

GREAT NEWS IN THIS ISSUE!

# The Penny Popular

No.  
267.

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



**SMYTHE IN THE WARS!**

See the Grand Long Complete Story  
of Jimmy Silver & Co.

A Grand  
Long Complete  
Story, dealing  
with the  
Early Adventures  
of  
Jimmy Silver & Co.

# THE TERRIBLE THOMAS!

By  
Owen  
Conquest

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### The Arrival of Thomas!

"SMYTHE & CO. ought to be somewhere about here," observed Jimmy Silver.

The Fistical Four were walking through the woods on the far side of Coombe.

It was a half-holiday, and as there was no football match on, the juniors were making the most of their time with a brisk walk. It was chilly standing about doing nothing.

But they had a second bird which they were trying to kill with their stone. The bird in question was Smythe, with his attendant crowd of foppish cronies.

"Sure they were coming out here?" asked Lovell.

Raby nodded. "I couldn't help overhearing them," he said. "Smythe has got into their bad books over something. They think he tried to cheat at cards."

"Whew!" "Howard and Townsend were frightfully cut up about it," said Raby; "so in order to heal the breach, Smythe is going to stand 'em a top-hole beanfeast out here."

"They'll find it a bit cold!" said Jimmy Silver.

"It's the only way," said Raby. "They're having cigars and champagne as well as grub. They couldn't have a bust-up like that in the study, so they've come out into the woods to do the thing in style."

"We'll lend all the assistance we can," said Jimmy Silver, with a grin. "We'll make Smythe popular again!"

Lovell grinned.

"Pour the champagne over their giddy hair," he suggested.

"And roll 'em in the ditch!" said Newcome.

"We'd better do something special to Smythe," said Raby. "He's the ring-leader. If we give him a lesson that he'll remember he won't be likely to do any more bragging for a bit."

"We could squirt him a bit with my fountain-pen," said Lovell. "That leaves its mark behind it all right. It's always making my hands grubby."

"Give him a fustion of leaves, and make him look like a giddy Greek god!" said Newcome. "We can push the fustion down his neck to dry up the champagne!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver eyed his chums critically. "You are very full of ideas, my infants," he said, "but there's a proverb about first catching your hare. I might remind you that we haven't caught Smythe yet."

"Soon do that," said Newcome easily.

"And also," proceeded Jimmy Silver,

"that you silly asses are making such

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 267.

a cackle that he'll hear you a mile away."

"S'pose he will," said Lovell. "The Fistical Four pressed on through the woods in silence for a little. It seemed, however, that they would draw blank. Lovell was about to express that opinion when the sound of voices reached his ear."

"Hist!" he warned. "The Fistical Four pressed quietly on. They had come to a very secluded part of the woods, and Smythe & Co. evidently felt very secure."

They were laughing and talking loudly, and it was easy for the Fistical Four to find them by following the sound.

Five minutes' cautious walking brought them in sight of a little glade, from which the faint haze of tobacco smoke arose.

Peering from the shelter of the trees, Jimmy Silver saw Smythe, with Howard, Tracy, Townsend, and Topham, sitting in a circle on the grass, wrapped in their overcoats, and smoking fat cigars.

In the middle of the circle were a couple of hampers which had evidently been filled with tuck. There was not much left in them now, but there were two bottles protruding from one, which seemed to back up the story of the champagne.

Raby's information had evidently been correct. The nuts of Lookwood had come out blugging on a big scale. "When I give the word," whispered Jimmy Silver, "we'll—Hallo! Wait a minute!"

The sight of a moving figure amongst the trees opposite had caught his eye. Lovell & Co. spotted it at the same moment.

"Who is it?" whispered Raby.

"Dunno," said Jimmy Silver.

He could see the new-comer quite well now. He was evidently a schoolboy of about their own age, and he was alone. But there was a mischievous grin on his face as he crept nearer to the nuts.

"Not one of our fellows," said Lovell.

"He's alone, too. I wonder what he's going to do?"

"Wait and see," said Jimmy Silver. "There's plenty of time. These merry blades here are going to have a game of cards."

Smythe had produced a pack of playing cards, and he was preparing to deal them out. The Fistical Four heard what he said quite plainly.

"Any objection to a little game of nap?" Smythe asked.

"None," said Howard. "But we don't want any more of your swindling, Smythe. That's understood."

"Oh, hang!" said Smythe. "Can't you drop that blessed yarn. I've told you again and again that I was not trying to cheat!"

Ho dealt the cards. The five took hands, and looked at them. As they did so, the boy whom Jimmy Silver & Co.

had spotted crept nearer still to the party, and then fished in his pocket.

To the surprise of the Fistical Four, he produced a pack of cards of his own, and started looking through them quickly, evidently in search of something.

"I'll have a shot at three," Smythe said.

He played his first card, and lost the trick. Topham led back to him.

The boy in hiding suddenly leant out from his place of hiding and flicked something deftly across the space between him and the nuts.

The Fistical Four saw that it was one of his playing cards, and it landed right in the centre of the ring just as Smythe was about to play.

"Ace, bai Jove!" yawned Tracy. "He quite thought that the card had come from Smythe. All of the blades had been too intent on the game to observe just where the piece of paste-board had come from. But as he saw it, Howard leapt to his feet with an exclamation of fury."

"Ace of trumps!" he exclaimed. "And I hold it in my own hand. How many aces are there in this pack, Smythe?"

"One, bai Jove!" said Smythe, looking at the card. "Where did that come from?"

"You played it, didn't you?" demanded Howard.

"Course I didn't!" retorted Smythe. Howard looked at him in bewilderment.

"You—you must have done!" he said. "And it doesn't belong to this pack at all. Are you trying to cheat again?"

"Cheat!" howled Smythe, who was perfectly innocent. "I'll punch your head if you're not careful what you say!"

The nuts exchanged glances. The mystery was beyond them. It certainly looked as though Smythe had produced a spare ace, and was trying to bluff out of it.

"It's a bit thick, you know," said Topham. "You might play the game, Smythe!"

"Yes, I think it is a bit too bad," added Townsend.

"Smythe glared.

"I tell you I didn't play that card," he said furiously.

"Then where did it come from?"

"One—one of you must have put it there!" snorted the fop. "It's a plant!"

"No good losing your temper," growled Howard. "You won't get out of it by accusin' us, y'know."

"I'll jolly well knock you down!" blazed Smythe, thoroughly roused.

Jimmy Silver & Co. chuckled in their cover.

"That kid who chucked the card is jolly smart!" he said, with admiration.

"Whoever would have thought that he could have upset those wasters like that?" "And not one of the silly jurgins's has guessed where it came from!" murmured Raby.

Lovell raised his hand. "Look out!" he said. "The kid's getting busy again. He'll get clobbered in a minute. He's got some luck to take a five to one risk like that."

The youngster in hiding had dislodged a heavy lump of turf, and, balancing it, he selected his opportunity when Howard was looking away. Then he threw it with splendid aim.

It passed right over Smythe's head, and smote Howard in the face. The nut staggered back. The missile had struck him beautifully, and his hair and face were smothered with black earth.

"Smythe, you cad!" he roared. "Smythe was looking round to see where the thing had come from, when Howard leaped on him with a roar like a bull."

The Fistical Four chuckled as Smythe went to the ground with a thud, and his assailant started pommelling him furiously.

But Townsend and Topham had seen where the clod of earth came from, and they made a sudden dash for the bushes. Before the gaping youngster could escape they had caught him and dragged him out.

Howard and Smythe, however, were going hammer and tongs at each other. They did not even notice the capture of the youngster.

Townsend and Topham dragged their captive into the open, and Tracy jumped forward to help them. Jimmy Silver & Co. saw that it was time to lend a hand. "Charge 'em!" whispered Jimmy Silver. "Ready."

The Fistical Four leapt to their feet and swooped down into the glade. Townsend, Topham, and Tracy went down in a heap before their charge.

The resistance which they put up was feeble, and Jimmy Silver & Co. did not have to use much strength to pull their hands behind their backs and tie them with handkerchiefs.

Then they looked round, just as Smythe and Howard realised that something was radically wrong, and gave up their own combat to join in the festivities.

"Keep your eye on these men!" said Jimmy Silver to the youngster they had rescued.

"Certainly!" replied the Loy, and promptly caught hold of Townsend and Topham by the scruffs of their necks as they tried to rise, and held them down.

Smythe and Howard sailed in to the attack, and then suddenly paused as they saw that the Fistical Four had finished with the others and could give them undivided attention.

Smythe glanced round and tried to bolt, but the Four were on him as one man.

In five minutes the capture was complete. Smythe and Howard fought furiously for their liberty, but to no avail.

The Fistical Four enjoyed dealing out the punishment. They had old scores to settle with the nuts, and this was a very favourable opportunity.

Smythe and Howard were tied up with their own handkerchiefs and dumped on the grass. Then Jimmy Silver stepped back to survey the prisoners.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

In the Ditch!

"GROOOCH!" groaned Smythe. "Oo-er!" seconded Howard. The downfall of the boisterous nuts had been complete. The scattered cards and half-smoked

cigars on the grass testified to that. They had been interrupted in the middle of their "sport."

"What shall we do with 'em?" asked Jimmy Silver.

The youngsters who had performed the card trick turned to him with a grin.

"Rub their faces in the earth for a start," he said.

Jimmy Silver regarded him severely.

"You're very forward with your suggestions," he said reprovingly. "What are you doing here, anyway?"

"I followed 'em out from the town," said the youngster coolly. "I saw that they were up to some blagging, as they were buying cigars. I lost 'em in the wood, but it didn't take long to pick 'em up again."

"Well, you've certainly got some nerve," said Jimmy, regarding the youngsters. "Do you live round this way?"

"No."

"We ought really to rag this chap for daring to jape Rookwood fellows," Jimmy Silver said, with a grin. "But it doesn't matter in this case."

The youngster grinned.

"I'd take any one of you on when you like," he said. "That's fair play."

"Don't want to hurt you, sonny," said Jimmy Silver. "You'd better cut that stuff right out. It's bad form to swank."

"I'm not swanking," said the youngster. "It's plain fact."

Lovell glared, but Jimmy Silver winked, and shook his head.

"This chap gave us a bit of jolly good amusement," he said, "and you can't blame any fellow for ragging a set of smoky rotters. I think we'll let it pass. What's your name?"

"Chisholm" said the boy.

Jimmy Silver started.

"No relation of the Head?" he asked.

"Only his nephew," said the youngster, with a grin.



"Dear me!" gasped the Head, drawing up as Smythe raised his battered topper. "What's the meaning of this?"

"I thought not. Otherwise you'd understand that it's best to leave Rookwood fellows alone. These are exceptions. But you weren't to know that."

"I did," said the youngster calmly. "I summed them up in a moment. But it certainly was a good thing that you fellows chipped in. What were you doing in this part of the woods?"

"Same as you," said Jimmy Silver. "We came out to finish this beanfeast of theirs."

He exchanged glances with his chums. Rookwood juniors were rather sensitive about the amount of "nerve" that a strange fellow ought to show.

"Oh, ho!" said Lovell. "So, if you gave you what you've asked for, you'd report us to Nunky, and get us swished, I suppose?"

"Don't you believe it," said Chisholm, with another of his rather pleasant grins. "I'd give you the time of your life for a bit. I'm on a visit to Rookwood for a week. I guess you fellows can't teach me anything in the shape of ragging. I'm not a chicken!"

"Perhaps you're not," said Jimmy Silver. "Anyway, as you're a relation of the Head, you can help us dole out some of the punishment which blagging

deserves. WEE's it going to be, Smythe?"

Smythe glared.  
"You look pale," said Jimmy Silver, with mock concern. "Have a drop of champagne?"

He caught up one of the bottles, and poured the remaining contents over Smythe's face, on his hair, and down his neck. Smythe coughed and spluttered.

"Gooogh!" he roared.  
"He's much better now," said Chisholm. "Perhaps there's something left in the hamper for the others."

He dived into the hamper and brought out a few catabies which had been left.

"Pity to waste a thing like this," he exclaimed, fingering an open jam tart. "Are you hungry—Howard, I think your name is?"

Howard glared. But Chisholm was not dismayed. He planted the jam tart firmly across Howard's features, completely hiding that worthy's expression of disapproval.

Jimmy Silver & Co. followed suit with the remaining articles. They felt that it was a pity to waste them. But, in any case, they belonged to the nuts, and they were entitled to their own property.

Smythe & Co. were furious by the time that the Fistical Four had concluded the first part of their entertainment.

Chisholm seemed full of ideas, and he had already proved that he did not lack pluck. Jimmy Silver felt that he liked the youngster, and the others soon shared his feelings.

"A roll in the ditch will be enough to

and get back. Topham's managed to get out of the ditch, and—"

"Yarooogh!" roared Townsend, cutting rudely into the conversation.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Fistical Four.

Townsend, in trying to scramble out of the ditch with his hands tied, had been a bit too rash, and he slipped back again, falling right amongst the struggling forms of the other three nuts.

"Be careful!" roared Smythe. "That was my ear!"

"And you nearly pushed my ribs in!" howled Tracy.

"Come on," said Jimmy Silver. "We might as well be getting back. I think we've given them enough amusement. Leave 'em alone as they are, and they'll play for hours!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fistical Four and their new chum made their way through the woods towards Coombe. On the way Chisholm explained his position.

"You see, I'm at school in Canada," he said. "This is partly a business visit and partly a holiday that I'm having in England. So I'm stopping for a week with my uncle. I intend to have a decent time, and if you fellows can put me on to any new stunts in the way of japes I shall be obliged. I want to take a few ideas back with me."

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"We do a little bit of it here," he said. "Ask the three Tommies if they know anything about our ragging."

"Who are they?"

Jimmy Silver explained that the Three

Tommyes were Modern juniors who had learned to fear the Fistical Four when they were out for a jape.

"I'm a Thomas myself," said Chisholm. "But it isn't contracted to Tommy by the chaps. I'm Tom-ass, Jack-ass, or any other, old thing that comes into their heads."

Rookwood was reached without any further incident, and the Fistical Four parted with Thomas at the gates.

"See you later," said the youngster, with a grin. "Must go and pay my respects to uncle. So-long!"

The Fistical Four made their way into tea. Smythe & Co. were naturally not there. They did not arrive back at the school until an hour later, and then they looked venomous enough for anything.

Jimmy Silver grinned as he saw Smythe standing moodily in the corridor as they were making their way up to the study.

"Looks like a wasp with toothache!" he said. "Hallo, Smythey! Stung anyone yet?"

Smythe scowled, but said nothing, and the hilarious juniors passed on, still chuckling.

Smythe was thinking. While he had been a prisoner in the hands of the Fistical Four he had naturally heard their conversation with Thomas Chisholm, and discovered who that worthy really was.

The news started great ideas working in Smythe's mind. He had heard, on pretty good authority, that the Head had a young nephew in Canada who was

pretty wealthy, having inherited his father's money when he died.

And, in addition, Thomas promised to be a very useful sort of friend to know.

He ought to have a lot of influence with the Head. Besides, if he had got plenty of money, he might be prepared to play with them in a friendly game of nap!

"I'll do it!" he muttered at length.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER. Pitch and Toss!

ROOKWOOD soon knew that Thomas was there.

He was up early the next morning, making his way round the old school, exploring passages and rooms, and generally getting the lie of the land.

Dr. Chisholm had given him the run of the place, but told him not to get up to any larks. Thomas, however, had his own ideas about that.

It was about half an hour before getting-up time that Thomas found the rising-bell. He grinned to himself as he saw it. The opportunity was too good to lose, and Thomas seized the bell-rope and tugged vigorously. Then he made himself scarce.

Fellows in the dormitories started turning out, only to find, to their disgust, that there had been a mistake. The page whose duty it was to ring the bell dashed out of the matron's room, in the hope of catching the miscreant; but he was too late.

The school had been aroused, and there was likely to be a hot time for him.

Thomas, meanwhile, made a detour

## OUT ON FRIDAY WEEK!

# GRAND SPECIAL CHRISTMAS NUMBER OF THE "PENNY POPULAR."

Full Particulars will appear in our next issue.

finish, I think," said Jimmy Silver, as the laughing juniors paused to survey their work. "The ditch isn't very muddy, but as their hands are all tied they'll take a good time to get out if we pop them in all on top of each other!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a little hollow in the glade which served as a watercourse when there was much rain, but it was almost dried up now. It seemed just sticky enough for the purpose.

Jimmy Silver & Co. lifted the captives up, and deposited them in it. Smythe went first; then Howard and Tracy, Townsend and Topham, followed in quick succession.

Townsend and Topham started struggling at once. Their hands being tied, they could only use their legs, and they used them with such advantage that Smythe's shins got severely barked.

"Yarooogh!" he roared. "Steady on, you idiots!"

But Townsend and Topham did not intend to be steady, and they kicked and struggled until they managed to roll off the top of the human pile and right themselves.

The Fistical Four and Chisholm stopped for a few minutes to watch their efforts. They were highly amused.

They waited until Topham and Townsend seemed in a fair way to getting out of the ditch, and then Jimmy Silver suggested moving off.

"They'll get out of there in time!" he said. "Then they'll untie each other

THE PENNY POPULAR—No. 267.

and reached the back part of the school, where the gas-main was. He knew that they were just starting to cook breakfast, and the idea seemed good and promising.

He turned the gas tap half off, and then left that area. The cook found the pressure go down, to her great indignation, but never guessed at the reason until it was nearly breakfast-time, and far too late for her to get the food cooked.

Thinking, then, that he had done enough, Thomas repaired to Dr. Chisholm's rooms and had breakfast.

He knew that there would be considerable indignation in the school, but he was prepared to take the consequences if anything was discovered.

He had not come over from Canada for nothing!

Finding things a bit dull during the morning, he popped down to the gates, where the old porter was just getting a nap in the lodge.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he shouted.

The porter appeared, rubbing his eyes. "Dr. Chisholm wants you to go out with this to the ironmonger's, at Coombe," he said, handing over a slip of paper.

The porter took the note with a grunt, and ambled off. But it was not until he got to Coombe, and was about to go into the shop, that he read the message on the paper. It ran:

"Please supply the bearer with one foot of pigeon's milk in a calender."

What the porter said on the way back to Rookwood is another story.

But Thomas contrived to let everyone in the school know that he was there. He did it quite openly, and he did not shelter behind the protection that he might have obtained from his uncle, the Head.

He walked with the others in the quad, and, being tackled on the subject of the morning's breakfast, admitted that he had turned the gas down.

He went into dinner with a slightly bulging cheek and a very red ear, but otherwise cheerful. He had disposed of two fellows who thought they could convince him of the error of his ways.

Dr. Chisholm noted the signs of combat, and smiled inwardly. He had heard of the breakfast jape, and he was rather glad that Thomas had received his deserts for that.

He did not want to have to punish his own nephew while he was on a holiday.

"Your face is a trifle swollen, Thomas," he said, with a twinkle in his eye. "Have you knocked up against something?"

"Y-yes!" said Thomas. "Yes, uncle!"

And nothing more was said on the subject.

After dinner Thomas went and sought the Fistical Four. But they were not in the quad. Smythe, however, was there, and he gave Thomas a friendly smile.

"Get back all right?" asked Thomas.

"Yes," said Smythe. "Of course, we know how to take a joke, you know."

"That's a good thing," said Thomas, with meaning. "I haven't gone back yet, you know!"

Smythe did not appear to catch the hidden meaning.

"You're staying here a week," he said, "so I've been told. I wonder, Chisholm, if you'd like to come and have a few evenings in our study?"

"Smoking?" asked Thomas bluntly.

"Not specially for that," said Smythe easily. "We're not priests, though. A fellow who enjoys a bit of sport, y'know, can always have one. The majority of the fellows here are pretty snobbish like that."

"I see," said Thomas slowly. He was thinking.

"Occasionally we have a little hand of cards," said Smythe. "It's all done decently, y'know. Of course, our set is the best set in the school. If you feel like a little hand of nap, you might drop in some time!"

"Thanks!" said Thomas drily. "Would I have been welcome to your little game yesterday in the woods?"

"Perfectly, by gad!"

"Sorry I interrupted it, then," said Thomas. "I was out for a rag, you see. Of course, I'm a perfect little gambler myself. We play for very high stakes in Canada?"

"Really?" asked Smythe. "Look here, you must certainly come up and have a game."

"Too risky," said Thomas. "The Head—that is, my uncle—might come to look for me, and then he would discover things. You'd do better if you came over to our part of the building. There's some fine old dark cloisters over there that I have discovered. I could

show you a thing or two there that would whack your rotten card games hollow."

Smythe smiled. He considered that he was getting on excellently with this fellow.

He did not understand that as Thomas had suddenly come round to his way of minding, he might have some plan in mind. But, as a matter of fact, an excellent wheeze had struck Thomas.

"Look here," he said confidentially, "I'll expect you over there just after tea. I'll show you the Canadian school form of pitch and toss. It's pretty exciting. When we get going a bit you won't know whether you're standing on your head or your heels."

"Of course—of course, I don't play for very large stakes," said Smythe, suddenly seeing that he might be letting himself in for something heavy.

"Won't cost you a bean to-night," said Thomas. "I'll simply show you how we do it in Canada."

"I've heard about pitch and toss before," said Smythe. "I didn't think that there was very much in it."

"Wait until you see this game!" promised Thomas. "You'll agree that you can think of nothing else in the gambling line for a week after you've played it once."

"Good!" said Smythe, with a friendly smile. "I shan't forget."

He walked away, feeling that he was getting on very good terms with this wealthy youth, and the thought made Smythe very happy. He imagined the spoils he would get, and he smiled hugely.

Thomas, too, was thinking of the spoils which Smythe would get, and he smirked just as much.

That afternoon, Thomas, seeking for fresh fields to conquer, climbed up into the belfry, and sawed the rope through until it hung by a single strand.

"It's a shame that the fellows got up too early this morning," he muttered to himself, with a grin, as he did it. "This, however, will put things square. The bell won't ring at all to-morrow!"

He had tea with Dr. Chisholm, and as soon as that worthy had gone back to his study, nipped down to the old cloisters to await Smythe.

While he was waiting he skipped nimbly about, as though practising something.

Thomas Chisholm, as a matter of fact, was the champion jiu-jitsu expert in his own school, and that was saying something, for the sport in question was largely indulged in there.

Smythe slipped out as soon as tea was finished, and made his way to the cloisters.

"I'm ready now to see this new game," he said.

"Right," said Thomas, surveying the immaculate form of Smythe. "I'm sorry that you've come in all your best clobber, but I haven't time to wait while you change. We always teach pitch and toss to smoky cads in Canada."

"Eh?" said Smythe, in alarm.

"For pitch and toss you want plenty of wind," said Thomas. "I don't smoke, you see, and I have got plenty of wind. Now, I know that you haven't, so I know, before we start, that I shall

win this game. But it will do you good. It will show you the opinion of a Canadian schoolboy—where smoky cads and nasty little gamblers are concerned."

Smythe backed away. He saw now that he had been lured into a trap. But it was too late to draw out.

"This is the first thing," said Thomas, catching hold of his arm. "I give a little jerk, and—voilà!"

Smythe found himself jerked off his feet suddenly and flying through the air. He landed on the ground with a thud.

Thomas watched him pick himself up, and then put out his hands to grip the nut again.

But Smythe had had enough. He lit out savagely.

How it happened, then, he did not know, but Smythe found himself on the ground within five seconds.

"Grooogh!" he howled.

Thomas chuckled softly.

He did not intend to give Smythe any mercy. He felt nothing but contempt for the nut of the Shell, and he was determined to give him a good lesson.

In five minutes he caused him to sit on his shiny topper three times, and reduced him generally to a complete wreck. And whatever Smythe did, he seemed to do the wrong thing. Thomas was ready for him every time.

When the nut of the Shell finally was allowed the opportunity of escaping, he took it. Picking up his hat, Smythe turned and dashed out of the cloisters back towards the school buildings.

But he selected a very bad moment, for he had not gone twenty yards before he encountered Dr. Chisholm, the Head.

"Dear me!" gasped the Head, drawing up as Smythe raised his battered topper. "What is the meaning of this?"

"Nothing, sir!" murmured Smythe.

"You are in a very disgraceful state!" rumbled the Head.

"Yes, sir. I—I fell down, sir!"

"Then go in and make yourself respectable at once!" said the Head.

"And don't let me see you like this again."

Smythe sped away, inwardly resolving that while Thomas was at Rookwood he would never go near enough to him to reduce him to that state for the Head to see again!

Jimmy Silver & Co. roared with laughter when Thomas told them the story of the game of pitch and toss, when his week's stay came to an end.

"I kept my word," he said. "I told him that he would get so excited that he wouldn't know whether he was standing on his head or his heels, and that he'd be able to think of nothing else in the gambling line for a week after he had played it. I don't suppose he will!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"'On my word,'" said Jimmy Silver. "I'm sorry you're going, Thomas. You've certainly made things lively."

And Thomas had. He had managed to work a joke on nearly everyone, and Smythe and his cronies, at least, were not likely to forget the visit of the Terrible Thomas.

Another Magnificent Long Complete Tale of Jimmy Silver & Co. in next Friday's issue of the PENNY POPULAR, entitled

**"THE HUN HUNT!"** By OWEN CONQUEST.

To avoid disappointment you must order your copy of the PENNY POPULAR in advance.

A Magnificent  
Long Complete  
Story, dealing  
with the  
Early Adventures  
of  
Tom Merry & Co.  
at St. Jim's.

# THE SCHOOLBOY INFORMER!

By  
**Martin  
Clifford**

## THE FIRST CHAPTER. Blake's Mysterious Behaviour.

"HEARD the latest news?" Thus Tom Merry. He was standing in the quad at St. Jim's, with his chums, Manners and Lowther, talking to Jack Blake & Co. of the Fourth.

"Bai Jove, Tom Mewwy, have you been weadin' the newspapaps?" asked D'Arcy.

"No, ass! I don't mean that kind of news."

"What the dickens do you mean, then?" asked Jack Blake.

"There's a new kid just arrived in the Fourth—"

"New kid?" asked Digby interestedly. "My hat! That's funny! We haven't heard anything about him."

Blake & Co. were all attention.

"When did he come?" asked Blake.

"Yesterday!" ejaculated Herries.

"What do you mean? If he came yesterday, we should have seen him before now, you chump!"

"Well, he came yesterday," grinned Tom Merry.

"And he's here now?" asked Digby doubtfully.

"No, he isn't!"

"Bai Jove, what evah are you talkin' about, Tom Mewwy?" asked Arthur Augustus, jamming his famous monocle into his eye and surveying the hero of the Shell. "You say the new chap came yesterday—"

"So he did!"

"And he isn't heah now?"

"Quite right," chuckled Tom Merry. "He arrived yesterday, but he isn't here."

Blake & Co. looked mystified.

"Then where the dickens is he?" roared Blake.

"At the Grammar School!" chuckled Tom Merry. "I was going to tell you that at first, only you were all in too much of a hurry. The new chap arrived at the Grammar School yesterday."

Blake & Co. gazed at one another in exasperation.

"And do you call that news?" demanded Blake warmly. "Do you mean to say you've kept us here all this time to tell us that a fatheaded new fellow has arrived at the fatheaded Grammar School? You fatheaded ass!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What's the new chap's name?" asked Herries.

"Well, I think it's Sinclair," said Tom Merry.

"Sinclair!" repeated Blake curiously.

"Yes, Tom Sinclair," said the hero of the Shell. "Anyhow, that's what Gordon Gay told us when we met him in Rylcombe, and I suppose he ought to know. The new chap's sure to be a

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 267.

decent sort, because he's got the same Christian name as I have!"

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Blake.

"What's up with you, ass?" asked Digby.

Tom Sinclair at the Grammar School?" said Blake. "Well, I'm jiggered!"

"Are you off your rocker, Blake?" demanded Herries. "What the dickens are you looking so giddy surprised about?"

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus. "What's the mattah?"

"Do you know this Tom Sinclair?" asked Manners curiously.

"I should think I jolly well do!" said Blake. "Why, he's my uncle's ward, and I've known him since he was a little kiddie. Of course, we've only met now and again, but I know him as well as I know you chaps!"

Tom Merry and the other juniors gathered round Blake interestedly.

"Then Sinclair's a chum of yours?" asked Manners.

"Well, not exactly a chum," replied Blake. "I haven't had much to do with him, because my uncle lives in Devonshire and my people in Yorkshire. The last time I saw him was about two years ago, so I can't say that he's exactly a chum. Still, I'll introduce him to you chaps when you see him."

"Rather rummy he wasn't sent to St. Jim's," said Herries.

"I don't know about that," replied Blake. "I don't expect Mr. Collins—that's my uncle—knew that I was at St. Jim's, or he might have sent Sinclair here. But are we going down to the village this afternoon, or not?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then we'd better buck up!" said Blake. "If we stop here javing, we shall waste all the time. Come on, kids!"

"Right-ho!"

And Blake & Co. parted with Tom Merry and Manners, and, crossing the road, entered the lane leading to Rylcombe. At length they reached Mr. Bunn's establishment in the village, where they proceeded to enjoy a thorough "blow-out," as Blake elegantly put it.

D'Arcy had just received a "fivah" from his pater, and he stood his chums a truly sumptuous spread.

While they were in the midst of it, Levison, of the Fourth, strolled in, Levison was the cad of St. Jim's, and universally disliked.

"You chaps look comfy," he remarked sneeringly. "Room for another at that table?"

Blake looked up.

"Yes, you can join us if you like," he said in a moment of good-natured gener-

osity. "I don't suppose Gussy will object."

"Wathah not!" said D'Arcy. "Pwaj join us, Levison."

"No, thanks!" he said. "I'm rather particular who I feed with, you know."

"What!"

"I can pay for my own grub, thanks!" said Levison.

"You rotter!" shouted Blake wrathfully. "You heastly boulder! My hat, I think you take the cake for coldishness, Levison! Even when we do offer to tolerate you, you insult us!"

"Yaas, wathah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "Weally, Levison, I wogard you as an uttah outsider! If it were not for the wisk of soillin' my hands, I would thow you out of this building!"

"Oh, rats!" sneered Levison.

He turned to the counter, where Mr. Bunn was regarding him rather coldly. Levison made one or two small purchases, then left the shop.

"The wank wottah!" said D'Arcy warmly.

Blake & Co. continued their feast, and soon forgot about the cad of the Fourth. At last they had finished, and D'Arcy paid the bill.

"Well, thanks for the spread, Gussy," said Blake contentedly, as they passed out of the shop.

"Yes; it was topping!" said Herries.

"Oh, pwaj don't mention it, deah boys!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"Suppose we stwoll quietly back to the coll now?"

"That's the ticket," agreed Blake.

And the chums of Study No. 6 leisurely walked up the High Street. Blake dropped behind for a moment to tie his bootlace. He did not see Levison lounging in the doorway of a small shop—the grocer's—where he was waiting to be served. At the moment a fussy old lady fully occupied the shopkeeper's attention.

Blake straightened up, and was about to hurry after his chums, when he paused. A boy had just appeared from a side street, and he was coming straight towards Blake, although he had not seen him yet. He wore the Grammar School cap.

"Why," began Blake, "that's—"

Then he paused, and a look of sheer amazement entered his eyes. He started forward with a low cry, Levison watching him interestedly.

"Good heavens!" muttered Blake, "in a startled voice, audible to Levison.

Blake came to a standstill in the centre of the road, and stood staring, wide-eyed, at the Grammar School boy. The latter suddenly looked up, and an expression came into his rather pale face, every bit as surprised as Blake's. He walked right up to Blake, and stood staring at him in consternation.

"Jack!" he exclaimed. "Jack Blake!"

For a moment the two boys stared at one another, and Levison, from the grocer's shop, watched them in considerable surprise.

"Great Scott!" said Blake at last. "What on earth—"

"You here, Jack?" interrupted the other sharply. "Do you belong to St. Jim's?"

"Yes," replied Blake quickly; "but, my dear chap, what, in the name of goodness, are you doing here? I thought—"

The other looked round wildly.

"Be quiet, for goodness' sake!" he ejaculated anxiously. "I can't explain now. I simply can't explain!"

"Can't explain—"

"No. My name is Tom Sinclair, and I'm the new boy at the Grammar School. Please—please don't say another word."

"But—"

"I'll explain later," interrupted Tom Sinclair anxiously.

And, with pale face, he hurried down the street, leaving Blake staring after him with a blank, amazed expression upon his face. Levison, from his point of vantage, had seen and heard everything, and he gazed at Blake with unfeigned curiosity.

The next moment D'Arey, Herries, and Digby were crowding round Blake, for they had witnessed the little scene, and had heard a word, or two as they hurried up at the last moment.

**THE SECOND CHAPTER.**  
Something Wrong.

"**B**AI Jove, Blake, whatever is the matak!"

"You look flabbergasted!"

"Who was that at Grammar School chap?"

Jack Blake started, and looked at his curious chums. They were gathered round him in a cluster, for they were anxious to know the reason for the hurried talk with the Grammar School boy.

"Who was it?" repeated Blake abstractedly.

"Yes, you silly chump!"

"It was Sinclair, you duffahs," said Arthur Augustus D'Arey. "Didn't you heah the stwanganh say it as we came up? It was Tom Sinclair, wasn't it, Blake?"

Blake hesitated.

"He said that was his name," he replied slowly.

"Said it was!" exclaimed Digby. "Look here, Blake, what's up? If that was Sinclair, why didn't you introduce us? You said you would when we met the chap."

"Yaas, wathah!" agreed D'Arey. "I wegard it as vevy stwange that you should allow Sinclair to wethah before you introduced us. You were not talkin' to him for more than half a minute, deah boy."

"And what was that the chap said about explaining later?" asked Herries.

"After he'd said that he buzzed off like lightning, and you stood staring after him as though he'd been a giddy ghost. What's the mystery, Blake—what's the matter?"

"You knew he was at the Gwammah School, so why were you so flustahed?" asked D'Arey.

Blake looked at his chum, and started.

"Flustered?" he repeated. "Who was flustered?"

"You were, deah boy!"

"Rather!"

"Rot!" said Blake, moving forward.

"Let's be getting on."

And the chums continued their walk through the village. Meanwhile, Levison had disappeared into the shop, and was now being attended to. But he was

thinking of the strange conversation which had taken place between Blake and the new Grammar School boy.

Levison knew that there was something wrong somewhere, and he told himself that he would ferret out the truth. Levison's nature was far from being honourable and straightforward, and he loved to pry into affairs which had nothing to do with him.

Blake & Co. walked on.

"It's all very well for you to say that you weren't flustered, Blake," said Digby, "because you were jolly flustered. Tell us—"

"Oh, dry up!" growled Blake.

"Dry up!" repeated Digby indignantly. "My hat, I like that! Why, you ass, you've got to explain why you didn't keep Sinclair with you until we came up. Why on earth did he hurry off without seeing us?"

"Perhaps he was frightened," said Blake crossly.

"Frightened?" repeated Digby.



Arthur Augustus stood looking anxiously at Blake as the latter ascended the ivy.

"Fwightened?" said D'Arey.

"Fwightened of what, deah boy?"

"Of you chaps," exclaimed Blake.

"Your funny faces are enough to frighten anybody. I wish you wouldn't ask so many fatheaded questions."

Arthur Augustus bristled.

"Bai Jove, Blake, I really cannot allow that remark to go unchallenged!" he said warmly. "Do you mean to insinuate that our faces would fwighten—"

"Ring off, Gussy," said Herries. "We want to ask Blake some questions."

"I uttaly wefuse to wing off, Hewwies," said D'Arey excitedly. "I—"

"Look here, Gussy, don't act the goat," interrupted Blake, looking strangely serious. "I've never known such chaps for being curious. What the dickens does it matter to you if Tom Sinclair didn't stop to speak to you?"

This isn't the only day in the year, is it?"

"What's that got to do with it?" asked Herries, who was a little dense.

"Can't you speak to Sinclair some other day? He—he was in a terrific hurry, and didn't want to stop. He—he— Oh, blow! I'm blessed if I'm going to make a lot of giddy excuses to you asses!"

With that Jack Blake walked on towards St. Jim's with set face and firm footsteps. His chums looked at him with wrathful expressions, and no matter how much they plied him with questions, he steadfastly refused to answer them. Therefore, when the quartette reached St. Jim's they were all feeling—and looking—decidedly ill-tempered.

Meanwhile, Levison had left the grocer's shop in Rylecombe, and was walking to the school with a thoughtful expression on his dark, keen face.

The cad of St. Jim's was thinking of the strange meeting between Blake and Tom Sinclair. Levison realised that there was something mysterious about it, and the words he had overheard—although they revealed nothing to him—told him that all was not as it should be.

There was some mystery about the new boy at the Grammar School which Blake himself did not fully understand. His amazement at the sight of Sinclair had been very obvious, and Levison told himself that he would find out what the secret was.

"The whole affair looks jolly queer to me," he murmured as he walked alone.

"Blake wouldn't have shown that surprise if everything was all right. This new chap told Blake that he'd explain. Explain what? I'm not going to rest until I know the reason for Blake's amazement and Sinclair's consternation."

Levison decided to tell nobody of what he had seen and overheard. Blake's chums knew practically nothing; they had not seen the meeting as Levison had, and, therefore, did not realise so fully that there was something radically wrong. Levison delighted in probing into other people's affairs, and meant to take full advantage of this occasion.

**THE THIRD CHAPTER.**  
Sinclair Explains.

**D**IRECTLY after tea that afternoon Jack Blake left Study No. 5, and going downstairs, entered the quad.

He arrived at the gates just as a small boy entered.

"Hallo, young shaver!" he said.

"What do you want?"

"Got a note for a chap named Blake," said the youngster.

"Good!" said Blake. "I'm Blake. Hand it over!"

The note was handed over, and the village boy took his departure enriched by a sixpence. Blake took the note to Study No. 6, which was empty, and closed the door. Then he eagerly ripped open the envelope, and read its contents:

"Dear Jack,—I simply couldn't explain to you in the street this afternoon. Uncle had no idea that you were at a school near Rylecombe, or I should never have come. Please say nothing until I've seen you, when I will explain everything. I shall be at the stile, down Rylecombe Lane (opposite the wood) at half past six. Love be there."

Blake stared at the note thoughtfully.

"He hasn't signed it—of course," he murmured. "My only aunt, I'm blessed if I can realise it now! Half-past six—"

eh? I'll be there to the tick of the clock!"

For five or ten minutes Blake paced up and down the study, deep in thought, then he went down to the common-room once again. His chums were busily engaged in an argument with the Terrible Three, and Blake felt rather relieved, for he did not want to be questioned just then.

Soon after six he quietly slipped out. It was, of course, still light, and Blake saw, far down the road, the figure of the new boy at the Grammar School long before he reached him. A minute or two later the two met under a thick tree, being quite sheltered from the rain.

Tom Sinclair caught Blake's arm anxiously.

"Have you told anybody?" he asked quickly. "Have you said anything?"

"Of course I haven't, Bob," exclaimed Blake. "But what in the name of all that's wonderful are you doing here?"

"I'm at the Grammar-School."

"Yes, I know that. I mean, what are you doing here in Tom's name?" asked Blake quickly. "When I saw you this evening I was simply staggered—you could have knocked me down with a giddy feather. I tell you, Bob, I was placed in a rotten position. The chaps simply pelted me with questions."

"But you didn't tell them—"

"Not a word," said Blake—"not a syllable, old man!"

"Thank goodness!"

Blake's companion breathed a sigh of relief.

"But you haven't explained yet," went on Blake eagerly.

"Yes, I got clean away." "I'm simply dying to know how you got there. I thought you were in the—the—"

Blake paused, rather awkwardly, and the other smiled bitterly.

"The reformatory," he said quietly.

"You thought I was in the reformatory?"

"Yes," said Blake, in a low tone.

"Well, I'm not, as you can see. Look here, Jack," went on the other eagerly.

"You don't think I'm guilty, do you?"

"You don't think I really did steal—"

Blake coloured.

"You ass!" he exclaimed indignantly.

"Do you think I'd believe that my own cousin was a thief? The very instant I heard the news, Bob—that you'd been sent to a reformatory for stealing—I told myself that there was some rotten mistake."

"You're a brick, Jack."

"Rot!" said Blake. "But can't you tell me how it is that you're here? You, Bob Collins, masquerading in Tom Sinclair's place—using Tom's very name?"

The new boy at the Grammar School looked thoughtful.

"Yes," he said, "I'll tell you all about it. As you know, my school was Holbridge, and I was in the Fourth Form there. Well, there was a series of thefts perpetrated—money taken out of fellows' lockers, and all that sort of thing. This went on for weeks, and nobody could find out who the thief was. At last, one day, some postal orders were found in my locker—postal orders that belonged to other fellows."

"My hat!" ejaculated Blake.

"I was flabbergasted when I saw them," went on his cousin. "I denied that I'd stolen them, but the proof was too much against me. Everything—I simply can't go into details now—but everything was against me, and I was expelled from Holbridge, and sent to a reformatory—actually sent to a reformatory like a low-down pickpocket!"

"Yes, I know," said Blake seriously.

"When uncle told me about it in a

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 267.

letter, I was simply amazed. Of course, I didn't say a word to the chaps because, not knowing you, they might have thought you were guilty. And you know what it is in a big school like St. Jim's. I mean—"

"I know what you mean, Jack," said the other quietly. "I'm jolly glad you said nothing—glad for your own sake, I mean. A lot of the snobs would have cut you, and made it jolly uncomfortable for you. Well, I was sent to the beastly reformatory, and stuck it until last week."

"Did you escape?" asked Blake eagerly.

"Yes, I managed to get out of the place in the middle of the night. It was fearfully risky, and it was only by luck that I managed to do the thing at all. As it happened, nobody had attempted to escape for years, and so they were fairly slack. After all, you know, a reformatory's not exactly like a prison. Still, I had the very dickens of a job to escape!"

"Yet you did escape?"

"Yes, I got clean away," replied Tom Sinclair calmly. "The reformatory is about twenty miles from home, and I trudged every inch of the way. I didn't dare ask for anything to eat anywhere—I hadn't any money—for fear of being looked upon with suspicion. Of course, they were searching for me everywhere when it was known that I'd escaped, but I arrived home in safety."

"Good," said Blake. "I'm jolly glad you managed to get out of the reformatory. It may not be exactly the right view to take, but as you were innocent, it was sheer injustice to send you there at all. Well, what happened when you got home? Did your pater get wild with you?"

The other smiled.

"Get wild with me, Jack?" he repeated. "No fear! Dad always believed I was innocent, and when he saw me he went on no end. Said I was plucky, and had got grit in me, and all that sort of rot. Mother, too, was jolly glad I'd escaped, so I can tell you I felt pretty happy. Then dad suddenly got a ripping idea."

"To send you to Rylcombe?" said Blake.

"Yes. You see, Tom, dad's ward—

we've lived so long together that he's practically my brother—was just on the point of being sent to Rylcombe Grammar School. Dad had written to Dr. Monk weeks before, and arranged it. Well, dad's idea was to send me to the Grammar School in Tom's name. He'd never been near this part of the country, so not a soul here knows that I'm the wrong chap. Besides, it simply flummoxed the reformatory authorities; they never dreamed that I'd been sent to another school in somebody else's place. How should they think of such a thing? They're still searching all over the country, thinking that I'm wandering about. I wouldn't mind betting a fiver they'll never think of coming here for me!"

"But how about Tom?" asked Blake.

"How did he take it?"

"He's a brick!" replied Tom Sinclair's substitute enthusiastically. "He's a first-class brick, Jack. As soon as he heard the idea he agreed to it at once. Some chaps would have kicked up a row about being kept at home while another fellow used his name. But Tom's just like a brother, and was simply mad about the idea—said it was the neatest thing he'd ever heard."

"So it is," said Blake, with shining eyes.

"My hat, it's simply ripping to have done them in like that. Of course,

I suppose uncle will be liable to a fine, or something, if the trick's found out?"

"Rather. But he doesn't care a dash about that. He's trying to prove my innocence all the time, and when he's done it, he's going to tell the reformatory officials where I am and what he thinks of 'em. If the headmaster at Holbridge wasn't a first-class rotter, I should never have been sent to the place!"

Blake looked at his cousin with admiring eyes.

"And so you're here in place of Tom?" he said breathlessly. "Well, my hat, if it doesn't take the biscuit! I'm jolly glad I didn't breathe a word about anything, or it might have been all up with you. I shall have to keep as mum as an oyster, because if the facts of the case got out, you'd be sent away from the Grammar School in two ticks."

"By Jove, rather! But, look here, Jack, for goodness' sake don't forget that I'm Tom Sinclair, and that I'm simply a friend of yours—no relation whatever. Understand? You mustn't forget yourself, and call me Bob, you know!"

"Don't you worry, Bob—I mean Tom!" exclaimed Blake. "Well, I can tell you I'm feeling a jolly lot better now! All this afternoon I didn't know what the dickens to think; but now you've explained everything, it's O.K."

Tom Sinclair—for it will be best to call Blake's cousin by his temporarily assumed name—smiled, and grasped Blake's hand.

"You're absolutely a top-hole cousin!" he exclaimed enthusiastically. "Jack, I've been worrying myself to a blessed rail since I saw you this afternoon! I thought perhaps you'd let out the truth—by accident, of course—and that it would be all up with me. Dad didn't have a suspicion that you were at St. Jim's, or, if he had, he'd no idea that St. Jim's was so near to Rylcombe."

"Well, it's all plain sailing now," said Blake easily.

"It'll be as easy as rolling off a form to call you Tom and keep the deception up. But we'd better agree to meet here every now and again and compare notes. I may hear something about the reformatory johnnies, and could give you the tip. It's not likely, of course, but there's no telling."

"Right-ho!" said Tom Sinclair, and with that he said good-bye to the

St. Jim's junior, and turned in the direction of the Grammar School.

Feeling as though a terrible load had been lifted off his head, Jack Blake set off towards St. Jim's.

The School House junior, however, would not have felt quite so easy in his mind had he known that Levison had heard every word of the conversation between him and the Grammarian.

A few minutes later Levison, with a look of self-satisfaction on his face, emerged from behind a tree, and followed Jack Blake back to St. Jim's.

#### THE FOURTH CHAPTER. A Lucky Find.

"YOU wotten boundah— Bai Jove, he is not heah!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made the remark as he entered Levison's study. He had heard that the cad of the Fourth had "collared" a letter of his from Cousin Ethel, and he had gone there to reclaim his property.

D'Arcy paused just inside the study, for the gas was turned low, and the room was empty. For a moment Arthur Augustus stood there looking round.

"Pewwaps the wottah is in the common-woom," he murmured. "Bai Jove, to think that the uttah wascal thwew my lettah into the fiah!"

Instinctively, as he murmured the words, his eyes rested for a moment upon



the fireplace. In the darkness of the room, the fire on one side of the grate was glowing, but in the other side it was quite dead. Nevertheless, the glow from the live embers clearly illuminated a screwed-up piece of paper in the fireplace. D'Arcy spotted it immediately.

"'Tis that!" he exclaimed, striding forward. "Bai Jove, the wascal thrave it into the fiab, and it has not burned." D'Arcy bent down over the fireplace, and picked the piece of paper from the warm cinders. Under any other circumstances he would not have intruded into another fellow's study, but just now he considered that he had a perfect right to do so.

The piece of paper was very much scorched in one corner, and crumbled away as Arthur Augustus straightened it out. The rest of it, however, was merely slightly discoloured. D'Arcy was sure that it was his letter, and passed out of the study with the paper in his hand, still extremely indignant with Levison.

In the passage he paused for a moment under the gas, and glanced at the paper. Then he started.

"Bai Jove, it is not my lettah!" he exclaimed blankly. "Weally, this is wotten! I have taken one of Levison's privates."

As D'Arcy murmured the words, his eyes had unconsciously glanced over the smudged writing on the paper. He could see it was not Levison's writing, but the words "Tom Sinclair" and "Dr. Monk" caught his eyes before anything else.

He did not read the letter, for D'Arcy had a strong sense of honour, and had no wish to pry into Levison's affairs, even though the paper had been thrown away. But those two names set him thinking. What had Levison to do with Tom Sinclair, of the Grammar School? "I had bettah throw the thing away," decided Arthur Augustus, after a moment. "It is weally nothin' to do with me!"

At that moment a door opened further down the passage, and Jack Blake emerged from Study No. 6. He glanced up at D'Arcy, and then came towards him.

"What are you looking so giddy serious about, Gussy?" he inquired cheerfully. "What's that mouldy old piece of paper you've got in your flipper?"

"I uttably wefuse to have my hand weffered to as a flipphah!" said D'Arcy. "Oh, rats!" said Blake. "Let's have a squint!"

"I am sowwy, deah boy, but it is uttably impos for you to have a squint!"

"Is it? I've got eyes, and there's the gas—"

"But this is a private lettah of Levison's," interrupted D'Arcy. "Pway let me explain mattahs."

And D'Arcy explained.

"So you haven't got your giddy letter, after all?" he grinned.

"No, deah boy, I took this out of the fiabplace undah the impwesh that it was my lettah, but I have now discovered that it is a portion of anoathah lettah. I have not waded it, of course, but two nmes I involuntarily saw struck me as being wathah swange. Your friend, Tom Sinclair, is mentioned, also Dr. Monk."

Blake's grin vanished.

"By Jove! Are they?" he exclaimed interestedly. "What the dickens has Levison got to do with Tom Sinclair?"

Blake had not the slightest suspicion of the truth, and had no desire to read the letter. But, unconsciously, his eyes rested upon it as he spoke, and, like D'Arcy, he naturally read at least one

word during the glance. And that word was "reformatory."

"'Goo! heavens!" he shouted. His face blanched, and he literally tore the sheet of paper from D'Arcy's grasp. Then, with shaking hands, he held it up to the light and read the smudged words:

"To Dr. Monk, Rylcombe Grammar School.—The boy who has entered your school under the name of Tom Sinclair is, in reality, the missing reformatory boy, Robert Collins. You are harbouring a branded thief. This is a friendly warning, for if you do not—"

The note finished abruptly at that point in a jagged line—the point where Crooke had put his head into Levison's study and made him spoil the letter. Blake stared at it in dumb amazement and alarm. Levison knew everything! And he had written to Dr. Monk, exposing him!

"Bai Jove, Blake! Whatever is the mattah?" inquired D'Arcy, looking curiously at his chum. "I weally must say that I strongly disapprove of your wexin' that lettah!"

Blake stared at D'Arcy in a dazed manner.

"And this—this is in Levison's grate?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!"

Blake thought swiftly for a moment.

"Gussy," he exclaimed, "come into the study!"

"Wight-ho, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus saw immediately that Blake was very much perturbed, and did not waste time in unnecessary questions. Two minutes later the pair were in Study No. 6, and the door was closed. They knew that they would be safe from interruption, for Herries and Digby were in the common-room playing chess.

"Gussy," said Blake quietly, his voice full of emotion, "you can set your mind easy about reading this note. You know Levison as well as I do. You know that he's a contemptible cad and a spying beast!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, I've found out, through this note that he's up to his rotten tricks again. When you've read this you'll understand what I mean."

And Blake passed the note into D'Arcy's hands. The latter read it wonderingly, and when he had finished, stared at it in amazement.

"Great Scott!" he ejaculated blankly.

"Is this true, Blake? Bai Jove, I cannot realise it! Tom Sinclair is not weally a weformatowwy boy, is he?"

"Yes," replied Blake grimly; "and he's my cousin."

"Good gwacious!"

D'Arcy stared at Blake in stilled wonder. Then Blake, without loss of time, explained everything—explained why he had been amazed on his first meeting with Sinclair. Gradually the amazement died from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's eyes, and he understood. There was not a larger-hearted junior at St. Jim's than the elegant swell of the School House, and when Blake had done he was looking extremely thoughtful.

"This is wotten, you know!" he said quietly. "Of course, I understand everything now, deah boy. So Sinclair is weally your cousin, Bob Collins? Of course, it is uttably absurd to suppose that he is guilty of theft! If you are satisfied that he is innocent, I am willing to stake a fiyah you are wight. Blake, I weward, you as a wrick, and I'll do ewerything, in my powah to help you. At the same time, I fully undahstand that strict swewwy is essential. It would nevah do to let a word of this leak out!"

"You're a good old stick, Gussy!"

said Blake gladly. "Still, what's the good of talking about letting it out? Look at this note! Can't you see what it means?"

"Bai Jove! Levison has sneaked!"

"Yes; he's sneaked against Bob!" exclaimed Blake, choking down his anger and banging the table. "He was writing this letter to Dr. Monk anonymously, otherwise he wouldn't have disguised his writing. Then, somehow, he snudged it, and threw it into the fire. It's practically certain that he wrote it out again and posted it."

"Bai Jove! I believe you're wight, Blake!" said Arthur Augustus, in alarm. "This is tewibly sewious, you know! If we could get hold of the lettah before Levison posted it—"

Blake started.

"Great pip, that's a good idea!" he exclaimed. "If we did that we could have it out with Levison and prevent him informing. Come on!"

And Blake and D'Arcy hurried out of the study. Blake, in his eagerness to help his cousin, did not realise that even if he did rescue the letter, Levison would still be in possession of the secret, and would almost certainly spread it about the school. And that would be just as harmful as a letter. And Levison would do it in such a way that nobody would know the source of the information.

But Blake's hopes were dashed to the ground. For, ten minutes later, he learned from Lawrence, of the New House, that Levison had posted a letter in the school box not half an hour since. Lawrence had seen him doing it, so there was no doubt about the matter.

The letter had gone! In the morning Dr. Monk would know the truth!

Blake could have cried aloud with rage and mortification as he realised what the consequences would be.

Something would have to be done—something desperate. And a daring plan was slowly forming itself in Blake's mind. By supper-time it had taken shape, and just before going up to bed Blake revealed his idea to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### A Desperate Venture.

JACK BLAKE looked at D'Arcy seriously. He had just outlined his scheme, and the swell of the School House had listened to it with no comment except for an occasional "Bai Jove!" Blake had finished now, and waited for his chum's comment.

"Well," asked Blake eagerly, "how does it strike you? Do you think we shall be able to do it?"

"I wathah think we shall, deah boy. It will be fwightfully wisky, though. But I am pwepared to wun any wisk to wally wound your cousin. You can wely on me to the bitnah end!"

"Good old Guss!"

"Oh, wats!" said Arthur Augustus warmly. "There is nothin' whatever in wallyin' wound a fwind!"

It was bed-time a few moments later, and Blake and D'Arcy went up to the Fourth Form dormitory with the rest. Both of them were looking extremely thoughtful, but they endeavoured to keep up a show of joking and light-heartedness.

The lights were put out, and soon the dormitory settled down for the night. By ten o'clock nearly all the juniors were sound asleep. But it was not until the school clock boomed out eleven that a form cautiously slipped out of bed.

It was Blake, and he bent over D'Arcy's bed.

"You awake, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!" murmured D'Arcy sleepily.

"Up you get, then!" whispered Blake. D'Arcy sat up.

Then he cautiously slipped from between the sheets and commenced dressing. Blake was already doing so, and five minutes later they were ready. The rest of the dormitory was fast asleep, and the room was in comparative darkness. The light of the moon floated in at the windows.

"Weady, deah boy?" breathed Arthur Augustus.

"Yes. Don't make a sound, for goodness' sake!"

"Twust me."

The two juniors quietly slipped out of the dormitory with their boots in their hands, and made for the little passage window which had served as an exit for more than one nocturnal expedition.

In less than five minutes they were out in the quad, and it did not take them long to clamber over the wall at the usual place.

In the moonlight they hurried down Rylcombe Lane. Their thoughts were busy, for they were on a desperate mission. Under any other circumstances, Blake would never have thought of such a scheme.

But the circumstances were urgent. Tom Sinclair, thanks to Levison's spite, was in danger of being exposed in his true colours. To the general public he was a young criminal—a boy escaped from a reformatory. But Blake was quite certain that there had been a miscarriage of justice, and that his cousin was innocent.

So Blake and D'Arcy had decided upon a scheme whereby Tom Sinclair could be warned and helped to escape. It was now or never. The escape would have to be effected to-night, or it would be too late.

And Blake's scheme was desperate, though feasible. Unless a serious hitch occurred, there was every likelihood of its succeeding.

It would mean expulsion if either of the juniors were discovered helping Sinclair to escape. But what did that matter?

Sinclair was Blake's cousin, and he simply had to be rescued.

It would be rank treachery to let him sleep, unconscious of the disaster.

Both Blake and Arthur Augustus were excited, and eager to get to work; so the risk of their mission was almost overlooked. They did not think of danger at all. They walked on through the moonlight with swift footsteps.

It was well after eleven, so the countryside was quiet and still. Rylcombe was asleep, and not a soul passed the juniors. Nevertheless they kept a strict look-out, for to have been seen by a constable—or anybody else, for that matter—might end in disaster.

"The Gwammah School at last!" murmured D'Arcy.

"And now the fun begins!" said Blake grimly. "This is going to be serious work, Gussy, I can tell you. For one night we're acting the part of burglars. We're going to break into a house."

"Pway don't be so absurd, Blake!" said Arthur Augustus. "We shall be doin' nothin' of the kind. Bweakin' into the Gwammah School to weseue Sinclair can't be called bweakin' into a house."

"Can't it?" asked Blake. "What's the Grammar School, then—a haystack?"

"You uttah duffiah! I mean that bweakin' into a house genevally means that you are doin' it so that you can ollah the silvah and plate. We shall be doin' nothin' of the sort."

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 267.

"I hope not, Gussy! But give me a leg-up this giddy wall!"

Under the influence of excitement Blake had recovered his spirits. He had got over his rage and disappointment, and only thought of rescuing his cousin—in fact, Blake was quite eager to commence operations.

D'Arcy forgot all about his elegant clothes, and allowed Blake to scramble on to his shoulders, although the latter's boots were far from clean. But Blake reached the top of the wall, and assisted his chum. A large tree overhung the wall at this spot, so there was no chance of their being seen by anybody in the school buildings.

They dropped cautiously to the ground. "Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy suddenly. "How shall we know which is the Fourth Form dorm, deah boy? There would be a frightful wumpus if we got into the Sixth Form-room by mistake."

"Don't you worry, Gussy," replied Blake. "I know which is the window right enough. Weeks ago, when I was here one day, Frank Monk pointed it out to me. I shall know it in a minute, because there's some ivy growing just under it. It's the only window with ivy on that side of the building."

"That's all right, then!"

They crept along beside the wall, and presently came within sight of the Fourth Form dormitory. There was not a single light showing in the whole building. Nevertheless, there was a certain amount of risk in crossing the open space to the house. Blake waited until a thick cloud was passing across the face of the moon, temporarily causing darkness.

"Come on!" he whispered.

They raced across to the house, and, arriving under the window, paused breathlessly.

"How are you goin' to get into the dormitow, deah boy?"

"Up this ivy."

"Will it bear your weight?" asked D'Arcy anxiously.

"If it doesn't I shall come a cropper!" replied Blake. "Anyhow, I'm going to chance it, old son. Gerson Jay told me once that it had been strictly forbidden to use this ivy as a ladder, because it wasn't safe. But that was swank, I expect."

"Pway be careful, deah boy?" said Arthur Augustus. "And, whatever you do, don't wake any of the othah fellahs up. It might mean a general wumpus."

"Trust me, Gussy!"

And Blake calmly turned to the wall and commenced his perilous ascent.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### Hidden Away.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY stood looking anxiously at Blake as the latter ascended the ivy. It was fairly strong, but now and again it sagged ominously, as some of the roots parted from the wall.

But Blake clung on tenaciously. The distance to the window was not very great, but if he fell it would mean, probably, a broken limb. So there was cause for D'Arcy's anxiety.

"Bai Jove, it looks frightfully dangewous!" he murmured to himself. "Thank goodness he has weached the window at last!"

Blake was indeed pulling himself up on the sill. Fortunately, the window was open a trifle, and he very cautiously pushed it up. Inch by inch he raised it, fearing to do it quickly lest a creak should break the stillness of the dormitory. At last he was able to clamber into the room. He looked down at Arthur Augustus.

"All serene, deah boy?" whispered the latter.

Blake nodded, then disappeared. "I wondah what will happen?" thought D'Arcy.

To tell the truth, the swell of the School House was expecting to hear a general commotion every minute. He thought it practically certain that Blake would unwittingly awaken some of the Grammarians.

But no such commotion came to his ears.

Blake, in the dormitory, was moving about like a shadow. Scarcely a sound did he make, and he saw at once that all the boys were sound asleep. They were all healthy youngsters, and not likely to awake at a slight sound.

Blake moved up and down the row of beds, scanning the faces of their occupants. At last he located Tom Sinclair. His cousin was fast asleep, little dreaming of the disaster which was about to befall him.

In the beds on either side of him were Gordon Gay and Carboy, both of them snoring rather loudly. There was not much risk of their suddenly awaking.

Blake shook Sinclair a trifle. The sleeper stirred slightly. Blake shook him again, and this time Sinclair opened his eyes, and struggled to a sitting posture. In the dim moonlight which streamed through the window he stared dazedly at the visitor.

"Why, wassermarrer?" he mumbled sleepily. "Tain't risin'-bell yet, you chump!"

"Why, blessed if it isn't moonlight!" he added, blinking.

"Quiet!" whispered Blake urgently. "For goodness' sake be quiet!"

Tom Sinclair started.

"What the—?" he began; then gazed at Blake with staring eyes. "Jack!"

"Shut up, you fathead!" urged Blake. Sinclair stared at him in sheer amazement, fully awake now.

"What's it mean, Jack?" he murmured in a startled voice. "What are you doing here? Great Scott, it's the middle of the night, isn't it?"

"Yes," whispered Blake. "For goodness' sake don't wake up the fellows! Slip into your clothes like lightning, and follow me out into the grounds!"

"But what for?" asked Sinclair amazedly. "Has—has anything happened, Jack?"

"Of course there has!" replied Blake. "There's something jolly serious happened, or I shouldn't be here. If we're found out it'll mean the very dickens!"

"But—"

"Can't you realise that if we're heard we shall be copped?" whispered Blake. "I've broken bounds to come here, and it'll mean the sack if it's known! Jump into your clobber as quickly as possible!"

Tom Sinclair, with serious face, did as Blake said. He realised that nothing short of a calamity would have caused Blake to take a desperate step such as this.

He knew that it was useless to ask questions there, so he swiftly dressed. Blake helped him, and he could feel that his cousin's hands were trembling.

A suspicion of the truth had entered Sinclair's mind, and it had caused his heart to sink and his face to blanch.

At last he was ready.

"Come over to the window," whispered Blake. "It's a pretty stiff climb, but I expect you can manage it. I'll shin down first, and Gussy and I will catch you if you fall."

"Gussy!" exclaimed Sinclair quickly. "Who—"

"He's a pal of mine," breathed Blake. "Now be quiet, or we shall be spotted."

With that Blake cautiously clambered out on to the window-sill, and descended to the ground. It was a risky descent, but the ivy was strong, and Blake's

nerves were of the best. He dropped to the ground when he was within a yard, and Arthur Augustus steadied him.

"Well," said D'Arcy quickly, "how did you get on, dear boy? You've been a faithful time, you know. I wearily began to think that you had got collied."

"It's all right, Gussy!" whispered Blake. "Bob's just coming down."

"Bai Jove, so he is!"

The two juniors looked up. Sinclair had lost no time, for he was already clambering down the now weakened ivy, but it held out, although Sinclair lost his grip when eight feet from the ground. He fell that distance, and rolled over at Blake's feet.

"Gweat Scott! Are you hrt, deah boy?"

"No; it's all right!" panted Sinclair painfully. "Only grazed my blessed wrist! Oh, you are the chap I saw at St. Jim's! It's jolly good of you to take this risk for me!"

"Wats!"

"Come on!" exclaimed Blake. "We'll slip across to the wall straight away. It's no use waiting until the moon goes behind a cloud."

Now that Sinclair was with him, Blake was not quite so cautious, and the trio slipped across to the high wall. Five minutes later they were in the roadway several hundred yards away from the Grammar School. Sinclair had stopped there, insisting upon an explanation.

"What does it all mean?" he asked anxiously. "Why in the name of all that's mysterious have you lugged me out of bed and brought me here? Does this affair mean that I've been discovered?"

"Yes," replied Blake quietly.

"By George, how rotten!" exclaimed Sinclair simply. "Well, I suppose I couldn't really expect it to last! I was rather an use to hope for it."

Blake and D'Arcy regarded their companion admiringly. They had also expected him to burst into a startled cry of disappointment and alarm. Instead of that, however, he had remained perfectly calm, and had taken the news philosophically.

"It's perfectly wretched, of course," he went on. "But how the dickens does anyone know, Jack? Are the Bramcourt police in Rylcombe, or what?"

"It's nothing to do with the police at all," replied Blake grimly. And he proceeded to tell his cousin what had happened, and that Dr. Monk would receive the informing letter by the first post in the morning. Blake's rage rose as he related the news, and his condemnation of Levison's conduct was scathing.

"What a cad the chap must be!" said Sinclair. "So it amounts to this—I've either got to clear out or be collied by the police?"

"That's it!" said Blake. "That's why we've come here to-night. If we'd let you be, you'd have been recaptured without a standing chance."

Sinclair nodded thoughtfully, and although he endeavoured not to show it, the others could see that he was biting his lips with keen disappointment. Just when he thought himself secure, the vindictiveness of the boy had altered everything.

"It was terribly hard on Sinclair. "It's awfully good of you fellows to have warned me," he said slowly; "but, honestly, I don't see what I'm going to do. Suppose I try to escape? Suppose I rush away from here as fast as possible? Why, I should be spotted in the morning, wherever I was! And the police, being on the look-out for a boy, would recognise me at once!"

"Exactly!" agreed Blake.

"Then what an I to do?"

"You're to do as your uncle tells you," replied Jack Blake calmly. "I've thought it all out, Bob, so you needn't worry. Necessity is the mother of invention, you know; and as Levison's acted the bound, I've thought of a plan to cheat him, after all!"

"And a weally wippin' plan, too, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus enthusiastically. "Of course, you will have to wuff it!"

"Wuff it!" repeated in a puzzled voice.

"Gussy means you'll have to rough it," said Jack Blake calmly. "Well, he's right. Because we're going to hide you in the old castle ruins, about a mile and a half from St. Jim's. Under the ruins there are really some ripping rooms, with great stone doors, and as dry as tinder. With some blankets and

Sinclair's eyes as he realised what it would mean to him.

"Well, now you know what we're going to do," went on Blake. "It's the best our little think-boxes can manage. I'm going to write to uncle—your pater—to-morrow, and tell him where you are, and that he's got to get your innocence proven within a week! When he knows the circumstances he'll buck up like one o'clock, and make things hum!"

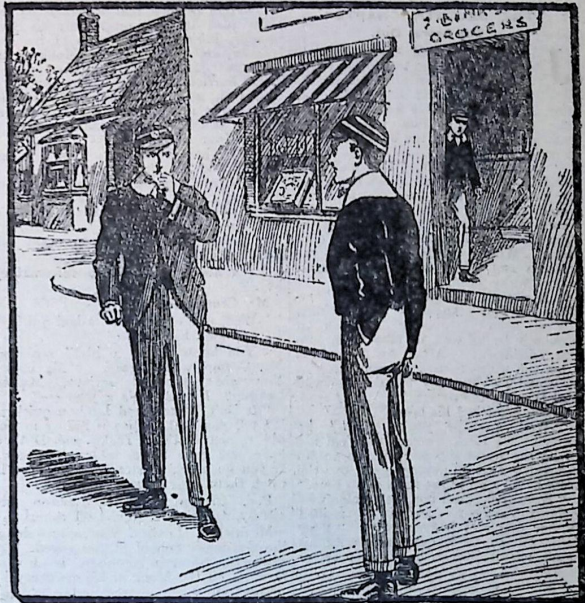
Tom Sinclair's spirits were raised immensely.

"I'm blessed if I know what to—to say," he muttered gratefully.

"Don't try to say anything," exclaimed Blake cheerfully. "I'll do all the gassing! We're going to Rylcombe Lane now, and we're going to leave you by the old stile while he buzz back to St. Jim's and get blankets and candles!"

"But the risk—"

"Rats to the risk! Come on, we'll be



"Be quiet, for goodness' sake!" ejaculated the Grammarian anxiously. "I can't explain. My name is Tom Sinclair now, and I'm the new boy at the Grammar School. Please—please don't say another word, Jack. I promise to explain later!" Levison, from his point of vantage, had seen and heard everything, and he gazed at Jack Blake with undisguised curiosity.

candles and grub you'll be as comfy as possible!"

Sinclair's eyes sparkled.

"By Jove, it's a great idea!" he exclaimed. "But it's too much to expect of you, Jack. If I was there you would have to bring me food, and run the risk of being discovered. Why, it might go on for days and days!"

"Well, I expect it will," replied Blake calmly. "But that doesn't make any difference. You'll be saved from the reformatory, and Levison will be diddled hollow! Don't you worry about us, my son; we can look after you all right!"

"Yaah, wathah!"

Tears almost welled into Tom

getting along. It's jolly late, and we want to get back to our little cots before brekker!"

And the trio hastened to the old stile. Sinclair did not have to wait there for more than twenty minutes by himself. At the end of that time Blake and D'Arcy returned with rugs, food, and candles. The risk in getting them had been considerable—for the juniors had had to pay a visit to the study—but nothing of an alarming nature had occurred.

Then, feeling quite cheerful, the trio tramped across the moonlit meadows to the castle ruins.

Several minutes later the juniors were standing in one of the old vaults under the ruined castle. It was one with a secret door, which Blake & Co. had discovered months before. When closed, it was practically impossible to detect it, and in the event of the police searching the ruins they would certainly never discover the missing boy.

"It's simply splendid!" exclaimed Tom Sinclair enthusiastically, when Blake and D'Arcy had made the place look comfortable. "By Jove, you chaps are bricks, and no mistake! Nobody will ever think of looking for me here, so close to the Grammar School, and I shall be as safe as eggs!"

"Good!" said Blake. "Then I vote Gussy and I buzz back to bed!"

Tom Sinclair shook hands with his two helpers, and then they departed, knowing that Sinclair would be quite all right in the ruins.

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

### The Secret Out.

JACK BLAKE and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy managed to slip away from their two chums after tea the following day, and discuss the situation in the quad. They were unaware of the fact that Levison was carefully watching them from the direction of the woodshed.

"Well," said Blake, "I've written to uncle, so he knows all about the bizney by now. Let's hope he comes up to the scratch, and relieves us of our charge jolly soon. I don't mind helping Bob a bit, but the chaps'll begin to get suspicious soon. When we get back to-night, Herries and Digby will want to know where we've been."

"It doesn't mattah, deah boy!" replied Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "I've been wondahing wethah it wouldn't be as well to take them into our confidence. Aftah we come back from the ruins to-night, I considah that it would be chummy to take Hewies and Dig into the secret."

Blake scratched his head. "Well, perhaps you're right," he agreed. "I think we can trust 'em not to let the secret slip out. We've got to remember that if Crump gets on the scent he'll be up to the ruins in no time."

"Even then, deah boy, he wouldn't be able to discovah anythin'," replied Arthur Augustus D'Arcy easily. "Your respected cousin is quite safe until his patah eithah proves his innocence or secretely fetches him away."

"Right-ho! We'll tell Herries and Digby all about it when we come back," exclaimed Blake. "If we stop to do it now we shouldn't have time to get back before locking up. So come across to the tuckshop and get the giddy provisions for the prisoner."

And Blake and D'Arcy crossed the quad to Dame Taggles' little shop. A few minutes later they emerged, each of them carrying a parcel. Levison watched them curiously, and his eyes gleamed as he saw them make for the gates, with hurried footsteps, obviously trying to slip out without being noticed.

"That proves it," Levison told himself. "That proves that Sinclair is hiding somewhere round about! They're taking him provisions on the quiet, or my name's not Levison!"

And the end of the Fourth carelessly strolled across the quad and made his way to the gates. Watching his opportunity, he slipped into Rylcombe Wood and followed the two juniors without their knowing of the fact—for Levison was walking on one side of the hedge.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 267.

and they on the other, as he had done when he had learned Sinclair's secret.

He saw them cross the stile and take to the footpath, and, after allowing them to get a good long way ahead, followed.

But suddenly he paused irresolutely. He allowed Blake and D'Arcy to continue alone.

"After all," he thought, "what's the good of my going after them? They can only be going to the ruins along this path, and I'm positively certain that they're taking that grub to Sinclair. The rotter's at the ruins—that's certain. Why should I go after them now, and risk being seen, and allowing them to give Sinclair warning?"

Levison considered the matter. Before he reached the ruins he would have to pass across the open meadows, and would almost certainly be seen in the twilight, for Blake and D'Arcy would keep a strict look-out. Also, while they were in the ruins, they would be on the alert for every sound.

Levison decided that it would be the best plan to go immediately to Rylcombe, inform P.-c. Crump of his suspicions, and then go to Dr. Monk at the Grammar School.

He hurried down Rylcombe Lane at a fast trot, and, as luck would have it, almost ran into the bulky form of P.-c. Crump as the latter was coming round a corner from a side lane.

"My heve! Steady hon, young gent!" said Mr. Crump.

"By Jove!" gasped Levison. "You're the very chap I want, Crumpy!"

"Wot's that, Master Levison?" said the constable suspiciously, recognising the junior. "Wot do you want me for?"

"It's about Collins, the reformatory boy."

Mr. Crump started.

"Well, wot of 'im?" he asked quickly. "I know where he is."

"You know where 'e his!" repeated Mr. Crump, with a gasp. "My heve! You ain't speakin' serious, Master Levison? If this 'ere's a joke—"

"It isn't!" exclaimed Levison quickly. "I tell you that Collins is hiding in the old ruined castle. Blake and D'Arcy have just gone there, taking him food. If you go up there straight away, you'll catch them without any trouble."

P.-c. Crump gazed at Levison excitedly, and then hastened off eagerly.

Meanwhile, Levison was approaching the Grammar School at top speed. To make his triumph complete, he would need to tell Dr. Monk of his discovery.

He walked in at the gates of the Grammar School, half expecting a hostile reception from the Grammarians. But there were only one or two fags visible, the Fourth-Formers all attending a meeting within the building.

Levison was glad of this, and was soon admitted into the headmaster's private quarters. Dr. Monk was in his study, and as Levison entered he was reading through a telegram with obvious pleasure. A frown crossed his brow as he saw who his visitor was. Dr. Monk knew Levison's character, and did not like the boy.

"Well, Levison?" he inquired. "Why are you here?"

"I've found a discovery, sir!" exclaimed Levison eagerly, but with perfect coolness. "I've found out the hiding-place of Collins, the reformatory cad! I thought I'd better come straight to you and tell you, sir."

Dr. Monk started.

"Indeed, Levison?" he exclaimed quickly, looking keenly at his visitor. "Perhaps you will tell me how you

gained the information, and where the boy is?"

"I followed Blake and D'Arcy down Rylcombe Lane, sir," replied Levison. "They'd just bought some provisions from Mrs. Taggles, so I know jolly well that what I say is right! Collins is in the old castle ruins, and I've already sent Crump, the constable, there to arrest him!"

Dr. Monk looked up quickly. "Are you sure of this, Levison—positive?" he replied.

"Positive, sir!"

"And you have sent Mr. Crump to the ruins?"

"Rather, sir!"

Dr. Monk looked at Levison coldly.

"And why have you hurried so much in order to tell me this news?" he inquired. "Being a schoolboy, I should naturally have thought you would have endeavoured to shield the poor boy who is hiding among the ruins. You evidently take delight in giving him away."

"But I thought—"

"You thought that I should be glad of the news, so that I can hand Collins over to the reformatory?" said Dr. Monk.

"Well, perhaps you are right. I am glad of the news. But, Levison, I do not admire your action in coming to me. Perhaps—I may be wrong—you are the author of the anonymous letter which informed me of the facts?"

Levison started.

"I, sir," he exclaimed. "I don't know anything— But what anonymous letter do you mean?" he added hastily. "Surely, sir, you wouldn't think I should send you such a letter?"

"We will not discuss the matter, Levison," replied Dr. Monk, rising. "As you have brought me this information, I will accompany you to the ruins at once, and personally take charge of Collins."

"Oh, good, sir!"

And Levison, flushed with triumph, followed the headmaster of the Grammar School out into the gathering dusk.

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

### At the Ruins.

"MY hat!" exclaimed Blake suddenly. "What's that?"

Jack Blake, D'Arcy, and

Tom Sinclair were sitting in the old vault, and they looked at one another, startled. Footsteps could plainly be heard descending the stone stairway.

"'Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "There is somebody comin'!"

"The door!" whispered Blake excitedly. "Shut the door!"

But before D'Arcy could do so there was an exclamation outside, and the next moment P.-c. Crump stood in the doorway, looking triumphantly at the three dismayed juniors.

"Ho!" he exclaimed, his eyes gleaming. "So 'ere you hare!"

"Hallo, Crumpy!" exclaimed Blake, recovering himself. "What the dickens are you doing here?"

"Yaas, wathah! What's the mattah, Cwumpy?"

"The matter is, young gents, that I've come 'ere in the execution of my dooty!" replied Mr. Crump heavily. "That young rip yonder is Robert Collins, an' it's my dooty to arrest 'im—"

"Arrest him?" echoed Blake. "He's not a criminal, you clump!"

"I don't say as 'e is, Master Blake, but 'H've got horders to take charge of 'im. 'E's a escaped reformatory boy, an' 'e'd best come along o' me quiet!"

Tom Sinclair stepped forward.

"It's all up, you chaps!" he exclaimed resignedly. "We can't do anything against this, you know. It's the con-

stable's duty to take me, so, of course, I shall go with him quietly. But how on earth he knew I was here is more than I can make out!"

"Ynas, wathah!" exclaimed D'Arcy indignantly. "Bai Jove, deah boys, I feel in quite a fluttah! Crump, you wottah, how did you get on the track?"

Mr. Crump stepped forward and laid a hand upon Sinclair's shoulder. Blake and D'Arcy looked on with dismayed faces and miserable feelings.

"Ow did I git on the track, Master D'Arcy?" repeated Mr. Crump, gripping Sinclair firmly. "Well, I don't mind hadmittin' that Hi was given the tip, has it were. I was jest enterin' the willage when Master Levison came hup

Blake uttered an exclamation. "So Levison told you?" he asked, silently gnashing his teeth.

"That's hit, Master Blake!" "The wottah—the howwid wascal!" shouted D'Arcy, literally dancing up and down in his excitement. "Good gwacious, this is uttably wotten of Levison! I have nevah heard of such wank weachery!"

"Now, come hon, young shaver!" said P.-c. Crump impatiently. "I can't stand 'ere hall night—"

"Hallo!" interrupted Blake suddenly. "Somebody else coming?"

"Gwheat Scott!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "Whetevah is the mattah? Ewewybody seems to be comin' to the wains to-night!"

"I wondah— Bai Jove, Dr. Monk!" Blake wheeled round, and saw the figures of Dr. Monk and Levison, the latter wearing a self-satisfied smile.

Dr. Monk stepped into the vault and looked round.

"I am glad I arrived before you took your prisoner away, Crump!" he exclaimed. "I have a word to say to him. Good-evening, boys," he added, looking at Blake and D'Arcy with a smile.

"Good-evening, sir," replied the St. Jim's juniors, rather surprised at Dr. Monk's cheery smile and genial tone of voice.

"So this is where you have been hiding, Collins?" continued the doctor, glancing round. "Well, well, I do not blame you in the least. And as for you, Blake and D'Arcy, I consider that you have acted in a very self-sacrificing and heroic manner. Notwithstanding the fact that you risked expulsion, you stood by this much-wronged boy to the very last."

"But—but I don't understand, sir!" gasped Blake.

"Perhaps I had better enlighten you, then," replied the Head of the Grammar School. "Crump, kindly take your hand off that boy's shoulder. Collins, I have some very good news for you—news which will instantly put an end to all this secrecy and unpleasantness."

Bob Collins stepped forward, his eyes gleaming, his heart beating quickly.

"Do you mean that—?" "I mean that your innocence has been proved, my boy," replied Dr. Monk. "I have received a wire this evening from the headmaster of Holbridge School, and it positively clears you of all guilt."

"Thank Heaven!" murmured Blake's cousin thankfully.

Levison, in the background, was staring before him with pale face, and a set look in his eyes. Innocent! Collins' innocence had been proved! So that was the reason why Dr. Monk had looked at him so coldly. Levison understood now, and a wild rage filled his breast. After all the trouble he had taken it was proved, at the last moment, that Collins was innocent.

Without a word, Levison turned and made his way out of the ruins.

Meanwhile, those within had not noticed his departure.

"So I hain't got a prisoner hat all!" exclaimed Mr. Crump indignantly. "Hunless you can prove this lad's innocence, sir, I'm afraid Hi can't let 'im go!"

"That will be all right, Crump," replied Dr. Monk. "I will take full responsibility for his safety. My boys, this affair has had its unpleasant aspects, but they are compensated for by the splendid exhibition of pluck and good-comradeship which you have shown. I will ask no questions as to how you escaped from the school, Collins, and Dr. Holmes will, I am sure, let the matter rest as it is. I have my suspicions, of course," he added genially, with a twinkle in Blake and D'Arcy's direction, "but of those I will say nothing."

"Thank you, sir!" exclaimed Blake. "Bai Jove, sir, you're a bwick!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy enthusiastically.

"But how is my innocence proved, sir?" asked Collins eagerly.

"By a very simple explanation, my boy," replied Dr. Monk. "I can only express my surprise that the affair was not investigated thoroughly before you were condemned. Several valuable articles, I believe, were found in your locker at Holbridge?"

"Yes, sir," replied Collins quickly. "Lots of the fellows' things had been

disappearing for weeks, and at last a couple of watches, some money, and other things were found in my locker. The proof was dead against me, so I was expelled and sent to the reformatory."

"Who really took the things, sir?" asked Blake.

"They were not taken by a thief at all," replied Dr. Monk. "It appears that they have just discovered a boy at Holbridge who is a sleep-walker. This boy, totally unconscious of the fact, left his bed at nights, and walked about the building. In his unconscious condition, he stole things from his companions' lockers, and hid them away in odd places. The reason the matter came to light was startling, but very simple. While one of the masters was having a last pipe in the privacy of his own room, the sleep-walker entered and quietly deposited some stolen money in the master's desk, under his very eyes. Then the boy left the room and went back to bed."

"My only topper!" ejaculated Collins. "So—so there wasn't a thief at all, sir?"

"Only an unconscious thief, my boy. This news reached me this evening by letter, but I could do nothing because you were not to be found. An hour ago I received a telegram from Holbridge saying that the headmaster will be delighted to have you back as a pupil."

"Bai Jove, that's wippin'!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "The only twouble is that we shall lose you, deah boy!"

Half an hour later, Blake and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were back at St. Jim's, telling the news to an excited crowd of juniors in the common-room. Tom Merry & Co. and the others wanted to find Levison and punish him for his cadishness, but the call of the Fourth was nowhere to be found. He realised the welcome he would receive, and had accordingly made himself scarce.

Meanwhile, Tom Sinclair—otherwise, Bob Collins—had accompanied Dr. Monk to the Grammar School, where he was welcomed heartily. After a hearty meal, he was packed off straight to bed, with the knowledge that everything was all serene, and that his time of trouble was at an end.

The next day was a sorry one for Levison. The juniors sought him out after morning lessons, and he was made to suffer for his guilt in a right and fitting manner. Bob Collins came over to tea with the juniors before returning to his old school. And a most enjoyable meal it proved to be—one of the happiest Bob Collins had spent for many a long day.

Next Friday's Long Complete Tale of TOM MERRY & CO.  
is entitled:

# "THE RIVAL HOUSEMASTERS!"

BY MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Please Order Your Copy of the PENNY POPULAR  
in Advance!

# THE FRENCH MASTER'S SECRET!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

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

## THE FIRST CHAPTER. Breaking Bounds.

**P**ATTER, patter, patter! Harry Wharton lay and listened to the rush of the rain on the windows of the Remove dormitory at Greyfriars, the roar of the wind in the leafless trees, and deeper, more terrible still, the boom of the distant breakers on rock and shifting sea-sand.

He could not sleep. It was not the noise that kept him awake—that was rather lulling than otherwise. He had heard a deep boom in the distance, and it had set him wondering.

Was it a gun? If so, the unhappy vessel had had time to fire only one. Wharton thought of the roaring seas sweeping round the great Shoulder—of the foaming waves lashing round the doomed vessel, of her pale crew, and passengers, perhaps, coming home to England, and it might be for Christmas!

He felt that he could not close his eyes till he knew whether there was a wreck on the rocks of the Shoulder that wild night.

He sat up in bed at last. It was very quiet in the dormitory; the roar of the storm did not keep the others awake.

"Nugent!"  
"There was no reply. Harry Wharton stepped out of bed, and tapped Nugent on the shoulder. His chum woke up at once.

"Who's that?"  
"It's I—Harry."  
"What the dickens are you doing out of bed?"

"I'm going down to the bay, Frank."  
Nugent sat up in blank amazement. He tried to peer at his chum's face in the darkness, but he could only make out a dim shadow.

"You're going down to the bay?" he said, in measured tones.

"Yes."  
"In this storm?"  
"Because of the storm, Frank."

"You'll be drenched—soaked—if you are not crushed by a tree or struck by lightning," granted Nugent.

"I don't mind getting wet, and I'm not afraid of lightning," said Harry, with a smile. "I can't help thinking it was a gun I heard, Frank."

"If it was, old chap, it's all over long ago."

"I—I suppose so; but I'm going. Will you come?"

"Well, you're an ass; but one fool makes many," said Nugent, putting one leg out of bed and shivering. "I'll go if you do."

"And so will I!" said another voice. "Excuse my hearing your jaw. The thunder woke me up. It's a nice night for a walk, too."

"I'll be glad if you'll come, Bob."

"Oh, I'll come, if only to look after

you!" grunted Bob Cherry, as he got out of bed. "No good putting on coats. A mac would be soaked through in five minutes in this rain. We may as well make up our minds to be wet through."

"Well, it won't hurt us so long as we keep in motion, and have a good rub down immediately we get in."

"Oh, no; it will be good for the health!" grinned Bob Cherry. "But I'm game, if you two silly asses are! Shall I wake up any of the chaps?"

"No; we three will be enough. I don't suppose we can do any good, but —"

"But if you can I will lend a hand," said Tom Brown, the New Zealander, sitting up in bed. "You chaps going out?"

"Yes. Wharton thinks he heard a gun."

"Good! I'm coming!"  
The juniors dressed quickly, without striking a light. They did not want to cause any comments on their proceedings, or to run risk of the matter being heard of outside the dormitory. Although Wharton's anxiety excused him, his action was a breach of the rules of the school, and it was very necessary to keep it dark.

They crept to the door of the Remove dormitory, and left it silently, shutting the door. Then they crept down the passage, and down the stairs at the back to a window looking out over the chapel green, which had been similarly used more than once before.

"Keep off my feet, you clumsy ass!" came a deep voice from Nugent.

"Keep your mouldy feet out of the way, then!"  
"Don't jaw, you chaps!"

"Who's jawing?" demanded two voices together.

"Well, shut up, then! Here's the window."

"Black as your hat," said Tom Brown. "Lucky there's lightning, or we shouldn't be able to see a step of the way."

"We may get too much of the lightning!"  
"Oh, rats!"

Harry Wharton opened the window, and the chums of the Remove dropped out one by one. Then Wharton closed the window from the outside.

To find their way to the school wall was easy enough for the juniors in the pitchiest darkness, as a rule. But it was not easy to-night. The wind caught them as they left the angle of the building, and hurled them to and fro.

Nugent clutched at Bob Cherry to save himself, and caught hold of him, unfortunately by the ear. Bob Cherry gave a wild yell, which would infallibly have given them away but for a gust of wind that drowned it with a greater volume of sound.

"What on earth's the matter?" muttered Wharton.

"Yow! Some ass had grabbed my ear!"

"Sorry!" gasped Nugent.  
"Look here! None of your little jokes, now!"

"I wasn't joking!"  
"Then you're an ass—"

"This way," said Harry Wharton.  
"That's all very well! That frajulous idiot has nearly grabbed my ear off!"

"Come on!"  
Bob Cherry followed, grumbling. The four juniors, fighting their way through the wind in the open Close, gained the shelter of the wall at last, and stopped there for some minutes to recover their breath.

"My hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "We shall have the gentlest little prom in the world if the wind keeps on like this!"

"We get the full force of it now, as it sweeps round the Black Pike," said Wharton. "It will be better in the lane."

"And worse on the shore."  
"Can't be helped. Give me a bunk up on the ivy."

"Hark!"  
"What is it?"

"I heard something."  
"Blessed if I don't hear something every second!" growled Nugent. "There is a row going on all the time. Are you ready?"

"There's somebody in the quad," said Bob obstinately.

"Rats! Nobody but us would be idiot enough to be out on a night like this."

"I thought I heard something, too," said Tom Brown of Taranaki. "Listen!"

They listened, crouching close to the wall.

Several times that sound of gasping came to them in the lulls of the wind, as if some person short of breath was fighting his way towards them.

He was coming closer, whoever he was, and the juniors thrilled with anxiety.

"Suppose we bump him, whoever he is?" suggested Nugent, in a faint whisper. "He couldn't see us, even if it's a master."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he is! My only hat! Bunter!"

A fat form, whirling along with the wind behind it for the moment, came towards the juniors at a rapid and helpless run, and ran right into them, and the exclamation it gave showed who it was plainly enough.

"Ow! Yow! Oh, really!"  
It was Billy Bunter.

Harry Wharton stood quite still in his amazement. He had not known that the Owl of the Remove had awakened when he left the dormitory; and curious as Bunter always was to know all about other fellows' proceedings, Wharton had not expected him to brave weather like this for the sake of gratifying his curiosity.

Bob Cherry groped in the darkness for Bunter's shoulder, and closed his grasp

upon something which a harder grip and a squeal from Bunter showed to be a fat nose.

"Ow!"  
Bob chuckled, and changed his grip to Bunter's shoulder. Then he proceeded to shake the fat junior as a terrier might shake a rat. A series of explosive gasps came from the Falstaff of Greyfriars.

"Ow! Ow! Yow! Ow! Ow!"  
"You fat young rascal!"  
"Ow! Ow! Ow!"  
"What have you followed us for?"  
"Yow! Yow! Yow!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Out of Bounds.

**B**OB CHERRY shook, and Billy Bunter gasped for several minutes. It occurred to Bob at last that the fat junior could not very well answer while he was having his breath shaken out of him.

He ceased to shake Bunter, but retained a tight grip upon his collar.  
"Bunter, what are you doing here?" demanded Wharton sternly.  
"Ow!"

"You young porpoise! What did you leave the dormitory for?"  
"I—I'm going to have some of the grub!" gasped Bunter.

"The what?"  
"The grub."  
"What grub?"  
"I know jolly well you fellows sneaked out of the dorm to have a feed somewhere," said Bunter. "I woke up just as you were going. I knew it at once."  
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see why I should be left out. Where are you going to have the feed?"  
"You young ass! We're not going to have any feed till breakfast-to-morrow."  
"Oh, really, Wharton—"  
"We're going down to the bay."  
"The— the bay?"

"Yes, to look at the sea, and see if there's a ship. You can come if you like," said Harry Wharton, with a laugh.  
"Yah! I wouldn't be such a fool!" Bunter gave a grunt of deep discontent.  
"Let's get out," said Bob Cherry.  
"Bunter will go on jawing all night if he can get anybody to listen. Give me a bunk up on the ivy."  
"Right you are!"

"I—I say, you fellows—"  
"Ow! I said a bunk up, not jam my napper against the bricks!" howled Bob Cherry.

"Oh, never mind—"  
"Yow! But I do mind."  
"I say, you fellows—"  
"That's right! I've got hold now!" growled Bob Cherry, scrambling through the wet ivy to the top of the wall. "My hat! I'm in a nice state! Any of you fellows wet?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"Here goes," said Tom Brown, swinging himself to the top of the wall.  
"Hallo! Did my foot knock against somebody?"

"Ow! Ow! Ow!" came from Bunter.  
"Oh, my napper! Yow!"  
"Sorry! Ha, ha!"  
"Ow! Keep your silly boot off my head, you chump!"  
"Rats! Keep your silly head off my boot!"

"I'm hurt!"  
"Well, what do you expect if you jam your head against a fellow's boot? I shouldn't wonder if the boot is damaged, too."  
"Yow! Ow!"

"I'm up," said Wharton. "Now, then, Nugent, grip my hand, and I'll have you up in a jiffy."  
"Right you are!"  
"I—I say, you fellows, if it isn't a feed—"

"It isn't, you duffer!"

"Then you ought to see me back across the Close. I—"

"Oh, go and eat cokenuts! Up with you, Nugent!"

Bunter groped blindly after Nugent, determined that they should not all go. He caught hold of the Removite's ankle.

"Leggo!" roared Nugent.  
"Yah! Look here—"

"I'll bill you with my other boot if you don't leggo!"

"Yes, but—"

Bump!

Bunter gasped as Nugent's boot dumped on his shoulder. He immediately grasped Frank's other ankle, however, and held it fast.

Nugent had one hand on the ivy. Wharton was holding the other. Bunter was now hanging on to both legs. Nugent wriggled and yelled.

"Leggo, Bunter!"  
"Yah! Come down, and—"

"I'll fall on you!"  
"Yah!"

"The young ass!" gasped Nugent.  
"I—I'm falling! Oh!"

"Not going to keep us waiting all night, I suppose?" suggested Bob Cherry.

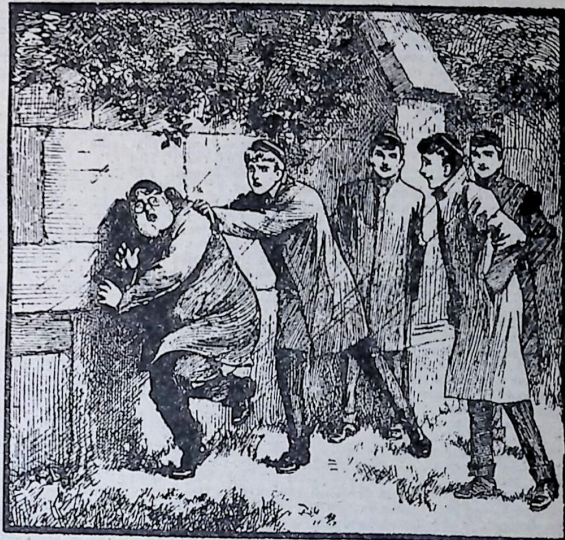
"How could I help it?" hooted Nugent. "That clump was hanging on to my legs."

"Still, tempus fugit, you know."  
"Rats!" said Nugent crossly.

"Here goes!" said Harry Wharton, swinging himself to the outside of the wall. "Mind how you drop!"

One by one the juniors dropped into the lane. There was a yelp from Bob Cherry as Nugent dropped on his toe—whether by accident or design was not apparent. Nugent said nothing on the matter, but Bob Cherry said a great deal. He was still referring to the matter, in fact, all the way down the lane as far as the slopes of the Black Pike. There the wind, sweeping round the Pike, buffeted them breathlessly, and talk was impossible.

It was fortunate that the Greyfriars juniors knew the way blindfold, for the darkness was blinding. They could not see a foot before them, and the wild wind



Bob Cherry changed his grip to Bunter's shoulder, and proceeded to shake the fat junior as a terrier might shake a rat. "Yow! Yow! Yow!"

"Here, hold on! I can't stand your weight on one hand!" gasped Wharton.  
"I—I'm going!"

And he went!  
There was a gasp like escaping steam from Billy Bunter as a heavy body from above bumped upon him and sent him rolling in the rain. Nugent sat in a puddle and said things.  
"Ow!" grunted Bunter. "I—I—I'm killed!"

"No such luck!" growled Nugent.  
"Oh, my back's broken, and I think my neck!"  
"Come here and let me see," said Nugent, doubling his fist.

But Bunter crawled away in the other direction. Nugent's tone was enough for him. He moved with surprising swiftness, too, considering that his back was broken.

Nugent scrambled into the ivy again.

hurled them to and fro as they went, so that they resembled drunken figures staggering down the lane.

Round the bend again, and they heard the thunder of the sea, and a dim vision of white foam glimmered in the distance through the dark.

Lights flashed through the night on the left of them now, and they knew that they came from the windows of Cliff House, the girls' school presided over by Miss Penelope Primrose. Harry wondered what Marjorie would say if she had known that four drenched Greyfriars juniors were passing under the windows of Cliff House at that hour.

Past Cliff House the quartette tramped on, lashed by the rain, fighting the wind, and they halted at last with the white foam from the breakers curling on the sands at their feet.

## THE THIRD CHAPTER.

## The Prey of the Storm.

THE sea was lashed to fury by the storm that swept over it. High round the rocks of the Shoulder the waves ran and roared, and a dull booming came from the hollow caves under the great cliff as the sea invaded the deepest recesses.

Only when the lightning zigzagged across the sky could the juniors catch a glimpse of the Shoulder, and of the wide ocean tossing outside the bay.

There were others on the beach besides themselves—burly men in oilskins, staggering in the wind. They were fishermen from the village of Pegg, and under their slouched hats their faces were anxious.

A man with a wooden leg was stumping on the sand, muttering strange oaths as the breakers dashed their spray over him. Harry Wharton heard his voice, and ran towards him.

"Captain Stump!"

The old sailorman stumped to a standstill, and touched his cap.

"Master Harry! You out here—at this time o' night?"

"Yes. I thought I heard a gun."

"There was one gun, Master Harry," said Captain Stump, making a funnel of his big brown hands to convey his voice to Wharton. "They only had time for one, poor critters."

The juniors shivered.

"There—there was a ship!" cried Nugent.

"Ay, ay!"

"On the Shoulder?"

"Ay, ay! I figgers it out, young gents, that they was a foreigner, and they didn't see the lighthouse in the mist, and they ran right on the Shoulder. They fired one gun that brought us all out of the Anchor, but they hadn't no time for more."

"Then she's gone down?" said Wharton, with a heavy heart.

"Ay, ay, Master Harry."

Wharton turned his glance seaward. A lightning-flash showed the towering cliff, the broken rocks at its base, over which the water was wildly tumbling. Truly, a vessel had little chance of survival if she found herself there.

"And no one was saved?"

"Not likely."

"Anything come ashore?"

"Yes, a few spars. They're yonder, Master Harry."

A lantern was burning in the shelter of the rock, and there the wreckage had been dragged. The juniors looked at it—a broken foremast, with part of a boom still clinging to it, and rags and tatters of rigging.

"Poor fellows!" said Nugent, at last.

"It's all up with them. It must be nearly an hour now since she struck."

"Yes."

"May as well get back."

Harry Wharton did not reply. He was standing, planted firmly against the wind, staring seaward. With every flash in the sky, the wild scene of turmoil was revealed for a fleeting moment, and Harry was trying to discover some trace of the wreck out at sea. But it was hopeless.

The timbers must have been ground to ruin at once on the sharp rocks, and it was equally hopeless for any of the crew to have gained the shore. The rocks upon which the vessel had come to grief were too far from the land.

"It's no good," said Bob Cherry, in a low voice.

Wharton nodded.

"I suppose not."

"The strongest swimmer could not live for two minutes in a sea like this,"

even if he wasn't dashed on the rocks," said Nugent, with a shudder.

"No, but—"

"But what, Harry?"

"I was thinking of the sea-caves. You remember the caves we explored, where we saw the smuggler, and nearly got drowned in the tide? There's a chance that a chap might get swept into them by the sea."

"A chance in a hundred."

"We couldn't get down to the caves till the storm's over," said Tom Brown, "and it will be jolly risky all day to-morrow, with the water running high. The fishermen wouldn't take out their boats near the Shoulder to-morrow."

Wharton nodded thoughtfully. It was, as Nugent had said, a hopeless chance that a swimmer from the wreck might have been swept into the cavern; but it might have happened. And, thinking of the possibility of a half-drowned, drenched sailorman crouching shivering among the rocks of the sea-cave, Harry longed to go to the rescue, on the merest chance.

But that was impossible now.

Until the sea went down, it was impossible to even approach the cave, which, so far as Harry knew, had an entrance only from the seaward.

"Look here, young chaps! We can get down here first thing in the morning, before brekker—"

"That's not a bad idea."

"I know it's the merest chance, but if it should happen so, think of the poor chaps shut up in that cavern, starving."

"We'll risk it, Harry."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Something's turned up!"

There was a grouping of the fishermen round some object on the sands, tossed up by the waves. The juniors ran down towards them. Captain Stump was holding up a sailor's cap, and a fisherman was throwing the light of a lantern upon it. There was a name on the cap—the name of a ship.

The juniors, as well as the fishermen, read the name in the lantern-light. It was the *May Queen*.

"English craft," said Captain Stump, "or American. And all gone to Davy Jones' locker. Ah, it's a hard life for poor Jack!"

And the old sailorman stumped off towards the Anchor Inn for consolation. A strange expression came over Harry Wharton's face.

"The *May Queen*," he repeated slowly, as the juniors turned away.

"Have you heard of the craft?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Yes, I think so."

"You think so! How do you mean? I suppose you know?"

Wharton halted in the shelter of a rock, where he could speak without being deafened by the wind.

"I heard the name of the *May Queen* mentioned only yesterday," he said.

"At Greyfriars, then?"

"Yes; by Monsieur Charpentier."

Bob Cherry whistled.

"The French master!"

"That's it. Poor old Mossoo knows somebody on board the vessel, I'm afraid," said Harry Wharton. "He was reading a newspaper in his study when I passed his window yesterday, and he beckoned to me. He was trying to make out the shipping news, and he seemed fogged, and asked me to look at it and tell him when the *May Queen* was expected in port."

"By George!"

"It was easy enough for me, of course; but Mossoo is fogged by English newspapers. The *May Queen* was due in port to-day."

"Oh!"

"Mossoo thanked me for my assist-

ance, and looked worried—I suppose because the vessel had been delayed."

"Poor old Mossoo! He's a harmless little ass, and it will be rough on him if he had a relation or a friend on this craft."

"Very rough."

"Ought we to tell him?" said Nugent hesitatingly.

"Well, he'll know soon enough, I suppose."

"No good hurrying up with ill news," said Wharton. "Somebody may have survived. We can't be sure till to-morrow, anyway. Ill news can always wait."

"Yes, that's so."

"Let's get back to Greyfriars, and get a change."

"Good!"

And the juniors tramped away towards the school.

## THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

## The Man in the Cave.

HARRY WHARTON awoke as the first beams of the winter sun penetrated the shadows of the Remove dormitory.

The morning was cold, but Harry jumped out of bed when he had been awake about two seconds. He shook his comrades, and soon awakened them. They turned out, Bob Cherry grumbling at the cold.

Harry Wharton & Co. finished dressing, putting on their thickest boots and scarves, and left the dormitory. They went downstairs, finding only an early housemaid about, who looked at them in surprise. They went out into the Close. The ground was strewn with twigs and boughs from the trees, torn down in the storm of the previous night.

"Some work for Gosling," grumbled Bob Cherry. "A little exercise will do him good. Jolly high wind."

The wind was still high, and it sang about their ears as they went down the lane round the base of the Black Pike. But there was no rain, and the sky was clear, and a hard winter sunlight fell over the Pike and the wide meadows and long lanes. The juniors came in sight of Cliff House, and passed it on their way to the sea. A wooden-legged man was stumping on the shore. He touched his cap to the juniors.

"You're up early, young gents."

"Anything more come ashore?" asked Harry.

"A boat and some spars," said Captain Stump.

"Name on the boat?"

"Ay, ay! The *May Queen*."

"Then there's no doubt about it."

"No, young gents. And there's a Press gentleman from Lunnon here already, though how I don't know," said Captain Stump.

"Any—any bodies?" faltered Harry.

The old sailorman shook his head.

"There'll be some later, Master Harry.

Though a good many of them will be sucked under in the hollow channels under the cliff yonder. Where are you going, sir?"

"We want our boat."

The old sailorman looked alarmed.

"You're never going out with a heavy swell on the sea like this, Master Harry."

"We shall be all right."

"But, Master Harry—"

"Let's run the boat down," said Bob Cherry. "It's all right, cap'n. We knew how to look after boats before you were born, you know."

The old man shook his head solemnly, but the Greyfriars juniors ran the boat down to the water and successfully launched it in spite of the swell. Harry Wharton shipped the rudder, and they pulled into the bay.



The sea was indeed rolling with a heavy swell, and the boat rocked upon the heavy surges. It was no easy matter to pull for the Shoulder, and by no means safe to approach the cliff with so heavy a sea running.

But the Greyfriars juniors did not falter.

The idea was still strong in Harry's mind that some survivor of the wreck—perhaps two or three shivering and starving wretches—might be clustered in the cavern, hopeless of deliverance.

That thought was quite enough to make the lads brave the dangers of the rocks and rolling waters.

Harry knew the place well, and he steered for the channel among the wild rocks and curling waves where the opening of the great cavern lay.

Within the ring of rocks the water was calmer, and the worst of the danger was past. On smoother water, the boat floated into the cavern.

High over them arched the great, grey rocks.

Harry Wharton stood up in the boat and lighted the lantern he had brought with him, sweeping the light to and fro as the boat advanced on the black waters. Was any refugee lurking in the cave?

At high tide the lower cave was filled to the very roof with the surging waters, but it was possible to climb the rocks to a place of safety farther back in the cave, where the hollow extended upwards into an upper cave.

But in the darkness and clamour of the storm, could any wretched refugee from the wreck have thus saved himself?

"We shall find no one," said Nugent, shaking his head. "If a man had been carried in here by the water, he must have been drowned."

"Look!" cried Tom Brown suddenly.

The boat was grating on the sand.

Beyond the water mark, still clinging to a broken spar, lay the figure of a man.

Harry Wharton sprang out of the boat. He ran quickly to the still—terribly still—foam and flashed the lantern light upon it. His heart stood almost still for the moment.

Was the man living?

Was it a dead body that the juniors had come to discover in the gloomy shadows of the cavern under the Shoulder?

The juniors in the boat held their breath, waiting for Harry to speak. The captain of the Remove knelt beside the still form.

He turned the face up to the light—a face of sallow complexion, with thin lips and an aquiline nose. The eyes were closed and still. The features were enough to tell Harry that he was looking upon the face of a Frenchman.

But the chest was moving slightly; the thin lips were parted. The man was insensible, but he was living.

Wharton gave a gasp of relief.

"He's alive, you chaps!"

"Thank goodness!" exclaimed Nugent, with a gasp. "I was afraid—"

"It's all right."

"The all-rightfulness is terrific!" murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Get him into the boat while I look round and see if there are any more!" exclaimed Harry, rising from the side of the insensible Frenchman.

"Right you are!"

Wharton moved up the cave, flashing the light of the lantern to and fro, and calling loudly in English and French alternately.

But there came no reply to the echoing of his voice.

Nowhere was there a sign of any other refugee, and it was soon clear that the Frenchman was the only man whom the grudging waves had swept past the barrier of rocks into the hollow cavern.

Wharton shuddered as he thought of what the man must have gone through, clinging to the spar, tossed to and fro in the blackness of the cave, and escaping death a thousand times by a miracle.

He returned to the boat.

The juniors had lifted the insensible Frenchman into it. As Wharton stepped in after him, the man's eyes opened wildly, and he moaned.

"He's coming to," said Bob Cherry.

"No one else, Wharton?"

"No one."

"It's rotten! But it's something to have saved one life. The man must have died here," said Mark Linley.

"Yes, it is something—much to that poor fellow." Harry bent over the Frenchman, and met his wild eyes.

"You are safe now, my poor fellow. Je suis ami—you are among friends."

"Ah! A moi—a moi!" moaned the man dazedly. "Ah! Ou suis-je?"

"You are safe—with friends," said Harry. "Can you speak English?"

The man's eyes seemed to become more intelligent.

"Ah! I am in Angleterre," he murmured. "Ah! I am saved! How—how did I come here?"

He spoke good English, but with a strong accent of France.

"You were cast into the cave," said Harry.

"Ah! I remember."

"We came to look for any that might be there, and we found you. We are taking you to where you can get rest and food," said Harry gently.

The man nodded; he seemed too weak to speak. The juniors pulled out of the cavern. In the sunlight on the sea the Frenchman blinked weakly, and his eyes sought the towering mass of the Shoulder, with the gulls shrieking round the summit.

His face seemed to light up.

"What!" he muttered. "What is that cliff?"

"The Shoulder, we call it," said Wharton.

"Ah! I saw it from the sea—hier soir—yesterday evening. Ah!"

The man shuddered, and lay quiet again. The juniors could do nothing for him till they reached Pegg Village, and they turned their attention to getting there as quickly as possible. With great care they steered their way through the rocks, the Frenchman shuddering as the foam leaped high round the gunwale.

Then a steady pull across the bay.

The Frenchman lay quiet, but presently he spoke.

"You—how came you to save me?" he said. "You are not fishermen—you are schoolboys. Whence do you come?"

"We belong to a school near here," said Harry.

"A school. Ah!"

"Yes, Greyfriars!"

The Frenchman gave a sudden cry, and sat upright; then, overcome by the effort, he fell back into the bottom of the boat again.

Wharton bent towards him.

"What is the matter? Do you know Greyfriars?"

"Greyfriars?"

"Yes."

"Ha, ha!"

It was a faint, chuckling laugh; but in words the Frenchman made no reply.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

## The Survivor.

THERE was a shout on the beach as the juniors ran the boat in. The fishermen had seen that there was an addition to the number in the boat, and half a dozen brawny sons of the sea ran into the water in their big sea-boots to help the boat in, and to carry the exhausted survivor of the wreck ashore.

"Where did you find him, sir?" asked Trumper, a big, burly fisherman, as he reached in and picked up the Frenchman like a baby in his mighty arms.

"In the smugglers' cave."

"Good heavens!" said the fisherman.

He bore the Frenchman to the shore, and laid him on the sands. Captain Stump had already hobbled down from the Anchor with a flask of brandy. He placed a tin mug to the Frenchman's lips, and the man drank eagerly. The potent spirit brought a flush to his cheeks and new light to his eyes.

Two girls, too, joined the crowd round the Frenchman. The juniors raised their caps as they saw Marjorie Hazeldene and her friend Clara, of Cliff House.

"We saw you put out to sea from a window," said Marjorie, with a smile to Harry. "We watched you till you were out of sight near the Shoulder."

"And our hearts were in our mouths, too," said Miss Clara. "Why, you might have been dashed to pieces a dozen times."

"I'm jolly glad we weren't!" said Harry, laughing.

"The gladfulness is terrific, most charming miss."

"And you found him in the smugglers' cave," said Miss Clara. "How lucky for the poor man! What is going to be done with him now?"

Wharton looked a little perplexed.

"He can't be taken to Greyfriars," he remarked. "He's too weak to be removed far. I suppose he had better go to the Anchor."

"Not at all!" said a decided voice, as Miss Penelope Primrose appeared upon the scene. "He must be taken up to Cliff House. I will send for the doctor from Briardale."

"Werry good, ma'am," said Trumper. "Bear a hand, mates."

Miss Primrose bent over the Frenchman.

"We will take every care of you, my poor friend," she said, in her gentle voice, "and look after you till you can be restored to your friends."

"Merci, madame," said the Frenchman faintly.

"Ah, you are from a foreign country," said Miss Primrose, speaking in French.

"All the more reason why we should take care of you. Marjorie, my love, will you run quickly up to the house and request Miss Locke to have a room prepared for this unfortunate man?"

"Certainly, Miss Primrose."

And Marjorie, with a bright smile to Harry Wharton, ran away with Clara; and three or four sturdy fishermen followed, bearing the shipwrecked Frenchman.

The Greyfriars juniors followed as far as the gates of Cliff House, and then they turned their steps in the direction of the school.

They were already considerably late for breakfast, and it behoved them to get to Greyfriars as quickly as possible.

Harry Wharton's brow was clouded with thought as the juniors tramped home.

They reached Greyfriars, and Gosling, the porter, gave them an extremely significant look as they came in.

"Which Mr. Quelch is in a bad temper."

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 267.

## TO THE BOYS AT THE FRONT.

If you are unable to obtain this publication regularly, please tell any newsagent to get it from:

Messageries HACHETTE et Cie.,  
111, Rue Reaumur,  
PARIS.

per," he remarked. "Which he's waitin' for you. Wot I says is this 'ere—"

But Harry Wharton & Co. did not wait to discover what it was that Gosling said. They hurried on to the house.

Most of the fellows had finished breakfast when the juniors came into the dining-room. Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was about to leave the Lower Fourth table. He turned his eyes very sternly upon the delinquents.

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "You have returned?"

"Yes, sir."  
"What is your excuse for absenting yourselves in this way?"

The Form-master's tone was angry, but Wharton felt a sense of relief. Monsieur Charpentier had evidently either omitted or forgotten to report the escape of the previous night.

"I am sorry, sir. We were delayed. There has been a wreck—"

"A wreck in the bay?"

"Yes, sir. We thought there might possibly be some survivors swept into the sea-caves, and we thought we'd go there and look, sir."

"Did you find any survivors?"

"Yes, sir—one."

Mr. Quelch's face relaxed.

"You must have run considerable danger, Wharton, in getting to the caves with such a sea as must be running now."

"Oh, we know the channels well, sir!"

"Ahem! It was wrong of you to go into danger. At the same time, you have certainly saved a life. Where is the rescued man?"

"Miss Primrose had him taken up to Cliff House, sir. She is looking after him."

"Is he injured?"

"No, sir; only exhausted. I think he will pull round all right."

"Well, Wharton, as your expedition has turned out so fortunately, I shall say nothing more about your being late for breakfast," said Mr. Quelch, with a smile.

"Have your breakfast now, and then come to the Form-room."

"Thank you, sir!"

And the chums of the Remove had the unusual experience of having the dining-room to themselves for breakfast. Not quite to themselves, however. Monsieur Charpentier remained after the others were gone. Mossoo appeared to be looking out of the window, but Wharton was certain that he had been listening to what had been said.

Monsieur Charpentier remained for some time looking out of the window, and the juniors had finished breakfast, and had risen to leave the dining-room, when the little Frenchman came hastily towards them.

He signed to them to stop.

"I have heard vat you say viz Mr. Quelch, Vharton," he remarked, with an effort, and with a strange flush coming into his cheeks.

"Yes, sir," said Harry.

"Zere is zely vun man save—from ze wreck of ze May Queen?"

"Only one, sir."

"Ze sheep vas an English sheep?" said Mossoo carelessly.

"Yes, sir; I think she vas English."

"Zeu ze man zat you have save is an English sailer, n'est-ce-pas?" said the little Frenchman, with ill-concealed anxiety in looks and tones.

Wharton shook his head.

"No, sir; the man we saved wasn't English."

"Ah! Non?"

"He's a Frenchman, sir."

Monsieur Charpentier sat heavily in a chair. His eyes were fixed almost stupidly on the juniors.

"A Frenchman?" he said at last.

"Yes, sir."

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 257.

"Do you know his name, zen?"

"I did not ask it, sir."

"Zank you! It is enoff!"

The juniors walked out of the dining-room. The French-master remained sitting where he was. As they went out, they heard him mutter to himself:

"Helas! So many brave men zey perish, and zat vun—zat vun he escape! Juste ciel!"

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### A Visitor for Mossoo!

HARRY WHARTON obtained permission before afternoon lessons to cycle over to Cliff House, and inquire of Miss Primrose about the rescued Frenchman. The wind had fallen, and it was an easy ride now down the lane to the bay. The captain of the Remove met Marjorie and Clara on the sands, with a crowd of the girls of Cliff House, and he stopped instead of going up to the school.

"You've come over to ask about the Frenchman?" said Marjorie.

"Yes. How is he?"

"He's well—and gone."

Wharton stared.

"Gone!"

"Yes. Haven't you seen him?"

"Seen him? No!"

"He came over to your school, I think."

"To Greyfriars?"

"Yes. He did not seem much the worse for what he had been through, after he had had rest and food," said Marjorie. "He was not a nice man, I think, Harry. He had an evil look in his eyes."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"I didn't like his looks much myself," he confessed.

"But he was very polite to Miss Primrose," went on Marjorie. "He thanked her for her kindness to him. He told her his name is Gaston Duprez, and that he had a friend at Greyfriars, and was going there."

"He must mean our French-master."

"Ah, little Monsieur Charpentier! I did not think of that. I suppose so. I suppose one ought to feel kindly towards a shipwrecked man, but he looked quite evil, I thought," said Marjorie.

"I was in the room when he said good-bye to Miss Primrose, and he had such a curious look in his eyes when he said he had a friend at Greyfriars. It was just as if he really meant an enemy, whom he was going to injure. I suppose it was only fancy, but I don't like him."

"I hate him!" said Miss Clara, who always carried her likes and dislikes, and everything else, further than Marjorie.

"Oh, Clara!"

"So I do," said Miss Clara. "I think he is a wicked man. He kicked a dog after he left Cliff House. I saw him, and it ran away howling. He is a beast!"

"Well, I thought he looked rather a beast, and a chap who kicks a dog is a beast, right enough," agreed Harry. "I haven't seen him. I wonder whether he came up to Greyfriars. He didn't look the kind of chap our little Mossoo would have for a friend. Mossoo is a funny merchant sometimes, but he's as good as gold, and as inoffensive as a kitten."

Wharton remained chatting with Marjorie till it was high time to return to Greyfriars, and then he pedalled back in a puzzled mood.

He was evidently correct in his surmise that there was some strange connection between Monsieur Charpentier and the stranger from the sea.

Who could this man Duprez be?

He certainly was not a friend of Monsieur Charpentier, and Mossoo had said that he was not a relation.

Little Mossoo was not the kind of man

to have enemies. He had never made one at Greyfriars. Wharton could not understand it.

The Remove captain rode into the Close, and jumped off his cycle as he caught sight of a group of juniors talking to a stranger in the quad.

It was the Frenchman!

He had been provided with a change of clothes by the kindness of Miss Penelope Primrose, and looked very clean and decent, and very different from his former aspect.

He raised his hat to Harry as the latter came up, wheeling his bicycle.

"Ah! This is the young gentleman who rescued me," he said. "Monsieur, I thank you very much. It was very brave and noble of you."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"That is all right," he said. "I am glad I thought of looking in the cave, that's all."

"I find that I have a friend in this neighbourhood," said the Frenchman, who spoke almost perfect English. "A gentleman, who is a master at this college."

"Indeed!"

"Oui, oui. I was just inquiring for him. His name is Charpentier."

"Our French-master!"

"Oui, oui. I was about to request one of these young gentlemen to show me to him."

"I will take you to his room," said Harry.

"More! More!"

And the Frenchman followed Harry Wharton into the house.

Although his manners were extremely polite, and he had displayed the most lively gratitude for his rescue, he had not made a good impression upon any of the juniors.

"Blessed if I like the chap!" said Nugent. "What a queer look he had in his eyes when he spoke of Mossoo. I don't believe he's the Mossoo's friend at all."

"He's come here to see him," said Brown.

"May only be going to eadge from him as a fellow-countryman."

"The probablefulness is terrific!"

"I shouldn't wonder," said Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton was not feeling comfortable in his mind as he led the way to the French-master's room. He knew that the visit of Gaston Duprez would not be welcome to Mossoo. He knew that from the words the little Frenchman had let drop in the dining-room.

He tapped at Mossoo's door.

"Entrez!" called out a faint voice.

Wharton opened the door.

Monsieur Charpentier was standing up, and his face was pale; his eyes had a scared look in them. It was clear that he fully expected his visitor.

"Duprez!"

He gusted out the name.

The now-comer smiled.

"Oui, oui, mon ami. Oui, oui."

"Zen you have come here?"

"Did you not have my letter?"

"Oui, oui; mais—"

"I have followed it."

Harry Wharton could not avoid hearing that much before he was out of the room.

He closed the door, and heard no more.

His brow was clouded as he rejoined his chums, now going into the Remove classroom.

"Well, was Mossoo glad to see his countryman?" asked Brown.

Wharton shook his head.

"No. He was frightened, I believe. He looked it."

"Frightened!"

"Yes, it looks go for anything."

"But what can there be to be afraid of?"

Wharton made a restless movement.

"I don't know! Mossoo is as good as gold, but that dark fellow has some hold on him, I imagine. I can't think how, or why. But monsieur doesn't want him to come here, and doesn't dare to order him out. That's clear!"

"The fellow must be a rotter, then!"

"No doubt about that."

And Wharton was thinking it over with a perplexed brow when they sat down for afternoon lessons. It was not exactly his business, perhaps. But he liked Mossoo, and he knew that the kind and simple little Frenchman was frequently imposed upon.

It looked as if an unscrupulous adventurer was getting the upper hand of him in some way. Harry did not understand, and the suspicion made the boy eager to interfere, and to send the stranger from the sea about his business. But he knew nothing of the affair—nor was he likely to know anything.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Mossoo Explains.

**M**ONSIEUR CHARPENTIER was walking up and down his study with a quick, nervous tread. He stopped, and glanced towards the door a dozen times, and then resumed his restless pacing. His face was pale and disturbed, and there was perspiration upon his brow.

"Ciel," he muttered, "it is terrible! I, who have done nozing—I, who am innocent—I am persecuted like zis! It is terrible!"

"Zat you? Come in, mon enfant!"

Harry Wharton entered the study.

Monsieur Charpentier turned towards him eagerly.

"Ah, I zank you for coming, Wharton! Please close ze door. I do not wish any ozzers to hear vat I have to say viz you."

"No, sir?"

"I zink you must have observe, Wharton, zat I am very mooch vorry and trouble joost lately?" said Monsieur Charpentier.

"Yes, sir, I have noticed it."

"You know zat zat man is not my friend?"

"I suspected so, sir."

"He is my enemy, Wharton—a pad, vicked man!"

"I am sorry I was the cause of his coming here, sir. But—"

The little Frenchman waved his hand.

"Zat is all right, Wharton! You was brave; you save his life. It is good. I would not zat even so vicked a man be drowned in ze shipwreck. You do vell, my boy! I am not sorry zat you save ze man. But he have brought mooch trouble to me. I tell you zis because I do not vant ze boys in ze Remove to know anything about zis."

"I will do my best, sir, to see that no rumours are spread," said Harry Wharton.

"And zen, Wharton, I will explain to you how—"

"It is not necessary, sir. I know very well that you can only be the victim of circumstances—that you have nothing to answer for, even if this man has some kind of a hold upon you."

The tears came into the little Frenchman's eyes.

"Zat is very good of you to say so, Wharton. I am glad zat you have so good an opinion of me."

"We all have, sir."

"C'est bien! But, because you trust me, Wharton, I will explain. It was ven I was in France zat I knew Duprez. He was a master at the school vere I was at, zat time. Zere was money missing, and it was known zat it was Duprez who had taken it. He ran away. Ze police zey never find him."

"Then the police want the man now?" said Wharton, opening his eyes.

"Oui, oui, ze Paris police!" said Monsieur Charpentier. "You will understand zat Duprez is not his real name."

"I suppose not, sir."

"I never zink zat I hear of him again: but he keep me in sight. He tell me zat he accuse me of being his confederate in zat robbery in ze French school, and ruin me viz my reputation. I give him money, and he go. Now he come again, and he demand more money. I zink I pay him some, and he go. You see, Wharton, I trust you. You will keep secret vat I have told you?"

"Certainly, sir! But—"

"Vat would you say?"

"Why don't you defy the scoundrel, sir?"

The little Frenchman shivered.

"I dare not! Ze post of French-master in a big English school it is not easy to get, and the least suspicion against ze character—"

"The coward!"

"He know zat I dare not risk it,"

And Harry Wharton quitted the French-master's study.

He went away with his brow darkly wrinkled, and a bitter anger in his breast against the blackmailing who was troubling the inoffensive little Frenchman.

As he had expected, Monsieur Charpentier was frightened by a shadow. If he had been determined enough to face the blackmailing, the latter would have been powerless. But the terror of incurring suspicion in the headmaster's eyes, and of having to leave the excellent berth he now possessed, made a coward of the little Frenchman.

He was likely to part with his small savings to satisfy the demands of the cowardly blackmailing, only to be fastened upon him again at a future time when Duprez was once more in need of money.

"I wonder," murmured Wharton—"I wonder if we could help him? The best thing he could do would be to go to the Head at once and tell him all about it. I'm sure Dr. Locke would stand by him. But he won't do that."

Wharton went back to his study, still reflecting upon the mysterious matter.



"Look!" cried Tom Brown suddenly. The boat was grating on the sand, and beyond the water mark, still clinging to a broken spar, lay the figure of a man.

groaned the little master. "He know zat I not stay in ze place under a breath of suspicion."

Wharton's brows contracted.

"But if you kicked him out, sir, most likely he wouldn't have the nerve to go to Dr. Locke."

"Oui, oui. Possible! But if he did?"

"I think the Head would give you a chance, sir."

"It is zat I have a mozzer in France, who vill starve if I not send ze money," said Mossoo. "I dare not risk it. I shall pay ze coquin—not so much as he ask, but enoff to make him go away."

"But he will return, sir."

"Possible!"

"You can't get rid of the villain for good by paying him money, sir. That's the way to make him stick to you."

Mossoo made a despairing gesture.

"I know—I know! But I dare not run ze risk! You keep my secret, Wharton?"

"Certainly, sir!"

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Order of the Boot.

"**M**ON enfant! Stop! I want to speak to you."

Harry Wharton halted.

It was the next morning, and he was going down to the gates of Greyfriars with Nugent. The two juniors had their coats on, for there was a fall of snow in the quad, and a cold wind was blowing.

Duprez started a little as Gaston Duprez looked out of the gloom.

He wondered what the Frenchman could want with him.

Duprez came quickly up as he spoke, his black eyes scintillating as they rested upon the two juniors. Harry disliked the man thoroughly, and he did not waste much politeness upon him.

"What do you want?" he asked abruptly.

Gaston Duprez gritted his teeth.

"You are going out?"

"Yes, certainly."  
"You go to the town?"  
"We are going to the village," said Harry wonderingly. "I don't see how it concerns you."  
"Ah, but I guess where you go," said the Frenchman savagely.  
"I do not understand you."  
"It is that you go to the police," said Duprez, between his teeth. "You think to bring them here and take me by surprise. Ah, I know!"

Nugent stared blankly. It immediately came into Harry's mind, however, that Duprez knew of that talk in the French master's study.

He was silent, and the Frenchman went on savagely:  
"Yes; I know all, you see."

"You know what you deserve, you mean," said Harry quietly.

Duprez sneered.  
"Put it as you like. Do you deny that you are going for the police? Bah! I should not believe you if you did! I heard your talk with Charpentier; I was outside the window. I knew the weak fool was going to confide in you, and I listened."

"It was like you!" said Harry scornfully. "You make me regret that I did not leave you in the cave."

The French adventurer shrugged his shoulders.

"It is too late to think of that, little monsieur. I have been watching to see if you should leave the school—and you are going. I know now that you have determined that if Charpentier will not resist me, you will do so. Well, you will not find me here when you return, Monsieur Wharton."

Harry drew a deep breath.

"Thank goodness for that, anyway!"

"Neither, perhaps, will you find Monsieur Charpentier here," said Gaston Duprez, with a sneer, "for ere I go I shall go to the Head!"

"You cur!"

"Bah! If my fangs are to be drawn, I will bite first for the last time!" said the adventurer, with a sneer.

"If I tell you that I am not going to the police—"

"Bah! I shall not believe you!"

The Frenchman turned away. Gosling had come out of his lodge to lock the gates, and he was looking at them curiously.

"Stop a minute, Gaston Duprez!" said Wharton, in a low, steady voice.

The Frenchman looked back.  
"What would you say?"

"You are going to the Head?"  
"Immediately!"  
"And then to leave Greyfriars?"  
"Oui, oui."

"Gaston Duprez, I saved your life—surely something is due to me from you," said Wharton. "You said you were grateful. Will you not go without harming Monsieur Charpentier, who, after all, has never injured you?"

Duprez laughed mockingly.

"I have my revenge before I go," he said.

"And nothing will stop you?"  
"Nothing!"

"Very well," said Wharton, between his teeth. "Since all is to come out, Monsieur Charpentier shall have the first word!"

"What do you mean?"  
"Lend me a hand, Nugent!" said Wharton, without replying to the Frenchman.

"I'm with you, old chap."  
And the two juniors sprang together upon the Frenchman.

Taken by surprise, Gaston Duprez reeled in their grip and struggled furiously; but, powerful man as he was, he had to deal with two athletic lads in the pink of condition.

In a minute or less he was rolling in the snow, and then they grasped him and dragged him towards the gateway.

"Outside!" gasped Wharton.  
"My honny 'at!" said Gosling, staring on at the scene in the blindest amazement.

"Wot I says is this 'ere—wot do you mean by it?"

Neither of the juniors troubled to reply. The Frenchman, cursing furiously, was dragged out of the gateway, and flung into the mud and snow of the road.

"There!" exclaimed Wharton, his eyes gleaming. "Now go, and do your worst! But you will not do it by word of mouth!"

The Frenchman scrambled up, mad with rage. He was fumbling in his coat, and Wharton sprang forward as there was a gleam of steel in the dusk.

Duprez, too mad with rage to care what he was doing, had a knife in his hand; but Wharton was in time. His clenched fist, hard and heavy as iron, with all his strength behind it, caught the scoundrel on the point of the jaw.

Duprez gave a choking gasp, and went over as if a cannon-ball had struck him.

Back—back till, with a crash, he went into a half-frozen ditch, and disappeared amid a spout of muddy water, his knife flying over the hedge.

"My hat," said Nugent, "that's what he wanted! I think that will cool him!"

"Let's get in!"

The two juniors entered the gates, and Gosling closed and locked them. He had seen the gleam of the knife, and he was anxious to get strong locks and bolts between himself and the enraged Frenchman.

Gaston Duprez struggled out of the ditch.

He was streaming with water and mud and slime, and looked a pitiable object. He shook his fist madly at the gates of Greyfriars, and then tramped away down the road. He had evidently had enough.

"Wot I says is this 'ere," remarked Gosling—"wot does it all mean, eh?"

"It's a conundrum," said Nugent blandly. "You have to guess the answer, and if you're right you get nothing a week for life."

And the juniors walked back towards

the Schoolhouse, leaving Gosling staring. Harry Wharton's face was very grave and hard.

"Well, the murder's out now, and no mistake!" said Nugent. "You're not coming down to the village about the football after all, Harry?"

"No. To-morrow will do for that. Frank. I must speak to Mossoo now."

"It's true, then, that that rascal knew something to Mossoo's disadvantage?"

"Yes; or, rather, he has made up a yarn that Mossoo is afraid of. Mossoo is a good little ass, but he hasn't the spirit of a mouse. Duprez has frightened him, and he hasn't nerve enough to turn on the scoundrel."

"He'll have no choice now, though."  
"No. Duprez is gone; but he is certain to write to the Head, and do Mossoo any harm he can, now he cannot hope to screw any more money out of him."

Nugent nodded thoughtfully.

"I don't see how you can stop that, Harry."

"I can't stop it. The only thing is for Mossoo to explain to the Head before he gets Duprez's letter. That can't come till the morning, anyway. Duprez will clear out—that's certain! He will expect the police to be set on his track. It's the letter that Mossoo must guard against. I'm going to tell him what's happened, and if he's got any sense he'll go straight to the Head and pitch him the whole story."

"Good!"

And Harry Wharton went directly to Monsieur Charpentier's study, and urged the French-master to confide in Dr. Locke.

Monsieur Charpentier wanted a lot of urging, but at length he agreed to fall in with Harry Wharton's scheme. Harry was glad, for he felt sure it would meet with success.

Monsieur Charpentier grasped Wharton's hand when he met him later that day.

"Ah, I thank you for ze heart, Wharton," he said. "It is you zat have save me."

"Is it all right, sir?"  
Mossoo beamed.

"Oui, oui. Oh, it is more zan all right. Ze Head was so sympathetic, and he assure me zat he never listen to ze man, and zat he trust me completement. He is ze great man, ze Head. I love him. He telephone for ze police to look for Duprez, so zat man never trouble me more. Zat is good. And I owe you very moosh, Wharton, and I not forget."

And the little Frenchman wrung Harry's hand again.

"Jolly glad he's out of the trouble," said Nugent, when Harry told him. "He's a good little ass, but he'll be all right now!"

And, true enough, nothing was ever heard again of the French-master's secret.

THE END.

Next Friday's Grand Long Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. is entitled:  
**THE GREYFRIARS CARNIVAL!**  
By FRANK RICHARDS.  
Please order your copy of the PENNY POPULAR in advance!