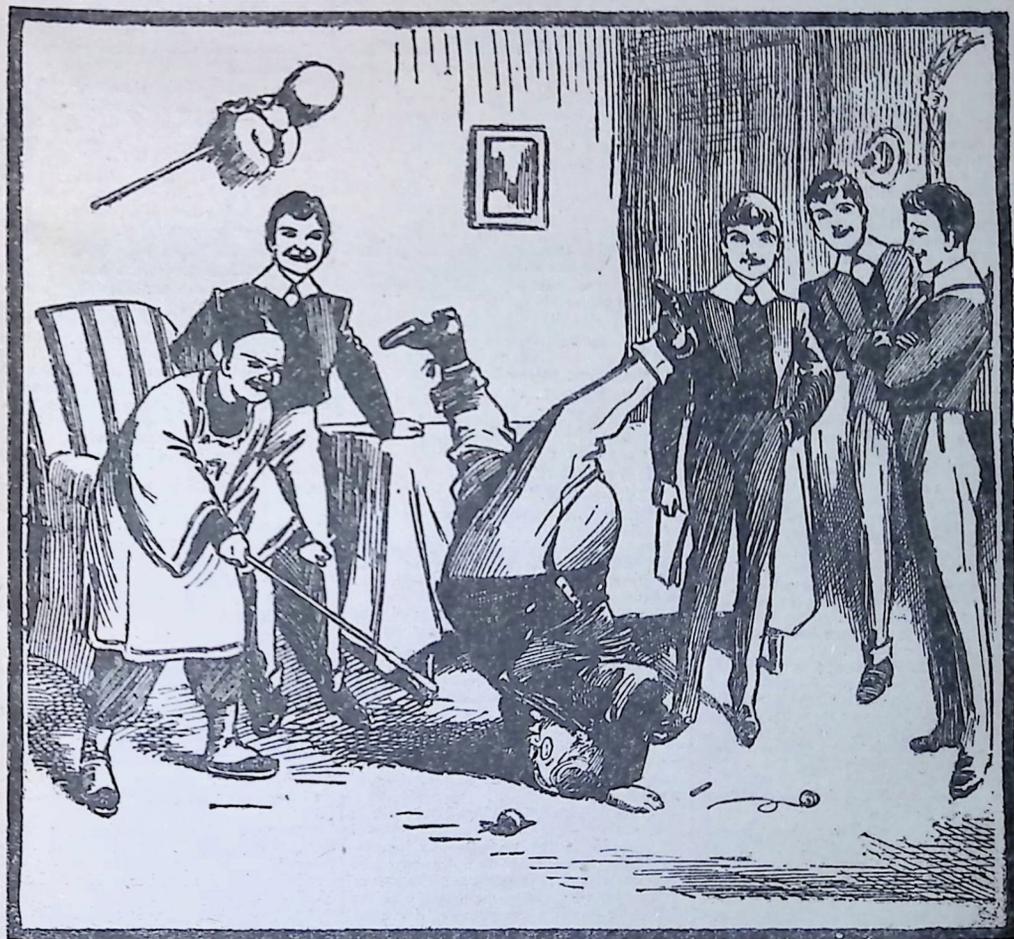


THE PAPER FOR SCHOOLBOYS!

The
**Penny
Popular**

No.
254.

Three Complete Stories of—
HARRY WHARTON & Co.—JIMMY SILVER & Co.—TOM MERRY & Co.



BILLY BUNTER'S GREAT FEAT!

(A Humorous Scene from the Magnificent Long Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.,
contained in this issue.)

THE GREYFRIARS BUN FIGHT!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

A Magnificent Long Complete Tale, dealing with the Early Adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars School.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Mysterious Meeting.

HARRY WHARTON entered Study No. 1 with a parcel under his arm. He had been down to the tuckshop to get something for tea.

Frank Nugent looked up from the grate, where he was lighting the fire—a fire of sticks, for the purpose of boiling the kettle.

"Got the grub?" he asked. "Good! What's all the row about?" The fellow

seem to be excited about something. "There's something on in No. 13."

"Have you ever heard of the N.O.B.F.?"

"The N.O.B.F.?"

"What is it—something to eat?"

"No," said Harry, laughing. "It's some where that Bob Cherry is getting

about. I suppose that they'll make No. 13 the top study in the R-

more. I supposed this is some scheme

Bob is working for the purpose. Let's succeed in making the whole Form

curious about it."

"The N.O.B.F.?" said Hurree Junest

Ram Singh, the dusky member of the

Remove. "I have never heard of the

honourable N.O.B.F. before. Per-

haps it's a secret society which the ce-

teemed Cherry is forming."

"Ah, perhaps! We ought to look into

it, really," said Wharton. "We're top of

the Remove in this study, you know.

We all like Cherry, but we've got to

keep No. 13 in the place. Bob's appointed

himself President of the N.O.B.F., and

he's holding a meeting at seven o'clock

this evening. I vote we attend."

The door was opened just then, and

Okley put his head in.

"Okley chaps interested in the

study, and some of them kicked at the

door.

"The kids seem to be curious," grinned

Bob Cherry. "The N.O.B.F. seems to

be making rather a sensation."

"Mark Lintley laughed.

"Yes, it does. Looks like being a row."

"Never mind. They can't make too

much row out there, as much as in his

study. Keep that poker handy, though,"

Wun Lung said.

"Alice lightee," grinned the little

Chinese.

"The noise in the passage was increas-

ing. The news that Bob Cherry had

come in, and that it was upon the stroke

of time for the mysterious meeting of the

N.O.B.F., brought the juniors from near

and far.

Even fellows in the Upper Fourth and

the Shell came along the Remove pas-

sage, inspired by curiosity. There was a

general demand for information, but none

was forthcoming.

Harry Wharton opened the door of the

study and looked in. Bob Cherry had

arranged the chairs round the table, as

present moment.

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"Here, I say," exclaimed Bulstrode,

"I don't know that it does stand. But

if it does, I suppose it would be because

there was nothing to sit on."

"Oh, don't be funny!" roared Bul-

strode. "What does the silly rot mean,

anyway?"

"If it's silly rot, I don't see why you

should be interested in the meaning."

"Hang it all, can't a

chap hold a meeting of the N.O.B.F. in

his own study if he wants to?"

"But what is the N.O.B.F.?" shrieked

N.O.B.F.?"

"You utter ass! What is the

President of the N.O.B.F.?"

"Captain of the Remove is nothing in

the committee-room of the N.O.B.F.,"

said Bob Cherry. "I'm boss here, as

President of the N.O.B.F."

"That poker hot, Wun Lung?"

"Quite plenty."

"Give that chap a jab with it."

Harry Wharton closed the door.

"Blessed if I can make it out!" he said.

"I suppose a chap has a right to play

wants to. Still, it isn't showing a proper

respect towards the top study in the Re-

move. But, look here, if there's to be

a meeting of the N.O.B.F., it's—how-

ever—whatever it is, will have to come

along here. We'll watch for 'em!"

"Right, and let us pass, darlings!" said

a cheery voice, as Mickey Desmond came

clowling along the passage. "Make

room for yer uncle, then!"

"Stop your shoving, Desmond. You

can find where you are!"

"But, sarge, I want to go into the

study, datings."

"They won't let you in!"

"Right, and they will! It's a meeting

of the N.O.B.F."

"What!" roared a dozen voices. "Do

you know what the N.O.B.F. is? Are

"Sure and I am, Lemme pass!"

"Hold him! Collar him! Make him

explain!"

Mickey Desmond made a wild rush, and

broke through the Remove's. He went

six hands clutched at him a second too

late.

"Fait, and I've had a thorough gettin'

here!" he gasped. "Look arter the tho-

door!"

"Where's the poker, Wun Lung?"

And the door closed again. In the

passage there was a greater ferment than

ever. The mystery of the N.O.B.F. had

evidently known to other members of the

Remove besides the chums of No. 13.

Harry Wharton had got through, but the

juniors in the passage watched grinty

for the arrival of the next member of the

N.O.B.F. The next would not escape

their clutches so easily.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter Looks In.

"MAKE way there!"
 "Stop your shoving, Lacy!"
 "I'm going into the study."
 "Oh, here's another of them!"

Hands were outstretched on all sides to grasp Lacy. He was seized and jammed against the wall, and pinned there fast.
 "Now, then! Are you a member of the N.O.B.F.?"

"Yes," gasped Lacy. "Let me go!"
 "What's the N.O.B.F.?"
 "Find out!"
 "Bang his napper against the wall, Skinner."

"Right-ho! Here goes!"
 "Hold on! The N.O.B.F. is—or—it's the N.O.B.F., you see. It's a society—a sort of association, you know."
 "What does it stand for?"
 "That's a secret only known to the members."

"It's going to be known to us jolly soon," said Bulstrode. "Give him the frog-march up and down the passage."
 "Rescue!" shouted Lacy. "N.O.B.F. to the rescue!"

Bob Cherry's study door opened, and he rushed out, followed by his friends. There was a scrambling struggle in the passage, and Lacy was perforce released. He retreated into the study with the tenants of No. 13, and the door was slammed again.

Skinner kicked at it, and Stott hampered, and Ogily thumped, till Harry Wharton called them to order.
 "Hold on!" he said. "We don't want to bring Quelch up here, you know. Don't make such a ghastly row!"
 "Let's raid the study," said Bulstrode.
 "What about that giddy red-hot poker?"

"And what about the prefects? They've started making a rotten fuss about a row or two in the Remove passage."

"Stop shoving against me, Morgan! What are you up to?"
 "I want to get by, look you."
 "You don't mean to say you're a— Hold him! Collar him!"

But Morgan had slipped into No. 13. He had quietly worked his way through the crowd, and it did not dawn upon them till the last moment that he was a member of the N.O.B.F. The door closed behind Morgan.

"My only hat!" said Nugent. "This is getting too thick! I wonder who else is in the game? Hallo, they've locked the door!"

The key clicked in the lock of No. 13. That evidently meant that the meeting was complete. So the Removites were in possession of one fact at least with regard to the N.O.B.F., that it had six members—Cherry, Linley, Wun Lung, Lacy, Desmond, and Morgan.

"Well, I give it up," said Harry Wharton. "I'm going to do my prep."
 And he walked away. The Removites hammered on the door a little, till a voice was heard from the direction of the stairs, inquiring what the row was about, and whether they wanted the speaker to come up with a cane. Then they gave it up.

As they dispersed, a fat figure came along the passage, and tapped at the door of No. 13. It was Billy Bunter. The fat junior was too short-sighted to see that he was observed by at least half a dozen pairs of eyes.

Nugent caught Harry by the arm.
 "Look there!" he muttered. "It's Bunter! Can he be in it?"
 Harry shook his head.
 "Hardly. Ask him."

Nugent ran along the passage and caught the fat Removite by the collar. Billy Bunter squirmed in his grip.
 "I—I say, you fellows, leggo! Ow!"
 "Look here, do you belong to the N.O.B.F.?"

"Certainly not! I—I—I—"
 Billy Bunter squirmed away from Nugent's hold, and scuttled into the box-room.
 Frank Nugent rejoined Harry, and they wended their way towards their study.

Billy Bunter watched them cautiously from the half-open door of the box-room, and ventured out when they were gone. He tapped again at the door of Bob Cherry's study.

"Clear off!" called out Bob Cherry. "No admittance except on business."
 "But I want to attend on business," said Bunter, through the keyhole. "I know jolly well you're having a feed in there. Let me in!"
 "Scot, you young cormorant!"
 "Look here, I'll join the N.O.B.F. if you like. I—I'll join anything!"

There was a chuckle in the study. Nobody there doubted that Billy Bunter

the study, and painted on the box-room side.

Billy Bunter blinked at that partition with a glimmer in his eyes. He bent and placed his fat ear close to it, and heard a sound of tapping, and then a murmur of voices.

His eyes gleamed behind his spectacles. The sound of voices was audible, but he could not distinguish a single word. But if he could find a knot-hole, or any rift in the partition—

The thought had no sooner come into his mind than he was acting upon it. A pair of steps was kept in the box-room, and Bunter, having closed and locked the door, carried them over to the partition, and set them up. Then he mounted them, and proceeded to make an examination of the boards.

His eyes gleamed suddenly. There was a knot-hole, more than half an inch in width, at a height of eight feet or so from the floor. He could not see into the study, because the wall-paper on the other side covered the hole.

But there was simply the thickness of the wall-paper between the two rooms at that particular spot.

"My word!" murmured Billy Bunter. "They won't keep the secret from me very long, I think. I'll jolly well find out what it is; and if there's any wheeze on, I'll make Bob Cherry stand me a feed to keep it dark."

And the fat junior chuckled. He opened his penknife, and with a cautious hand slit the wall-paper on the other side of the knot-hole.

The keen knife made no sound shearing through the paper, and the slit did not enable Bunter to see into the study. But the voices from within came more clearly to his ears.

"Rap, rap!"
 "Order!"

It was the voice of Bob Cherry. He was chairman of the meeting, and he was tapping on the table with the toy croquet mallet.

Billy Bunter grinned gleefully. He turned the knife in the paper, and made a cross slit, and then another, so that a square of the paper was cut away on three sides.

It was then easy for him to press the piece of paper back without a sound, and leave himself an unobstructed peephole into the study.

From where he stood, with his eye to the peephole, he could see the whole of the interior of No. 13, with the exception of the wall below him.

And every word that was spoken in the room came to his ears as clearly as to those of the juniors who were attending the first meeting of the N.O.B.F.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
 The Noble Order of Bun Fighters.

BOB CHERRY had taken the head of the table. The other five members of the N.O.B.F. were seated round it. There was a slight twinkle in the eyes of Mark Linley, the lad from Lancashire, as if he did not take the proceedings wholly seriously.

Wun Lung, too, wore his usual smile, "child-like and bland." Morgan, Lacy, and Micky Desmond were as serious as could be expected. As for Bob Cherry, he was solemnity itself. He had the toy croquet mallet in his hand, and was rapping for order.

"Gentlemen—"
 "Hear, hear!" said Lacy.

"Gentlemen, this is the first meeting of the N.O.B.F. Our numbers are not very numerous so far, but that is because the extent of the society is not yet—"

"Extensive!" suggested Morgan.

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Billy Bunter mounted the steps, and proceeded to make an examination of the boards. "My word!" he exclaimed, as he espied a knot-hole. "They won't keep the secret from me for long!"

would join anything if there was a feed attached.

"Look here," said Bob Cherry, through the keyhole, "I'll tell you what N.O.B.F. stands for, as far as you're concerned—Not Our Big Feeders. See?"
 "Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Buzz off, or I'll come out to you!"
 Bunter discontentedly left the door of the study. On a previous occasion, by his trick of imitating voices, he had caused Bob Cherry to open the door. But it had caused trouble, and the fat ventriloquist did not feel inclined to risk it again.

He retired into the box-room, which adjoined No. 13. No. 13 was, in fact, an extra room which had been turned into a study to accommodate the overflow of juniors. It was separated from the box-room simply by a wooden partition, which was papered on the side of

"Not yet extensive," agreed Bob Cherry. "It will grow. I have asked you chaps—ahem!—you gentlemen to join the N.O.B.F. chiefly because you dig at this end of the passage, and you would naturally back up No. 13 against—well, against aliens from the other end."

"Hear, hear!"

"I hope, later on, to rope in the Remove one by one, and gradually get the whole Form into the fold," said Bob Cherry. "Then we shall be irresistible, and Study No. 1 will have to sing small with its diminished head."

"Good!"

"The society—"

"Hold on!" said Lacy, rising. "Is it in order to inquire what the initials N.O.B.F. may happen to mean? We've attended the meeting because we understood that there was some sort of a feed to follow—ahem!—because of our friendship for our esteemed President, I mean. But as we're sailing under the name of the N.O.B.F., it would be rather advantageous to know what it means."

"Hear, hear!"

"Brother Lacy's remark is quite in order," said the chairman graciously. "The initials N.O.B.F. stands for the Noble Order of Bun Fighters!"

"The—the what?"

"The Noble Order of which?"

"Bun Fighters," said Bob Cherry firmly. "I consider it a ripping title. I presume you all know what a bun fight is. We're the bun fighters. N.O.B.F.—Noble Order of Bun Fighters."

"Oh! I suppose that means that there's going to be a bun fight, or a tea scramble, or something of the sort," remarked Morgan.

"Exactly!"

"Go ahead! We're on!"

"The society is formed for the purpose of backing up Study No. 13, and putting the other end of the passage in its place," said Bob Cherry. "That is the chief end of the—"

"Passage?"

"No, ass; of the society. Incidentally, we shall give the Upper Fourth beans, and the Shell socks—"

"Why not give the Shell beans, and the Upper Fourth socks?"

"If you are going to be funny, Lacy, you can get on the other side of that door. No rotten jokes are wanted in the N.O.B.F. We're going to keep up the end of the Remove against all comers, and keep up our own end in the Remove."

"And as it is necessary for every society to have a feed at regular intervals, to bind it together in the strongest possible bond of union, we shall establish a periodical bun fight—say every Saturday."

"Hear, hear!"

"The Vice-President of the Society, the Honourable Wun Lung, Esquire, has the good luck to be as rich as a giddy Cæsus. I, the President, have lately received a remittance from a rich uncle, who says I can buy a bicycle with it if I like. As my jigger is all right, I'm using the money as a Foundation Fund for the Noble Order of Bun Fighters. Funds are only allowed to be subscribed by President and Vice-Presidents."

"Hear, hear!"

"Every Saturday during term a bun fight will be held—and I need not say that the grub will not be limited to buns. A certain amount of good grub will always be provided by the N.O.B.F.—but any member will be invited to add anything he chooses to the stock. Now for the rules."

"Rule No. I.—A bun fight every Saturday, as aforesaid—"

"Hear, hear!"

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"Rule No. II.—Implicit obedience to the orders of the President, even to the extent of facing cannon."

"That's all right!"

"The members of the N.O.B.F. were never likely to be called upon to face cannon by their President, so they subscribed to that rule with easy minds."

"Rule No. III.—A meeting to be called whenever the President considers it necessary, such meeting to be held in Study No. 13, or some other place."

"Right!"

"Rule No. IV.—Study No. 13 to be considered top study in the Remove, and every member of the N.O.B.F. to back up the President in keeping it there."

"Good!"

"Rule No. V.—Strict secrecy to be observed, and as many recruits as possible to be gathered into the N.O.B.F. Only reliable and useful members to be initiated into the mysteries of the N.O.B.F."

"What mysteries?"

"Don't interrupt! These are the rules of the N.O.B.F., and they can be added to and subtracted from as occasion requires, at any future meeting of the N.O.B.F. Gentlemen, are these rules adopted?"

"Hear, hear!"

"Hands up for the rules."

"Every right hand went up."

"Good!" said Bob Cherry. "The—What was that?"

"What was which?"

"I heard somebody sniff."

"Well, I suppose a chap can sniff if he likes," said Morgan. "There's no rule against sniffing in the rules of the N.O.B.F., is there?"

Bob Cherry looked round to the partition behind him.

"Hark!"

A sound could be heard through the partition.

It was the sound of a heavy footfall on the floor, as if somebody had suddenly descended from a higher place and missed his footing in his hurry.

Bob Cherry snapped his teeth.

In an instant the truth rushed upon him.

There was an eavesdropper in the box-room, and he had heard all that was said—he had heard Bob remark upon the sniff, and was hurriedly beating a retreat.

The whole secret of the Noble Order of Bun Fighters was at the mercy of the spy!

"The—the cad!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"We—"

"What's the matter?"

"There's somebody in the box-room; he's been listening—"

"He couldn't hear through the wall!"

Mark Linley pointed to a cut fragment of wall-paper. It could be seen easily enough when the eye was directed specially towards it.

"Look there!"

"Pshaw!"

Bob Cherry was rushing to the door. He unlocked it, and threw it open, just as a fat figure dodged out of the box-room and flew along the passage.

"Bunter!" roared Bob Cherry.

For a moment the members of the N.O.B.F. stood paralysed.

It was Bunter—a member of the rival study—and he had heard the whole plans of the Bun Fighters, and was going to report them to Wharton!

"Stop him!" gasped Lacy.

"Faith! Collar the spalpeen!"

Bob Cherry was already speeding after the fat Removeite.

Billy Bunter heard the pattering footsteps behind, and he put on a desperate spurt, gasping with terror.

Exactly what Bob Cherry would do if

he caught him the fat junior did not know, and he did not stop to think.

He simply ran as if he were running for his life!

"Patter, patter, patter!"

With his eyes staring wildly, and his spectacles slipping down his nose, Billy Bunter dashed along, Bob Cherry close on his track, and the rest of the N.O.B.F. bringing up the rear.

Bob was gaining fast; but Bunter had a start, and he had not far to go. He reached the door of Study No. 1, and hurled it open, and hurled himself in.

Right in he went, with a terrific impetus, right at the table where the chums of No. 1 sat doing their prep.

Crash!

The table went flying, and Wharton, Nugent, and Hurree Janset Ram Singh jumped to their feet with startled exclamations.

"You young ass!" roared Wharton. "This isn't the first time you've done this! I'll—"

"Help!" gasped Bunter. "The enemy! I've found them out! I've been—or—scouting! They're—"

"What's he talking about?"

"They— Oh! Keep him off!

Help!"

The Bun Fighters tore into the study in an excited crowd.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

In the Toils.

BILLY BUNTER made a dive to get under the table, but Bob Cherry's grasp closed upon one of his plump ankles, and he was dragged out again.

He squirmed in the grip of the leader of the N.O.B.F. Bob Cherry yanked him towards the door, Billy squealing piteously for help.

Exactly what had happened the chums of No. 1 did not know. The chances were that Bunter was in the wrong. But they were not going to have their study invaded in this way, and they rushed at once to the rescue.

Harry Wharton grasped Bunter by the shoulders, and tried to drag him away from Bob Cherry; and Bob tightened his grip upon the fat ankles, and pulled the harder. Wharton was trying to rescue the fat junior; but Billy Bunter's last state was worse than his first.

"Let go!" shouted Wharton.

"Rats! You let go!"

"Rubbish! What do you want with him?"

"He's been spying on us! Let me have him!"

"Rats!"

Morgan suddenly collared Harry Wharton round the neck, and Harry, having to defend himself, relaxed his grasp upon Bunter.

Bob Cherry gripped the fat junior round the body and whisked him to the door.

"Come on!" he shouted.

He rushed the breathless Bunter along the passage, and the rest of the N.O.B.F. followed with yells of victory.

The three juniors in Study No. 1 were pretty well fagged out by the unequal struggle, but they followed as fast as they could. It was only to see the bun fighters retreat into No. 13, and slam the door in their faces. The key turned in the lock; and the N.O.B.F. were secure in their fortress, and Billy Bunter was a prisoner.

Harry Wharton hammered at the door. "Let us in, you bounders!"

"Go and eat cake!"

"It's no good," gasped Nugent. "If Bunter had put up a fight instead of yelling for help, he wouldn't have been captured. What are they doing?"

"Can't make out."

A dead silence had fallen in the study, save for the breathless gasps of the captured junior.

But Harry Wharton knew very well that Bob Cherry would not really hurt Bunter, whatever he had done, and so he did not feel uneasy about him. It was only the loss of prestige by the defeat that mattered.

In No. 15 Billy Bunter had been plumped upon the table.

Round him the N.O.B.F. stood with solemn and threatening faces, and the fat junior gasped and blinked at them.

"W-w-what's the little game?" demanded Bunter at last. "What are you standing round like a lot of owls for?"

"Silence!"

"Oh, really, Cherry, you know I'm Here I am not Cherry—I am the President of the N.O.B.F.," said Bob sternly. "Silence, caitiff!"

"Oh, really, Cherry, you know I'm not a caitiff. I don't know what it is; but I don't think you ought to swear—"

"I'm not swearing, you utter ass!" exclaimed the President of the N.O.B.F., becoming Bob Cherry again all of a sudden. "A caitiff is a mean, sneaking, rotten sort of a worm, and it just describes you."

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"You have surprised the secret of the N.O.B.F.," said the President solemnly. "What is the punishment of a spy upon the mysteries of the N.O.B.F., brothers?"

"Death!" said Lacy, with a dim remembrance of something he had read in some American fiction about Anarchists in New York. "Death!"

"Something lingering with boiling oil in it," suggested Morgan, with a remembrance of Gilbert and Sullivan.

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"Suppossee we puttee him to teettle with led-hot pokee?" suggested Wun Lung.

"Why, you heathen beast!" exclaimed Bunter indignantly. "Look here—"

"Silence, caitiff!"

"But—"

"There is one alternative," said the President solemnly. "You have discovered the dread secret of the N.O.B.F. You must die—"

"Ow!"

"Or else join the N.O.B.F., and swear—"

"It's not allowed, and—"

"Silence! And swear to observe its rules and keep its secrets, and join in the bun fight every Saturday."

"I'll swear that willingly enough," said Billy Bunter. "I—I—I'll swear anything you like."

"Young blackguard!" said Morgan.

"Oh! I—I mean—"

"Then the new member must be initiated," said the President. "Art thou prepared, caitiff, to be initiated into the mysteries of the N.O.B.F.?"

"Certainly, Cherry. Do you mean a feed?"

"No, cormorant, I don't mean a feed. Every applicant for admission to the N.O.B.F. has to go through an initiation to prove his worthiness to be admitted as a member. Art thou prepared?"

"Ye-e-e-es. Does it hurt?"

The President of the N.O.B.F. suppressed a chuckle.

"First of all, the candidate must stand upon his head and turn round three times—"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Silence! Then he must take the oath of secrecy. Art thou prepared?"

"Ye-e-e-es."

"Bring forth the candidate!" thundered the President, in a voice that

made the fat junior jump. "Let him be initiated."

Morgan and Lacy yanked Billy Bunter off the table, and plumped him on the floor. Bunter sat there blinking, and wondering whether the N.O.B.F. were in earnest or not.

"Now, prisoner—"

"I say, you fellows—"

"The initiation will now commence.

Wun Lung, keep that red-hot poker handy, and prod him if he hangs back!"

"Yes; lathel!"

"Candidate! Begin, or die!"

"Ow! Will—will you hold my spectacles, Linsley?"

"Certainly."

"Mind you don't drop them. If they get broken you'll have to pay for them. I—I say, Cherry, wouldn't it do if I stand on my feet, instead?"

"The poker!" thundered the President.

"Ow! Keep off, you horrid, heathen rotter! I'm just going to begin."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Bring forth the poker, Wun Lung!"

"Ow! Keep off! I'll try again!"

And Billy Bunter up-ended himself once more. This time his fat legs rose higher, till they were at right angles with his body.

"I—I—I say, is that all right?" he gasped.

"Higher, you young ass!"

"The feet went up another inch.

"Higher!"

"Another inch.

"Shove them up, you duffer! Make an effort!"

Bunter gasped, and made an effort. His feet flew up—and over, and he went down on the wrong side with a bump that shook the floor.

"Oh!" he gasped.

"Caitiff! What do you mean by damaging the study carpet in that way?" demanded the President of the N.O.B.F.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"He hasn't turned round—three



Bob Cherry threw open the study door just as a fat figure dodged out of the box-room and flew along the passage. "Bunter!" roared Bob Cherry. For a moment the members of the Noble Order of Bun Fighters stood paralysed!

And Billy Bunter, placing his fat hands very gingerly on the carpet, proceeded to stand upon his head, while the N.O.B.F. looked on with suppressed chuckles.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.
Billy Bunter is Initiated.

"SILENCE!" rapped out the President of the N.O.B.F.

And the chuckles ceased.

Bunter planted his hands on the carpet, and then the crown of his head between them, and slowly raised his feet in the air.

His feet left the carpet about six inches, and then flopped down again, and Bunter scrambled up.

"There you are, you fellows!"

"Boah! That isn't standing on your head. You've got to stand perpendicularly, or die!"

times," said Lacy. "He had better die, after all."

"I—I—I'll turn round now!" gasped Bunter. "Don't be hard on a chap, you know. This is making me fearfully hungry."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! The candidate will now take the oath. Sit down!"

Bunter sat down.

"Now repeat this solemn vow after me. I swear—"

"I swear—"

"By the six books of Euclid and the last book of the Iliad—"

"All right!" mumbled Bunter. "By the first six books of Euclid and the last book of the Iliad—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!"

"Sorry! Go on!"

"By the—the bridge that Balbus builded—"

"Yes; by the—the bridge that Balbus builded—"

"By—by alpha, beta, gamma, and delta—"

"By alpha, beta, gamma, and delta—"

"By the Commentaries of Cæsar and and the Georgics of Virgil—"

"By the Commentaries of Cæsar and and the Georgics of Virgil—"

"I swear—"

"I swear—"

"To observe the rules of the N.O.B.F.—"

"To observe the rules of the N.O.B.F.—"
"Yow!"

"Stop that row!"

"Yow—wowow! Somebody pinched me!"

"Order! To obey the President of the N.O.B.F. in all orders, even to the extent of facing a cannon or missing a meal—"

"To obey the President of the N.O.B.F., even to the extent of facing a cannon or—or—missing a meal."

"Good! Now repeat the oath through from the beginning."

Billy Bunter blinked in dismay. He had been able to follow Bob Cherry's lead through that most peculiar oath of secrecy, which Bob was probably composing as he went along; but to remember it was more than Bunter could manage.

"Lemme see, I swear—"

"Yes, go on. Silence, you fellows—I mean, brothers of the N.O.B.F. Listen to Bunter swearing!"

"Oh, you shock me, Cherry!" said Laey. "I'll stop my ears if you don't mind. I was very carefully brought up; and when I first came to school, my great-grandmother took my little hand in hers, and made me promise never to—"

"Ring off, you babbling ass! Let Bunter swear. Go ahead, fatty!"

"I—I—swear by the—the bridge that Virgil builded, by the first six books of Balbus, and the Commentaries of Euclid—" stammered Billy Bunter lazily.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"By alpha, beta, Virgil, and Cæsar, to observe the President of the N.O.B.F., and to miss a cannon and face a meal."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, that's near enough," said Bob Cherry, laughing. "You are now—I mean, thou art now a member of the N.O.B.F. You will be admitted to all the bun-fights of the noble order. You will back up the N.O.B.F. through thick and thin. By the way, you'll be up against your own study."

"Oh, that doesn't matter, Cherry! Wharton never really treats me properly in the matter of feeding, and if there's to be a bun-fight every Saturday, I'm on your side all the time. That's all right!"

"Regular worm, isn't he?" said Morgan.

"Oh, really, Morgan—"

"That's settled," said Bob Cherry. "Mind you keep the secrets of the noble brotherhood, or you will get it where the chicken got the chopper, that's all!"

"I say, Cherry, if that's true about the remittance from your uncle, I—I— Look here, if you like, I'll come and dig in this study."

"I don't like!" said Bob Cherry grimly. "You're a member of the N.O.B.F. but I wouldn't have you in this study if you were hung with diamonds; in fact, I'd prefer you hung with a length of rope!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Bob Cherry unlocked the door.

"Now you can run along."

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 254.

"I—I—I say, you fellows, isn't there going to be a feed?"

"There isn't. Gentlemen, the first meeting of the N.O.B.F. is now over. The first bun-fight will take place on Saturday afternoon, *à fresco*—a sort of picnic up the Sark, on the Holme Hall land. The time will be duly announced. Gentlemen, you are dismissed!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I'm jolly hungry—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! You still there, Bunter? Bring forth the red-hot poker!"

Billy Bunter scuttled down the passage.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bunter is Patriotic.

"NO. 13 is going ahead!" said Frank Nugent.

"Let 'em rip!" remarked Harry Wharton carelessly.

"What's the latest?"

"I don't quite know. Only a lot of the fellows are joining the N.O.B.F., whatever that may be, Noble Order of something, Inky says."

"So our Bunterful chum inadvertently informed me," said the nabob.

"It's a society they're getting up in the Form, of course. It doesn't much matter what the name is. The point is that they're getting a lot of the fellows into it. Skinner and Stott and Ogilvy and Lyell have joined. I know, and I think Russell and Trevor. They'll have the whole Form in soon at this rate. And they're all talking among themselves about something that's coming off."

"Perhaps it's a row among themselves," said Harry, laughing. "They won't be in a society together long without a row."

"I don't know. There's something up against us, so far, and we've got to keep our eyes peeled. I think it's rotten that a chap in our study should join them. We ought to make Bunter resign."

"The oughtfulness is terrific."

"Oh, he'll resign when they can't feed him any longer," said Harry.

"Oh, really, Wharton!" Billy Bunter came into the study. "I don't like to hear you fellows running a chap down behind his back."

Harry coloured.

"Don't be an ass!" he exclaimed.

"You know jolly well I'd have said the same thing if you'd been here. I'll say it now, if you like—you've only joined the N.O.B.F. for what you can make, and you'll chuck it up when there's no more grub."

"I'm sincerely sorry to see this jealousy and petty spite so rampant in the study," said Bunter, with dignity.

"If I had been treated well here, I should have been willing to lend you my assistance, and exert my influence with the Form in your favour. Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at, Nugent!"

"I was thinking of your influence with the Form," chuckled Nugent. "Go on."

"Oh, really, Nugent! Look here, I'm quite willing to treat you fellows the same as ever, and I shall not refuse any little loan on Saturdays as heretofore. I'm not the sort of chap to go back on old chums."

"So long as the tinfalness lasts," purred the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Oh, really, Inky! As a matter of fact, I should like a few bob just now, to contribute a few extras to the bun fight—I mean—"

"What bun fight?"

"Oh, that—that was a slip of the tongue. I didn't mean anything."

"Bun fight," said Nugent. "Why, that's what the initials stand for, then. Noble Order of Bun Fighters. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"So you're going to have a bun fight to-day," said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Where?"

"That's a dead secret. Wharton. I—I mean, we're not going to have one."

"Up the river, I suppose?"

"Of course—or, rather, no, certainly not! Down the river."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, if you could lend me five bob—"

"Five rats!"

"Half-a-crown would do at a pinch."

"Well, I can give you the pinch," said Nugent, fastening his finger and thumb upon the fat junior's arm. "But not the half-crown. Now—"

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"What's the matter?"

"Ow, yow!"

Billy Bunter tore himself away.

"Yow! Ow, you beast! Look here, I'm done with this study! I shall jolly well go and dig in No. 13. I wash my hands of you."

And the fat junior rolled out of the room.

"We're disinherited and done in," grinned Nugent. "Fancy Bunter washing his hands at all! Look here, you chaps, those bouncers have got something up for to-day, and we're going to wade in and make them sing small."

"The idea is a wheezy good one."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"I'm on, if you like. We must keep up the dignity of the study. The Noble Order of Bun Biterers has got to be busted."

"Ha, ha! It's pretty clear that there's going to be a picnic of some sort up the river, and we'd better be on the scene, and chip in."

"Good!"

And the chums of the Remove kept their eyes upon the members of the N.O.B.F. It was easy enough to see that the Bun Fighters had something on. They hardly made a secret of it.

Bob Cherry was observed to go into the school shop, and emerge with a large cane basket, which seemed to weigh very heavily.

Morgan went down to the village on his bicycle, and came back with a parcel; and the chums of No. 1 knew as well as if they had been told, that he had been to obtain comestibles not obtainable at the school shop.

"Well, I think we've obtained enough clues," said Harry Wharton.

"Let's get back to the study."

And they went.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

On the Track.

"THERE they go!"

It was Nugent who spoke. Bob Cherry and Mark Linley were leaving the gates of Greyfriars, and each of them carried a well-packed bag.

Billy Bunter was scuttling after them, his little fat legs going like clockwork to keep pace with the sturdy stride of the two juniors.

"Well, they're off," said Wharton. "Only three of them! What about the rest of the Noble Order of Bun Feeders?"

Nugent shook his head.

"They may be going to meet some of them later—or it may simply be a picnic for Study No. 13. Anyway, it's up to us to bust it up."

"Good!"

"The goodwillness is terrific."

"We'll wade in and lick them, and raid the grub, and then if they like to make it pax, we'll let 'em have a share

of their own feed," grinned Nugent. "How's that for high?"

"Jolly good. Let's get along." Keeping Bob Cherry in sight, the chums left the precincts of the school, following the lane up the river.

Bob Cherry and Mark Linley kept straight on, without once looking back. As for Billy Bunter, he never even thought of looking over his shoulder. All his energy was taken up by plodding on after the others.

"I say, you fellows, don't go so jolly fast," he mumbled. "I'm fagged, you know. I'm rather delicate, and you oughtn't to work me like this."

"We've got to get to Holme as soon as the boat with the other fellows in it," said Bob Cherry.

"There's no hurry."

"The grub's in the boat—most of it." "Still, we've got enough with us in case of accidents," said Bunter. "Don't you think it would be a good idea to sit down by the roadside here for half an hour or so, and have a snack?"

"No, I don't."

"I'm jolly hungry."

"Then you'll enjoy the bun fight all the more."

"There's such a thing as over-taxing a fellow's strength. You wouldn't like me to fall down in a swoon at your feet, Bob Cherry."

"I shouldn't mind, Billy. Don't mind me. I sha'n't interfere with you. It would be better than your keeping on jawing, anyway."

"Oh, really, Cherry—" "Come on; it isn't much further." And they strode on, Bunter gasping and complaining all the time. At a good distance behind, the chums of No. 1 kept them in view.

Study No. 1 were inclined to triumph. There was no doubt that when they ran the bun fighters down, they would have things all their own way, for Bunter counted for nothing in a tussle; and, in fact, he was certain to join the winning side, whichever it was.

The N.O.B.F. were approaching an ignominious defeat, as far as the chums of Study No. 1 could see.

"They haven't the faintest idea that we're on their track!" grinned Nugent. "They haven't looked back once! Hallo, they're stopping now!"

The bun-fighters had turned from the lane into a path that led down to the river. Ahead through the trees could be seen the waters of the gleaming Sark.

"They're going to camp there," said Wharton.

"Good! Keep cover!"

The juniors crept on through the trees and underbrush beside the path, keeping the school caps in sight as they followed the picnickers.

Bob Cherry stopped on a stretch of green velvet sward that sloped down to the water, under the shade of a gigantic elm.

It was an ideal spot for a picnic, and the bun-fighters dropped their bag there with the evident intention of making a camp of it.

Billy Bunter sank upon a grassy knoll, and gasped.

"I say, you fellows, I hope you're not expecting me to make the fire or anything," he mumbled. "I'm too exhausted."

"Well, you chose to walk, you know," said Bob Cherry. "You could have gone in the boat."

"Yes, but you said I should have to row."

"Well, you can't join the N.O.B.F. to lead a lazy life," said Mark Linley. "But sit where you are; I'll make the fire."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "What's that?"

Three figures rushed from the trees as he rapped out the words.

Without wasting time in speech, the chums of Study No. 1 dashed to the attack.

Wharton closed with Bob Cherry, and Nugent with Mark Linley, and they rolled over and over in the thick grass.

The Nabob of Bhanipur pranced up to Billy Bunter, with his fists in position, and the fat junior jumped up and dodged round the tree.

"Here, hold on!" he roared. "What's the game? You're not going for a chap in your own study, are you?"

"My worthy Bunterful chum, on the present suspicious occasion you are an enemy, and I am going to lick you terrifically!"

"Hold on, you inky idiot! Stop! Chuck it!"

Bunter dodged actively round the tree, and the dusky junior dodged after him.

the shoulders and rolled him over, and Nugent came uppermost.

"Oh!" gasped the Lancashire lad, as he rolled in the grass. "Groo!"

"Got him!" "Got them both!" grinned Wharton.

"Now, then, my nobby bun-fighters, where do you come in?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Hallo! What are you sniggering at?"

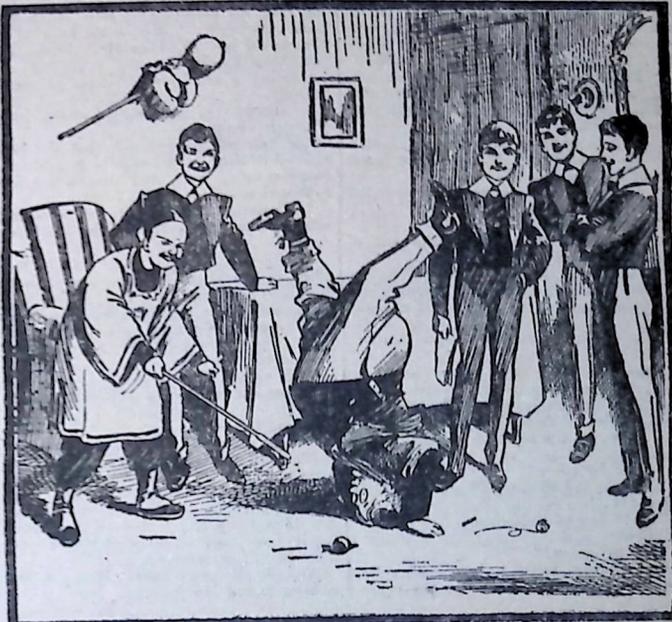
"Ha, ha, ha!" "You utter ass—" "Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a splash of an oar in the water and a bump of a boat among the thickets on the shore. A shout rang over the bank.

"Arrah! To the rescue, darlings!" And Micky Desmond rushed upon the scene, followed by Lacy, Skinner, Trevor, and the rest of the bun-fighters.

Wharton and Nugent jumped up. But they had no chance!

There was a moment's struggle, but



Billy Bunter planted his hands on the carpet, and then the crown of his head between them, and slowly raised his feet in the air. "Shove them up higher, you duffer!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Make an effort!"

Hurree Singh was only in fun, as a matter of fact; but Billy Bunter thought he was in deadly earnest, and he was in great terror.

He dodged round the tree till he fell over one of the baskets, and then he plumped down in the grass and yelled.

"Ow—wow—yow! Keep off! Oh! I've broken my leg! I've sprained my back—I mean my ankle! Keep off! Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Pax!" roared Bunter. "I'm on your side, you ass! I'm on your side all the time. A chap has to stand up for his own study. Lemme alone!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Wharton was sitting on Bob Cherry's chest by this time; but, on the other hand, Mark Linley was sitting upon Nugent.

Hurree Singh soon altered that. He caught Linley by

then the chums of Study No. 1 went to grass again, with overwhelming odds sprawling over them.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.
The Triumph of N.O.B.F.

BOB CHERRY staggered to his feet, gasping with laughter. Harry Wharton, Nugent, and Hurree Singh lay in the grass now, each with a couple of bun-fighters sitting upon him. The tables had been turned with a vengeance!

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "This is where we snigger!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the bun fighters. "Look here, my innocents," said Bob Cherry, addressing his prisoners. "You're no match for the N.O.B.F. The sooner you chuck it up the better. The new Co. are scoring all the time, and it's time for Study No. 1 to go out of business."

THE PENNY POPULAR—No. 251.

"Rats!"

"I knew you had screwed some information or other out of that sneaking worm, Bunter—"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Shut up, Bunter! I knew that, and I laid my plans. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the N.O.B.F.

"We came along here on our little lonesome, and I knew jolly well you chaps were following," chuckled Bob Cherry. "You didn't see us look back, did you? That was because we were leading you into this."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of Study No. 1 exchanged sickly looks.

It certainly looked as if they had been completely done by Study No. 13 this time.

"Most of us were coming by boat, you see," explained Bob Cherry, chuckling. "The boat was in sight when you rushed us, though you didn't see it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And now—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Wharton. "You've done us. But we'll make you wriggle another time. As for Study No. 13 being top study, that's all piffle!" "You're prisoners of war. We're willing to make it pax," said Bob serenely. "First of all you've got to admit that you are licked."

"Well, I suppose we may do that," said Harry ruefully. "There's not much doubt on that point."

"Next, you've got to own up that Study No. 13 is top study."

"Bosh!"

"Very well. Get the pickles out of the bag, Micky!"

"Faith, and here they are!"

"Do you like pickles, Wharton?"

"Sometimes. What are you driving at?"

"Do you like them taken externally?"

"Eh?"

"Because that's what you're going to get. You're going to own up that Study No. 13 is top study, or else be anointed with pickles. I'm letting you off lightly, you know, on the score of ancient friendship."

"Look here—"

"Do you admit that Study No. 13 is top study?"

"No!" roared Wharton.

"Then—"

"My goodness!"

Bob Cherry gave a jump, and the bottle of pickles dropped into the grass.

It was a girl's voice that spoke.

He swung round in a twinkling.

From the path in the wood two fair faces were looking, and Hazeldene's grinning countenance was beside them.

The two girls were Marjorie Hazeldene and her friend Clara, the pupils of Cliff House. They had come upon the scene quite unexpectedly, and were looking on in blank amazement.

"Goodness gracious!" said Marjorie.

Bob Cherry turned crimson.

He jerked off his cap, and the other fellows did the same, all of them looking very confused and guilty.

"Get up, you duffers!" muttered Bob. Wharton, Nugent, and the nabob scrambled to their feet.

There was a moment's awkward silence.

"My hat!" said Hazeldene, grinning.

"Is this a picnic?"

"Ye-e-es," stammered Bob Cherry. "It's a-a-a-a-a picnic! A-a-a picnic, you know!"

"Exactly," said Harry Wharton, recovering his presence of mind with his usual quickness. "We should be glad if you would join us, Miss Hazeldene, and you, Miss Trevlyn."

"Jolly glad!" said Bob Cherry heartily.

A glimmer of amusement came into Marjorie's eyes.

She understood very well that she had arrived in time to put an end to a scrimmage of some sort, and that was quite sufficient to decide her to remain.

"I suppose you fellows were doing some—some gymnastics!" said Hazeldene.

"Ye-c-c-es, in a way," said Bob Cherry; "and I—I was—was showing Wharton some pickles. I say, Miss Marjorie, we've got a jolly good feed. It's awfully good of you to join us. Bunter, you fat young villain, why haven't you lighted the fire?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"How can we boil a kettle without a fire?"

"Yes, but—"

"Light a fire."

Wharton pulled his collar straight. The arrival of Marjorie and Clara had been a very fortunate thing for him. He would never have admitted that Study No. 13 was top study; but he would certainly have had an uncomfortable time if he hadn't done so.

And so he was more than usually pleased to see Marjorie.

All signs of warfare were banished from the camp of the N.O.B.F. at once.

A fire was lighted, and the kettle slung over it and boiled, and the goodly array of tables set out on white cloths on the grass.

"My goodness!" murmured Clara.

"How ripping!"

"Oh, Clara!"

"Well, spiffing, then!" said Clara.

And Marjorie laughed.

The picnic was certainly a very enjoyable one. Wun Lung shaded the girls from the sun with his big umbrella, sitting between them with great state and a contented grin on his face; but whenever Billy Bunter drifted near the girls there was always somebody to give him a shove and send him away again. Bunter attributed it to jealousy; but there was no help for it.

The picnic was enjoyed by all; and when towards the finish Bob Cherry gave the toast—to the N.O.B.F.—in ginger-beer, it was drunk with enthusiasm; only the girls inquiring what the N.O.B.F. might happen to be.

Bob Cherry explained, and, struck by a great idea, begged Marjorie and Clara to become honorary members, which they forthwith did.

The N.O.B.F. grinned cheerfully at the chums of Study No. 1. They had secured two lady members for the Noble Order of Bun-Fighters, and after that they naturally considered that it was time for Harry Wharton & Co. to strike their colours.

When the picnic was over, most of the N.O.B.F. walked home with Marjorie and Clara, and so did Wharton and his chums. They parted with the girls at Cliff House, and walked back to Greyfriars together. It was tacitly agreed that it was "pax" for the rest of that day. Bob Cherry gave Wharton a staggering slap on the shoulder as they entered Greyfriars. But it was a friendly one.

"I rather think that Study No. 13 is top study now, old son?" he remarked.

To which Wharton replied with the ancient and classic monosyllable:

"Rats!"

But afterwards, in Study No. 1, Harry Wharton & Co. talked it over, and agreed that it was time they "pulled up their socks," as Nugent expressed it, and settled that burning question for good and all!

THE END.

Next Friday's Grand Long Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.

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THE FIRST CHAPTER.
Very Pathetic.

MONTY LOWTHER laid down his pen and grinned.

"I think this will do," he remarked.

There was no reply from Lowther's two companions in the study. Tom Merry and Manners were very busy. Tom Merry's pen was racing over the paper at express speed; and Manners was chewing the end of his pen-handle in a deep effort of thought. Neither of them appeared to hear Monty Lowther's remark, and Lowther repeated it.

"I think this will do. It's really funny, you know—funniest thing we've ever had in the 'Weekly,' I think. And it will make Figgins sit up."

Scratch! Scratch! Scratch! Tom Merry did not pause. Manners left off chewing for a moment, to cast a reproachful glance at Monty Lowther.

"Don't jaw for a minute, Monty," he said.

"Look here, Manners—" "Don't! I'm doing my article for the 'Weekly,' ass, and I'm thinking out a really good recipe for a combined toning and fixing solution—"

"Blow your toning and fixing solutions!" growled Monty Lowther. "I've got my limerick done. It's really good this time—"

"Well, that will be a change," agreed Manners.

"Listen to this, you chaps—" "Oh, father, father!" cried the child!" said Tom Merry, speaking aloud as he wrote, in self-defence. "Shut up, Monty! I'm doing my serial. 'Oh, father, father! I hear the church-bells from afar! I—"

"Blow the church-bells from afar!" exclaimed Monty Lowther irritably.

"What's that stuff you're writing?" "My serial for the special number, fathead. I've got to get an extra long instalment done, as some of the silly asses haven't turned in their copy, and it's got to go to the printer's this evening. I'm just doing a touching bit—simply makes you weep. 'Oh, father, father!' cried the dying child—"

"Make it daddy!" said Lowther. "It sounds more the thing!"

Tom Merry sniffed. "Look here, I know how to write my own serial!" he retorted. "You get on with your blessed limericks, and leave the pathos to me. 'Oh, father, father!' cried the dying child. 'I hear the church-bells from afar—'"

"Quite touching!" growled Lowther. "The readers will be touched—and they'll jolly well think the author was a little touched, when he wrote that."

"Rats! Keep your blessed puns for the Agony Column in the 'Weekly,'" said Tom Merry. "'Oh, father! I hear the—'"

"Look here!" said Lowther. "I've finished my special limerick. Are you

fellows going to listen to it, or are you not?"

"Not!" replied both the fellows together.

And Tom Merry dashed on with his pen; and Manners, having thought out his solution, proceeded to jot it down, for the benefit of the readers of "Tom Merry's Weekly" who were photographically inclined. And Monty Lowther glared at them.

Monty Lowther was simply bursting with the extraordinary funniness of his latest limerick, and it was hard upon him to have to keep all that merriment bottled up, as it were.

The editors of "Tom Merry's Weekly," were pressed for time. As usual, the "Weekly" had fallen much into arrears. Cricket had taken up a great deal of time lately. Fellows who had sent in copy weeks before had inquired sarcastically whether Tom Merry was turning the school paper into an annual.

Blake, of the Fourth, had threatened to revive his opposition paper, the "Saint," if the "Weekly" did not soon appear.

The Terrible Three had set to work in earnest at last, to turn out a new number—a Special Number, to console the readers for having missed the paper for some weeks.

Monty Lowther, in addition to his usual comic column, was doing a column under the title of "Lowther's Limericks!" Lowther was a great hand at limericks—most of them being personal reflections on the other fellows—more or less funny, but all of them decidedly personal.

But Lowther, like all great humorists, did not like keeping his little jokes to himself. When he perpetrated a new one, he liked to impart it immediately to his friends, to share the enjoyment with them. His enjoyment was generally in excess of theirs.

"The church-bells of my childhood," went on Tom Merry, the tears almost starting to his eyes, so pathetic was his serial. "'Oh, father, father—'"

"That's four times that kid's said 'father!'" said Monty Lowther. "Was he speaking about his ancestors?"

"Eh?" "His forefathers, you know," explained Lowther.

Tom Merry snorted. "It isn't a he, you fathead; it's a she! Listen to this little bit, and try to understand it. 'Her golden head lay upon the snowy pillow—'"

"Was she ill?" asked Lowther. "Of course she was, fathead; dying! 'Her golden head lay upon the snowy pillow—'"

"But was she having proper medical attention?" asked Lowther.

"Oh, rats!" growled Tom Merry, jamming his pen into the inkpot with a force that was dangerous to the nib.

He went on writing, disdaining to read out any more to such an unappreciative

audience. Monty Lowther glanced at the limerick he had written, and grinned—Lowther had the keenest possible appreciation for his own little jokes.

"Now, you fellows, listen to this," he said. "It's a jolly good limerick about Figgins & Co. and the New House bouncers—"

"Oh, cheese it!"

"Look here, I've listened to your rot!" began Lowther warmly. "You've got no more sense of humour than a cold leg of mutton. Manners, old man—"

"The trouble is," said Manners, "whether there really is any satisfactory combined toning and fixing solution at all. I've always found it better to keep the two jobs separate. At the same time—"

"In St. Jim's are two Houses, you know, And one is a rotten old show.

There, they're all off their dot, But the worst of the lot, Are the bouncers called Figgins & Co.!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" concluded Lowther. Then he stared at Tom Merry and Manners. The two juniors were scribbling away, quite insensible to the funniness of that limerick.

"Did you hear me?" demanded Lowther.

"Couldn't help hearing you!" grunted Tom Merry. "Now leave off, and let a chap get on with his work."

"Don't you think it's funny?" roared Lowther.

"Oh, any old thing!" said Tom Merry. "Simply a scream! A regular shriek! Now, dry up! 'Oh, father, father!' cried the child—"

"I'm sick of that kid!" snapped Lowther. "Never could stand crying children!"

"Silly ass! When I say she cried, I don't mean that she cried! I mean that she—"

Tap!

"Come in!" sang out Tom Merry, as there was a knock on the outside of the study door.

The door opened, and in walked Jack Blake & Co. and Figgins & Co.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Blake. "Hard at work on the 'Weekly'?"

"Yes." "Good! We're just in time to give you some advice, and—"

"Oh, sit down and get to work if you want to!" growled Tom Merry. "There's plenty of ink and paper."

"Right-ho!" The new-comers sat down at the table, and for the next half-hour or so complete silence reigned in the study. At length the copy was completed, and Figgins picked it up. Then he gave a sudden exclamation.

"Hallo! What's this rot?"

"Some New House stuff?" asked Blake.

"No, ass! It's headed 'Lowther's Limericks'."

"We're giving Monty an extra column, as it's a special large-sized number," Tom Merry explained.

"What's this rot about the New House?" demanded Figgins, glaring at Lowther's latest limerick. "That can't go in, you know!"

"Can't it!" said Monty Lowther, looking warlike. "Why can't it?"

"We're not going to have rotten jokes about our House in the 'Weekly'!"

"It isn't a rotten joke—it's true!"

"Look here—"

"You can put in a limerick about the School House, if you like, Figgy," said Tom Merry pacifically.

"It's out of order to be personal," said Kerr. "I think Lowther's stuff ought to be barred. He calls the New House a rotten old show—"

"Well, even in limericks, a chap ought to stick to facts," said Lowther. "What is there wrong in that?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here!" roared Figgins. "I'm not having it. You'll take that rotten limerick out of the number!"

"My dear chap, it's done and finished with now," said the unhappy editor. "It fills up the column just right—"

"Yaas, wathah; it's all wright, Figgy!"

"It's not all right. I'll give you some lines instead. Frinstance: There's a silly ass called Monty Lowther, a bigger ass than any other!" suggested Figgins.

"Is that poetry?" asked Blake, in astonishment.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Can't put in knock-kneed lines like that, Figgy. It's all right—you shall have a go at Lowther in the next number—"

"Oh, rats! Take it out!"

"Wats!"

"Put it to the vote!" said Manners.

"Yes, all you School House rotters will vote for putting it in!" growled Figgins. "I don't want to put it to the vote. Take it out!"

"Hands up in favour of taking it out!" said Tom Merry.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn put up their hands. But the School House fellows only grinned.

"You see you're outvoted, Figgy!" said Tom.

"Bosh! Take it out!"

"Rats!" said Lowther. "It's going in!"

"I protest—as a sub-editor—"

"I insist—as a sub-editor—"

"Yaas, wathah, and I considah it's all wright—as a sub-edithah—"

It looked as if war would break out among the staff of "Tom Merry's Weekly." But Tom Merry poured oil on the troubled waters.

"We're going to have tea as soon as this is sent off," he said. "We've got a ripping spread—and we're late—"

"I'm hungry!" remarked Manners.

"Yes, let's have tea," said Fatty Wynn. "It's all right, Figgy. Everybody knows that the New House is cock-house of St. Jim's, so it doesn't matter what Lowther bleats!"

"Well, you New House ass—" began Lowther.

"Let's have tea," said Fatty Wynn. "I've had hardly anything to eat since dinner—only some sandwiches and a few saveloys and some tarts and a pound cake."

"Poor chap, you must be famished," said Tom Merry, sympathetically. "You can buzz off with the copy, Blake, It's ready!"

"Right-ho!" said Blake.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 254.

"Look here—" began Figgins, as Blake fastened up the copy. Kerr nudged his leader.

"Shut up, Figgy," he murmured. "It will be all right."

Figgins looked up at him. Kerr half-closed one eye, and Figgy understood. His Scottish chum had some idea working in his mind, which he could not explain before the School House fellows.

Figgins nodded, and let the subject drop. Figgins placed great reliance upon the Scottish member of the Co.

Indeed, many fellows said that Kerr had nearly all, if not quite all, the brains of the Co., and that he could have been junior captain in the New House if he had liked—not that Kerr would ever have dreamed of supplanting his chum.

"Tea's the word!" said Fatty Wynn. "I'll lend a hand with the cooking, you fellows, if you like—if there's any cooking to do."

There was—and the fat Fourth-former was soon busy with it. Jack Blake left the study with the copy for the printers, and was soon cycling down to Mr. Tiper's in Rylcombe village.

In Tom Merry's study, a happy editorial staff gathered round the festive board. Funds had been low lately in the study; but Tom Merry had received a generous remittance from his uncle in America, and for the present he was rolling in money. And a sumptuous feast in the study was the first result of it.

Figgins's good-humour was completely restored, and he left the School House Co. on the best of terms. But he had not forgotten the limerick, and he mentioned the matter as soon as the New House trio left the study.

"Look here, Kerr," said Figgins, as they went down the passage. "I shut up when you told me; but I'm not putting up with having that rotten limerick about us in the 'Weekly,' you know!"

Kerr grinned.

"I've got an idea about that," he said. "I thought you had—but I'm blessed if I can see what we're to do," said Figgins. "Blake has taken the copy to the printers now."

"That's all right—we get the proofs before the paper appears."

"Tom Merry gets the proofs."

"Yes, and corrects them, and they have to be sent back to the printer. That's where we come in—hallo!"

Kerr broke off short.

Levison of the Fourth was coming down the passage. He smiled at the New House juniors in a sickly manner, and passed on.

"Do you think he heard what I was saying?" asked Kerr, as they left the School House, and went out into the dusky quadrangle.

"I shouldn't wonder. But he can't have tumbled. I don't know yet what you were getting at," said Figgins.

"Levison's a bit keener than you are, though, Figgy, old chap," remarked Fatty Wynn.

"Rats!" said Figgins. "File in, Kerr, and let's hear the dodge."

Kerr lowered his voice.

"When Tom Merry's corrected the proofs, we'll get at them somehow—and make a bit of an alteration," he said. "It will go down, with the printer, as part of the proof-correcting, you know. We'll make up something about Lowther, and put it in, in the place of the limerick, without those bounders knowing. We can work it—if we're careful!"

Figgins chuckled.

"My hat! Fancy Lowther's face when he sees it in print—when he's looking for his own giddy limerick!" he exclaimed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the New House juniors laughed

merrily as they walked on in the dusk to their own House.

Levison, in his study, was not laughing. His eyes were gleaming, and his brows wrinkled in thought.

"So those New House rotters are going to play some game with the proofs of the 'Weekly,' when Tiper sends them to Tom Merry!" he murmured. "That's where they come in—is it? Perhaps it's where I shall come in, too!"

And Levison's lip curled in a sneering grin.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Call of Duty.

"BAIJOVE! What a wippin' aftahnoon for cwicket, deah boys!" Arthur Augustus was quite right.

It was a couple of days after that busy editorial scene in Tom Merry's study; and it was a half-holiday.

School House juniors were playing New House juniors that afternoon; one more test to prove which House was cock-house of St. Jim's—a question that probably never would be satisfactorily settled.

"Wippin' aftahnoon, deah boys," Arthur Augustus remarked. "So sorry you won't be able to play, Tom Mewwy!"

Tom Merry stared at the swell of St. Jim's.

"Nothing to be sorry about, Guesy," he replied. "I'm playing all right. I'm not likely to leave you fellows to be walked over by the New House!"

"I should wufuse to be walked ovah by the New House, for one, Tom Mewwy! But you can't possibly play this aftahnoon, and I was goin' to suggest that I should captain the team in your place. I am not a fellow to put myself forward in any way—I weally don't want to be forward—"

"Forwards are not any good at cwicket," said Monty Lowther. "You're thinking of footer!"

"Pway don't be funnay, Lowthah! I have already wuestioned you to keep those wotten jokes for the 'Weekly.' I do not wish to be forward, but I weally considah that I should skipkah the team vewy well indeed. It requires a fellow of tact and judgment."

"But I'm not looking for a new skipper!" exclaimed Tom Merry puzzled. "I'm going to captain the School House team myself, fathead!"

"I wufuse to be called a fathead!"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Jack Blake, coming out of the School House in spotless flannels, with his bat under his arm. "You fellows getting ready? As you can't play this aftahnoon, Tom Merry, I was going to offer to take your place as skipper."

"But I can play!" roared Tom Merry, in bewilderment. "What do you mean?"

"Now, be reasonable," urged Blake. "Sinco circumstances prevent you from playing, I think I ought to captain the team. After all, I used to captain the School House juniors before you came, and I really don't know why I let you have the job—my innate modesty, I suppose. But now—"

"Oh, cheese it, Blake!" interrupted Kangaroo of the Shell. "I was just going to suggest to Tom Merry that I should captain the team, as he is standing out."

"Oh, rats!"

"Weally, Kangawooh—"

"I am not standing out!" roared Tom Merry.

"Yes, you are!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"The call of duty, you know," explained Blake. "You know the proofs of

the 'Weekly' have just come in, and they're got to be corrected this afternoon, and sent back to the printer. There's a jolly lot of correcting to do, as it's a special double number. As editor-in-chief, it's up to you, Tommy. Fellow can't have the name without the game. I've offered to be chief editor myself, and you've declined. Go and do your duty!"

"Yaas, wathah! It's up to an editah to set an example to his sub-editahs, you know."

"Yes, you pile in on the proofs, Tommy, and I'll captain the team," grinned Kangaroo.

"What utter rot!" said Tom Merry warmly. "The proofs can wait. I'm not going to miss a cricket match for the sake of a rotten paper!"

But the juniors all shook their heads. They couldn't have their chief editor neglecting his duties in that way. They all felt the same, especially the fellows who wanted to captain the eleven.

"It's up to you, Tommy," said Blake solemnly. "If the proofs aren't corrected to-day, the paper won't be out this week. We can't have you turning it into a hardy annual."

Tom Merry snorted. "I'll tell you what I'll do," he said. "I'll appoint Blake temporary chief editor, with full powers to correct proofs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "That you jolly well won't!" said Blake emphatically. "I'm not missing the House match! Tommy, my son, it's up to you. Do your giddy duty, and set an example to your schoolfellows and your teachers, same as they do in the story-books. You remember how good little Reggie set an example to a whole school by staying in and writing lines, while bad little Willie went out, and was eaten by a mad bull!"

"Oh, cheese it! The proofs can wait!"

"The proofs can't wait! Impossible!" "Quite imposs, deah boy!"

"It really isn't a chief editor's bizney to correct proofs, either," said Tom Merry argumentatively. "Chief editors don't do it. Beside—"

"Awful thing to see a fellow trying to get out of his bounden duty, after the fearful example of bad little Willie, who was eaten by a mad bull!" said Blake, with a shake of the head. "Come, Tommy, put a cheerful grin on it, and go and correct the proofs! You can look out of the study window every now and then, and see me knocking up boundaries!"

"And you can see me wunnin' like anythin'!"

Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth came out of the House. He was in flannels, too, and he had his bat with him.

"Chance for me this afternoon, I guess?" he remarked.

"You're not in the eleven," said Blake.

"No; but as Tom Merry is standing out—"

"I'm not!" yelled the unhappy editor of "Tom Merry's Weekly."

"I guess you are; the proofs have come."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry grinned, in spite of himself. He didn't want to miss the cricket-match. It was not that he specially feared for the result if he stood out; but he wanted to play.

It was an ideal afternoon for cricket, and cricket was an ideal game for that sunny afternoon. But Tom Merry yielded to the pressure of public opinion, and, after all, a secret inward voice told him that he really ought to attend to his duties as editor.

"Well, upon the whole I'll stand out,

and do the proofs," he said cheerfully. "But what about a skipper in my place?"

"I wegard that as settled alweady." "Yes, rather," said Blake promptly. "that's settled! Couldn't be anybody but me!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Kangaroo is vice-captain," said Tom Merry. "I leave it to Kangy. And if you let the New House beat you, I'll put a special note in the 'Weekly' about a team of silly asses who thought they could play cricket!"

"Oh, we'll beat the New House!" said the Cornstalk. "Come on, you fellows, and look lively! Figgins & Co. are waiting!"

"If you would-care to wesign the place to me, Kangy—"

"But I wouldn't," grinned Kangaroo. "I mean, from a point of view of the good of the team."

opened the innings, and Kangaroo led his merry men out to field.

Tom Merry turned back into his study with a sigh. He unwrapped the package on the table, and took out the proofs of the "Weekly."

There was quite a pile of them, owing to the fact that the "Weekly" was a special double number. Tom Merry sat down to the table, and was soon busy with the proofs.

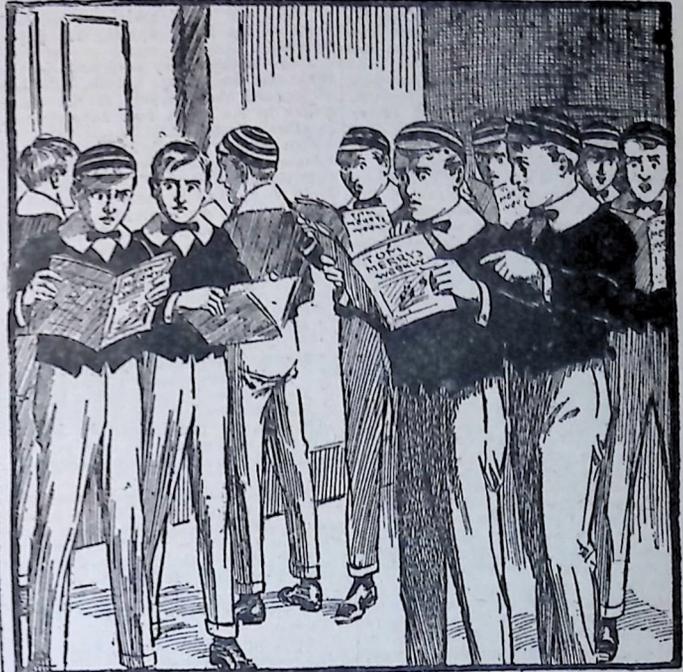
There were very many corrections and revisions to be made, and he had some hours of work before him.

He was busily engaged when there was a tap at the door, and Kerr of the Fourth looked in.

Tom Merry glanced at the new House junior in surprise.

"Hallo! Aren't you playing cricket?" he asked.

Kerr nodded. "Yes; but I'm last man in, and I



Tom Merry opened the "Weekly" and turned at once to the limerick column. An expression of amazement and incredulity came over his face, and then of horror and dismay. "Good heavens!" he exclaimed, "Figgins must be mad! He will be sacked for this!" And there was a chorus of similar horrified exclamations from the rest of the fellows.

"Ha, ha, ha!" Kangaroo & Co. streamed away towards the cricket-ground. Tom Merry went back into the School House. It was very much against the grain to spend that bright and sunny afternoon in his study; but the call of duty had to be obeyed.

The package from the local printer was lying on the study table.

Tom Merry did not open it immediately. He stood at the study window looking out.

Tom Merry's window commanded a view of the cricket-ground. Very cheerful and merry the juniors looked as they gathered there.

Figgins and Kangaroo tossed, and apparently Figgins got the best of it, for the New House went out to bat.

Figgins and Redfern of the New House

shn't be wanted yet. They'll keep your bowlers busy for a long time, I expect. Got the proofs there?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry, with a sigh. "Heaps of 'em."

"We're going to have tea in our study after the match," said Kerr. "You can come along. When will you be finished this little lot?"

"About five, I suppose."

"Good! I—"

Kerr was interrupted by a shout from the direction of the cricket-ground. Both the juniors jumped to the window at once.

Figgins' wicket had gone down, and the School House juniors were cheering Jack Blake, the bowler. Kerr looked astonished.

"My hat, Figgy's out!" he exclaimed. THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 254.

"What did you expect?" grinned Tom Merry.

"Well, I didn't expect a fluke like that!" said Kerr.

"Fluke!" said Tom Merry warmly. "Why Blake could bowl your heads off!"

"Rats!"

"Fathead!"

"Clump!" said Kerr.

"Ass!"

And with this exchange of compliments they parted. Tom Merry was left alone to his task. But he did not stick at it with steady industry. The spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak.

About every five minutes he rose from the table, and stationed himself at the window to watch the progress of the cricket. And he remained longer at the window than at the table each time.

The correcting of the proofs dragged its weary length through the sunny afternoon, and it was past six o'clock when the tired editor finished his task.

Then he wrapped up the proofs in the same paper in which they had come from the printer's, and hurried out of the study.

Levison was in his room with the door open, and his eyes were on the passage, and he grinned as he saw Tom Merry pass. But the Shell fellow had no eyes for Levison; he was only thinking of seeing the finish of the cricket-match.

Tom Merry went down to the playing-fields, and witnessed the finish of the match, which, strange to say, ended in a draw. Then he returned to the School House, and, finding the proofs just where he had left them, took them straight to the printers.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

An Amazing Discovery!

THE St. Jim's juniors were at class on Friday afternoon, when a bulky package arrived from Mr. Tiper's.

Toby, the House page, took it up to Tom Merry's study, and left it there, and informed him of it when the Shell came out of their Form-room.

"The paper's arrived, you chaps!" said Tom Merry. "It's in my study!"

And quite a crowd of fellows, School House and New House, followed Tom Merry to his study to see the paper.

The packet was unfastened, and copies were handed out on all sides. Every fellow who subscribed to the expenses of the "Weekly," was entitled to a certain number of copies—and needless to say, all the contributors were among the subscribers.

Levison of the Fourth was one of the first in the study, coming in with Gore and Crooke of the Shell. Gore was a subscriber, and he took three copies, one each for his friends.

"You'll find a rather good paragraph on batting in this number," Gore remarked, in a careless sort of way, as he handed the copies to Crooke and Levison.

"Yes," said Levison. "Who's it by?" Gore coughed.

"Ahem! I wrote it!" he said.

"Then I'm sure it must be good, old chap!" said Levison cordially. "Must say I don't want to read Lowther's funny business, or Tom Merry's serials. But if you've got an article, I'll read it with pleasure. Can I keep this copy?"

"Certainly!" said Gore, highly flattered. "With pleasure!"

"Thanks very much!" said Levison. And he took the copy away to his own study.

The fellows carried off their copies of the "Weekly." Figgins & Co. and

Redfern & Co. grinned hugely as they received their numbers. Figgins glanced back as they were leaving the study.

"By the way, you fellows might look at the limerick page. You'll find it interesting!" he remarked.

"My limericks, do you mean?" asked Lowther.

"Yes. Ha, ha, ha!"

"You didn't seem so pleased with them when we were making up the copy," said Monty Lowther suspiciously. The New House juniors chuckled in chorus.

"May be a bit of difference since then!" chuckled Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the New House fellows hurried out.

The Terrible Three exchanged glances.

"Oh, the bounders!" said Tom Merry. "They must have got at the proofs after all, you chaps!"

"Let's see 'em!" exclaimed Bernard Glyn of the Shell, opening his paper hurriedly.

There were a score of fellows in the study and the passage outside, and they all opened their papers at the comic page, to see what had happened to Lowther's limericks.

Tom Merry looked at the limerick column, reading Lowther's effusions one after the other hurriedly. His face suddenly changed as he came to the last in the column. An expression of amazement and incredulity came upon his face, and then of horror and dismay.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed. And there was a chorus of exclamations from the rest of the fellows.

"Great Scott!"

"My hat!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Figgins must be mad!"

"He might be sacked for this!"

"The silly ass!"

"The fathead!"

The juniors could scarcely believe their eyes as they saw the cold print of the revised limerick looking them in the face.

For the limerick which Lowther had written to make fun of Figgins & Co., and which Lawrence had amended to make fun of the Terrible Three, was, in its final state, not funny at all, but simply horrifying. It ran:

"In the School House they give me the hump,

Every chap is a bit off his chump!

The masters are dotty,

The prefects are potty,

And the Head is a giddy old frump!"

The juniors looked at one another in horrified silence. That Figgins, or any other fellow could be stupid enough and reckless enough to put such a composition into print, was astounding.

The fellows simply could not speak; the lines took their breath away. The fellow who had written them, if they came to the notice of the masters, was as certain of a flogging as he could be of anything in this world, if not of being expelled from St. Jim's.

Tom Merry was the first to find his voice.

"The ass! The utter ass! A giddy old frump! Figgins must be mad! Suppose the Head were to see that—"

"He'd sack Figgins!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah, and serve him right!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy indignantly. "No chap has a right to allude to his headmastah as a giddy old frump. It is a vulgah expression!"

"The Head would get his hair off if he saw it!" said Hierries.

"He musn't see it," said Tom Merry quickly. "I can't understand Figgy being such an utter idiot; but it must have been Figgy—you heard what he said as he went out—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"No doubt about it, though I can't understand it," said Jack Blake. "For goodness' sake, keep this dark! Figgins would be flogged, if not sacked! The utter idiot!"

"Faith, and he must be off his rocker intirely!" said Reilly. "It isn't like Figgins to do this at all. It's bad enough about the prefects, but the masters—and the Head! Sure, Figgy must have gone off his dot!"

"We shall have to suppress this number," said Tom Merry. "For goodness' sake don't let any of the prefects get hold of it!"

"What about the copy we always give Kildare?" asked Digby.

"We can't give him one of these—unless we tear this page out," said Tom Merry. "That might make him suspicious, too, that there was something in it that we daren't let a prefect see. We shall have to suppress the whole number."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We'll jolly well make Figgins sit up for it, then!" growled Lowther. "It will cost a pretty penny to have this lot printed over again."

"We'll make Figgins pay for it," said Manners.

"Good idea!"

"And bump the silly ass, into the bargain!" said Kangaroo.

"Hear, hear!"

"It won't be so jolly easy to suppress the number," said Bernard Glyn. "Half the copies have been taken away already."

"Go round collecting them up, you fellows," said Tom Merry. "It would be frightfully serious for the author of that rot if it got into a master's hands."

And the juniors hurried away to collect up the scattered copies of the "Weekly"—not an easy task, as Glyn had remarked, and soon to prove impossible!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Called Over the Coals.

TOM MERRY and Manners and Lowther were busy in the study a little while later when Arthur Augustus joined them. Tom Merry had lighted a fire in the grate, and the "limerick page" from the edition of the "Weekly" was being fed to the flames.

Monty Lowther was in a state of great exasperation at this destruction of his humorous columns. But there was nothing else to be done.

As fast as the scattered numbers of the "Weekly" were brought in, the limerick page was torn out and put into the fire. Blake and the rest were very busy making the collection, and out of the hundred numbers provided by Mr. Tiper, more than fifty had already been disposed of.

Barring accidents, there was no reason why the whole edition should not be successfully suppressed, and that unfortunate limerick consigned to oblivion. Then in came Arthur Augustus with his bad news.

"You can let that fire out, deah boys," said D'Arcy dismally. "It's too late! Mr. Wailton has got a copy of the 'Weekly'!"

"Oh, my sainted Sam!" said Lowther. "Then all the fat's in the fire—instead of the 'Weekly.'"

"Yaas. I thought I'd bettah come and

tell you at once. I suppose Wailton is bound to see that wrotten limerick?"

"Sure to!" groaned Tom Merry. "Everybody always sees just the thing you don't want him to see. What rotten luck! But how on earth did Railton get hold of a copy so soon? He's not generally specially keen about our giddy magazine."

"Levison happened to be weadin' it, and Wailton saw him, so Levison says."

"That's no reason why he should collar it," said Lowther. "You can bet that Levison had spotted the limerick, and he managed to let Railton see it. I know Levison."

"Bai Jové! I nevah thought of that! But now you speak of it, deah boy, I wegard it as extremely pwob," said Arthur Augustus, with a doleful shake of the head. "I'm afraid there will be a feahful woe. Wailton will be sendin' for the editah next, to ask him to explain the mattah."

Tom Merry set his lips.

"I suppose so. What on earth can I say? I can't give Figgins away."

"You can't take the responsibility for that rotten limerick yourself, Tom!" Lowther and Manners exclaimed together.

open, of course, at that unfortunate limerick page.

Mr. Railton fixed his eyes sternly upon the junior.

"This is the latest number of your junior magazine, I understand, Merry?" he said.

"Yes, sir."

"You act as editor, I believe?"

"Yes, sir."

"In that case you must be held responsible for what appears in the paper."

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry again.

"You are, then, responsible for these wicked and scurrilous verses?" said Mr. Railton, laying his finger upon the limerick.

"No, sir," said Tom Merry. "I did not know that that limerick was in the paper. I was shocked when I found it there."

"It was put in without your knowledge then?" asked the Housemaster, his brow relaxing somewhat.

"Most certainly, sir."

"In that case, you must have been very remiss, Merry. It was your duty to see that there was nothing in the paper displaying bad taste and bad manners, and reflecting upon the authorities of the school."

"I know, that, sir," said Tom Merry, hanging his head. "I can't say how

must be immediately destroyed—that is the first step."

"We were doing that already, sir. As soon as we found that limerick in the paper, we started collecting the copies. We've been burning them in the study."

"I am glad to see that you realise the seriousness of the matter. How many copies were there of this paper?"

"One hundred, sir."

"How many have you destroyed?"

"Over fifty. We're keeping count of them, and we shall know they're all destroyed, sir. All the fellows are just as keen as I am to get them done in—I mean destroyed!"

"Very good, so far. Now, to discover who wrote these wicked lines. You tell me that this limerick was inserted in the magazine without your knowledge, and yet that you read over all the contributions. How can that be?"

"It was put in after I'd corrected the proofs, sir," said Tom Merry reluctantly. "I left the proofs in my study while I went down to the cricket, and somebody must have gone into the study and opened the packet, and put that limerick in on the proof-sheet!"

"And you sent the proofs back to the printer without knowing that they had been tampered with?"

"Yes, sir."

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"Put it on the gwound of editorial pwivacy, and wefuse to answah," suggested Arthur Augustus. "Editahs always wefuse to weveal the names of contwibutahs before a committee of inqwiry, you know—I wemembah weadin' that in the papah. Aftah all, you are an editah, you know, and you must have some wegard for pwofessional etiquette."

Tom Merry smiled faintly.

"Master Merry"—Toby put his head in at the door—"Master Merry, please Mr. Railton wants you in his study." The juniors looked at one another glumly.

"He's seen it," said Manners.

"Now to get it in the neck," said Monty Lowther, in a role of Job's comforter.

"Wemembah pwofessional etiquette, Tom Mewwy, deah boy, and don't weveal the name of the contwibutah," said D'Arcy.

Tom Merry left the study, and went slowly downstairs.

Mr. Railton was standing up, his brow very stern, when the captain of the Shell presented himself in the Housemaster's study. He had the copy of the "Weekly" open in his hand, and it was

sorry I am, sir. I only hope the Head won't see it. You can't think that I would allude to the Head in that way, sir, or any of my friends either."

"Do you read over everything that is printed in the paper, Merry?"

"Certainly, sir. I have to be careful, of course."

"Then how did this escape your attention?"

Tom Merry hesitated.

"You had better tell me all, Merry. If it is an ill-natured trick, you will be exonerated from blame, and the author will be severely punished. But the matter must be sifted to the bottom. I may tell you that, if this comes to Dr. Holmes' knowledge, the author of those scurrilous lines will be expelled from the school. But as the offence has occurred in my House, I am entitled to deal with it as Housemaster, without acquainting Dr. Holmes that there is a boy in the school who dares allude to him in such an insulting manner."

Tom Merry breathed more freely.

"I know the Head would feel it, sir," he said. "I only hope he won't know."

"As this has occurred in the School House, Merry, I shall take the matter into my hands, and deal with it myself, if possible. Every copy of this paper

"Very well. I believe your statement, of course, and that exonerates you. Do you know who tampered with the proofs?"

Tom Merry flushed.

"I see that you do know, Merry. Who was it?"

"It—it wasn't a School House chap, sir!" stammered Tom Merry.

"A New House boy?"

"I—I think so, sir!"

"You mean that you know it was a New House boy?" Mr. Railton exclaimed sharply.

"Well, yes, sir!"

"His name?"

Tom Merry was silent.

"Do you know his name, Merry?"

"No, sir, I don't! I was on the cricket-ground when it was done, and I only guessed afterwards that a New House chap had tampered with the proofs!"

"Had you reason to believe that it was a New House boy?"

"Yes, sir; from something some of them said—about a surprise for us on the limerick page, though I can't understand how decent fellows came to play such a trick!"

"If the New House boys are concerned

in the matter, Merry, I am afraid that I shall have to confide it to Mr. Ratcliff, if not to the Head himself. You are quite sure the author of these lines did not belong to this House?"

"I—I am sure, sir, because—"

There was a quick knock at the door, and it opened, and Figgins, Kerr, and Lawrence of the New House came in without ceremony. Mr. Railton raised his eyebrows.

"Excuse me, sir," said Figgins breathlessly, "I've just had it from Lowther that Tom Merry was here, and—"

"Do you know anything about this matter, Figgins?" asked Mr. Railton sternly, pointing to the open page of the "Weekly."

"Yes, sir; but not much!"

"You'd better explain, Figg!" said Tom Merry. "How you could be such an ass as to get those lines in there I can't understand!"

"I didn't," said Figgins indignantly. "Do you think I'd speak of the Head in that way? I should deserve to be kicked out of the school if I did!"

"But—but—"

"Explain to me what you know, Figgins!" said Mr. Railton quietly. "I should be sorry indeed to suppose you the author of those lines. I am anxious to keep this disgraceful matter from troubling the Head. But the truth must be discovered, and the author of those lines severely punished!"

"I don't know who it was, sir!" said Figgins.

Tom Merry stared at Figgins blankly. "You don't know?" he stammered.

"No. If I did, I'd jolly well wallop him!" said Figgins. "One thing I'm certain of—it wasn't a New House chap!"

"Wh-a-at?"

"That it jolly well wasn't!" said Lawrence.

"But—but you said in my study—" stuttered Tom Merry, in amazement.

"Yes, I know what I said. We altered the limerick, but we didn't alter it like this. It was altered again by somebody after Lawrence left it!"

"Yes, rather!" said Lawrence.

"Oh!" gasped Tom Merry.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

By Whose Hand?

MR. RAILTON listened quietly. He broke in now.

"Kindly tell me, as concisely as you can, what you know about the matter, Figgins!" he said.

"Certainly, sir!" said Figgins. "You see, we're all sub-editors of the 'Weekly,' and when we were getting this special number ready for the press I found a rotten limerick in it by Monty Lowther, getting at the New House. I objected; but it was put in. And we made up our minds to get at the proofs afterwards and alter the limerick, so that it would be a joke up against the School House. No harm in that, sir!"

"None at all!" said Mr. Railton.

"I've got the original here, sir," said Figgins. "Kerr read it over, and wrote out a new limerick very much like the old one, but up against Tom Merry & Co. Kerr can do these things. It was really his idea from the first. Here they are, sir! The first one is Lowther's limerick, and the other is the limerick after we had altered it!"

Figgins laid a scribbled paper on the table before the Housemaster. Mr. Railton read the lines, and smiled slightly. He read first Lowther's original version:

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 254.

"At St. Jim's are two Houses, you know, And one is a rotten old show.

There they're all off their dot, But the worst of the lot Are the bounders called Figgins & Co."

"This is somewhat personal; but there is no harm in it," said Mr. Railton. "This, then, is the original limerick that appeared in that column?"

"Yes, sir. The other one is Kerr's version," said Figgins.

Mr. Railton read Kerr's version:

"At St. Jim's are two Houses, you see, And one is too rotten for me, There they're all off their dot, But the worst of the lot Are the chumps called the Terrible Three."

"You see, sir, it was only a bit of an alteration; but we made it up against the School House," explained Figgins. "When the number came to-day we told them to look at the limerick page, and they'd find it interesting. We thought they'd find that limerick there. But when we opened our own copies over in the New House we found these new lines about the Head, sir. We were simply knocked over. We hadn't expected anything of the kind. We hadn't the faintest idea—"

"Not the faintest, sir!" said Kerr. "We came over here to see Tom Merry about it, and Lowther told us you'd sent for him, sir, so we came here!"

"Quite right!" said Mr. Railton. "Explain how it was that you contrived to insert these lines in the paper without Merry's knowledge!"

Figgins grinned a little.

"You see, sir, Tom Merry was standing out of the Form match to look over the proofs; but when he'd finished the proofs he came down to the ground to see the finish of the match. We were se fielding, so we couldn't get off, but we'd put Lawrence up to it. Lawrence had Kerr's limerick in his pocket, all ready, waiting for a chance. As soon as Tom Merry got to the ground, Lawrence slipped into this House. There was nobody about, as it was a half-holiday, and he worked the oracle—I—I mean he put it in!"

"What did you do, Lawrence?"

"I got into Tom Merry's study, sir," said Lawrence. "The proofs were in a packet on the table. I opened the packet, and wrote Kerr's limerick over Lowther's, crossing out the words I wanted to alter, so that the printer would take it just as an ordinary proof correction. Then I fastened up the packet again and buzzed—I mean I went out. The School House chaps never tumbled."

Mr. Railton's eyes dwelt very keenly upon Lawrence's face while the junior was speaking. Lawrence's frank face and fearless blue eyes inspired confidence. It seemed hardly possible to doubt that he was telling the truth.

"Then when you left the proofs, Lawrence, Kerr's limerick was written over Lowther's," said Mr. Railton. "After that, according to your statement, some unknown person must have reopened the packet, and made a further alteration, putting in the lines that have appeared in the printed edition."

"That's it, sir, exactly!"

"You knew nothing of these scurrilous lines?"

"Nothing at all, sir, till I saw them in Figg's study ten minutes ago."

The Housemaster reflected for some moments.

"You left Tom Merry's study—where did you go?"

"Back to the cricket, sir."

"What time was that?"

"Just before the match finished, sir."

The last wicket was down about ten minutes afterwards."

"Did you return to your study after the end of the match, Merry?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry. "I came in for the proofs. The other fellows went to tea in Study No. 6, and I took the proofs down to the printer's."

"Without examining them again?"

"Certainly, sir. I had fastened up the packet all ready, and I found it just as I left it. It never occurred to me that it had been opened."

"Then this alteration, if it was made at all, was made during the short time between Lawrence's departure from your study, and your return to it—a period apparently of about a quarter of an hour?"

"I suppose so, sir."

"This is a very, very difficult matter," said Mr. Railton slowly. "I am disposed to believe Lawrence's statement. But all we know for certain so far, is that Lawrence admits opening the proofs and making an alteration in them. You assure me, Lawrence, that the alteration you made is as you have stated, and that you know nothing of these lines reflecting upon the Head?"

"I give you my word, sir," said Lawrence. "I hope you don't think I'd insult the Head in such a way. I should be a fool to do it, too, for I would be to come out and cause an awful row."

"That is very true. It remains, then, to prove that someone else tampered with the proofs after you had left them, and before they were taken to the printer's," said Mr. Railton.

"We will find out, sir," said Tom Merry. "Most of the fellows were out of doors. We shall be able to find out who was in the House at that time."

"You believe Lawrence's explanation, Merry?"

"Every word, sir; I know he wouldn't tell a lie."

"Very well. Lawrence's confession exonerates you, and you are free from blame. Unless a third party can be discovered, however, I am afraid it will rest upon Lawrence to prove that he did not insert these lines in the paper when he altered the limerick."

"Oh, sir!" said Lawrence, in dismay.

"I form no judgment now," said Mr. Railton. "I leave it to you to discover a third party in the case, if you can—and I will give you time. Meanwhile, every copy of this paper must be destroyed."

"Oh, certainly, sir!"

"Very well; you may go!"

The juniors left the study.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Lumley-Lumley Takes a Hand!

LEIVISON was discontented. He was sitting by the window, and looking out across the quad.

Lumley-Lumley was at the study table, writing out lines. He glanced up curiously from time to time at the clouded brow of the ead of the Fourth. Leivison did not notice it; but he started as his study-mate spoke at last.

"Penny for 'em!" said Lumley-Lumley.

"Eh! What?" said Leivison, looking round.

"What have you been scowling about for the last half-hour?" asked Lumley-Lumley.

"Mind your own business!"

"Something on your conscience, I guess," said Lumley-Lumley calmly.

"Are you wondering whether Mellish will pay you?"

Leivison started again.

"What do you mean? I—"

"I saw you hand him five bob," said

Lumley-Lumley. "I suppose you must be ill! Mellish is a regular cadger, but I never knew him to get any money out of you before."

"Oh, shut up!" said Levison irritably. Lumley-Lumley laughed, and went on with his lines. There was a knock at the door, and Kildare of the Sixth came into the study. Lumley-Lumley gave him a friendly nod.

"Come to tell me I needn't do my lines, Kildare, old man?" he asked. Kildare smiled.

"No. I've come to speak to Levison. Levison, you've heard, I suppose, about the lines that were published in 'Tom Merry's Weekly'?"

"I saw them," said Levison. "Do you know how they got into the paper?"

"I suppose Tom Merry put them there."

"Tom Merry says he knows nothing about them. They were put into the proofs, after he had wrapped them up to go to the printer's."

"Oh, that's all rot!" said Levison. "I don't believe it. I don't see how anybody could get at his proofs, if he didn't want them to."

"He left them on his study table when he went down to the cricket-ground. Where were you at that time on Wednesday afternoon, Levison?"

"If they accuse me—"

"No one has mentioned your name," said the captain of St. Jim's quietly.

"But I can't help remembering the rotten trick you played on Brooke of the Fourth, and I thought of you at once when I heard of this matter. Can you tell me where you were at that time on Wednesday afternoon—just before the junior cricket-match finished?"

"I don't know what time that was. I wasn't watching the match."

"I came into the study just after the finish," said Lumley-Lumley.

"Oh, yes; I remember!" said Levison.

"I was here, with Mellish. I remember you made a remark about our sticking in the study."

"I guess so!"

"You had not been to Tom Merry's study?" asked Kildare.

"Certainly not!"

"Had you been in here for a considerable time when Lumley came in, or only for a few minutes?"

"About half an hour, I think," said Levison calmly.

"If you had been here half an hour, you could not have been the person who went to Tom Merry's study and tampered with the proofs," said Kildare.

"Will Mellish bear out your statement that you were here?"

"Of course he will!"

"Very well!" The captain of St. Jim's gave Levison a long, keen look, and quitted the study.

Lumley-Lumley rose to his feet, and left his lines unfinished. Levison also rose, and moved to the door.

"Going out?" asked Lumley-Lumley, with a peculiar intonation in his voice.

"Yes," said Levison shortly.

"Going to see Mellish?"

"Mind your own business!"

Levison's hand was on the door. Lumley-Lumley stepped forward, caught him by the shoulder, and jerked him back into the study. He closed the door again. Levison stood with clenched fists and glaring eyes, his breath coming thick and fast.

"What—what do you mean, you cad?" he gasped. "How dare you lay hands on me?"

"You're not going out just yet, I guess!" said Lumley-Lumley coolly.

"Do you dare to stop me?" yelled Levison.

"J guess, so!"

"You cad! Get out of the way!"

Levison made a furious rush to the door. Lumley-Lumley met him grimly, and they closed and struggled fiercely. Tramp, tramp, tramp!

To and fro they whirled in desperate struggle. But Lumley-Lumley, if not the stronger, was the more fit of the two. They parted—Levison going to the floor with a crash. Lumley-Lumley stood regarding him, breathing hard, and on the alert. Levison staggered to his feet.

"What do you mean, Lumley?" he stammered thickly. "What do you want to keep me in the study for, you fool!"

"I guess I smell a large-sized mouse," said Lumley-Lumley. "I've been thinking of you all along in connection with that trick on 'Tom Merry's Weekly,' but I couldn't quite work it out. But now I reckon I can see light." Levison forced a laugh.

"I didn't! You know I was here when you came in—"

"But I don't know how long you'd been here. You were here—only a dozen steps from Tom Merry's study—I know that! Mellish can prove how long you'd been in the study."

"That will see me clear," said Levison, with a confidence he was far from feeling.

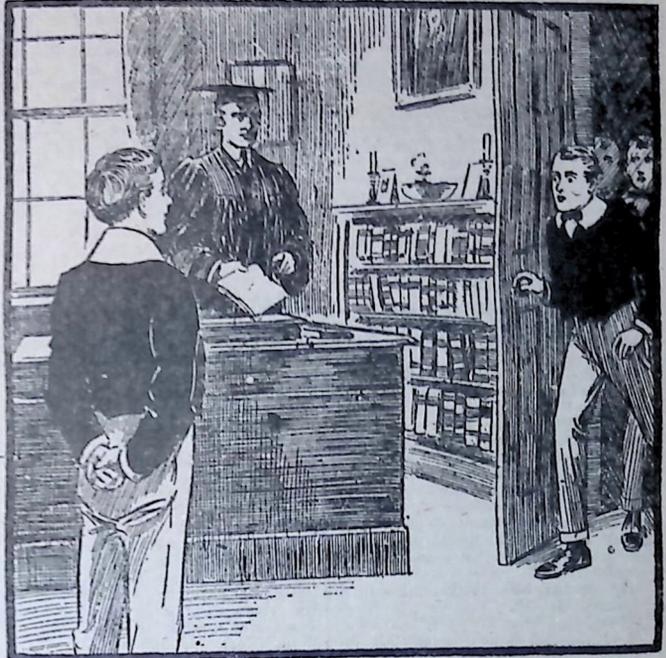
"All the better for you. But what have you been giving Mellish money for?"

"I made him a little loan—"

"You're not the chap to chuck your money away, as a rule. Mellish won't pay you, and you know it!"

"Mind your own business!" said Levison fiercely.

"I guess I'm making this my business. What are you in a hurry to get out of the study for, since Kildare's been here?"



"Have you any reason to believe that it was a New House boy who perpetrated this outrage, Merry?" asked Mr. Ralston sternly. "I'm sure of it, sir, because—" There was a quick knock at the door, and in came Figgins, Kerr, and Lawrence of the New House.

"Do you think I did it?" he exclaimed.

Lumley-Lumley nodded.

"I guess I do!"

"You—you fool! I knew nothing about it till I saw it in the 'Weekly'-to-day," said Levison, his hands trembling a little. "What do you want to fix it on me for?"

"I don't want to fix it on you unless you did it, I guess. If the matter isn't cleared up, it will come before the Head—and that means trouble for Tom Merry and the New House chaps. I guess that's not good enough. If you did it, you're going to be bowled out, my infant—and I guess I'm the giddy antelope that's going to bowl you out. Tom Merry's not going to be flogged for printing an insult to the Head in his paper—when you put it there without his knowledge!"

"I've got to see Crooke—"

Lumley-Lumley chuckled.

"I guess it's Mellish you want to see, to prime him ready for being questioned by Kildare," he remarked. "And I guess you're not going to do it."

"Will you let me pass?"

"I guess not."

Levison wasted no more in words. He caught up a chair with both hands and rushed at Jerrold Lumley-Lumley.

If Lumley-Lumley had been a little less alert he would have been swept out of the way by that savage attack. But Lumley-Lumley was looking out. As the chair swept down upon him he dodged, eluded the savage blow, and caught Levison round the waist.

In a second the cad of the Fourth was swept off his feet. The chair crashed to the floor, and Levison crashed into the

fender, where he lay breathless and dazed.

Lumley-Lumley changed the key to the outside of the lock and stepped out of the study, closing the door behind him. Levison staggered up, and hurled himself at the door, but it was too late. Click!

The key had turned in the lock, and Levison dragged at the handle in vain. He was a prisoner in his own study. And, with rage and terror in his heart, he heard Lumley-Lumley turn his steps in the direction of the Shell passage, and heard him call:

"Tom Merry!"

THE SEVENTH CHA TER. Cleared Up!

PERCY MELLISH was enjoying himself.

He was sitting on a high chair in the little tuckshop, and Dame Taggles was hanging out her tastiest comestibles at his order.

There was a sudden crowding in the doorway of the tuckshop. Tom Merry & Co. came in, and Mellish looked round. Mellish felt a momentary uneasiness, he hardly knew why.

"What do you want?" he asked nervously.

"We want you," said Tom Merry quietly. "Lumley-Lumley tells us that you know something about the affair of that limerick in the 'Weekly.' We want you to tell us."

Mellish's face blanched.

"What—what should I know about it?" he stammered. "I suppose you don't think I made up the limerick and put it there, do you?"

"No; you wouldn't have pluck enough, if you had brains enough to think of it," said Jack Blake. "But you know who did."

"I—I don't know anything about it."

"Now, listen to me," said Lumley-Lumley. "When I came in after the match on Wednesday I found you two in the study. Levison said something to make me believe he'd been there all the afternoon, and I was taken in; but I guess now that he was pulling my leg. He wanted me to believe that he had been there a long time. You were in the study, Mellish, and you know whether Levison had just come in or not when I arrived."

"He—he had been there some time!" stammered Mellish.

"How long?"

"I—I did not notice; nearly all the afternoon," said Mellish.

"Nearly all the afternoon—oh?" said Lumley-Lumley grimly. "Say, more than two hours?"

"Quite two hours," said Mellish.

"Good! You chaps see that I was right to lock Levison in the study while we got at Mellish by himself, I reckon," said Lumley-Lumley. "You've all heard Mellish say Levison had been in the study two hours?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And when Kildare was questioning Levison, Levison said that he'd been in the study half an hour," said Lumley-Lumley.

Mellish bit his lip hard.

"It's pretty clear," said Tom Merry, "Levison said half an hour, because most likely somebody had seen him somewhere

else during the afternoon. Mellish says two hours, because the longer he makes it the better for the yarn he's telling. Only the two yarns don't agree; and we know they're both lying!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Now, Mellish, you're going to tell us the facts," said Blake. "It's jolly clear to us that you know Levison had played that trick, and that he's been giving you money to keep your mouth shut."

Mellish blushed.

"Well?" said Tom Merry sternly. "Levison came into the study only a few minutes before Lumley-Lumley," faltered Mellish weakly. "I knew he had been up to something by his look; and when he lied to Lumley I was sure of it. But he didn't tell me anything. That's all I know."

"But you know he played that trick with the proofs of the 'Weekly'?"

"I—I suppose he did. But I didn't see him, and he didn't tell me."

"That settles it," said Tom Merry. "Levison told Kildare that he had been in the study half an hour at that time, and now Mellish can prove that he had only just come in. If he hadn't been playing that trick, why should he lie about the time he got back to his study? There wouldn't have been any motive."

"Well, now we know it was Levison—," began Lawrence.

"Here's Kildare!"

The captain of St. Jim's entered the tuckshop with Darrel. There was a frown upon Kildare's handsome face.

"I was looking for Mellish," he said. "I came here to see him; but as I found that the cross-examination was in such skilful hands, I left it to you. But I've heard it all. It's clear now that Levison was the fellow. You state that he had only just come into the study when Lumley came in that afternoon, Mellish?"

"Yes," stammered Mellish, covering before the clear, steady eyes of the captain of St. Jim's. "But I—I—"

"Very well," said Kildare. "Levison will have to explain to Mr. Railton."

"Better take this," said Lumley-Lumley, holding out the key of the study door.

Kildare smiled, and took the key. The two prefects left the tuckshop. Mellish turned back to the counter, remembering his tarts. It was the last feed he was likely to have at Levison's expense. But those tarts were no longer there. There was a smear of jam upon Fatty Wynn's face, and that was all.

Levison clenched his hands as the key turned in the lock. He had been raging in the study like a trapped animal, a prey to fury and terror. While he was shut up there, the juniors would be extracting the truth from his weak and cowardly accomplice; he knew that, and he could not interfere.

He ground his teeth with helpless rage, and tramped to and fro in the study; but he halted, facing the door, as the key turned. He had expected to see Tom Merry & Co., but his eyes fell upon Kildare and Darrel of the Sixth. And his flushed face paled.

Kildare's look was very grim.

"Come along!" he said.

"You—you want me?" stammered

Levison.

"Yes."

"W-w-what for?"

"I am going to take you to Mr.

Railton."

"What for?" yelled Levison.

"To answer for putting that limerick in 'Tom Merry's Weekly.'"

"I didn't—I didn't! I was here when it was done—I've told you so."

"And Mellish has told us differently," said Kildare coldly. "Mellish has confessed that you were not here—"

Levison clenched his hands.

"Mellish has?"

"Yes."

"Oh, the cad—the cad! The rotten funk! I—I—"

"You had better shut up, and come along," said Kildare.

He dropped a heavy hand upon the shoulder of the furious junior, and marched him away. With Kildare's hand upon his shoulder, Levison was marched into the Housemaster's study. Mr. Railton guessed what it meant, as Kildare brought him in.

"It was Levison, sir," said Kildare. "He's been found out, and he has confessed."

Mr. Railton fixed his eyes sternly on the cad of the Fourth.

"You confess to having inserted those lines in 'Tom Merry's Weekly,' Levison, without his knowledge?" asked the Housemaster.

"Yes, sir," muttered Levison. "It—it was only a joke, of course. I—I didn't mean any disrespect to the Head."

"You not only meant disrespect to the Head, but I am convinced that you wished to have better boys than yourself punished for that disrespect," said Mr. Railton icily. "I may tell you, Levison, that if those insulting lines had come to Dr. Holmes' knowledge, you would have been expelled from the school. I do not desire to bring such a disgraceful matter to his notice, and shall therefore punish you myself. All the copies of the paper have now been destroyed, and your punishment will end the matter. Your punishment will be severe. But you have the choice, if you wish, of appealing to the Head—though I warn you that in that case you will be expelled from the school. Take your choice."

"If—if you please, sir, I—I'd rather be punished by you," faltered Levison.

"Very well. Remove your jacket."

And Levison received then and there a thrashing that he remembered for a very long time.

Mr. Railton ran no risk of spoiling him by sparing the rod. And when Levison staggered from the study at last, white with rage and anguish, he had reason to be sorry that he had tampered with "Tom Merry's Weekly."

The mystery of the "Weekly" had been cleared up, and the threatened suppression of that famous paper did not come off.

And for the next few days the juniors—editor and sub-editors—were busy in producing a new and improved edition of that special number. The special number was a great success, and, needless to say, it contained no contribution from Levison of the Fourth!

THE END.

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THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Counterfeiters.

"IT'S the giddy limit!" Thus said Jimmy Silver to his chums Lovell, Newcome, and Raby, of the Classical Fourth at Rookwood.

"What is?" asked Lovell. "Those counterfeit coins are on the ramp again," explained Jimmy Silver. "You know there has been a great deal in the papers lately about the extraordinary amount of bad money and notes which have been going the rounds!"

"Well, what about it?" inquired Lovell unconcernedly. "Have you found a bad ha'penny among your six penorth of coppers?"

"Shut up, ase!" snapped Jimmy Silver abruptly. "I was only just going to remark that there is another long notice about it in this morning's paper, advising the public to examine carefully all notes that come into their hands."

"Oh, yes," said Lovell. "I saw that. And they give a list of numbers which are supposed to be the numbers on the counterfeit notes. Everyone is warned that they should check the numbers on all the notes they receive, at the time they are handed to them."

"Well, it won't take me long to check the numbers on my notes," said Raby with a grin. "What does it say about checking ha'pennies and pennies? That's more my mark."

"Unfortunately," said Jimmy Silver, "it says that there are really no means by which the public can test coins at the time they are received, as the forgers are turning them out so cleverly that in weight and appearance they are exact. So everyone must take his chance in the matter of silver and coppers."

"There's a clever gang of forgers about somewhere, that's very certain," remarked Lovell.

"Yes, and the police have absolutely no clue at present. They can only give the highly interesting information that a new batch of bad notes is believed to have been recently turned out!"

"Well, there's a jolly fine chance for some cute detective to do a bit of good work," remarked Lovell, as the Fistical Four walked along the corridor to the class-room.

"Oh, I expect they'll soon get nabbed," said Raby complacently.

"Well, we'll hope so," said Jimmy Silver, "because it's a rotten sort of thing. I hate swindlers!"

"Hear, hear!" rejoined his chums. "It was a half-holiday at Rookwood, and the juniors came out of morning classes with beaming faces, for it was a blazing day, and they were heartily glad that lessons were over."

"Phew! Thank goodness we've finished up for to-day," said Lovell. "I'm nearly baked!"

"Hear, hear!" ejaculated Raby. "I

reckon we ought never to do more than half a day's work in this sort of weather!"

"What are we going to do with ourselves this afternoon?" asked Jimmy Silver. "There's no match to-day!"

"Good job too!" remarked Newcome. "I don't feel much like running about after a cricket-ball. It's too jolly warm!"

"Oh, cheese it!" retorted Jimmy Silver. "Don't keep on grousing about the weather. What do you want better than this? You'd grumble if it was wet!"

"What do you say to a walk over the moors this afternoon, kids?" queried Lovell. "There'll be a nice breeze across there!"

"I'm agreeable," said Jimmy Silver. "So am I," answered Newcome. "Same here," agreed Raby.

"Well, I think it's about the best thing we can do," went on Jimmy. "If we get tired, we can lie down on the grass and rest. We've only ourselves to please!"

"Right-ho!" In less than an hour the juniors had passed through the school gates, and were sauntering up the road leading to the open country.

There was a delightfully cool breeze across the moors, and the four juniors soon began to feel refreshed and invigorated by it.

"I wonder how it is that old show over there is always empty?" said Jimmy Silver, pointing to a rambling old house about half a mile away.

The Fistical Four had reached a particularly deserted stretch of country, and the old empty house, standing back some distance from the main path across the moor, was often an object of comment among the juniors of Rookwood School.

"Let's go and have a look round it," suggested Lovell. "It looks an interesting old show. Perhaps it's haunted!"

"Shouldn't be surprised," remarked Raby. "It's been empty ever since I first came to Rookwood!"

"It's more likely that it's empty because it's such a long way from everywhere," said Jimmy Silver. "Who'd want a place like that nowadays?"

"Well, nobody, apparently for some reason or other," said Newcome. "But let's go over there!"

The four juniors sauntered towards the old mansion. It stood in extensive grounds, and was surrounded by high railings. Inside the railings thick bushes and shrubs grew in profusion, wild and untended, shutting off all view of the gardens within.

Jimmy Silver led the way round to the front gates, only to find that they were fastened together with a stout rusty chain and padlock.

"There's evidently no housekeeper in charge of the place," said Jimmy, "or these gates would not be so securely locked."

"It doesn't look as if there had been

anyone here for years," commented Lovell. "The whole place is thoroughly wild and deserted!"

"What about climbing over the railings?" suggested Raby. "It'll be a bit of sport, and we've nothing else to do!"

"What-ho!" said Newcome. "Don't see that there's much in it," said Jimmy Silver indifferently. "But we'll go over if you like!"

"Come on, then," cried Raby, scrambling up the gates.

He was quickly on the other side, and the others followed him. There was a long winding path leading to the house, which looked as though it had not been trodden upon for many months past.

It was almost overgrown with grass and weeds, and straggling branches from the shrubs on either side almost met across the path in places.

The front of the house presented the same appearance of desolation. Grass was growing up through the cracks between the steps leading to the main door, and cobwebs hung from the porch.

"Let's have a look round the back," suggested Jimmy Silver. "It's certainly not very interesting from the front view."

A narrow path ran round the side of the house, completely overgrown with bushes, through which the juniors forced their way.

The back view was no more inspiring than the front, and it was just passing through the minds of each of the juniors that it was not worth lagging over the railing for, after all, when Lovell uttered an exclamation.

"I say," he exclaimed, "there's water through there!" He pointed as he spoke to a glitter through the trees.

"There must be a pond or lake down there," said Jimmy Silver.

"If there is, I'm going to have a dip," said Newcome quickly. "Just the very thing! It'll cool us down a bit!"

"Rather!" yelled Raby, rushing ahead. "Come on!"

Jimmy Silver was correct in his surmise. It was a pond in the centre of the grounds, but it was almost hidden by huge craggy lumps of rock, which had doubtless been placed round the sides to give a picturesque appearance.

The water did not look quite so tempting on closer inspection. It had a dark appearance, and in places the surface was covered with a thick green slime.

"Well, I don't fancy plunging into that," said Jimmy Silver with a sniff. "But, of course, you kids can please yourselves."

"It wouldn't be so bad over here," replied Newcome; "but I must admit it doesn't look very tempting!"

"I say," exclaimed Raby suddenly, "I believe there is a boat round the corner of that rock further along! It looks like the end of one sticking out!"

"It is, too! Come on, you chaps!"

"Any more for the Skylark?" yelled Newcome.

The Fistical Four clambered over the rocks at the side of the stream and quickly reached the boat. It was a dilapidated old thing, covered with moss, and there were one or two holes in the side of it. It had evidently not been used for a very considerable time.

By the side of it, half in the water and half out, Jimmy Silver came upon an old oar, split down the centre.

"You don't mean to say that you intend rowing out on the lake in this rickety old thing?" exclaimed Lovell.

"Oh, it'll be safe enough, if we're careful!" replied Jimmy Silver. "I don't suppose the water's very deep!"

"It's deep enough to get drowned in!" "Well, if you're afraid, don't come—that's all!"

"Who said anything about being afraid?" snorted Lovell quickly. "You said just now that you didn't fancy plunging into this filthy water, and now you absolutely go and ask for it!"

"Oh, rats! Who's for a row?"

Jimmy Silver stepped into the boat, which bore his weight without flinching. Newcome followed, and then Raby.

"Now, then, what about it?" said Jimmy Silver to Lovell. "Are you coming, or not?"

"Of course, I'm coming!" "Well, buck up, then!"

Lovell stepped into the boat, which suddenly lurched forward.

"Now we're off!" exclaimed Raby, rising slightly from his seat to settle himself more comfortably.

"Steady on, ass!" yelled Lovell, gripping the side.

"It's safe enough!" replied Raby. "But, of course, it wants careful managing. You'd better let me take the oar, Jimmy!"

"I can handle it all right, thanks!" retorted Jimmy Silver. "You keep your seat!"

"Let me have a go at it!" said Raby, rising.

The boat gave a lurch as the impetuous Raby got upon his feet, and Lovell, who had been rather anxious about the trip from the first, grabbed suddenly at the side which had leaned towards the water.

This, of course, made matters worse, and caused Raby to topple backwards. He endeavoured to save himself by plunging down upon his seat; but, unfortunately, he just missed it, and caught the side of the boat.

With a yell, he splashed into the slimy water and disappeared.

Jimmy Silver, in making a grab at the falling junior, made the rickety little craft tip violently to one side. The leader of the Fistical Four clutched at his seat, but it was too late. With a cry, he, too, slipped over the side. But he did not release his hold on the boat.

This was more than the battered old tub would stand. Jimmy Silver's dead weight hanging to the side precipitated the final disaster.

The side which was being pulled down dipped right into the water, and in a moment it filled up and sank like a stone, leaving Lovell and Newcome, also, struggling in the slimy, green weed.

Raby was frantically spluttering and waving some distance away, and calling to his chums to come to his assistance. He was evidently in some difficulty.

Lovell and Newcome struck out towards him, and Jimmy Silver swam towards the bank, with the intention of dragging him from the water when the others had got him to the edge.

When the three juniors reached the side Raby was nearly done. He had been attacked by cramp on striking the water.

Jimmy Silver threw himself flat on the edge of one of the rocks by the pool, and grasped his hand.

For the moment Raby was almost too knocked to help himself. But his chums soon had him on the bank, where, after a few minutes, he began to revive.

"How do you feel, old scout?" asked Newcome.

"Not so bad!" replied Raby pluckily. "It was a near thing, though!"

The juniors moved away from the shade of the trees into the sun, supporting Raby between them. Then they speedily removed their clothes, and laid them out on the grass.

"They won't take long to dry there!" said Jimmy Silver. "I wish we'd got something to give you a good rub down with, though!" he continued, turning to Raby.

"Oh, it's all right!" replied Raby. "I feel better now. The sun is warming me up rippingly!"

"Good! Think you'll be able to walk back to Rookwood?"

"Yes, rather! By the time our things are dry I shall be as right as a trivet! But, I say, there's something rather queer about that pond!"

"Oh? In what way?"

"Well, when I toppled out of the boat I plumped straight to the bottom!"

"How deep was it?"

"Only about six or seven feet, I should say. But the curious thing is that the bottom was not rough and gravelly, but smooth and flat, like glass!"

"You must have had a delusion," remarked Jimmy Silver.

"There was no delusion about it," grunted Raby. "Of course, it was only down there for an instant, but I distinctly felt the smooth, flat surface."

"You must have—"

"Listen!" exclaimed Lovell.

There was a momentary pause.

"Can't hear anything," said Jimmy Silver. "What is it?"

"A sort of knocking— Ah! There it is again!"

The four juniors sat perfectly still, and strained their ears, and in a moment they could all distinctly hear a thumping noise, which seemed to come from below them.

"There's some blessed mystery connected with this rotten old show!" declared Newcome, reaching for his clothes. "I vote that we clear off!"

"Hear, hear!" said Raby. "I've had enough of this for one day!"

"Well, anyway, we're obliged to clear off now, because we've only just about time to get back to Rookwood in time for tea. Our clothes are dry now. Buck up, kids!"

In about three minutes Jimmy Silver & Co. were ready, and they did a quick trot down to the gates of the old house, and were soon on the other side.

"Thank goodness we're out of that!" said Newcome, with a sigh of relief.

"Hear, hear!" exclaimed Lovell. "I said at first I reckoned it was haunted."

"Oh, rats!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver. "Doubtless the noise we heard has some perfectly feasible explanation."

"Doubtless it hasn't!"

"Oh, I admit there's something rather

queer about the old show, but there's nothing to be afraid of."

"I'm not afraid!" declared Lovell sharply.

"Nor I!" said Newcome.

"I'm sure I'm not," said Raby; "because I don't think there's anything to be afraid of, really."

"Very well, then," said Jimmy Silver. "If none of you are afraid, what about coming over here on Saturday afternoon to investigate?"

"I'm game!" said Lovell at once.

"So am I," said Newcome and Raby together.

"Good!" said Jimmy Silver. "We'll start away as early as possible on Saturday, so as to allow plenty of time to have a good nose round."

"We must be careful not to let those Modern rotters get wind of what we're up to, though," said Raby.

"That's so," agreed Jimmy Silver. "We'd better get straight up to the study when we get back, and we may be lucky enough to miss them."

"If they see us in our present condition," said Lovell, "they'll know we've been up to something out of the ordinary."

"True, O king!" said Newcome.

The four Classical juniors advanced rather cautiously when they came in sight of the gates of Rookwood, but there was not a Modern junior in sight.

They proceeded up the stairs, congratulating themselves upon not having been seen. But just as they turned a bend in the stairs they ran full tilt into Tommy Dodd & Co.

"Hallo! Where have you kids been to?" exclaimed Tommy Dodd, with a grin, looking the Fistical Four up and down.

"Minding our own business!" retorted Jimmy Silver promptly.

"Looks as if you've been trying to mind somebody else's!" returned Tommy Cook, as the Fistical Four passed on.

Tommy Dodd was artful. He said nothing, and appeared not to have noticed the condition of the Classical juniors. But directly they had turned the bend in the staircase he laughed all over his face. Tommy Dodd had tumbled. He guessed that the Fistical Four had met with an adventure that they did not want the Modern juniors to know anything about. But Tommy Dodd's mind was made up. He was going to make it his task to find out what had happened to Jimmy Silver & Co.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.
A Great Adventure.

SATURDAY arrived at last, and by this time the Fistical Four were quite keen on the adventure before them. They hurried over dinner, and made speedy preparations to start for the mysterious house.

They left the school, and struck off across the moor. In less than half an hour they were in sight of the gaunt, desolate old mansion.

"What's the plan of campaign?" asked Lovell, as they scaled the gates.

"Well, I think we'd better investigate Raby's little mystery of the pond first," replied Jimmy. "I'm not keen on going in there again, but it won't hurt us."

"Right-ho! But I don't think Raby ought to go in this time, because it knocked him up the other day," said Lovell. "Besides, there's no need for all of us to go in."

"That's so! I think you'd better stay out and look after the clothes," said Jimmy Silver, turning to Raby.

"Very well; I don't mind."

Jimmy Silver, Lovell, and Newcome speedily divested themselves of their

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clothes, and jumped up on to a high rock to take a dive into the pond.

Jimmy Silver splashed into the water first, and was followed by Lovell and then Newcome. For a few seconds they were out of sight, but at length they came spluttering to the top, and struck out for the bank.

"Did you touch the bottom?" said Jimmy to Lovell, as they scrambled out of the water.

"Yes," replied Lovell. "I should say it was glass!"

"That's what I think," said Newcome, wringing the water out of his hair.

"It's very strange!" reflected Jimmy Silver. "When we've got our wind back we'll have another dive."

"You see, I was, right," said Raby confidentially.

"Quite so. But what can it be?"

"Goodness knows! But we may be able to find out more in a minute."

"Are you ready, you chaps?" sang out Jimmy Silver.

"Yes!"

One after the other they plunged into the water again. Raby was sitting in the shelter of one of the rocks at the side of the pond.

Just as the three juniors had disappeared, a man came running round the corner of the house some distance away. Raby crouched down, and rushed back into the shelter of a clump of bushes just behind the spot where he had been sitting.

The stranger came rushing towards the pond just as Jimmy Silver and his chums came to the surface of the water, and he was followed almost immediately by another man.

They were rough, powerful-looking individuals, and glared at the swimming juniors in a vindictive manner.

"Now then!" called out the first one to the three chums. "What's yer little game? Come on out of it!"

Jimmy Silver emerged first, and was grabbed by the man's powerful hands. Lovell and Newcome tried to swim away, but they were quickly seized by the second ruffian.

Raby stared at the scene through the bushes, and was at his wits' end to know what to do. It flashed through his mind that if he rushed into the fray he, too, would probably be captured; whereas, if the other three gave no clue to his whereabouts, he might be able to get clear away and summon help.

He felt rather like a coward for not running to the assistance of his chums, but he argued that he would render greater help by getting further assistance from the village.

"You can come inside with us," said the ruffian who was gripping Jimmy Silver's wrist, "and explain what you mean by nosing round private property."

Jimmy and his chums realised the hopelessness of their position, and they gave in without a struggle.

"You can bring your clothes with you!" said the man curtly. "Pick 'em up, and look slippy about it!"

The juniors obeyed, and were then escorted to the front door of the house.

Raby saw them disappear through the door, and at once scuttled along behind the bushes towards the gates. In less than a minute he was out upon the moor, and running for all he was worth in the direction of Rookwood.

Then, to his great surprise and relief, he saw three Rookwood juniors walking towards him: They were Tommy Dodd & Co.

Never in his life before had Raby been so pleased to see the Modern chums. Without stopping to ask why they were there, he hastily told them of what had

happened, and urged them to return with him to the house.

Tommy Dodd & Co. were not lacking in pluck, and, in a moment, the four juniors were racing back towards the house.

"Now, then, steady!" muttered Raby, warningly. "If we're seen now, it will upset the whole thing."

They speedily mounted the gates, and dropped down on the other side.

Then, slowly and cautiously, Raby led the way through the grounds to the front door of the house.

"Good! It's open!" whispered Raby. He pushed it slightly, and looked inside.

Tommy Dodd & Co. were craning their necks to get a glimpse over his shoulder.

"All clear!" whispered the leader. They advanced stealthily into the

the four juniors did not hesitate for a moment.

The voices were more audible as they slowly crept down the old, wooden stairs. Once, at a bend, Raby stumbled slightly, catching his foot against the side of the staircase.

The four juniors stood still, their hearts beating violently, but nothing happened. After two or three minutes Raby deemed it safe to proceed, and they continued their stealthy descent.

At last they reached the bottom of the stairs, and a faint glimmer of light showed beneath a door at the end of a long passage.

With a whispered word of caution from Raby, Tommy Dodd & Co. tiptoed towards the glimmer of light, and pulled up about two or three yards from the door.

The position of the juniors was now a



Jimmy Silver throw himself flat on the edge of one of the rocks by the pool, and seized Raby's hand. The three juniors soon managed to bring him safely to land.

spacious hall, and stood still a moment to listen. But not a sound reached their ears.

The doors on either side of the hall stood open, but not a soul was within. On tiptoe they moved further in, but still they could hear no sound.

Suddenly Raby, who was leading the way, held up his finger, and stood quite still. The four juniors stood in the dingy old hall listening intently. Then they heard a faint murmur of voices below them.

"They're down a cellar!" whispered Raby. "Come on! Not a sound!"

At the back of the house they came upon a staircase leading downwards.

It was as black as pitch. There was not a glimmer of light to direct them, but

perilous one, for they could distinctly hear the gruff voices of the two men within. They knew only too well that if the door was suddenly opened there was no means of escape except by the way they had come, and it was certain that, should they have to retreat, they would never find the foot of the staircase in time to get clear away.

"We shall have to rush the place!" said Raby.

"Supposing there are more than two men in there?" asked Tommy Dodd.

"We must risk that," declared Raby.

"Even if there are only two of them, unless we take them unawares, we shall probably be overpowered."

"Come on, then," said Tommy Dodd.

viantly. "Anything will be better than this suspense. The door may be opened at any moment, and then we shall be caught like rats in a trap."

"Right-ho!" answered Raby, cautiously gripping the knob of the door.

Then with a dash he threw open the door, and the four plucky juniors dashed into the room.

Tommy Dodd dashed blindly at one of the ruffians, followed by Tommy Doyle, and Raby rushed at the other, followed quickly by Tommy Cook.

The inmates of the room were completely taken by surprise. Before the two men had realised what was happening, two stalwart lads were clinging to each of them.

Jimmy Silver, Lovell, and Newcome, now fully dressed, were lying bound upon the floor. At the rush of the rescuers they gave exclamations of joy and surprise.

The struggle between the Rookwood juniors and the ruffians waxed fierce and strong for quite five minutes, and more than once it looked as though they, too, would suffer the fate of their companions on the floor.

But at last, with a tremendous effort, Tommy Dodd and Tommy Doyle succeeded in dragging their man to the floor, and in falling he struck his head upon the corner of a bench, which partially stunned him.

In a flash Tommy Dodd whipped his knife from his pocket, and cut the cords which bound the Classical chums, and rushed back to assist Tommy Doyle in keeping their captive on the floor.

By this time Jimmy Silver and his chums had rushed to the help of Raby and Tommy Cook.

The issue was no longer in doubt. The two ruffians were no match for the seven stalwart juniors, and in a very short time they were bound up with the cords which, but a few minutes before, had rendered the Classical chums powerless.

"That's done 'em!" said Jimmy Silver, gasping for breath. "They were just threatening us with all kinds of torture when you kids came upon the scene."

"Look!" exclaimed Raby, who was staring aloft.

Above them was a circular glass roof, about five or six yards in diameter, through which they could plainly see water outside.

"That explains your mystery of the glass at the bottom of the pond," said Jimmy Silver.

"Well, that beats the band!" ejaculated Lovell. "I've never heard of anything like that before!"

"Nor I," said Jimmy Silver. "The thing is now, what are we going to do about these rotters?"

The two ruffians were muttering viciously, and writhing upon the floor, mad with rage, but powerless.

"They'll be safe enough where they are," said Lovell. "We'd better go to Coombe and summon the police."

"That's the game!" responded Jimmy Silver. "There's a key in the door, so we'll lock it on the outside, just to make sure."

Wishing a cheerful "Good-bye!" to

the raving villains upon the floor, the victorious juniors made their exit.

They ran all the way to the police-station, and speedily explained what had happened.

The inspector, with a couple of men, returned with them at once to the house on the moor.

They found the two ruffians where they had left them, and the police speedily hauled them to their feet and handcuffed them. The inspector, who was gazing round the queer apartment, gave a sudden cry of amazement.

"The counterfeiter!" he cried. "These machines round here have been used for making bad money and notes. By gad, what a capture!"

Jimmy Silver and his chums had given no thought to the machines and materials around them, thinking that the place was just an ordinary workshop, used for perfectly legitimate purposes.

But now, with a flash, they remembered the outcry about the false money and notes, and the newspaper warnings.

"Do you mean to say this is a forgers' den?" demanded Jimmy Silver incredulously.

"That's just what it is, my son!" declared the inspector excitedly. "The biggest catch I've ever made, that's what it is! And if I'm not very much mistaken, there are some more scoundrels in the gang, and they may be back here at any moment!"

The inspector hurried back to the police-station, and telephoned for help from the nearest town. With the extra men he returned once more to the house, and not a moment too soon, for they had scarcely reached the underground den when they heard footsteps without.

Never dreaming for a moment of the disaster that had overtaken their confederates, three more ruffians descended the stairs to the workshop.

With a yell the inspector's men were upon them, and before they could offer any resistance they were overpowered.

Then, securely handcuffed, the five rogues were escorted to the station and locked in the cells.

"I will return to Rookwood School with you young gentlemen," said the inspector, "and tell your headmaster of what has occurred."

Needless to say, Dr. Chisholm was amazed and astounded by the inspector's story; but, all the same, he congratulated the juniors upon their bravery.

The news travelled round Rookwood like wildfire, and the Fistical Four and the Modern chums were carried round the quad shoulder-high. Never before had such scenes occurred in the old school.

In due course the whole story of the capture of the forgers appeared in the newspapers, and the part that had been played by the Fourth-Form juniors was talked of all over the country.

Letters of congratulation were received by the Fourth-Formers from prominent men in all parts, and never will the story be forgotten of how the Rookwood juniors discovered the Secret of the Moor.

THE END.

BETWEEN OURSELVES.

A Weekly Chat between The Editor and His Readers.

FOR NEXT FRIDAY.

The first grand long, complete tale in next Friday's issue of the PENNY POPULAR is that dealing with the adventures of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled:

"BUNTER THE BOXER!"

In his time Billy Bunter has taken up many hobbies and pastimes, and readers of the PENNY POPULAR will remember the enjoyment they experienced at reading "Bunter the Photographer."

However, "Bunter the Boxer" beats them all for humorous incidents. The Owl of the Remove takes up the pastime with great seriousness, and offers to box Bob Cherry for a pound. Bob accepts the challenge, and, naturally, Bunter talks a great deal about the forthcoming boxing match.

Carberry, the bad-tempered prefect, hears about the fight, and, learning that Bunter and Bob Cherry are going to box for money, resolves to expose the Removites. However, a big surprise awaits both Carberry and Bunter at the conclusion of the fight. You will laugh heartily when you learn the nature of this surprise.

The title of next Friday's magnificent long, complete tale of Tom Merry & Co. is

"THE MASKED ENTERTAINERS."

This is a story in which the rivalry between the School House and the New House is very much to the fore. Cutts engages a party of masked entertainers to perform at St. Jim's.

In due course the latter arrive; but, strange to say, their performance does not appeal to Cutts. They pull Cutts' leg no end, and when another party of entertainers appear on the scene, and state that the first party are impostors, Cutts is greatly relieved.

But Cutts' relief does not last for long; the second party turn out to be worse than the first. Then an amazing disclosure takes place!

The long, complete tale of Jimmy Silver & Co. in our next issue is entitled:

"WITH EVIL INTENT!"

The crafty, cunning nature of Leggett, the Modern cad, is very evident in this story. In fact, it has the effect of putting Jimmy Silver in bad odour with his chums for a while. A great deal happens before Leggett is bowled out, and Jimmy Silver comes into his own once again.

Don't forget to order your copy of next Friday's issue in advance. It is the only way to avoid disappointment.

YOUR EDITOR.

Another Magnificent Long Complete Tale of Jimmy Silver & Co. in next Friday's issue of the PENNY POPULAR, entitled

WITH EVIL INTENT!

To avoid disappointment YOU must Order your copy of the PENNY POPULAR in advance.