

YOU MUST LOOK BELOW!

The
Penny Popular

No.
270.

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



Make
the Acquaintance
of
**BILLY
BUNTER**
You Will Meet Him
in This Issue!



WINGATE'S SECRET!

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

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Explorers!

JUST an hour and a half to tea-time!" Bob Cherry remarked. "What are we going to do?"

Football practice was over.

The chums of the Remove had changed, and as nothing particular had been arranged for the remainder of the afternoon, they were looking out for something to do.

The Soccer practice was over early, owing to Wingate's not having "come up to time" earlier in the afternoon.

The chums of the Lower Fourth stood in a group at the doorway of the School House to discuss further proceedings.

There was a lowering of clouds in the sky, which looked as if the fine afternoon would be followed by rain. Dark ridges of cloud had rolled up over the Shoulder from the North Sea.

"Might have a run down to the village," said Frank Nugent.

Bob pointed to the sky.

"Looks like rain."

"I've got an idea," said Harry Wharton.

"We've been going to explore the underground passage to the old priory for a long time. Suppose we do it now—it will fill up the time to tea, anyway."

"Good egg!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Look there!"

A strange figure was approaching across the Close.

The juniors stared at it in amazement.

It was Billy Bunter.

He was covered with mud and green ooze, and his clothes were dripping with water and sticking to his limbs.

"My only bat!" ejaculated Wharton.

"What on earth's the matter, Billy?"

"It's that heathen beast, Wun Lung," spluttered Bunter. "He pretended to be showing me the way Wingate went, and he tipped me into the ditch."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at!"

"Never mind; we can," chuckled Bob Cherry. "If you have been spying, as usual, it serves you jolly well right."

"I was tracking Wingate down—"

"Oh-h-h! If you weren't looking like a drowned rat already, I'd shove your head into the fountain," said Bob Cherry in disgust.

Billy Bunter backed away hastily.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Bah! Cut off!"

Bunter grunted discontentedly, and went into the house to change his clothes.

"I'll get my bike lantern," said Harry.

"You fellows start. I'll catch you up."

He went up to the study and fetched down the bicycle lantern. It had long been the intention of the Remove chums to explore the subterranean passage.

It ran from the crypt under the ruined chapel to the old priory in the wood, a considerable distance.

A subterranean passage naturally appealed to a boyish imagination, and the legend of a buried treasure at Greyfriars gave it an additional interest.

Wharton filled the lamp, and hastened after his chums, and overtook them as they reached the ruined chapel. They descended the stone steps to the crypt, and plunged into the gloom of the shadowy vaults. A cold chill of air struck them as they entered. Bob Cherry shivered.

"My hat! It's like a blessed graveyard!" he said.

"Yes; we might have found a more cheerful place," Nugent remarked. "But—look!"

He pointed back towards the door of the crypt. Outside big drops of rain were be-

ginning to fall, and dash on the stone steps.

"Rain!"

"Better here than outside," remarked Wharton.

And the Nabob of Bhanipur replied that: "The betterfulness was terrific."

Harry Wharton led the way with the lantern across the gloomy vaults to the spot where the underground passage opened in the stone walls.

Dark and gloomy it looked as Harry flashed the lantern-light into it.

"Come on!"

Wharton led the way into the passage.

The air grew more dank and chilly as they advanced. There were doubtless outlets for ventilation, though they were invisible to the juniors, and no stray beam of daylight gained admittance to the place.

The darkness was intense, save where it was cut by the rays of the lantern.

The juniors advanced in silence.

In spite of their naturally cheerful spirits, the cold and gloom and loneliness of the place had an eerie effect upon them.

Even Bob Cherry was subdued.

The passage ran almost straight—the ground damp and clammy beneath their feet, and the walls of glimmering stone slimy to the touch.

No passage or opening of any kind branched off to right or left. It was impossible to lose one's way in the tunnel, and that, as Bob Cherry remarked, was one comfort.

Suddenly Harry uttered a sharp exclamation.

"Look!"

From the dead darkness ahead of the juniors appeared a point of light. They stared at it in amazement.

"There's somebody else down here," said Nugent at last.

"And coming from the direction of the priory!" said Bob, in astonishment. "Who on earth can have—"

"It's some other chap exploring the passage."

"I suppose so, but—"

"The light's gone!" exclaimed Wharton.

The gleam ahead had disappeared.

The juniors stood still, waiting for it to reappear, but it did not. Blackness reigned in the tunnel, save where the light from their own lantern fell.

"What on earth does that mean?" exclaimed Nugent. "It can't be one of our own fellows returning after exploring the passage, or—"

"Or he wouldn't put the light out."

"Exactly."

"The exactfulness is terrific."

"He caught sight of our light, of course, whoever he is," said Wharton, with a puzzled brow. "Is it somebody who doesn't want to be seen?"

"Goodness knows!"

"Well, we're going on," said Harry.

"Oh, rather!"

And the juniors pressed on their way.

The incident of the light in the tunnel was curious enough, but there was no reason why they should allow it to interrupt their exploration of the passage.

They quickened their pace, keeping eyes and ears open for the other explorers of the tunnel, but there was nothing to be seen or heard.

They reached the spot where Wharton judged that the individual holding the light must have been standing, but there was no one there.

He had turned back, evidently.

Why he, whoever he was, should turn back on catching sight of the juniors' lantern, was a puzzle.

The Greyfriars chums advanced. They were drawing nearer to the old priory now,

as the freshness of the air in the tunnel testified.

Wharton halted at last.

The lantern-light gleamed upon a wall of stone that barred the path. It was a sliding door of stone, and as Wharton knew the secret of it, there was no difficulty—or should have been none—in getting through.

The captain of the Remove placed his hand upon a depression in the stone, and pushed hard, expecting the huge mass to turn upon the pivot, as it had done on previous occasions.

Harry had been on the outside of the stone door when he had discovered its secret, but he had tried it from within, and, once knowing how it worked, it had been easy to open it.

But the stone did not move now. Instead of swinging round slowly, as he expected, it remained quite fast in its place.

Harry pressed harder. The stone remained fast.

"That's curious," said Nugent. "Has it got jammed somehow?"

"I don't see how it could. It might be wedged from the other side, but—"

"Let's all shove."

"Good!"

The lantern was placed on the ground, and the juniors formed up to shove with their whole strength upon the revolving stone.

"It's going!" exclaimed Harry.

The stone shifted a little. Then it held fast again.

Harry Wharton's eyes gleamed.

"It's not jammed, kids—it can't get jammed."

"Then what's holding it?"

"Somebody's holding it from the other side!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Mystery.

WHARTON uttered the words in a tone of conviction. The partial view of the stone, and then its holding fast again, had convinced him.

Somebody on the outer side of the stone door had his foot against it, and was bracing himself to resist the pressure from within.

"My only hat!" said Bob Cherry. "The check of it!"

"Some giddy japer having a little fun with us," said Nugent. "The nerve!"

Wharton smiled grimly.

"Well, we'll see who's the stronger," he said. "We're jolly well going to have this door open, or burst something!"

"What-ho!"

"You fellows get behind me and shove!"

"Good! All together!"

Wharton placed his hands on the stone, and Nugent stood behind him and placed his hands upon it over Harry's shoulders. Then Bob Cherry and Hurree Singh placed their hands on the others' backs. By this means the whole force of the four was brought to bear upon the stone.

"Now, then, shove!"

"All together!"

"The altogetherfulness is terrific!"

And the Greyfriars chums exerted themselves hard.

The stone began to move.

"Hurrah! It's going!"

"Bravo!"

"Shove away! My hat, this is like the scrum!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Go it!"

Harder and harder they shoved.

The door was rolling open now. There was no gleam of daylight from beyond, for the stone door opened into the vault under the old priory, but there was a yellow flicker of light from a lantern.

The door was half-open now, and Wharton could see a lantern on the stone flags

beyond, and he could also see the leg of the individual who was holding the door.

It was a check trouser-leg, and evidently belonged to a man, and not to a boy. It was not a fellow of Greyfriars who was playing this trick upon the juniors.

Bob Cherry gave a sudden chuckle. He released one hand, and drew a pin from his coat. Leaning forward, he jabbed the pin into the leg beyond the door.

There was a sudden wild howl, and the resistance of the door ceased. The stone flew open, and the juniors tumbled through the doorway, and almost fell over a man who had been knocked flying by the sudden opening of the door.

He was a little man, dressed in check clothes, with a cloth cap and a red face—the red hue, perhaps, caused by the exertions he had made in keeping the door shut.

The juniors had never seen him before, to their knowledge, and it was quite plain that he was not an inhabitant of Friardale village, or Pegg.

He had the unmistakable air of a townsman.

He was rolling helplessly on the stone flags on his back, and was not so swift to regain his feet as the juniors were.

The boys were up in a few seconds, and they stared at the man on the flags, and burst into a shout of laughter.

After his attempt to keep them shut in the underground passage, his sudden and absurd downfall seemed comical enough, and his evident rage added to the effect.

He sat up, gasping for breath.

"You young hounds!" he roared.

"Rats!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully.

"What were you trying to keep the door shut for?" demanded Harry.

"You had no right to try and keep us shut up there."

"What are you doing here, anyway?"

said Nugent. "You're a blessed trespasser, as a matter of fact."

"The matter-of-factfulness is terrific."

The stranger staggered to his feet.

He had evidently been hurt by his sudden fall, and was equally evidently in a raging temper.

He turned to the juniors and poured out a volley of abuse, his language growing more lurid as he proceeded.

Harry Wharton's brow darkened with anger.

"Shut up!" he exclaimed imperiously.

"Do you hear? Shut up!"

"Or we'll jolly soon shut you up!" said Bob Cherry.

The man raved on.

Harry exchanged a look with his comrades, and they surrounded the stranger in a second, and laid hands upon him.

In a moment he was whirled over, and bumped on the ground.

"Now, then," said Harry, "are you going to shut up?"

"You—you—you—"

"Hold your tongue!"

The man struggled desperately. He was short—not much taller than the juniors—but he was thickset and powerful. He was a tough customer, even for the four sturdy juniors, and they rolled over on the floor as he fought.

But they would not let go.

Like hounds clinging to a bear, they rolled over and over, and they had the fellow down again at last, and Bob Cherry sat on his chest.

All of them were panting now, and out of breath.

"Got him!" said Bob.

"Now, are you going to shut up?" demanded Harry.

The man glared at him furiously.

"You young hound!"

Harry shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, I don't mind that, but I bar swearing! That's what you've got to understand. It would serve you right if we gave you a jolly good licking!"

"Let me get up!"

"Not unless you are going to behave yourself."

The stranger gasped for breath.

"It's all right—it's all right! I—I'm sorry I lost my temper."

"That's better."

The juniors released him, Bob rather reluctantly getting off his chest. The man rose to his feet. All the juniors were looking at him curiously, wondering who he was and how he came there. He was evidently in as great a rage as ever, but he had sense enough to know that it was useless to give expression to it.

"Why were you holding the door shut?" asked Harry.

"It—it was a joke."

Wharton's clear eyes looked him up and down.

"I don't believe you!" he said bluntly.

"I don't see why you should do it, but you weren't doing it for a joke, that's jolly certain."

"The certainfulness is terrific."

"It looks to me as if the rotter's here for no good," remarked Bob Cherry.

"What were you doing in the underground passage, my man?"

"I was not in it."

"Lie number two," said Bob cheerfully.

"You were in it—and you backed out when you saw our light, and then tried to keep us shut up. It looks to me as if there's some little game on. Where do you come from?"

"Mind your own business!"

"What are you doing here?"

"Exploring the place," said the stranger, after a moment's hesitation. "It's a—curious old place, and I was looking into it."

"And you brought a lantern with you on purpose," said Bob. "You came all the way from town with a lantern to explore this old place? You're a jolly fishy customer, that's all! I—Why—My hat!"

"What's the matter, Bob?"

"Look at that lantern!"

Bob was staring at the stranger's lantern in astonishment. It was standing on the flagstones, where the man had evidently

The man turned deadly pale.

"You are mistaken," he exclaimed hoarsely. "I did not steal the lantern."

"How did you come by it, then?"

"It—it was given to me."

The juniors laughed scornfully.

"Do you mean to say that you know Wingate—the captain of Greyfriars—a rotten worm like you, who swears like a trooper?" exclaimed Nugent.

"That lantern was lent to me."

"Rats!"

"We may as well be getting back," said Harry. "We sha'n't be in too soon 'or tea as it is. Come on!"

"I'd better bring the lantern, Harry?"

"Oh, yes, rather!"

The stranger made a step forward. The juniors faced him grimly, not at all loth to wipe up the floor with a man they regarded as a thief.

The man thought better of it. He had no chance of regaining the lantern—no chance of getting anything but a licking if he tackled the four. He drew back with an oath.

The chums re-entered the passage.

Wharton closed the stone door behind him, and they slowly retraced their steps towards Greyfriars. They had explored the subterranean passage, and had found nothing of great interest in it, but certainly there had been a most curious adventure at the



Like hounds clinging to a bear, the juniors rolled over and over, and they had the fellow down at last.

placed it when he held the door fast. The chums of Greyfriars followed Bob's glance, and looked equally astonished, for they knew the lantern.

It was one of a rather uncommon make, and they had seen it frequently enough on Wingate's bicycle. Bob bent closer to it to make sure. There, sure enough, were the initials "R. W.—Wingate's initials—scratched on the metal.

"Wingate's lantern!" exclaimed Harry in astonishment.

"Yes, rather!"

The stranger gave a start.

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed.

"That lantern is mine!"

"Liar!" said Bob politely. "That lantern belongs to Wingate, the captain of our school, and we're jolly well going to take it back to him, too!"

And he picked up the lantern.

The man looked at him in alarm.

"You are not going to take my lantern?"

he exclaimed well going to take Wingate's lantern," said Bob. "You've stolen it, and it would serve you right to march you off to Friardale and give you in charge for it, trooper!"

end of it. The juniors discussed it as they made their way back, but there were several points about the affair that they could not explain to their satisfaction.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Keeping It Dark.

"COME in!" called out Wingate.

The captain of Greyfriars was in his study, changing his clothes. He had been drenched in the rain, and his jacket, which he had thrown off, was dripping with water. He was half-clad in dry clothes when the tap came at the door.

Harry Wharton entered the study.

"Wet?" he said.

Wingate laughed.

"Looks like it, doesn't it? I was a good distance from Greyfriars when the rain came on, and I was caught in it."

He broke off suddenly.

Harry had the bicycle lantern in his hand, and Wingate's eyes had fallen upon it. The captain of Greyfriars turned pale.

"What's that—my lantern?"

Wharton nodded.

"Yes. We've found it for you. Had you missed it?"

"Yes. I came here to bring it back," said Harry. "It had been stolen."

"Stolen?"

"Yes. I don't think you'll ever guess where we found it."

Wingate stared at him blankly. Harry could not help noticing the strange agitation of the Sixth-Former. He wondered what was the matter with Wingate. Surely the discovery that his lantern had been stolen should not upset him so much.

"You—you've found my lantern!" said Wingate huskily. "In Heaven's name, where did you find it?"

"In the old priory?"

"The old priory?"

"Yes, Wingate."

"You—you've been there?"

"Yes. We've been exploring the tunnel from the crypt here to the old priory," Harry explained. "There was a chap in the priory—"

"My heavens! You've seen him?"

Harry started.

"Wingate, do you know him—did you know he was there?"

Wingate did not reply. Harry gazed at his pale face, upon which the perspiration was gathering, in blank wonder.

"He tried to keep us from opening the stone door," said Harry awkwardly. "We shoved it open, though. He was a blackguard of a chap—swore horribly at us, and we made him shut up. Then Bob Cherry spotted your lantern. Of course, we thought he must have stolen it, and we brought it back."

"Ye-ees, I see!"

Wingate muttered the words hoarsely. "He said it had been lent to him," said Harry. "Of course, we didn't believe a word of it."

Wingate nodded.

"I hope we've done right," said Harry anxiously. "I suppose you don't know the man?"

"Shut the door!" said Wingate.

Harry Wharton closed the door. The big Sixth-Former wiped his forehead—it was wet. He opened his lips to speak several times, but no words came. Harry Wharton waited, with a curious feeling of uneasiness. He did not understand Wingate at all. The usually frank and open senior seemed to be strangely mysterious, and to be labouring under some emotion that Harry could not comprehend.

Wingate seemed to make up his mind suddenly.

"Look here, Wharton," he said abruptly. "I—I shall have to tell you something. I know I can trust you to keep your mouth shut."

"Certainly."

"That—that man—the fellow who had the lantern—I—I lent it to him," said Wingate in a sinking voice. "I—I know the chap, you see."

Wharton nodded. That Wingate should know, and be on friendly terms with such a man, was amazing enough. But it was no business of his, after all, and at that moment he was only feeling sorry for Wingate's evident distress.

"I lent him the lantern," said Wingate. "Never mind why. You did quite right to bring it back—you couldn't know."

"I am sorry!"

"It's all right—you couldn't know—you did quite right. I—I can't explain, Wharton. It's—it's impossible, but—but—"

Wingate's voice trailed away.

"It's all right," said Harry quickly. "No need to explain. I don't want any explanation. You know I'm a chap who can mind his own business, Wingate."

Wingate looked relieved.

"Good! You haven't told anybody about meeting this—this man, Wharton?"

"No."

"Was—was anybody with you at the time?"

"Yes—Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, and Inky."

"I suppose they can hold their tongues?"

"Of course!" said Harry wonderingly. "We'll keep the whole thing dark if you like. I don't suppose they've said anything yet, and I'll go and warn them."

"I—I'll be grateful if you keep it dark, Wharton. I can't explain—now, anyway—but it means a lot—an awful lot to me."

"That's enough, Wingate. You can rely on us."

"Thank you, Wharton! Leave the lantern here."

Harry nodded, and leaving the lantern on the table he quitted the study. He was amazed, and he could not understand the

strange affair in the least. What Wingate's connection with the man of the priory could be was a mystery.

Harry hurried away to the Remove passage.

The incident of the priory had, of course, a certain amount of interest as an anecdote, and some one or other of the juniors was certain to relate it if not stopped in time.

As Harry reached the top of the stairs he heard Bob Cherry's voice. Bob was talking in the passage to Tom Brown of the Remove.

"You see, we had just got to the end of the passage, and were trying to open the stone door, when—"

Harry ran along the passage.

He ran right into Bob Cherry and sent him flying. Bob rolled on the linoleum, and Harry rolled over him.

Tom Brown burst into a roar.

"You ass!" yelled Bob Cherry, sitting up and rubbing his head dazedly. "You frabjous ass! Can't you see where you're running?"

"Sorry!" gasped Harry. "But—"

"Oh, you dummy!"

"You see—"

"You've biffed all the breath out of me!" spluttered Bob. "Oh, you ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And now you're cackling!" roared Bob wrathfully. "I'll give you a cackle!"

And he clasped Harry affectionately round the neck and waltzed round the passage with him, punching away cheerfully.

Harry returned his grasp, and whirled the sturdy junior into the open doorway of Study No. 1, and they crashed upon the table and rolled on the floor again.

"What on earth—" began Nugent.

Tom Brown walked away laughing. Harry dragged himself loose, and shut the door. Bob Cherry staggered up dazedly.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"I'm sorry!" said Harry, laughing. "But I had to interrupt you in the passage, Bob. I've just seen Wingate, and he wants us to keep it dark about meeting that chap in the priory."

"You—you ass! You ran into me on purpose!" gasped Bob.

"Yes, it was the only way."

"You frabjous duffer!"

"We've got to keep the whole story dark. Wingate wants us to."

"What for?"

"I don't know."

"It's jolly curious!"

"I know it is; but there you are! We're to keep it dark."

Bob Cherry grunted.

"Oh, all right! But the next time you want to interrupt me, ass, you can find a gentler method, duffer, or you'll jolly well get your head punched, fathead!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Startling Discovery.

I WANT to read something out to you fellows.

Billy Bunter made the remark. He was sitting in Study No. 1, blinking over a newspaper. Harry Wharton and his chums watched him attentively.

"Oh, get on with it, do," said Bob Cherry impatiently. "I expect it's something asinine!"

"You won't say it's asinine when you see me rolling in a hundred pounds!" said Bunter. "Hallo, here's the paragraph! Now, shut up, you fellows, and I'll read it out to you! There isn't very much of it."

"Well, let's be thankful for small mercies, then! Go ahead!"

Bunter grunted to clear his throat, and began:

"There is no clue to the whereabouts of James Stainforth, the cashier of the London and Suburban Bank, who absconded on Thursday last with banknotes value £1,000 belonging to the bank. Further examination of the books shows a series of defalcations extending over a period of more than two years."

"Stainforth absconded just in time to

escape arrest, for his rascality had been discovered. He is supposed to have made for the coast in the neighbourhood of the fishing village of Pegs, the police having tracked him as far as Friardale, but there all trace of him has been lost. It is presumably his intention to cross to the Continent in some vessel there. His arrest is hourly expected. The following is his description:

"Age, 35 years. Short in stature, dark in complexion, with a clean-shaven face, and light and very keen eyes. Hair of a light brown colour, somewhat thin. When last seen, was dressed in dark clothes, with a bowler hat, and elastic-sided boots."

Billy Bunter stopped and looked at the juniors.

"There's his photograph here, too," he said. "Now, what do you think of that?"

"Bosh!" said Wharton. "What on earth has it got to do with us?"

Bunter blinked at him.

"Oh, really, Wharton, you're awfully dense, you know. There's a hundred pounds reward offered by the London and Suburban Bank for information leading to his arrest."

"Oh, I see!"

"Why shouldn't we rope in that hundred?"

"We?"

"Yes," said Bunter. "You know what I can do as an amateur detective—"

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

"Well, suppose we track him down," said Bunter. "That's my idea. We should be doing a service to justice and law, and so on, and making a bit for ourselves. A hundred pounds is not to be sneezed at, I can tell you. I shall take seventy-five per cent., as the originator of the scheme, and shall stand a series of extensive feeds for the rest of the term!"

"Go hon!"

"You chaps will make a decent bit, too. We shall be all rolling in wealth, if we can get hold of the hundred quid," said Bunter eagerly. "You fellows can help me and back me up. Of course, I shall have to be the guiding spirit—the directing mind, you know. That chap Stainforth has come down here somewhere, to try to get across the North Sea in some shore craft. The police will be watching the coast pretty keenly, and my idea is that the chap will be hiding in some corner about here somewhere."

"Very likely!"

"Now, there isn't a more likely spot than the old priory in the wood," said Bunter. "It occurred to me all at once that he might hide there."

"Quite possible."

"I made up my mind to look for him there," said Bunter. "That's really why I want you fellows to help me. It occurred to me that if I found the criminal there, he wouldn't give in quietly. He might go for me."

The juniors burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha! That's very likely."

"Well, it might be serious for me, you know, if a blessed desperate criminal went for me, when I was alone," said Bunter, blinking at them. "He might have a revolver, too, and then I might get hurt."

"Quite likely. Ha, ha!"

"But if you chaps came with me, and we found him, we could collar him, you see. I should stand in the rear and give orders, and you chaps would rush on him and seize him."

"Yes; I can see us doing it," remarked Nugent.

"I don't think!" observed Bob Cherry.

"I suppose you're not going to let an opportunity like this slip," said Bunter aggressively. "You're not funky, I suppose. I was going alone to-day to look for traces of the villain, but—"

"But you thought better of it. Ha, ha, ha!"

"No, I didn't—said Wingate!"

"Wingate!" said Harry, in surprise.

"Yes. He's had the door of the crypt locked up, and taken the key. So it won't be possible to go to the old priory by way of the subterranean passage again," said Bunter. "Jolly officious of Wingate, I call it."

A cloud came over Wharton's face. Bunter's words caused strange thoughts to rise in his mind. He remembered the stranger in the priory, and Wingate's strange interest in him.

"Did you say you had the picture of the missing man there?" he asked.

"Yes, here it is; it's reproduced from his latest photograph, they say," said Billy Bunter. "Look at it! He's not a nice-looking chap, either."

"Hand it over!"

"Here you are."

Billy Bunter tossed over the paper, and Harry looked at the roughly reproduced

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If you are unable to obtain this publication regularly, please tell any newspaper to get it from:

Messageries HACHETTE et Cie.,
111, Rue Reaumur,
PARIS.

photograph which followed the description of the absconding cashier.

The others looked at it over his shoulder. Wharton changed colour. "My only hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. There was no mistaking the features. The juniors knew the face at a glance.

It was that of the man they had encountered in the old priory. The man of the priory was James Stainforth, the absconding cashier.

Harry Wharton and his chums stared blankly at the photograph. It was that of the refugee of the priory—of the man in whom Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, took so deep and so inexplicable an interest.

What did it all mean? The chums of the Remove could lay their finger upon the missing man for whom the police were seeking up and down the east coast—for whom they were watching the ports from London to Hull.

A hundred pounds! A word from No. 1 Study at Greyfriars, and the bank-robber was arrested, and the juniors would indubitably be entitled to the reward.

But they did not think or care for that. It was too much in the nature of blood-money for the juniors to have cared to touch it, even if they had been free to do so.

But they were not free. The man of the priory was a criminal wanted by the police—but their promise to Wingate, or, rather, Wharton's promise for them, held good.

to know a word of the discovery they had made, of course.

Wharton felt in his pockets, and produced a stilling.

"Would you like some tarts, Bunter?" he asked.

Billy's expression changed.

"Well, I'm still a little peckish," he remarked. "You fellows started tea before me, and you didn't leave me much."

"Here you are, then."

Bunter caught the coin as Wharton tossed it to him, and immediately left the study.

Cherry chuckled.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "Exit, Bunter! Now, about this affair."

Wharton's brows contracted.

"I don't know what to say," he said. "The man we found in the old priory is this chap, sure enough."

"Yes, that's certain."

"The certainfulness is terrific."

"But what is Wingate helping him for?" exclaimed Harry abruptly. "Wingate lent him the lantern, you know."

"It's awfully run!"

"And you remember we found the chap coming along the tunnel towards Greyfriars. Now, we know all about that tunnel, but a stranger wouldn't. Wingate must have shown it to him."

"Looks like it."

"It must have been Wingate's idea to help him to hide in the crypt here," said Harry. "The police might search the old priory any day, as they know he's in this

Of course, fellows have been suspected and sent to prison for nothing. But think of that chap. You remember the language he used; no decent chap would have used it. He was a rascal."

"I certainly should have taken him for one."

"He was, right enough. It looks to me as if he's a cunning beast, and is taking in Wingate in some way."

"It might be a good idea to warn Wingate of the kind of rotter he's helping," said Harry. "We're not going to say anything; but it might all come out, especially if the police should track the rascal to Greyfriars, and then Wingate would be done for. He couldn't stay at Greyfriars after a show-up like that."

"Impossible!"

"I think I'll go along and speak to him."

"Right-ho!"

Harry Wharton left the study, and went to the Sixth Form passage to look for Wingate.

As luck would have it, Wharton met the captain of Greyfriars coming out of his study.

"Can I speak to you for a minute, Wingate?" he asked.

"Yes. What is it, Wharton?"

"I thought I ought to show you this."

Harry held out the copy of the newspaper, folded down at the description of the missing bank cashier. Wingate glanced at it, and his face grew pale.

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"THE PENNY POPULAR"
PORTRAIT GALLERY.



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1



3

No. 2. NEXT FRIDAY.
Jack Blake, George Herries,
Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

1. TOM MERRY.
2. MONTY LOWTHER.
3. HARRY MANNERS.

Criminal or not, the man was safe from them.

They had undertaken to keep their adventure a secret—to say nothing about the presence of the mysterious man in the priory.

And they would keep their word. Billy Bunter blinked at the chums of the Remove with eager satisfaction. He knew nothing of the thoughts that were passing in their minds, and he felt that he had made a great impression at last.

As a rule, his wheezes were received with silence or rude interruptions. Every scheme he propounded for raising the wind was hailed with scorn and contumely. But there was evidently a change at last. The chums of Stud; No. 1 were beginning to believe in the genius of the Remove.

"Well?" said Bunter at last.

Wharton started.

"Here, you take a little run, Bunter!" he exclaimed.

"Eh? What?"

"Buzz off!"

Bunter gazed at him, almost speechless with indignation. To be told to buzz off, after just broaching a scheme for making the whole study rich, was a little bit too much.

"I—I say, Wharton!" he stammered.

"Run away and play, do!"

"You—you ass!"

Wharton made an impatient gesture. It was necessary to discuss the matter, but he did not feel inclined to do so before Billy Bunter. The Owl of the Remove was not

neighbourhood. But they don't know anything about the revolving stone door, and they wouldn't dream of searching within the walls of Greyfriars. The chap would be quite safe in the crypt.

"Yes, rather!"

"And that's why Wingate has started being so awfully careful about keeping the door locked."

"Of course."

"I'm blessed if I know what we ought to do," said Wharton, after a pause. "The chap's a thief, and ought to be arrested. He seems to have some of the stolen money actually with him, too, so it's not only a question of punishing a guilty chap, but of recovering stolen goods. I don't know what we ought to do. The rascal ought to be given up to the police!"

"We don't want the reward."

"Oh, no! I was thinking of a fellow's duty to the public. Only we've promised Wingate to keep it dark."

"And that promise is binding, under any circumstances," said Bob.

"I suppose so."

"But Wingate can't know what an awful rotter the chap is," said Nugent. "He wouldn't stand by a fellow who was a thief, if he knew."

Wharton shook his head.

"I can't get on to it at all. Wingate can't know; yet he knows that the fellow is in hiding. Perhaps he believes him innocent; he may have known him somewhere."

"Innocent!" said Nugent. "Not much!"

The reproduced photograph of the bank cashier stared out from the paper, and it struck the Sixth-Formers' eye at once.

"How did you get this paper, Wharton?"

"It belongs to Bunter."

"You've seen the original of that picture, haven't you?" said Wingate, speaking slowly, with dry lips.

"Yes," said Wharton frankly. "That's why I showed it to you. I thought you ought to know. That is the face of the man we met in the priory."

"I know it."

"You knew he was—was Stainforth, the bank robber?"

"I—I knew who he was. I can't explain. Wharton. I'm in a kind of fix, but—"

Wingate broke off abruptly.

"I thought he might be imposing upon you with some tale of injured innocence or something of that sort," said Harry quietly.

"I don't think it could be true, Wingate. The man is a rascal."

"How do you know?"

"When we found him he was alarmed, and he flew into a savage temper, and used language that no decent man would use."

"I—I don't know whether he's innocent or guilty," said Wingate. "He swore to me that it was all a mistake, and he only wanted to gain time."

"To get clear of the country?"

"No; to clear himself."

"And you believed him?"

"I don't know what to believe."

"Of course it's your business, Wingate, and I don't want to interfere, but I thought you ought to see that paper. It's a serious matter helping a man who's hunted by the police, you know."

"Oh, yes, I know that."
"But I suppose you have your reasons," said Harry. "That's all."
"Do you want this paper?"
"It belongs to Bunter. If it is destroyed he will get another copy."

"What is Bunter's interest in the matter?" Wharton smiled involuntarily.

"He's playing amateur detective, that's all, and he thinks he can get hold of the hundred pounds reward, and have a huge feed with it."

Wingate laughed, and handed the paper back to Wharton.

"There it is. Of course, you've said nothing about this to anyone?"

"Only my own chums know."
"Thank you!"

Wingate walked moodily away. Harry put the paper in his pocket, and a few minutes later he was accosted by Billy Bunter:

"Got my paper, Wharton?"
"Here it is. Look here, Billy, you had better burn it."

"No fear!" said Bunter promptly. "I shall want that photograph to identify the criminal when I have tracked him down."

"You young ass!"

"You needn't help me if you don't want to," said Bunter loftily. "I can get help when I need it, and I shall jolly well keep the reward myself, too!"

"Ass!"

"When I have tracked down the villain I shall make the prefects help me to capture him or else call in the police," said Bunter. "I suppose Wingate and the rest would lend a hand if I told them where the man was?"

Wharton started.
"Wingate?"

"Yes. It would be his duty to help to capture an escaped criminal."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to chuckle at!" muttered Bunter, looking very puzzled, as Harry Wharton walked away laughing. "I'll jolly well rope in that hundred pounds, anyway, and then some of them will look pretty sick."

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. The Expedition.

DURING morning lessons the next day Billy Bunter gave the matter of the missing bank robber a great deal of thought, somewhat to the detriment of his morning's work.

The reward for the discovery of James Stainforth was running in his mind all the time, and he surprised Mr. Quelch by some of the information he gave him that morning.

The Form-master did not know what Bunter was thinking about, but he could see that the fat junior was not paying attention to his work; and that was enough to make Mr. Quelch devote a little more time than usual to Bunter.

Mr. Quelch believed that there was a time for work and a time for play, and that in the time for work attention should be devoted wholly to that work—a theory which never had found favour in the eyes of Billy Bunter.

And when Mr. Quelch asked what Robert Bruce gained by the victory of Bannockburn, and Billy Bunter replied, "A hundred pounds!" it was natural that the Form-master should pour out the vials of his wrath upon the fat junior. Which he accordingly did.

Billy Bunter was given a hundred lines to keep company with those he already had; but even that did not impress him very much.

"I shall expect your lines at tea-time, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch significantly, as the Remove were dismissed.

"Eh? Oh, yes, sir; certainly!"

"It will be better for you not to forget them, Bunter."

"Certainly, sir!"

Billy Bunter passed out of the class-room. It was Saturday, and a half-holiday at Greyfriars. Bunter already had that afternoon mapped out, and doing lines for Mr. Quelch did not form part of the programme.

After dinner he repaired to No. 1 Study, and he was filling Wharton's bicycle lantern from Nugent's oil-can when Nugent came in.

"Hallo, going out biking?" he asked.

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"N-n-no."
"What do you want with a bike-lamp then?"

"Oh, I'm just filling it, you know."

Nugent grinned.

"What's the game?"

"Oh, I'm going out for a walk."

"With a lantern, on a fine afternoon!"

"Well, you see—"

"You young ass!" said Nugent contemptuously.

"Do you think I can't see through you? You've got an idea of exploring the vaults—looking for a blessed bank robber, I suppose."

"You'll jolly well be ready to share the reward, I expect," said Bunter.

Nugent sniffed.

"I wouldn't touch it if I could. But don't you know that Wingate keeps the crypt locked up now? You can't get into it; he has the key."

"Blow Wingate!"

Nugent sniffed again, and, taking his football, he left the study. Bunter finished filling the lamp, and put a box of matches in his pocket.

Then he prepared to leave the study; but at the door he hesitated. To be seen going out in the early afternoon with a lantern in his hand was certain to attract attention.

Bunter did not want to be questioned just then, and he was particularly anxious for Wingate to pass him unnoticed.

However, he had to run the gauntlet. He thrust the lantern under his jacket, to keep it out of sight, and went down the passage. He hoped he would meet nobody; but, as generally happens at such a time, he met nearly everybody he knew.

Several fellows glanced at him curiously as he walked with his right hand under his jacket, the lantern bulging the jacket out.

"What on earth have you got there?" asked Tom Brown.

"Oh, nothing!"

"Been raiding somebody's grub?"

"Certainly not!"

"Well, what is it, then?" exclaimed Skinner, jerking the fat junior's jacket up by the flap.

"My hat! A bike lantern!"

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"He's short-sighted, and he's going out with a lantern in the daytime," said Skinner, in a tone of explanation to the other Removites.

"What you really need, Bunter, is a stick and a little dog."

"Look here—"

"That's Wharton's bike lantern," said Bulstrode.

"I suppose Bunter's borrowed it without mentioning the fact to Wharton."

"That's why he's hiding it."

"He's going to pawn it in Friardale," said Ogilvy.

"I know him!"

"Oh, really, Ogilvy—"

"Better give Wharton the ticket, Bunter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter blinked at the grinning juniors, and tramped on. It was useless to keep the lantern under his jacket now. He left the House, and in the Close caught sight of Wingate chatting with Courtney.

He jammed the lantern into his pocket hurriedly to get it out of sight, and walked past the captain of Greyfriars with as unconscious an air as he could command.

Wingate did not even glance at him.

Bunter reached the gates, and was congratulating himself on getting clear, when a hand tapped him on the shoulder, and he blinked round.

"Oh, really, Linley—"

Mark Linley pointed to the pocket in which the lantern reposed.

"Look at that!" he exclaimed. "You're soaking your jacket with oil."

Bunter gazed at it in dismay. The lantern had not been firmly screwed, and it was pouring out oil as it lay on its side in his pocket.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Bunter. "You might have pointed that out before, I think, really, Linley."

"But I've only just seen it," said Mark.

Bunter grunted.

He drew the lantern out of his pocket. Half the oil was soaking through his jacket, and running in a stream down his trousers.

"What on earth are you carrying a lantern about in the daytime for?" exclaimed Mark, looking at it in astonishment.

"Don't ask questions, and I won't tell you any lies," said Bunter surlily.

And he marched out of the gates, carrying the lantern in his hand, and with the oil still dripping from him.

The fat junior took the road towards the village, intending to turn off in the wood by the footpath to the priory.

As he could not enter the vaults by the subterranean passage from the Greyfriars

end, he had determined to visit the priory, and commence his exploration there.

Mark Linley strolled in the Close, and met Harry Wharton and Nugent, who were making for the football-ground, the latter with a football under his arm.

"Playing footer?" asked Nugent.

"Yes, rather! By the way, is anything wrong with Bunter?"

"Bunter!"

"Yes. I met him at the gates, and he had a bicycle lantern in his pocket, and his jacket was soaked with oil. Where is he going with a bicycle lantern in the daytime?"

Harry Wharton gave a start.

"The young ass! He's up to his tricks again! I think I'll leave the footer a bit, kids, and go and look for him."

"He'll be all right," said Nugent.

"He may cause a lot of trouble."

"The troublesome young animal!" exclaimed Nugent, exasperated.

"We want you in the footer practice, Harry."

"I'll join you later."

"Oh, rats! I'll come with you. Take this footer down to the ground, Linley, will you? Tell the chaps we'll be along later."

"Certainly," said Mark.

Harry Wharton and Nugent walked towards the gates. The same thought was in both their minds: Bunter had gone to explore the priory, and he was almost certain to meet the bank robber hiding there. At any cost the discovery of the fugitive by the fat junior had to be prevented.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. Tracked Down.

BR-R-R! I'm jolly tired!"

Billy Bunter grunted out the words as he entered the old priory in the wood.

The fat junior sat down on a block of masonry to rest.

The sun was shining upon the ruins, and on the green trees growing amid the shattered wall, and the creepers that trailed over the broken casements.

The ruins were very silent.

They were seldom visited, save sometimes by picnic parties from the village, and at present there were no picnickers.

Billy Bunter rested for a few minutes, and then he carefully lighted the lantern. It was still half-full of oil, and would probably last quite as long as he needed it.

He made his way towards the entrance to the vaults, and descended into the darkness below.

There he looked about him nervously.

He knew that he was running a risk by entering the place at all, for if the bank robber was there, he might run into him at any moment. For that reason he would have preferred to have the chums of the Remove with him.

But Bunter was cunning, if nothing else. If he came upon the fugitive, he did not intend to give a sign of recognition, although from the photograph he was certain that he would recognise him at once.

If the man saw him, he would doubtless assume him to be merely a schoolboy exploring the ruins from motives of curiosity, and would not take the alarm. He would not dream for a moment that Bunter knew him.

So Billy reasoned it out.

He entered the vaults, and flashed the light of the lantern to and fro.

The vaults were very dark and silent.

There was no sign of any lurking fugitive there, but Billy Bunter knew it would take hours to explore the place thoroughly, without counting the secret passage under the wood to the chapel at Greyfriars.

Suddenly the fat junior gave a start.

On the dry stone floor of the vault was a very plain imprint of muddy boots. There had been rain off and on for the past two or three days, but the rain, of course, never reached the recesses under the old priory.

But anyone entering there had naturally brought muddy footstep with him. And the muddy tracks were very plain when Bunter turned the lantern light upon them.

The fat junior's heart beat faster.

It was no fancy of his. He was really on the track at last.

The muddy steps were thick on the stone flags, and all of them were close to the revolving stone which gave admittance to the secret passage to the chapel at Greyfriars.

Bunter stopped and examined the stone.

Was it possible that the fugitive knew of its existence, or had discovered it? If so,

the secret passage, or the vaults under the Greyfriars chapel, would make a safer hiding-place than the priory.

Bunter pushed the stone, and it swung on the pivot.

The fat junior threw the lantern light into the opening, and peered in through his big spectacles.

All was dark and silent.

After a short hesitation he stepped in, and closed the revolving stone behind him. Then he pulled up short.

His heart leapt to his mouth.

Ahead of him a light had gleamed in the darkness.

It was only a point of light, but it burned there, clearly and steadily, and Bunter knew that it proceeded from a candle or lamp burning in the vaults at the end of the tunnel.

His heart throbbed hard.

Who was there, burning a light in that secret recess? Who but the man he was in search of—the absconding bank cashier.

Strange as it was, the amateur detective of Greyfriars was really on the right track for once in his life.

The fat junior hesitated a few moments, and then crept on.

The light grew larger as he advanced.

He saw the radius of the light it cast as he reached the end of the tunnel and gazed into the vault.

There he halted, blinking at a strange scene before him.

In the vault the lamp burned upon a ledge, casting a clear light upon the scene—one of the strangest.

There were blankets and rugs on the stone floor, showing that someone had slept there, and a large bag, half open, showed a quan-

there, he was turning over some papers in his hands, and in the dead silence of the vault Billy Bunter could hear a soft, crisp rustle. It was the unmistakable rustle of banknotes.

The thief was counting over his loot. Bunter remembered that the newspaper had stated that Stainforth was supposed to have taken a thousand pounds' worth of banknotes with him in his flight.

It was time to go. Billy Bunter had seen enough. He made a movement to retreat. At the same moment there came an echoing call along the tunnel from the direction of the old priory.

"Bunter!"

Bunter started and shivered. The sound reached the ears of the bank robber. He sprang to his feet, his eyes gleaming.

"Who—what—who is there?" he cried.

Bunter gave a gasp, and fled along the tunnel.

In a moment the man was springing after him. His grasp closed upon the fat junior, and he dragged him into the vault, and held him there, and searched his face in the light of the lamp.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Wingate's Secret.

"WHO are you?" The man ground out the words between his teeth.

Bunter gasped for breath.

"I—I—"

"Who are you?"

"I—I'm a Greyfriars chap," mumbled Billy.

"I—I don't mean any harm. I—I was just exploring the vaults, you know; we often do

the tunnel, and they were staring into the vault.

Billy Bunter caught sight of them at the same moment, and he began to struggle in the grasp of Stainforth.

"Help! Rescue, Remove!" he yelled.

"Fool!" hissed the bank robber. "Keep still!"

"Rescue, Remove!"

Wharton and Nugent ran into the vault.

"Let him go!" exclaimed Wharton.

Stainforth gave him a savage look.

"You again!" he exclaimed.

"Come on, you fellows!" yelled Bunter.

"Help me to collar him!" He's the bank robber, you know! There's a hundred pounds reward! Look at the banknotes on the floor!"

Stainforth uttered a fearful oath.

"So you know? By heavens, you shall never leave this vault to tell others!"

"Help, Wharton!"

The bank robber's grasp, half unconsciously, had closed savagely upon Bunter's throat.

Wharton and Nugent ran forward, and in a moment their grasp was upon Stainforth.

"Let him go!"

Stainforth gritted his teeth.

He did not relax his grip, and Wharton and Nugent closed with him at once. His grasp was forced from Bunter, and he was hurled back. Wharton and Nugent, panting, stood between him and the fat junior. Bunter reeled away, gasping, and frightened almost out of his wits. Wharton gave him a push.

"Run, Billy! Scoot! Quick!"

Billy Bunter needed no second bidding.

He tore along the tunnel as fast as his fat, little legs would carry him. He had forgotten the reward and everything else but his personal safety. Wharton and Nugent

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tity of food, while the remains of a meal lay on the floor.

Seated upon a camp-stool was a man, whose back was turned towards Bunter.

But he was short and thick-set in figure, and was dressed in dark clothes, and that was quite sufficient for the fat junior.

Billy Bunter did not need to see his face; he was quite certain of the man's identity. But he was to see his face, all the same.

Perhaps he made some slight sound, for suddenly the man turned, and swept the vault with his piercing eyes.

Bunter shrank back in terror.

He forgot for the moment that he was standing in the darkness of the tunnel, and that the man could not possibly see him.

He stood with his heart thumping; but the piercing glance passed over him, and the man seemed to be satisfied.

He settled down in the camp-stool again; but Bunter had seen his face, and could still see it in the light of the lamp on the ledge.

It was the face of the photograph in the newspaper.

The man was Stainforth, the bank robber. Billy Bunter almost turned giddy with the feeling of triumph, mingled with terror, that surged up within him.

He had succeeded!

The absconding cashier of the London and Suburban Bank was before him, and he had only to get the police to the spot to win the hundred pounds reward.

What would the fellows say?

What a triumph for the Owl of the Remove, whose amateur detective essays had been the cause of never-ending chuckles.

But what was the man doing? As he sat

on half-holidays. I—I wasn't looking for anybody in particular."

The man's grip tightened upon him.

As he spoke, Bunter's glance had involuntarily fixed upon the banknotes, which the man had dropped in springing up so suddenly to seize the intruder.

The notes were scattered on the floor, dozens of them; and even Billy Bunter could read the denominations of most of them—five pounds, ten pounds, twenty pounds. Nearly all were for small amounts, and there were a great number of them.

The bank robber followed Bunter's glance, and his look grew haggard and savage.

"You are not one of those who came the other day?" he muttered, searching Bunter's face attentively.

"I—I haven't been here before. I—I didn't know anybody had."

"You young fool! You should not have come here!"

"I—I don't know who you are," gasped Bunter, "and I—I haven't seen the banknotes."

Stainforth shook him roughly.

"Can you keep a secret?"

"Ye-es, yes, yes!" gasped Bunter. "I won't say a word about your being here. I swear I won't! I—"

"You must stay here now," said Stainforth, calming down a little. "There is someone coming soon who may be able to answer for you. We shall see."

"Who—who is it?"

"That is no concern of yours! I—"

The bank robber broke off.

The forms of Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent had suddenly appeared at the end of

might be in danger, but it did not even occur to Bunter to help them. He was thinking only of himself. His pattering feet died away down the tunnel.

The bank robber made a movement as if to follow, but Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent were in his path.

"No, you don't!" said Harry grimly.

"You—you confounded brat—"

"Enough of that!" said Harry quietly.

"Look here, you are known, James Stainforth, and in a short time that fellow who is gone will be spreading the news everywhere. You have got to get out."

"Hang you!"

"I have sent him away on purpose, so that you can go," said Wharton. "I am not thinking of you, but of the chap whose kindness you're imposing upon. For his sake, I offer you a chance to get clear!"

Wharton started as a sound came from the direction of the door of the crypt. It was the sound of a key grating in a rusty lock.

The juniors exchanged glances. It must be Wingate coming—no one else had a key to the door of the crypt.

It was, indeed, the captain of Greyfriars. He came towards the light of the lamp, the key still in his hand. He gave an almost convulsive start as he caught sight of Wharton and his chum standing facing the bank robber.

"Wharton! Nugent! What are you doing here?"

"We had to come," said Wharton quietly. "Bunter came to the old priory, and we followed him, to stop him from coming here, but we were too late. He had come,

and he has seen the fellow here, and recognized him."

"Good heavens!"

"The game's up!" said Stainforth, with a bitter look at Wharton.

"Bunter is gone," said Harry. "He will talk, of course. Wingate, look at that money on the floor—stolen banknotes! You can see now with your own eyes that this man is a thief!"

Wingate glanced at the banknotes, which Stainforth made a hasty movement to gather up, and his face went white.

"Then you lied to me!" he muttered huskily.

Stainforth did not speak.

"You told me it was all a mistake," said Wingate. "You swore that you were innocent, and suspected for the crime of someone else. In the letter you wrote me, telling me you were coming to this place to hide, and demanding my help—in that letter you said that you were innocent, and I believed it—I tried to! And now—"

The misery was keen in Wingate's face. Stainforth was still silent. Harry Wharton looked compassionately at the captain of Greyfriars. What was his interest in this scoundrel?

Wharton understood now what must have been in the letter which Billy Bunter had found Wingate reading, and what had made him utter the exclamation which had first put the fat junior on the track.

No wonder Wingate had thought that he was ruined when he learned that a bank robber, hunted by the police, was claiming his aid in the very precincts of the school of which he was captain, yet why should he extend the aid that was so claimed?

"You see that he is guilty," said Wharton. "He ought to be given up to justice, Wingate."

Wingate groaned.

"But I can't give him up."

"Why not?"

"Because he's my cousin!"

"Oh!"

Wharton understood. That was the explanation; it was a near relative of Wingate's who had claimed his aid, and received it. The junior was silent. There was nothing he could say—nothing he could do to help in a situation like this.

"You must go now, James!" said Wingate, breaking a miserable silence. "The police will be here as soon as Bunter can fetch them. You are lost if you stay!"

Stainforth nodded.

"I understand that. I will go."

He stooped to gather up the banknotes. The captain of Greyfriars stepped forward with a stern brow.

"Let that money alone!" he exclaimed.

"What!"

"You cannot take it!"

"Cannot take it!" exclaimed Stainforth fiercely. "Do you think I am going out into

the world a beggar, then, as well as a fugitive? Are you mad?"

Wingate's face set grimly.

"You will not take a shilling of stolen money with you," he said—"not a penny! I am helping you to escape the penalty of your crimes—I will not help you to steal! You will hand over every banknote there, to be left for the police, or I will hand you over to them! You can take your choice!"

Stainforth took one look at his face, and read there his grimly fixed resolution. He muttered an oath.

"As you like! I am in your hands!"

"Go, then!"

The bank robber gave him one last look, in which there was little of regard or gratitude, and strode sullenly away into the tunnel. His footsteps died away.

Wingate looked at the juniors.

"You know my secret now!" he said.

"You know that that man—that scoundrel—is my cousin. I learned first of his rascality from the newspapers, and you can guess what a horrible shock it gave me; but I hoped and tried to believe that he was innocent. Then I had his letter, then he came here. What could I do but help him? If I had known that he had stolen money about him, it would have been different. But he swore that he was the victim of a mistake, and I—I wanted to believe it!"

"It was rotten for you," said Wharton.

"Of course, you know that we sha'n't say a word."

"Of course not!" said Nugent.

"Bunter knows nothing of your connection with the man," said Harry. "What he knows he will tell to everybody who will listen, but he knows nothing to hurt you. You know you can rely on us, Wingate."

"Thank you!" said the captain of Greyfriars.

The news was, indeed, very quickly spread by Billy Bunter, and the police visited the vaults in search of the bank robber. But they were hours too late. Stainforth was gone, and all the police found, as proof of his late presence there, was a bundle of banknotes lying on the stone floor. By the numbers the notes were ascertained to be those which had been carried off by the rascal in his flight, and it is probable that the directors of the London and Suburban Bank were more pleased by their recovery than they would have been by the arrest of the fugitive.

Wingate breathed more easily as the days passed on and there was no news of the arrest of Stainforth. The man had got clear, and, rascal as he was, blood was thicker than water, and Wingate was glad that he had escaped.

Not a word of the matter ever passed the lips of the chums of the Remove. No one was likely to learn from them a word of Wingate's secret.

THE END.

BETWEEN OURSELVES.

A Weekly Chat between The Editor and His Readers.

AN EXPLANATION.

Readers of the PENNY POPULAR will notice this week a slight reduction in the size of our paper. Whereas we had twenty pages, we have now the same number as our companion papers, the "Magnet" and the "Gem"—sixteen pages.

I want to impress upon all my readers the fact that this reduction has been unavoidable. The scarcity of paper is an extremely serious matter, and it gets more serious every week.

As, of course, you all know, the paper used for the PENNY POPULAR has to be brought to this country from overseas. This being the case, ships are needed to carry the paper. Ships are needed, too, for war purposes, and, what is more, they are needed for the purpose of bringing food to this country. The needs of the war must come first; paper has rightly to take a back seat.

I want to tell you all, however, that, although you lose four pages in the size of the paper, you are not

LOSING A SINGLE LINE

of reading matter. The whole of this issue is printed in a slightly smaller type, and, therefore, our stories are exactly the same length as before. If any reader disputes my statement, let him compare the words in this column with those in column one and two. A mere glance will prove that my statement is correct.

"If, however, you still want further proof, you should count the words in a single column in this issue, and also count the words in a column of last week's issue. The difference in the number of words is a marked one, as you will see if you take the trouble to do as I suggest.

In conclusion, I want to assure you that I shall always do my very utmost to make the PENNY POPULAR good.

VALUE FOR THE MONEY.

In this issue there are thirty thousand words of magnificent reading matter, and I shall continue to spare no efforts to make the good old PENNY POP the finest school story paper on the market.

Remember, my chums, you are getting as good value for your penny now as you have been getting for the last six months. The reduction in size does not mean a reduction in reading matter. The smaller type enables me to keep the stories the same length as before.

YOUR EDITOR.

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

"BUNTER, THE DANDY!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.

Please order your copy of the PENNY POPULAR in advance, and hand this number, when finished with, to a non-reader.

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

IN DEEP DISGUISE!

By
Martin
Clifford

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Very Mysterious!

JACK BLAKE came along the Fourth Form passage in the School House at St. Jim's, and turned the handle of the door of Study No. 6. To his surprise, the door did not open. Blake jerked at the handle again, and then kicked vigorously on the lower panels.

"Hallo! Who's in there?" he called out.
"Weally, Blake!" came the gentle voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form, from within the study.

"Open the door, Gussy!"

"I am sqwvy!"

"Nothing to be sorry about, unless you don't open the door at once," said Blake.

"I am sqwvy!"

"I want iny footer!" roared Blake through the keyhole. "Herries and Dig are waiting for me. Open the door!"

"Sowvy!"

Blake kicked at the door again.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth Form, who shared that famous apartment with Blake and Herries and Digby, evidently did not want to be disturbed. He had locked himself in Study No. 6, and Blake guessed that he was trying on new waistcoats, or selecting a new tie. He hammered at the door.

"Let me in, you fathead!"

"Sowvy!"

"I'll sqwvy you!" exclaimed Blake. "If you don't open the door, you fathead, I'll bump you bald-headed! Let me in!"

"Sowvy, but—"

Bang! Bang! Bang!

"Weally, Blake, I wish you would go away. You are thwovin' me into quite a futtah with that feahful wow!"

"Will you open the door?" said Blake, breathing hard through his nose.

"Imposs!"

"Why, you ass?"

"I wefuse to be called an ass!"

"Why can't you open the door?" shrieked Jack Blake.

"I am twyin' an expewiment."

"Rats! The waistcoats can wait, and the neckties can go and eat coke. Open the door at once, you burbling jabberwock!"

"I decline to be chawactewised as a burblin' jabbahwock, and I wefuse to open the door. I am twyin' an expewiment, and I cannot be bothahed by you youngstahs."

Blake snorted.

"If you don't open this door at once—"

he said, in measured tones.

"Way go away!"

"What experiment are you trying, you ass?"

"It's a jape on the Gwammawians. I am goin' to make them sit up, deah boy, and give Gordon Gay & Co. the giddy kybosh."

"Oh, rot!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Are you coming, Blake?" roared the powerful voice of Herries up the stairs.

"The silly ass won't let me into the study!" shouted back Blake. "Come and help me bust the door in!"

"Right-ho!"

Herries and Digby came up the stairs three at a time. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther came along the passage from their study at the same moment, and paused outside Study No. 6 as they beheld Blake's red and wrathful countenance.

"Wherefore this thustness?" asked Monty Lowther, in surprise.

Blake delivered a terrific kick on the door.

"Gussy's locked himself in, and won't open



The juniors dropped the battering-ram as the door flew open, and rushed into the study. "Bal Jove, you wottahs!" It was the voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, but he was not to be seen. In the study a gentleman in frock-coat and beard and tinted glasses stood and stared at the intruders. "M-m-m-my hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "Where's Gussy?"

the door!" he gasped. "I'm going to bust the lock, and then bust Gussy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I should uttally wefuse to be busted, Blake, deah boy," came the voice of Arthur Augustus from within; "and I wegard 'busted' as a vulgah expewision."

"Open the door!" bawled Blake and Herries and Digby together.

"Sowvy!"

"You're not so sorry as you'll be presently!" roared Blake.

"Weally, deah boy—"

"What on earth is he up to?" exclaimed Tom Merry, laughing. "Blake, old man, you'd better go easy with that row, or you'll have a prefect up here."

"I'll—I'll—I'll—"

Words failed Jack Blake, and he could not fully express all the things he would do when the door was once open.

Levison of the Fourth came along the passage. He was grinning.

"Hallo! Trying to get in?" he asked.

"Yes!" growled Blake.

"Who's Gussy got in there with him?" asked Levison.

"Nobody."

"Yes, he has. I saw him at the window," said Levison. "I saw him at the window—chap with a grey beard and tinted glasses."

"What!"

"It's a fact!"

Blake stooped to the keyhole.

"Gussy, you ass, have you got anybody in there?"

"No, deah boy."

"Oh, what a whopper!" exclaimed Levison, in amazement. "I saw an old chap in there, only two minutes ago. He passed the window, and I was looking up."

There was a chuckle from within the study, and that was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's only rejoinder to Levison's remark.

Blake put his eye to the keyhole, and looked into the study. The keyhole commanded a view of about a third part of the room; and Blake gave a jump as he caught sight of a figure in a frock-coat, with a grey beard and tinted glasses, exactly as Levison had described it. The figure moved out of the line of vision the next moment.

"My hat!" ejaculated Blake.

"What have you seen?" asked Manners.
 "Chap in there with a beard and glasses."

"What!"
 Levison chuckled his disagreeable chuckle. The cad of the Fourth was always pleased in finding anybody out in anything not quite above-board.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had a reputation for truthfulness that completely put in the shade that of the late G. Washington.

And yet D'Arcy had stated that there was nobody in the study with him, and Blake had seen a man evidently of middle age.

Blake was so astonished that he was silent for a full minute.

"Blessed if I understand this!" said Tom Merry, equally amazed. "Gussy said distinctly that there was no one in the study with him."

"Quite distinctly," said Manners.
 "Must be off his rocker," said Herries.
 Levison sniggered.

"Oh, it's something fishy, of course," he said. "Perhaps he's been borrowing money. That old chap in there looks a bit like old Benson, the moneylender of Wayland. Anyway, he's lying."

"Levison, you uttah wottab," came D'Arcy's voice from within, "if I were out there, I should give you a fearful thwashin' for that wotten remark."

"Open the door, Gussy!" said Digby.

"Sowwy, deah boy!"

"Gussy, old man," said Blake, with unaccustomed gentleness, "open the door, there's a good chap, and we won't bump you." And Blake tapped his forehead as a hint to the others of what he suspected.

Prevarication was so foreign to the nature of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, that Blake could only imagine that there was something temporarily wrong with him mentally.

"I should refuse to be bumped, Blake."

"Will you open the door?"

"Sowwy, it's imposs!"

"Must be barmy!" said Monty Lowther. "Better bust in the door, I think; he ought to be taken care of."

"Pway go away, deah boys!"

"Who's that in there with you, Gussy?"

"There is nobody here, deah boy."

"Look here, Gussy, I saw him through the keyhole," said Blake.

"A chuckle was the only reply.

"It isn't like you to tell whoppers, Gussy. You must be off your rocker. Now open the door, like a good chap."

"Sowwy! It's imposs! I cannot be bothered just now."

"I want my footer!"

"I will throw it out of the window to you, if you like."

"I want to come in, Gussy. I'm afraid there's something wrong with you."

Another chuckle.

"Open the door, old fellow!"

"Wats!"

"Well, I'm going in," said Blake determinedly. "We'll bust the lock, and make Gussy pay for a new one."

"Good egg!"

Blake strode along the passage, and dragged back a heavy form. Three or four of the juniors grasped it, to use as a battering-ram. The heavy oaken form crashed upon the lock of the door.

The lock was a stout one, but it was not intended to resist attacks of that kind. It flew into pieces, and the door flew open. The juniors dropped the form, and rushed into the study.

"Bai Jove! You wottabs!"

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's voice, but Arthur was not to be seen.

In the study a gentleman in frock-coat and beard and tinted glasses stood and stared at the intruders, but of the swell of St. Jim's there was no sign in the study. He had vanished apparently into thin air.

"M-m-my hat!" gasped Tom Merry.
 "Where's Gussy?"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

D'Arcy's Great Jape.

TOM MERRY & CO. stared blankly round Study No. 6.

The gentleman in tinted glasses stared at them, and they stared at him. D'Arcy was not to be seen.

His elegant Etons were lying on the table, his collar and his necktie were on the table, his beautiful boots were on the rug. He had vanished, apparently, leaving his clothes behind him.

For a moment the juniors fancied they were dreaming.

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"Where's Gussy?" gasped Blake.

"D'Arcy, old man—"

"Gussy!"

"You uttah asses!"

Then the juniors jumped.

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's voice, and it proceeded from the middle-aged gentleman in glasses.

"They understood."

"You—you chump!" said Blake, in great relief.

"Blessed if I didn't think there was some giddy magic in it! You fathead!"

"You ass!"

"You chump!"

The juniors regarded D'Arcy in amazement. They observed now that there were many signs in the study that D'Arcy had been "making-up."

A box in which supplies for the Junior Dramatic Society were kept was open, and there was a box of grease-paints on the table and several wigs and beards.

The middle-aged gentleman before them was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth, and now that they looked at him more carefully they could recognise his features, disguised as he was by the beard and the tinted glasses and by dabs of grease-paint.

The grey beard, too, was a little sideways, and its fastenings were distinctly to be seen. "You—you unutterable ass!" said Blake. "So that is the experiment you were trying?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

It was ludicrous to hear the junior's boyish voice, with its beautiful accent, proceeding from the grave-looking gentleman of middle age.

The juniors could not help grinning.

"I werged you as twouble-some asses for intewwupting me in this way!" said the swell of the School House. "I had nearly finished my expwiment."

"What is it—a new character in amateur theatricals?" asked Tom Merry.

"Somethin' like that, deah boys. I don't mind tellin' you; but kick that wottab Levison out!"

Levison of the Fourth was promptly bundled out of the study. Blake jammed the door shut.

"Now, explain, you image, before we scalp you!" he said.

"I wefuse to be scalped—"

"Explain!" roared Blake.

"It's a jape," said D'Arcy condescendingly—"the jape of the season! I have made the discovery that Mr. Adams, the Fourth Form mastah of the Gwammah School, has left."

"What on earth!"

"They are expectin' a new mastah at Wylcombe Gwammah School."

"Well?"

"I had it from one of the Gwammawian chaps," D'Arcy explained. "They are expectin' a new Form-mastah—a Mr. Fowlah."

"But what—"

"Don't you tumble?"

"I'll tumble you if you don't make yourself clear!" growled Blake. "What on earth has a new master at Rylcombe Grammar School got to do with this rot?"

"Oh, he's barmy!" said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"It's a jape, is it?" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And what's the jape?"

"A wegulah sell for the Gwammah cadst!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a chuckle.

"I have learned that the new mastah is expected to-morrow. Suppose he was to arrive to-day instead?"

"Well, suppose he did?" said Blake.

"Don't you see?"

"See what?"

"The jape, you duflah!"

"Blessed if I do!" said Blake in bewilderment.

"I suppose you wemembah that Gordon Gay, of the Gwammah School, made himself up as Dr. Holmes, our headmaster, once, and palmed himself off on us?" said D'Arcy.

"Yes; he's a jolly good actor!" said Tom Merry. "But what—"

"Well, one good turn deserves another," said D'Arcy. "I've made myself up as Mr. Fowlah, the new Form-mastah at the Gwammah School, and I'm goin' to palm myself off on the Gwammahians, and give them a wegulah high old time!"

The juniors simply gasped.

Gordon Gay, by his wonderful powers of impersonation, and his still more wonderful powers of sheer cheek, had passed himself off on the St. Jim's fellows as their headmaster on a celebrated occasion.

But that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy should dream of playing the same role was amazing.

In the study the junior had nonplussed his

friends for a moment, but only for a moment. At the second or third glance they would have known him. And in the open air his disguise would not have passed muster for a second.

And if it had, his unmistakable voice would have given him away at once, immediately he began to speak. They stared at him blankly in dumbfounded silence. The silence was broken by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's satisfied chuckle.

"What do you think of the wheeze, deah boys?" he asked.

"Oh!" murmured Blake. "Oh, my only Uncle George Peter! Oh!"

"Great Scott!"

"Whew!"

"My word!"

"I'm not surprised that you're surprised!" said D'Arcy loftily. "I think of these things, you know. I'm not supposed to be leadah of this studay, but it requires a chap with some tact and judgment to think of a weally good jape!"

"Oh, dear!"

"I shall give the Gwammah cadst a wegulah wotten time!" said D'Arcy confidentially. "I shall ordah Gordon Gay & Co. to w'eck their own studies, and cane them, you know, and give them lines to do, and—"

"You ass!" roared Blake, finding his voice at last.

"Weally, Blake—"

"You frabjous ass—"

"Weally—"

"Do you think you'll take in the Gram-marians for a single second?" yelled Blake. "Why, a blind man would know you at once!"

"I werged you as an ass, Blake!"

"They'll spot you on the spot—"

"Imposs!"

"There isn't a chap at St. Jim's who won't know you are as soon as you step outside this study in that rig!" gasped Tom Merry, with tears of merriment rolling down his cheeks.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"It's no good, Gussy!"

"Wats!"

"They'll scalp you if you go over to the Grammar School like that—"

"Wot!"

"They'll know you immediately—"

"Bosh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Monty Lowther. "Let him go! It will be the joke of the season, just as he says—but it will be up against Gussy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I werged you all as asses!" said D'Arcy. "You youngstahs can go and play footah, and leave me to finish my bizney. You have intewwupted me!"

"But—but—you don't really intend to go out of doors like that?" gasped Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Anybody on the road will see that you're in disguise. Suppose you meet P.-c. Crump; he may take you for a disguised burglar—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He will take me for a Form-mastah," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with dignity. "I trust that I am as good an actah as Gordon Gay!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Howevah, I shall put it to the test," said D'Arcy. "Before goin' ovah to the Gwammah School I will drop into the New House here, and see whethah Figgins & Co. are taken in. If they are taken in it will be all wight."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

"Pway cleah out, you sacklin' asses, and don't intewwupt me any more!"

Blake picked up his football.

"Oh, come on!" he gasped. "If he goes over to the New House in that rig, it will be all right. Figgins & Co. will make an example of him, and he won't get as far as the Grammar School. Let's get down to the footer."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I werged you as a set of feahful duflahs! I considah—"

But the juniors did not wait to hear what Arthur Augustus D'Arcy considered. They left the study, and went staggering down the passage, weak with laughter.

Arthur Augustus snorted, and closed the door after them, and as the key would no longer hold it, he jammed a chair under the lock.

Then he proceeded with his busy preparations for the visit to the Grammar School in the guise of a new Form-master—a visit that

was to give Gordon Gay & Co. the "kybosh," and make them hide their diminished heads for ever and ever!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
Not Deceived.

BUCK up, Fatty!" Figgins of the Fourth was standing at the open window of his study in the New House at St. Jim's. Kerr, was sitting in the armchair, with his feet on the table. Fatty Wynn was at the table, busily engaged in demolishing the last remnants of a pie.

Figgins and Kerr were waiting for their chum, but Fatty Wynn seemed to be in no hurry. So long as there was any of the pie left wild horses could not have dragged the fat Fourth-Former from the study.

"Blessed if I know how you're going to walk after that lot, Fatty!" said Kerr. "And it's only a couple of hours since dinner; and you did yourself very well then."

Fatty Wynn looked up from the pie. "Rot!" he said tersely. "Dinner was very skinny—mutton cutlets and vegetables and a pudding. If I hadn't had the foresight to take in some sausages and ham-sandwiches and a saveloy, I should have gone away hungry. And I haven't had anything since, excepting the cold fowl and the cake and the tarts. If we're going to walk to Wayland, it's no good starting out hungry. I've always thought it's a good idea to lay a solid foundation."

"Well, buck up and lay it," said Kerr. "We don't want to sit here all the afternoon-watching you eat."

"No chance of that," said Fatty Wynn, with a sigh. "This is the last thing in the cupboard. But I'll tell you what. Suppose we raid the School House instead of going out? Those boudgers are down at the footer practice, and we—"

"Rats!" said Figgins. "If you eat any more you won't be able to walk. We're not going to carry you!"

"Well, I could do with a cake and some tarts; and I know Blake has—"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Figgins suddenly. He was looking out of the window, and he had caught sight of an extraordinary figure approaching the New House. His amazement caused Kerr to join him at the window, but Fatty Wynn continued operations on the pie.

Figgins and Kerr stared blankly at the new-comer. They beheld a middle-aged-looking gentleman, with a grey beard and tinted glasses, dressed in a somewhat rusty frock-coat and silk hat. He was approaching the New House, however, with an elegant gait full of youthful verve. And the remarkable thing was that, in spite of the tinted glasses and the beard, the well-known aristocratic features of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were plainly recognisable.

"D'Arcy!" said Kerr.

Figgins nodded.

"Yes, I know it's D'Arcy," he said. "But what on earth is he got up like that for?"

"Theatricals, perhaps," said Kerr.

"Well, chaps don't usually walk out into the quadrangle got up for amateur theatricals," said Figgins, in amazement. "They don't, as a rule," agreed Kerr: "though there's no telling what Gussy will do at any time. He's coming here."

"My hat!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, quite unconscious of the fact that he had been seen and recognised from Figgins' study window, disappeared into the porch of the New House.

Figgins and Kerr exchanged glances of astonishment.

"Coming to see us, I suppose," said Figgins. "I suppose so."

"I'm ready now," said Fatty Wynn, rising from the table. "That was a jolly good pie, but I wish it had been larger. What are you fellows staring at?"

"Gussy's coming here—"

"Coming to ask us to a feed, perhaps," said Fatty Wynn hopefully. "Look here, let's be civil to him. I don't believe in carrying these blessed House rows too far, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a tap at the door.

"Come in!" sang out Figgins.

The door opened, and the disguised School House junior presented himself. He bowed gracefully to the New House fellows over his silk hat.

"Good-afternoon, deah boys!" he said. "Good-afternoon!" said Figgins.

"I twust you will excuse this intwusion of a stwargah," said D'Arcy.

Figgins & Co. almost choked.

It dawned upon them that the swell of the School House was under the impression that his disguise was so good that it had deceived them as to his identity.

The three New House juniors exchanged a rapid wink.

The same thought had occurred to them all at once to "rot" Arthur Augustus by pretending to be taken in.

"Not at all, sir," said Figgins politely. "Will you take a seat?"

"Thank you, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus sat down.

"To what do we owe the honour of this visit, sir?" asked Kerr, with elaborate respect. "I suppose you are an uncle of Figgins, or a father of Fatty Wynn?"

"Not at all. As a matter of fact, my name is Fowlah," explained Arthur Augustus. "I am the new Form-mastah at Wylcombe Gwammah School."

"Pleased to meet you, sir."

"The pleasure is on my side," said Arthur Augustus, with another bow. "I have called in heah before goin' oval—I mean before—in fact—ahem!"

"Exactly, sir!" agreed Figgins.

"Quite lucid," said Kerr.

"Oh, quite!" murmured Fatty Wynn. "As a matter of fact, deah boys, I undahstand that there have been wows and wags between you and my boys—my boys at the Gwammah School."

"Yes; I fancy there have been some little rags, sir," said Figgins. "I hope you haven't come over to report us to Dr. Holmes, sir?"

"Not at all—not at all, Fig—deah boy!"

"Thank you very much, sir!"

"Of course," said Kerr, "we must admit that we always get the best of the Grammar cads, sir. There's only one fellow who's always getting the kybosh from Gordon Gay & Co., and he doesn't belong to this House. As a stranger here, I suppose you've never met him—a rather silly ass named D'Arcy."

"Oh!"

"Chap who generally goes about with an eyeglass," explained Kerr. "He's about the limit when you come to really first-rate fatheadness."

"You uttah wottah—"

"Eh?"

"I—I mean, vewy good," said D'Arcy hastily. "Now, I want to make an appeal to you youngstahs," said the swell of St. Jim's, in the best manner of Dr. Holmes.

"Go ahead, sir!" murmured Figgins.

"I wogard it as wathah wotten that these wags and wows should go on, and I want you to twy to live on bettah terms with my boys."

"Certainly, sir!"

"Undah the cires, I wogard that as a wippin' idea. Let dogs delight to bark and bite, you know, but, children, you should nevah let such angwy passions wise."

"Quite right, sir."

"You speak like an oracle, sir," said Kerr. "Are you going to take charge of the Grammar kids?"

"Yaas, wathah! I'm goin' to take up my dutays there to-day."

"I'm sure Gordon Gay & Co. will give you a ripping welcome, sir. They'll be very glad to see you," said Figgins.

"I twust so." D'Arcy rose to his feet; the interview had proved that his disguise was perfect, and that the New House juniors had not the faintest suspicion of his identity.

"Pway excuse my intwusion."

"Not at all, sir."

"Good-afternoon, deah boys!"

"Good-afternoon, sir!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with another graceful bow, retired from the study.

Figgins & Co. stared at the door as it closed after him. Then they whooped:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins sank into a chair and gasped. Kerr wiped his eyes, and Fatty Wynn seemed to be on the verge of a serious attack of hysterics.

"Oh, my only Aunt Georgiana!" moaned Figgins. "The ass! The duffer! The chump! He thinks he's taken us in with that—that rig! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, he's given me a pain!" groaned Fatty Wynn. "He shouldn't have sprung that on us just after I'd eaten a pie. Oh, dear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins ran to the window.

"There he goes!" he gasped.

The New House juniors looked out towards the school gates. There was the disguised Arthur Augustus, as large as life, crossing to the gates. He disappeared from view,

and the three juniors of the New House gurgled hysterically.

"He's going to the Grammar School!" said Figgins faintly. "If this won't be the biggest joke of the season—up against the School House, too—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gordon Gay & Co. will be glad to see him, I think!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins wiped his eyes.

"I think we'll take a stroll along to the Grammar School ourselves, instead of going over to Wayland," he said. "Somebody will be wanted to pick up the pieces when the Grammarians have done with him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Figgins & Co. left their study and strolled in the direction of Rylcombe Grammar School, with the benevolent intention of bringing home what remained of the swell of St. Jim's after he had worked his great jape on the Grammarians.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
The New Form-master.

HANDS up, or die the death!"

It was Gordon Gay, of the Fourth Form at Rylcombe Grammar School, who spoke. He had covered Frank Monk of the Fourth with a ruler, in lieu of a revolver, and Frank Monk promptly held up his hands.

"Lemme see, what do I say next?" said Gay.

"I've got the drop on you, of course," said Tadpole, reading from a scribbled manuscript play.

"I've got to drop on him?" asked Gay.

"No, no! You've got the drop on him."

"Drop of what—water?"

"No, no! With the pistol."

"Oh, I'm to let the pistol drop on him?"

"No, no!" said Tadpole patiently. "Nothing of the sort. In the Rocky Mountains, when you point a pistol at a chap, you've got the drop on him."

"Oh, I see! I've got the drop on you, Monkey."

"That's right," said Tadpole.

"This beats Shakespeare hollow!" said Wootton major. "There's nothing of this sort in old William."

Tadpole nodded.

"Yes, I may say that this is like Bernard Shaw, a little bit better than Shakespeare," he said modestly. "Of course, Shakespeare had his good qualities as a playwright—"

"Go on!" said Gordon Gay.

"Yes, he had," said Tadpole. "But what is wanted now is something a bit more up-to-date. 'The Belle of the Prairie' is more up-to-date. I don't say I'm a first-rate playwright—"

"Wouldn't be much good if you did, Taddy."

"My dear Gay, I don't say so, but others have said so!" said Tadpole, with dignity. "My Aunt Gloxiana thinks my plays are splendid!"

"Queer ideas one's relations have about one," murmured Lane.

"My dear Lane—"

"Well, let's get on with the washing," said Gordon Gay. "We've got to rehearse the whole giddy thing this afternoon. Lucky there isn't any Form-master to bother us to-day. I could get on very well without any Form-master at all, for one."

"Same here!"

"Let us proceed," said Tadpole.

"Allons, done!" said Gustave Blanc, the French boy in the Fourth Form at the Grammar School, generally called Mont Blong by the Grammarians.

The Fourth Form at the Grammar School was crowded with juniors, although it was a half-holiday. It was a grand meeting of the Dramatic Society, of which Gordon Gay, the Australian junior, was president and stage-manager, and nearly everything else. Mr. Adams, the Fourth Form master, was gone, and his successor had not arrived, and was not expected until the following day.

The Fourth-Formers of the Grammar School, therefore, felt entitled to allow themselves some little additional license—and they did. The Form-room was the scene of the play, and the forms had been piled up into a form of a "corral," which was to be attacked by Red Indians, the Red Indians being Frank Monk & Co.

Tadpole of the Fourth had written a play, which he was very anxious to have performed by the junior dramatists, and Gordon Gay had promised to give it a trial. It is possible

that Tadpole exaggerated when he declared that it was better than Shakespeare; but it was certainly more to the taste of most of the juniors.

It consisted chiefly of shouting, rushing about, yelling, struggling, and uttering dire threats, and the Grammarian juniors felt that it was better than long speeches. Gordon Gay was the handsome cowboy, whose business it was to rescue the Belle of the Prairie from all sorts of deadly dangers, and to fire off a revolver incessantly.

He was supposed to charge pretty often upon a fiery mustang, too, but that part of the play had to be left to the imagination. It was not feasible to introduce a steed into the Form-room; besides, fiery mustangs were not to be obtained in Ryiccombe for love or money.

"Hands up!" repeated Gordon Gay, keeping the ruler steadily levelled at Frank Monk's head.

"Got 'em up!" said Monk.
"You don't say that," said Tadpole. "You say, 'What does the pale chief want of the dusky son of the prairie?'"

"Oh, good! What does the pale thief want?"

"The pale chief, you fathead!"

"Right-ho! The pale chief, you fathead—"

"You don't say 'you fathead, you duffer! You say—"

The Form-room door opened.

"Ahem!"

The Grammarian juniors swung round.

They stared at the new-comer.

At the first glance he appeared to be a middle-aged gentleman, with a grey beard and tinted glasses, and a very respectable if rusty black frock-coat.

At the second glance it was perfectly clear that his beard was false, and that his features belonged to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

The Grammarians glared at him.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Gordon Gay.

"My deah boys—"

"Eh?"

"I am surprised and shocked to find you actin' in this wewpewhensible way!" said the new-comer severely. "Put those forms in their places at once!"

"What?"

"You may not be aware who I am, you young wascals!"

"Yes, we jolly well are!" roared Wootton major.

"I am your new Form-mastah!"

"What?"

"I am Mr. Fowlah!"

Gordon Gay sank down on a form faintly.

"You're—you're—you're which?" he gasped.

"I am Mr. Fowlah, your new Form-mastah!" said D'Arcy severely. "I am shocked to see such conduct in my Form-room."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Great pip!"

"Pway cease this diswepctful and wibald laughah at once!" said D'Arcy sternly.

"Don't you know it is wewy wude to laugh in the presence of your Form-mastah?"

"Our Form-master!" panted Frank Monk.

"Oh, this is too rich!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall cane you all severely!" said Mr. Fowler.

"Cane us?"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Yaas, wathah! I weward you as an unwely set of young wascals!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, still under the blissful impression that his disguise had not been penetrated. "I shall certainly cowwect you wewy severely."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" thundered D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Have you any ideah whatevah of the wewpect due to a Form-mastah?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gay, you are the wingleader. Fetch my cane from my desk at once!"

"What?"

"Fetch my cane!"

"Your cane?"

"Mr. Adams' cane. It is my cane now, as you are my pupils. I have already wemarked that I am your new Form-mastah."

Gordon Gay staggered to his feet. The Grammarians were in hysterics. That Arthur Augustus D'Arcy imagined that his absurd disguise deceived them for a moment seemed too rich a joke. The Form-room rang with shouts of laughter.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 270.

"He's—he's rotting!" gasped Frank Monk.

"It's a joke!"

"No; he's taking us in!" sobbed Gordon Gay.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You wewpewhensible young wascals!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gordon Gay tottered to the Form-master's desk and fetched the cane. He handed it to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The Grammarians stood round almost weeping.

D'Arcy took the cane.

"Now hold out your hand!" he said severely.

"Which hand?" asked Gordon Gay demurely.

"The wight hand."

"They're both white," said Gay, looking at his hands. "I always keep my hands nice and clean, sir."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway don't make any wotten jokes, Gay. I have enough of them from Monty Lowthah—I mean, hold out your hand at once, you wottah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wewly, Gay—"

"Here you are, sir," said Gay.

He held out his hand, and the new Form-master made a swipe at it with the cane. Gay stepped back, and the cane swept downwards and landed upon Arthur Augustus' own leg with a resounding thwack.

There was a yell of anguish from the swell of St. Jim's.

"Ow! Yawwooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gwooh! You young wottah! I'll give you a feahful thwashin'! Ow!"

The Grammarians yelled.

"Oh, my only hat!" gasped Gordon Gay.

"Gussy, you frabjous ass, do you think we don't know you? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gussy, you chump!"

"D'Arcy, you burbler!"

"Bai Jove!"

The swell of St. Jim's realised that he was discovered. How, he did not know; but it was evident that he was discovered. He made a rush for the door.

But a crowd of the Grammarians were there before him.

"No, you don't!" said Gordon Gay genially. "You've come, and now you're going to stay. Gentlemen, I vote that we show great attention to our new Form-master!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We must show him how glad we are to see him."

"Bravo!"

"This beats 'The Belle of the Prairie,'" grinned Frank Monk. "Tadpole, old man, you can put your play in the fire. We're going to play with Gussy."

And the Grammarians formed a ring round the swell of St. Jim's, cutting off his escape on all sides.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

In Deep Disguise.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY felt a little alarmed.

He had come to the Grammar School with the blissful conviction that his disguise would impose upon the Grammarians, and that he would jape Gordon Gay & Co. as much as he liked, and have a wondrous tale to tell when he returned to St. Jim's.

The enterprise was evidently not going to work out that way.

"You—you wottahs!" said Arthur Augustus. He took off the tinted glasses, which impeded his vision considerably, and jammed his famous monocle into his eye.

"How did you guess?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wewesume that Tom Mewwy or any of the othahs did not give me away," said D'Arcy. "I have no ideah how you found me out."

The Grammarians shrieked.

"How did we guess?" murmured Gordon Gay.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Howevah, I will now wewire—"

"Not just yet," said Gordon Gay blandly.

"We've not done with our new Form-master yet."

"No fear!" said Frank Monk emphatically.

"Wewly, you wottahs—"

"Collar him!"

"Pway keep off," said the swell of St. Jim's.

"I shall handle you wathah wuffly if you lay hands on me!"

"He's going to lick the lot of us!" ex-

claimed Wootton major in alarm. "Hide me, somebody!"

"Keep off, you boundahs! Ow—ah—yah—ow!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was collared by a dozen pairs of hands. They yanked him over on a form and sat upon him. The grey beard came off, revealing the well-known features, quite recognisable as usual, in spite of dabs of paint.

"Poor old Gussy!" said Gordon Gay sympathetically. "Poor old innocent bird, falling into trouble this way! Gussy, old man, the next time you try to pass yourself off as somebody else, I should recommend you to have your voice amputated."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wewly, Gay—"

"Gussy has disguised himself so that we shouldn't know him," said Gordon Gay. "One good turn deserves another, so I suggest that we disguise him, so that the other St. Jim's fellows won't know him when he gets back."

"Good egg!"

"Hear, hear!"

"We've got the things all handy," said Gay. "We can spare a little paint and some false hair to make Gussy really presentable."

"Yes, rather!"

"It is ze good idea," grinned Mont Blong, "zat ve stick ze vig and ze viskers on him viz ze glue, so zat zey not come off any more."

"Hurrah!"

Arthur Augustus wriggled under the half-dozen Grammarians who were sitting on him and pinning him down on the form by their weight.

"I wewfuse to be tweated in such a way!" he exclaimed indignantly. "I am willin' to make it pax!"

"I dare say you are," grinned Gay, "but we're not—just yet. Seccotine is a good thing for fastening on whiskers so that they won't come off. There's a tube of it in that box, Carboy."

"Here you are," said Carboy.

"Hold him tight while I disguise him!"

"I wewfuse—Ow—ow!"

"Not much good refusing," said Gordon Gay, dabbing the sticky fluid upon the hair of the swell of St. Jim's. "Now give me his beard. He can wear it on the back of his head; it will be just as convincing."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now a nice pair of sandy side-whiskers," said Frank Monk.

"And a black pointed beard for his chin."

"And some nice, large red cyebrows."

"Ow—ow—ow—wow!" groaned D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

With a liberal use of seccotine the hair was fastened upon the swell of St. Jim's. His aspect, with thick red eyebrows, sandy whiskers, and a black beard, was so utterly ludicrous that the Grammarians simply shrieked. The grey beard stuck to his hair added to the curious effect. A few dabs of scarlet paint on his nose and ears enhanced it.

"Now we must give the stuff time to dry, or he'll get it off," said Gay. "Better tie his hands behind him, I think."

"I wewfuse to have my hands tied—Ow!"

D'Arcy's hands were tied behind him, in spite of his refusal.

Then he was allowed to slide off the form and stand upon his feet. The Grammarians doubled up as they looked at him.

"That looks ever so much more convincing," said Gay. "You should come to us when you want to be disguised, Gussy. We knew you were D'Arcy the moment you came in, but I'll wager no one will know you now!"

"Gwooh! You wottahs!"

"I've got a pair of nigger minstrel striped bags here," went on Gay, looking into his bag of properties. "They've seen plenty of service, and I don't mind giving them away for Gussy's sake."

"Gay, you howwid beast!"

"Shove them on him!"

The striped trousers were drawn upon D'Arcy outside his own garments, and fastened securely at the waist. The black frock-coat over striped pink trousers had a most extraordinary effect.

"There! Now I think he will do," said Gordon Gay, surveying the victim with great satisfaction. "Now when he goes back to St. Jim's they can't possibly see that he's Gussy, and he can introduce himself as a new Form-master, or a new headmaster, or a new fellow escaped from a lunatic asylum."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you uttah wottahs, I can't return to St. Jim's in this state!"

"Bring him along!"

Gordon Gay threw open the door of the Form-room, and the crowd of Grammarians marched Arthur Augustus D'Arcy out, with shouts of laughter. The unhappy swell of St. Jim's was marched into the quadrangle, and there other Grammarians gathered from all sides to see the amazing sight.

"What on earth is that?" exclaimed Delamere, the captain of the school, as he caught sight of the fearsome figure.

"It's D'Arcy of St. Jim's," explained Gordon Gay. "He came over here in disguise, but it wasn't thick enough, so we've finished it for him."

Delamere laughed. The Grammarian juniors marched Arthur Augustus down to the gates and out into the road. There they left him, with his hands still secured behind him, so that it was not possible for him to make any change in his new disguise.

"Good-bye, Gussy!" said Gordon Gay. "Give 'em our kind regards at St. Jim's."

"You awful wottah—"

"Good-bye, Bluebell!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wufuse to go in this state! I considah—"

"Pea-shooters to the front!" said Gay. "Give him volleys till he starts. Now then, all together!"

"Ow, wow! You wottahs! Yow!"

And Arthur Augustus started. The Grammarians watched him down the road, yelling with laughter, till a bend in the lane hid him from sight, and then they turned back into the gateway, almost weeping.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Return of the Japer.

"WH-WH-WHAT'S that?" Figgins jumped almost clear of the ground at the sight of the remarkable object in Rylcombe Lane.

"Somebody escaped from a lunatic asylum!" exclaimed Kerr.

"Or the wild man from Borneo!" grinned Fatty Wynn.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The remarkable object uttered an exclamation of relief at the sight of the three St. Jim's fellows.

"Pway untie my hands, deah boys!" said the remarkable object.

"I know that voice," murmured Figgins. "There is only one accent like that in the country. Can it be a revelation of the one and only Gussy?"

"I am Gussy, you ass—"

"Oh! You are Gussy, you ass!"

"I have been tweated in a gwoosly disrespectful way by the Gwammah cads!"

said a voice from the depths of whiskers and beard. "I am feeling wotten!"

"You're looking rather rotten, too!" chuckled Kerr.

"They have stuck these howwid things on me with seccotine, and I'm afwaid they won't come off!" said D'Arcy distressfully.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothin' whatever to laugh at," said D'Arcy. "I have been japing the Gwammah cads, but—"

"Looks as if they've been japing you!"

"Yaas, that was how it turned out," said D'Arcy. "Do you wemembah a chap comin' into your studay this aftahnoon—a new mastah for the Gwammah School?"

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

"Well, I was that chap!"

"Go hon!"

"Yaas, it's quite twine. I got myself up like that to jape the Gwammawians, to palm myself off on them as a mastah, you know, as Gay did on us once. As I took you fellows in, I weakened I could take them in. But it didn't work. Somehow or othah they spotted me."

"Not really?" said Figgins in astonishment.

"Yaas, weally!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway don't cackle, deah boys, but untie my hands! I want to get these bags off, even if I can't get the wotten hair and paint off my face!"

Figgins grinned as he untied D'Arcy's hands.

He was tempted to allow the swell of St. Jim's to return to the school in that state, but he relented. But untying D'Arcy's hands was all that he could do.

The whiskers and the false hair stuck tightly on D'Arcy, would require hot water, and plenty of it, before they came off, and the paint would not be easily removed. Arthur Augustus pulled at the whiskers, and gave a little yelp of pain.

"Ow! They won't come off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, pway shut up!" said D'Arcy crossly. "There is nothin' whatever to laugh at. I shall feel an awful ass goin' back to St. Jim's like this!" He wrenched off the nigger bags and tossed them under a hedge.

"Well, you are an awful ass, you know!"

"It's all your fault, you duftahs!"

"Our fault!" ejaculated Kerr.

"Yaas, wathah! If you had been able to penetwate my disguise I should not have gone!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The yell of laughter from the New House trio let in a light upon D'Arcy's mind. He jammed his eyeglass into the paint round his eye, and glared at Figgins & Co.

"You uttah wottahs!" he exclaimed. "Do you mean to say that you were wottin', and that you knew me all the time?"

Figgins & Co. shrieked.

"Bai Jove! I wegard you as wotten wottahs! I wufuse to speak to you! Wun off!"

And Arthur Augustus, with his aristocratic nose very high in the air, tramped away towards St. Jim's. Figgins & Co. followed him, doubled up with merriment.

"Buzz off, you wottahs!" shouted D'Arcy.

"We're going to look after you, Gussy," explained the hilarious Figgins. "Suppose somebody met you and had a fit. Or you might be arrested and taken back to the asylum."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy walked on haughtily, with the New House juniors following in his wake. They did meet somebody. The first was Grimes, the grocer's boy of Rylcombe. Grimes was carrying a basket on his arm, and he dropped it at sight of D'Arcy, and there was an ominous sound of cracking eggs.

"Oh, lor'!" gasped Grimes. "Wot is it?"

"It's the wild man from Borneo," explained Kerr. "He's going to give a performance at St. Jim's!"

"Oh, my 'at!" said Grimes.

"You wottah, Figgah—"

"Master D'Arcy!" exclaimed Grimes, in astonishment.

"I have been tweated in a gwoosly disrespectful way, Grimes—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Grimes. "Ho, ho, ho!"

"Weally, Grimes—"

Grimes sat down on the bank and roared. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave him a withering glance, and stalked on. He met some village boys further along the lane, and they greeted him with a yell and began to pelt him. Then he discovered that the escort of Figgins & Co. was valuable after all. Figgins & Co. charged the villagers, and rolled them into the ditch, and marched triumphantly on.

It seemed an age to D'Arcy before he reached the gates of the school; but when he reached them, he began to wish he hadn't. For he was spotted at once, and fellows gathered round on all sides to greet him and stare.

"It can't be Gussy!" gasped Tom Merry.

"More disguised than ever!" remarked Jack Blake.

"Did they spot you, Gussy?"

"How did they guess?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The champion ass really went, after all, then!" ejaculated Merry Lowther. "Well, this takes the cake. Gussy, old man—"

"Pway allow me to pass," said the swell of St. Jim's frigidly. "I wegard you as wottahs!"

"Oh, Gussy, Gussy!" said D'Arcy minor—Wally of the Third. "Is this the way you set an example to your minor, as Aunt Adclina told you to do?"

"Weally, Wally—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, wats!"

D'Arcy marched on, and escaped into the School House. He rushed upstairs to a bathroom, and was soon under steaming water, scrubbing away at the paint and the seccotine. He left the juniors yelling.

"Oh, the awful ass, to go over there in that rig!" said Tom Merry, wiping his eye.

"He was going to show himself to Figgins, first, or I—"

"He did!" said Figgins.

"Didn't you spot him?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Of course we did! But we wouldn't interfere with a School House jape; that wouldn't be playing the game," grinned Figgins.

"So we let him rip!" said Kerr.

"You bounders!" said Blake wrathfully. "You ought to have stopped him. I've a jolly good mind to dot you on the nose, Figgins!"

"Well, here's my nose!" said Figgins, with a warlike look.

Blake promptly dotted him upon it, and then there was a rush and a row. School House and New House boys mingled in a wild scramble, which lasted till Kildare of the Sixth came out with a cane, and laid it about him impartially. Then the combatants separated.

Tom Merry & Co. followed D'Arcy into the School House, and discovered him in the bath-room, mopping his head under steaming water. Most of the paint had come off, and some of the hair, but tufts of it were still clinging lovingly to the head and face of the swell of St. Jim's. D'Arcy turned towards them a face that looked like a freshly-boiled beetroot.

"Ow!" he said breathlessly. "Is it all off?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Not quite!"

"The howwid boundahs stuck it on with seccotine—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway give my head a wub, Blake. I'm exhausted."

"Certainly!" said Blake.

He took the brush and began to scrub. Arthur Augustus gave a wild yell.

"Ow! You silly ass! I didn't tell you to wub my scalp off!" he roared.

"Well, it will want some rubbing, you know—"

"Ow! Leggo!"

"Well, I call that ungrateful," said Blake, releasing his chum's head. "I was doing my best—really putting my beef into it—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Get out, you wottahs; you are as wotten as the Gwammawians! Ow! Gewwout!"

And Arthur Augustus finished his ablutions unaided. He was a long time in the bath-room, but he came down at last, with a crimson countenance, and with little tufts of hair still sticking to him, and wherever he went that day he was greeted with prolonged chuckles. And in Study No. 6 that evening he announced that he was not going to waste any more time in putting the Grammar cads in their place, and that he intended to leave Gordon Gay & Co. severely alone, and his chums agreed that he had better.

THE END.

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THE FIRST CHAPTER. A Plan of Action.

"I VE had about enough of that rotter, Smythe!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver one day, as he and his chums, Lovell, Newcome, and Raby, were at tea in the end study at Rookwood College.

"Why, what's up now?" asked Lovell quickly.

"Oh, nothing in particular," replied Jimmy Silver, "except that he was talking to Howard this morning about those stuck-up kids of the Fourth—meaning us, of course."

"He seems to have been going out of his way just lately to annoy us!" remarked Newcome.

"That's just it!" said the leader of the Fistical Four. "He's been up to all sorts of little tricks lately, and he thinks he'll escape all right because he won't fight!"

Adolphus Smythe of the Shell, one of the nuts of Rookwood, was a sworn enemy of the Fistical Four. At least, he could hardly be called a sworn enemy, for the simple reason that, ordinarily, the Fourth Form chums bestowed but scant attention upon him.

Smythe was not of their calibre, and they were not interested in his movements.

But the one thing that condemned him completely in the eyes of the Fistical Four was the fact that he would not fight.

In the ordinary way, when those stalwart young juniors fell out with anyone, a grand battle royal was the result, and the trouble was ended.

But it was not so with Adolphus Smythe. Nothing would induce him to fight. Whether he was afraid of being hurt, or whether it was fear of having his well-oiled hair disturbed, no one rightly knew.

The Fistical Four had long since decided that it was a little of each.

Smythe's latest campaign of provocation had not been carried out because he had any particular grudge against the chums of the Fourth, but merely because he begrudged them their popularity in the school, for the Fistical Four were popular with almost everyone.

"I should give him a jolly good hiding, if I were you!" suggested Raby.

"No fun in giving a fellow a good hiding who won't stand up for himself!" responded Jimmy Silver, contemptuously.

"That's so," agreed Lovell. "And if you suggest a fight he only smiles with that sickly, little smile of his, and walks away!"

"I was just wondering," mused Jimmy Silver, "if we couldn't make him fight!"

"Make him fight?"

"What's the wheeze?"

"Well," continued Jimmy, "suppose we work on his lines, and do all we can to make him wild."

"What'd be the good of that?" asked Raby, looking puzzled.

"Why, in time it might make him so furious that he'd go for us," explained Jimmy.

"I don't mind meeting any fellow on level ground," he continued, "even if I get a licking, but I can't stand a chap who won't face you squarely!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I think there might be something in your idea, old son," remarked Lovell, "and I vote we try it."

"Right-ho!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "I fancy I can think of one or two wheezes that won't please his lordship very much!"

So saying, the Fistical Four rose from the table, and began gathering together their books for the evening's prep.

The next morning, which was a dark and foggy one, Adolphus Smythe, after washing and dressing, descended to his study to oil his hair.

He always kept his hair-oil locked up in

his study cupboard, because he gave a great deal for it, and was afraid it might come to some harm if he kept it in the dormitory.

Consequently, it was his custom every morning to carefully do his hair in his study, where he kept a brush and comb, for, as a matter of fact, his hair had to receive attention at least a dozen times a day.

On this particular dark and gloomy morning he took the bottle containing the perfumed oil from the cupboard and applied the usual liberal quantity.

Then, his toilet being completed, he made his way downstairs to breakfast.

His entry into the dining-hall was greeted with roars of laughter from the juniors already assembled there, in which even his own particular chums joined.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Smythe gazed at the crowd in astonishment and confusion, which soon turned to anger as the sounds of mirth increased.

"What's the matter with you, ass?" he exclaimed, turning to his own particular chum, Howard, who was grinning from ear to ear.

"He, he, he! There's nothing the matter with me, dear boy!" replied Howard.

"Well, what's the matter with me, then?" demanded Smythe angrily.

"Ha, ha, ha! Go and look in a glass, old man!" laughed Hooker of the Fourth.

Smythe rushed from the room and up to his dormitory, where he peered at his reflection in the mirror.

What he saw caused him to utter a growl of anger.

His hair was dyed a beautiful blue-black! He hastily poured some water into the washing-bowl, and commenced to scrub his head furiously with a nail-brush.

After about ten minutes of violent scrubbing, however, he had only succeeded in removing the oil from his head. The dye remained.

He could spare no more time then, or, he realised, he would be late for classes. So he plastered his hair down, and descended once more to his study to examine his hair-oil bottle.

As he suspected, someone had interfered with it, and poured something into the bottle which had completely ruined the precious concoction. The oil, which should have appeared a beautiful golden colour, was blue!

In anger and disgust, Adolphus went downstairs again, just in time to see the rest of the school trooping out of the dining-hall on their way to class.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fresh bursts of laughter greeted his re-appearance, and the particularly hearty guffaws of the Fistical Four, and the expressions on the faces of the Fourth Form chums, led Smythe to think very seriously that they knew something more about the matter.

Of course, Jimmy Silver had dyed the hair-oil.

It was the first effort in the direction of provoking the dandy of the Shell to fight.

The Fistical Four were highly satisfied with the result of this idea, for Smythe already looked angry enough to slay the perpetrator of this wheeze against him.

But Jimmy Silver & Co. knew from experience that it would take a great deal more to work him up to a state of anger sufficient to cause him to launch out.

All that day Smythe was unmercifully chipped by all with whom he came in contact about the colour of his hair.

He certainly was a weird spectacle. Such coloured hair had never been seen before. When it caught the sun it shone a rich navy blue!

By bedtime he was thoroughly "fed-up" with the whole thing. But even in his own dormitory he did not escape.

His own Form-fellows had joined in the mirth provoked by his "blue napper," and he fell asleep that night to the accompaniment of remarks about people who dyed their heads.

The Fistical Four retired to bed tremendously pleased with themselves. Had they been able to see ahead they would have been even more pleased.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. A Gale and Its Result.

SOON after sleep had descended upon Rookwood that night, a strong wind began to blow, which speedily increased to the force of a gale.

Each gust seemed stronger than its predecessor, and by two o'clock in the morning the wind was howling and roaring with a violence that seemed almost capable of lifting the roof off the old school.

Windows rattled and doors creaked, accompanied by a continuous long-drawn moan of the wind in the chimneys.

Several of the juniors were aroused by the noise, and Jimmy Silver had just opened his eyes, and was wondering what was on, when there was a terrific crash outside in the quadrangle.

This aroused several other members of the Fourth dormitory, including Jimmy Silver's chums.

"What was that?" exclaimed Lovell, starting up in bed.

"It's all right, old son," said Jimmy reassuringly; "it's only a chimney-pot or something gone down. There's a bit of a breeze on!"

"My hat! I should think there was," said Newcome, as a fresh gust of wind nearly blew in the dormitory windows.

Then, as nothing more of a particularly startling nature occurred, the juniors settled down to sleep again, and they slept the sleep of the just until rising bell.

But the occupants of the Shell dormitory were not so fortunate.

Just before daybreak the wind died down, and it began to rain in torrents.

Then, suddenly, Smythe was awakened by a douche of cold water on his face, and the plump of something falling on his chest.

He started up in alarm to discover that about two feet square of the ceiling had dropped on him, and that rain was pouring in at the hole above his head.

At the same moment, Howard, and three or four more members of the Shell dormitory, sat up with exclamations of surprise and annoyance, for rain was dripping down from several places in the ceiling.

But Smythe had received by far the worst treatment of the lot, and he was compelled to scramble quickly out of bed to avoid being soaked to the skin.

He felt very much aggrieved, for it seemed that even the elements were conspiring against him.

He had intended rising early in order to make another strenuous attempt to remove the dye from his hair, but he had not bargained for being turned out in this way.

It transpired later that the crash which had startled the Fourth Form juniors in the night was due to the falling of about half a dozen slates in a bunch from the roof of the Shell dormitory, which thus accounted for the douching Smythe had received.

Great was the amusement of the whole school when news of Smythe's experience had been spread around.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the Fistical Four at breakfast-time. "Rain's good for the complexion, Smythe!"

"I see it hasn't washed the colour out of your hair, old man," said Hooker mildly.

"Rats!" snarled Smythe. "Can't you leave it alone?"

"I'm not touching it, dear boy," replied Hooker calmly; "I wouldn't for anything!" Smythe, with a flush of anger, ignored the remark.

Then the juniors trooped into classes once more.

Later in the day the workmen arrived to commence repairs on the roof, and it became known that the Shell dormitory was to remain vacant during the next two or three nights.

It fell to the lot of Bulkeley, the captain of the school, to divide up the regular occupants of that dormitory among the other dormitories where there were spare beds.

Thus, Jimmy Silver & Co. learnt, with mingled feelings, that Smythe and Howard were to take up their abode in the Fourth Classical dormitory.

They hardly knew whether to feel glad or gloomy at this prospect. They quickly came to the conclusion, however, that this arrangement would suit their purpose very well, and at once turned their attention to plans for giving the nuts a warm reception.

As for Smythe and Howard, they were absolutely furious about the idea, and took no pains to conceal their disgust.

But it was pointed out by Bulkeley that the inconvenience was unavoidable, and that they might as well be there as anywhere else.

Smythe and Howard did not agree about this, however, but they did not say so.

Their entry into the Fourth dormitory that night was greeted with shouts of facetious inquiry, as to how the "blue napper" was progressing, and what it felt like.

To all of which remarks Smythe preserved a stony silence.

"Don't you go and turn that pillow blue!" exclaimed Hooker.

"I'll turn your eye blue if you don't shut up!" retorted Smythe sharply.

"Come and do it then!" cried Hooker immediately.

But Smythe curled up at this ready response to his challenge, and showed no disposition to pursue the matter further.

Then the two chums turned to get into bed, but found to their anger and dismay that their feet would go no farther than half-way down.

Muttering threats of vengeance against "silly asses" in general, and Fourth Form "silly asses" in particular, they slid out again to investigate.

The Fistical Four had carefully prepared for them an apple-pie bed, and it was necessary for them to pull the whole bed to pieces and entirely remake it.

When they were in the midst of this delightful task, Bulkeley opened the door to see that all was settled for the night.

He politely informed Smythe and Howard that if they couldn't get into bed as quickly as the rest of the fellows he would give them a hundred lines each, which might be an incentive to them to move a bit quicker in future.

The bed-making finished, they turned in just as Bulkeley closed the door, but as soon as they laid their heads upon the pillows they knew something was amiss.

"Confound those fatheads!" muttered Smythe.

"Mad asses!" exclaimed Howard.

An examination of the pillows proved that a quantity of straw had been shoved into them, the sharp ends of which stuck through the pillow-cases, and tickled their heads and faces.

Topham and Townsend, the nuts of the Fourth, who were chums of Smythe and Howard, raised loud protests against the conduct of their Form-mates, but a boot, well-directed, quickly silenced them.

But Topham and Townsend, it was clear, had ranged themselves on the side of the enemy.

Then, next morning, when rising bell sounded, and the juniors tumbled out of bed, it was discovered that Smythe's and Howard's socks had disappeared.

The wrath of the nuts was terrible to behold. Never had the Fistical Four seen Smythe so angry, and Jimmy Silver was highly elated.

He gave it as his opinion that the time would soon come when that worthy would throw all caution to the winds and strike out.

The Fistical Four didn't trouble to disguise the fact that they were at the bottom of these wheezes against Smythe and Howard, and if looks or words could have slain, Jimmy Silver & Co. would have been dead men.

"Ha, ha, ha!" they laughed. "What have you done with Smythe's socks, Townsend?"

"You're a set of rotters—"

"You know, those beautiful pink socks with stripes on 'em," continued Lovell, ignoring the interruption.

Smythe & Co. hunted high and low for the missing articles.

They completed their toilets except for socks, and then continued the search. And they were still at it when the rest of the juniors trooped downstairs.

At last Topham, who, with Townsend, had stayed behind to assist their chums, discovered them flattened out under a locker.

Smythe and Howard dragged them on as quickly as possible, and then the little party descended to breakfast.

Gins from the juniors greeted their entry.

Thus it went on for several days, Smythe's anger increasing as time went on, and he and his chum were heartily thankful when the order came for them to return to their own dormitory.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Smythe Hits Out.

"HALLO! What have you got there, Mack?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver a couple of days later, as he and his chums were entering the school gates.

Lovell caught hold, though he didn't know why he was doing it.

But that box didn't go straight up to Howard's study, Jimmy Silver led the way to the end study, which was the one occupied by the Fistical Four.

"What's the wheeze?" asked Newcome, as Jimmy set down his end of the box and locked the door.

"It all depends," replied the leader. "We'll see what's in it first."

"But, I say," put in Raby; "we shall get into an awful row—"

"We're not going to pinch the stuff," interrupted Jimmy Silver impatiently. "Give us that screw-driver out of the cupboard, Newcome."

The screwdriver was procured, and Jimmy proceeded to prize open the box.

As he supposed, it was a box of supplies from Howard's home.

The top layer of shavings removed, a number of boxes and tins of all shapes and sizes lay revealed.

There were tins of pineapple-chunks and apricots, one or two jars of jam, tins of sardines, biscuits, and other comestibles.

Wrapped in a separate paper were a couple of pairs of new socks and a woollen scarf.

Lower down was a box of chocolates, some



Topham and Townsend dropped on to their knees, and stared at the collection of rubbish which was revealed, and Smythe opened his eyes so widely that his monocle scarce held to its place.

Mack, the school porter, was examining the label on a large wooden packing-case.

"It's a box for Master Howard," replied Mack, looking up at the Fistical Four.

"Like us to take it up for you?" asked Jimmy, with a significant wink to his chums.

"That's werry good 'o' you, sir," said the porter. "It'll save me a journey, and I've had rheumatics rather bad this day or two."

"Don't mention it," said Jimmy Silver.

"Always glad to help a lame dog—that is—er—always glad to lend a hand where it's needed."

"Come on, kid," continued the leader of the Fistical Four, turning to Lovell. "Catch

condensed milk and tea, and a couple of tins of salmon.

"Well, we won't pinch the stuff," said Jimmy Silver magnanimously. "But we'll just give 'em a run for their money."

"Why, what d'ye mean?" asked Newcome perplexedly.

"My idea," explained Jimmy, "is to fill this box up with all the rubbish we can find—tin cans, old boots, and so forth—fasten down the lid again, and put the thing in Howard's study."

"But what about all this stuff?" queried Raby, pointing to the tins and jars.

"Well, we'll hide that, and give 'em a hunt for it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Jolly good wheeze!" grinned Lovell.
"Come on, then; look sharp!" commanded Jimmy Silver. "Clear it out!"

The Fistical Four fell to the task, and in a short time the original contents of the box were piled up on the table of the end study, and the box, filled with a lot of rubbish, and looking as though it had never been touched, was ready for removal to Howard's study.

"Now, where shall we hide these things?" said Lovell, turning to the table.

"I was just thinking that the roof would be a good place," said Jimmy Silver.

"Good egg!"
"Just the very thing!" exclaimed Lovell. "But we must cover the things over, though, so that they don't get damaged in any way."

"Right-ho!" agreed Jimmy Silver. "We can cover 'em up with my old mac."

"Good!"
"Now we shall have to be jolly careful over this giddy job," cautioned Jimmy, "or we shall be landed in the cart."

"Yes," said Lovell; "the whole thing would be properly mucked up if we got nabbed."

"Well," continued Jimmy, "you and Newcome and I will load ourselves up with the things, and Raby can go on in front to warn us if anybody turns up en route."

"S'pose we're going out through the top box-room?" said Newcome.

"Yes, unless you particularly want to climb up a drain-pipe from the quad," answered Jimmy Silver.

The upper box-room was situated at the top of the building, and in the ceiling of it was a trapdoor about a yard square which led on to the roof.

With this objective the Fistical Four set out from the end study with their packages, piloted by Raby.

There was great risk attached to this phase of the undertaking, for there were a couple of flights of stairs to negotiate, and the chances of meeting someone on the way were pretty considerable.

However, luck favoured them, and they reached their destination without meeting a soul, for most of the juniors had not yet come in to tea.

Jimmy Silver heaved a sigh of relief as Raby closed the box-room door, and they set down their parcels.

"That's all right!" he said. "Now for the trapdoor!"

It was necessary to pile up a number of boxes and trunks, one on top of another, to reach the trapdoor, and the juniors set about the job as quickly and quietly as possible, for every moment spent increased the risk of being detected.

At last all was ready for Jimmy Silver to ascend. He quickly mounted the boxes and commenced to fumble with the bolt which fastened the trapdoor.

In another moment Jimmy raised the door about a foot, and immediately something soft and cold fell upon his face. It was snow!

"My hat, you chaps!" he exclaimed. "It's snowing hard!"

It had been bitterly cold and overcast all day, but none of the juniors had thought about a fall of snow.

"That's done it, then!" said Lovell gloomily.

"No, it hasn't," replied Jimmy Silver quickly. "Wrap the things round in that mac and they'll be all right!"

Lovell hastily obeyed the command of the leader, and handed up the bundle carefully.

Jimmy deposited this out on the roof first and then clambered out after it.

It was a dump and chilly task he had set himself, for already there was a layer of snow on the roof about an inch deep.

But Jimmy Silver was a "sticker," and, stepping cautiously across the tiles, he planted the macintosh and its contents in the shelter of the parapet.

This done, he quickly returned to the trapdoor, and descended once more to the box-room, carefully closing and bolting the trapdoor after him.

Then, jumping down to the floor, he began to brush off the snow which was clinging to the front of his waistcoat and trousers.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed. "It's jolly thick out there!"

"How about Smythe & Co. climbing out there for their grub?" grinned Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Raby.

"Shut up, fathead!" snapped Jimmy Silver.

"You'll go and give the game away just at the last minute, if you make that row!"

At the same time that the Fistical Four were returning to the end study, Smythe and Howard were entering the quad.

They were informed by the school-porter that a box had arrived for "Master 'Oward," and had been taken up to his study.

As the nuts hastened towards the school door, they encountered their Fourth Form supporters, Topham and Townsend, and Howard informed them of the arrival of his box from home.

He finished up by inviting them, in a very lordly manner, to tea with himself and Smythe.

They were soon assured that the box was in the study all right, for, immediately on their entry, Smythe, in his haste to light the gas, knocked his shins upon it.

Howard quickly produced a hammer and a screwdriver, and commenced to attack the lid of the box with more vigour than he applied to most things.

In two minutes the lid was raised and swung back on its hinges.

Howard dragged out the top layer of shavings, and then started back with a cry of amazement and anger.

Topham and Townsend dropped on to their knees, and stared at the collection of rubbish which was revealed, and Smythe opened his eyes so widely that his monocle scarce held to its place.

Then Howard spotted a note, which read:

"Your grub is quite safe. Hunt for it. Exercise is good for shady rotters."

"My hat!" howled Smythe. "This is the beastly limit!"

"It's those rotters again!" hissed Howard.

"What are you going to do about it, dear boy?" asked Townsend.

"Nothing for it now but to search for the things, I suppose," said Howard gloomily.

"Why not rag the beasts in their study?" suggested Townsend, who of the four was the most war-like junior.

"Not now," said Smythe quickly. "We'll find the stuff first, and then deal with the rotters afterwards."

His chums glanced at him in some surprise. From the tone of his voice he evidently meant business.

However, they were faithful followers, and they were content to follow his lead.

The search began, and the nuts hunted high and low for the original contents of Howard's box from home.

They hunted in the dormitory, but with no success.

Then they ventured a few inquiries among their own Form-fellows, but in most cases were very impolitely repulsed.

At last they returned to their own study, their patience well-nigh exhausted, and immediately they entered, a note propped on the front of the mantelpiece caught Howard's eye.

"Try the roof," it read.

"My hat!" exclaimed Smythe. "Surely it isn't up there! Why, it's snowing hard!"

"Probably it's only a wheeze to make us climb up there," suggested Townsend. "Don't suppose the stuff's there at all."

"Well, we've looked in every other possible place," argued Smythe. "We've been over an hour nosing about now."

Howard stood considering the matter for some time, and at last he came to a decision.

"I think we'll try it," he said; "for I've an idea that's where they've put the things!"

"But, I say, how are we going to get up there?" asked Smythe, glancing down in concern at his spotless attire.

"Climb up, fathead!" growled Howard. "D'ye think I'm going to leave my things up there for the sake of going up and fetching 'em?"

"How do we get up?" asked Townsend, who was the most keen of the party.

"Box-room!" replied Howard briefly.

"Right-ho!"

And together the four nuts made their way upstairs.

Howard clambered up through the trapdoor as Jimmy Silver had done over an hour before, and, after wandering about in the snow on the tiles for some few minutes, came upon the old macintosh.

Smythe was waiting just inside the trapdoor, having climbed up the pile of boxes, ready to receive the goods from Howard.

Just as that young worthy was descending, Smythe was struck with a brilliant idea.

"I say, dear boy," he exclaimed, "what about taking down some snowballs for the benefit of the Fistical Four?"

Howard glanced at Smythe in surprise. It was evident, then, that he intended to hit out at last.

"But they'd melt before we get downstairs," said Howard.

"No, they wouldn't, if we're quick," responded Smythe, who was very keen on his idea.

"All right; I'm game to try it," said Howard.

And he forthwith began scraping together the snow just outside the trapdoor.

In a few minutes the four nuts were armed with a couple of snowballs each, and, deciding to leave the grub in the box-room for the time being, they hastened downstairs again.

They entered the Fourth Form passage, and at that moment they heard the voices of the Fistical Four coming up the stairs.

"Quick! Get in here!" exclaimed Smythe, slipping into the open doorway of an empty room close by.

A moment later Jimmy Silver & Co. appeared in the passage, strolling towards their study.

"Get ready to sock 'em!" muttered Smythe. But there was no need for this injunction.

As the Fistical Four passed through the open door of the end study, eight snowballs burst upon their heads and necks with telling force.

"Ow! Yarooogh!"

But before they scarce had time to realise what had happened, the four nuts descended upon them with a yell.

"My hat!" cried Jimmy Silver, as Smythe, who had marked out his man, bore him to the ground.

Taken by surprise as they were, the Fistical Four could do nothing for a second or two, but they soon began to recover themselves, and a great battle ensued—a battle such as had never been known before at Rookwood.

The nuts were fighting tooth and nail!

They swayed about in twos for nearly a quarter of an hour, success favouring first one side and then the other.

At last, however, the Fistical Four, who were in much better condition than Smythe & Co., got the better of their opponents, and the nuts speedily succumbed to their final efforts.

When the fight was finally finished, Smythe emerged with clothes crumpled, his collar torn from its gold stud, his tie flapping round his ears. Never before in his life had Smythe been seen in such a state.

His chums, too, were in a very similar condition.

But, strange to say, the nuts did not seem in the least crestfallen. Perhaps it was because they had left signs of combat upon their opponents.

Jimmy Silver's eye was fast discolouring, and a red stream was running from Lovell's nose. Newcome and Raby also bore marks of their punishment.

Smythe & Co., without doubt, had put up a good fight, and were very pleased with themselves in consequence.

And the Fistical Four were satisfied, for at last they had had an opportunity of settling their differences in a grand combat, such as they always delighted in.

"Shake hands, Smythe!" said Jimmy Silver to Smythe, as the nuts turned to go. "You look more of a man than I've ever seen you before."

Smythe, after some hesitation, shook hands, and he and his chums departed.

"By Jove!" said Jimmy Silver. "They can fight when they like! My eye's almost reached the colour of Smythe's hair!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

For the next few weeks Smythe was more respected at Rookwood than he had ever been before, and the antagonism between the nuts and the Fistical Four, for the time being, at any rate, completely disappeared.

THE END.

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