

BUNTER THE DANI

(See the Long Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. in this

The Penny Popular

No.
271.

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



BUNTER IN BORROWED PLUMES!

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

BUNTER THE DANDY!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

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

THE FIRST CHAPTER. In Borrowed Plumes.

"MY only hat!" Harry Wharton, the captain of the Greyfriars Remove, uttered that exclamation in tones of unbounded amazement.

He was coming into Study No. 1 in the Remove, and he paused in the doorway to gaze in amazement upon what he saw, and to utter that ejaculation.

Billy Bunter was in the study. There was nothing surprising in that, because Billy Bunter shared Study No. 1 with Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, and Hurree Singh. But there was something very surprising about Bunter at that moment.

Billy Bunter, besides being the fattest and greediest fellow in the Lower Fourth, was generally the most slovenly in addition. His strong objection to soap and water was well known, and the amount of washing he did in the morning was a standing joke in the Form.

Some of the fellows had seriously suggested bathing him by force some day; while others declared that such a sudden change, after so many years, would be fatal to him.

Bunter had all sorts of manners and customs that were a little out of the ordinary, but no one had ever suspected him of being elegant or dignified.

Hence Harry Wharton's astonishment. For—but for the fat form and the big spectacles—he would hardly have known William George Bunter at that moment.

Bunter was in evening-clothes, which his fat limbs seemed to be filling almost to bursting-point. His broad chest was covered with spotless white, and in the centre of his shirt-front gleamed a diamond. He was wearing gold sleeve-links, in each of which glittered a ruby.

His fat neck was enclosed in a high collar, which seemed to be on the verge of cutting his ears off. His hair was nicely parted in the middle. His white tie was arranged with the greatest elegance. And—wonder of wonders!—he was trying on a crush hat before the glass as Wharton arrived upon the scene.

Wharton could only stare. Bunter as a dandy was a new thing—quite new. Bunter the ventriloquist, Bunter the boxer, Bunter the photographer—all of them had made the Remove laugh. But Bunter the dude!

Bunter was too busy to see or hear Wharton. He was trying on that topper very carefully. It seemed a little too small for his wide, fat head, and he made a grimace or two as he jammed it down.

Once on, however, he seemed to be quite satisfied with the look of it, for he grinned and smirked with a gratified air at his reflection in the glass.

"Good," he muttered—"jolly good! I think it looks ripping! Won't the girls look at it, too? I'll jolly well bet that I'm the only chap in the Remove who will go in an opera hat! The other fellows will take their toppers, and they can't say that a topper looks as well as an opera hat on an occasion like this. I think I shall make a hit of a sensation. I like the look of that diamond, too. These little things enhance a fellow's natural good looks."

Harry Wharton clung to the door-post in a paroxysm of silent merriment. Bunter's reflections, muttered aloud, seemed to him too funny.

"I know girls, I think," Bunter went on, smirking at himself in the glass. "They

always prefer a handsome, medium-sized fellow to those big, clumsy asses like Bob Cherry! That's why the big chaps are so jealous of us medium-sized fellows. The curious thing about a girl, though, is the way she never lets on that she likes a chap. There's Marjorie Hazledene. I know how fascinated she is by me, yet if I didn't know 'em so well, her manner would make any chap think that she disliked me."

"You silly, fat duffer!" Wharton's indignant voice made Billy Bunter spin round, startled.

"Oh, really, Wharton—" Wharton glared at him.

Bunter's unpleasant conceit was always very irritating to the chums of Study No. 1, and they never allowed him to mention Marjorie's name.

Wharton picked up a ruler—a proceeding which Billy Bunter eyed with great alarm.

"I—I say, Wharton—"

"Where will you have it, Bunty?"

"Look here, Wharton, don't you—Ow!"

Bunter jumped in the air as the ruler rapped him across the shoulders. There was an ominous reading sound, and his evening-coat split down the back.

"Oh!"

"My hat!" gasped Wharton. "That was a tight fit!"

"You—you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Bunter squirmed round, to try to get a view of his back in the glass. The sight of the back of the waistcoat showing through the coat made him red with wrath.

"You—you beast! You've busted my coat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton threw down the ruler and roared. Billy Bunter glared at him like a basilisk through his spectacles.

"You—you utter ass! You'll have to explain to Ogilvy, that's all!"

"Eh?"

"You'll have to own up, and pay for the coat."

"What on earth has Ogilvy to do with it?" asked Wharton, in amazement.

"It's Ogilvy's coat, that's all."

"Ogilvy's coat! Did he lend it to you?"

"Well, yes, in a way. I borrowed it."

"Pshaw! Without asking Ogilvy, I suppose?"

"Well, what was the good of asking him?" demanded Billy Bunter aggressively. "He would only have refused."

"You cheeky young ass! What are you dressed up in that way for, anyway? I suppose you're going to start having tea in the study in evening-dress?"

"Oh, don't be an ass! I was seeing how I should look for the party at Cliff House."

Wharton laughed.

"I see. A sort of dress rehearsal?"

"Exactly!"

"Well, you're coming out strong, I must say. Where on earth did you get that diamond stud from, and those sleeve-links? You never bought them!"

"I'm treated with a jolly lot of meanness on all sides," said Bunter. "I never have enough to eat, and never get enough money. If I want to dress decently for a party, I have to borrow the things. It's rotten! Now, you've got all the things you want."

"Well, I take care of them," said Harry. "You wear a thing out in next to no time, through being so lazy and slovenly."

"Oh, really—"

"I expect your clothes cost your people more than mine do," said Harry. "But who have you borrowed those things of?"

"Well, this stud belongs to Ionides of the

Sixth, that Greek beast; and I borrowed the sleeve-links from Blundell of the Fifth. The shirt is Nugent's, and the coat and waistcoat Ogilvy's. The trousers belong to Bob Cherry. I shall have to shorten them if I wear them at the party."

"You've borrowed them, without asking permission?"

"Well, you see—"

"They're the only pair of evening-trucks that Bob has at the school, as I happen to know!" said Harry indignantly. "What is he going to do?"

"Well, I suppose he could borrow some, the same as I have!" said Billy Bunter peevishly.

"You young ass! If the owners of those things come along, and find you like that, there will be trouble," said Harry Wharton. "People don't like their things being borrowed without their permission being asked."

"Well, I had no other resource, you see. I must have clothes for the party. I suppose you don't want to take me there in a blessed Norfolk jacket?"

"I don't want to take you at all, if it comes to that," said Wharton, with a shrug of the shoulders. "You're a nasty, conceited, troublesome little beast! The sooner you take those things back to their owners, the better."

And, picking up the book he had come to the study for, Wharton strode out, leaving Billy Bunter blinking after him.

Bunter made a grimace.

"Curious thing, it is," he murmured. "Wharton's not bad-looking, in his way, but even he's jealous of me! It's getting on my nerves, all this petty jealousy of a chap in his own study, just because he happens to be a little out of the ordinary run in looks. I must say I thought Wharton would be above it."

And Bunter shook his head sadly and seriously.

THE SECOND CHAPTER Bunter Loses His Feathers.

IT was raining at Greyfriars; the winter evening was wet and dark. Most of the fellows were in their studies or the common-rooms. Among the Remove, the chief topic of conversation was the forthcoming party at Cliff House.

Miss Penelope Primrose, the Principal of Cliff House School for Girls, had asked the Fourth Form at Greyfriars over for a little party in the evening.

The Remove were on the best of terms with Marjorie Hazledene and her friends, and they had often cycled and skated together; and on one never-to-be-forgotten occasion there had been a dance at Cliff House, which had been a great success.

Miss Primrose was repeating the experiment now, and in the long winter evenings it was natural that both boys and girls should look forward to the party with great eagerness.

It was to be quite a swell affair, and some of the Greyfriars fellows were looking over their wardrobes of late with anxious eyes.

The whole of the Fourth Form was going—the Upper Fourth and the Remove, or Lower—and Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth, were known to be making great efforts to dress gorgeously for the occasion.

The Remove, naturally, felt a spirit of emulation.

It was settled that evening-clothes were imperative; that was a sine qua non. Those of the fellows who didn't happen to have any dress-clothes—school w—

home to their parents, or tore off to the local tailor.

But even when that was settled, there remained many details upon which a gorgeous fancy might disport itself—as in the design of the waistcoat, for instance.

Jewellery, too, was an important item. Toppers were indispensable; but a crush hat was better than a topper, and the few fellows who were the happy possessors of gibus hats sorted them out in great glee.

Harry Wharton went down to the junior common-room with a book. The weather was so bad that even Harry had given up his evening sprint round the Close.

Ogilvy, of the Remove, was in the common-room, looking worried. He glanced across at Wharton as the latter came in.

"Hallo, Wharton! Have you seen anything of my coat?"

"Evening-coat," explained Ogilvy. "I had it out, you know, because there's a spot I have to get off it somehow, and I left it on my bed. It's gone!"

in their own room by a member of the Fifth.

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

"Outside!"

"Get back to the Zoo!"

"Yah!"

"Look here——"

Bob Cherry covered his eyes with his hands.

"Ask us anything else," he said tearfully. "But, really, you must—you must not ask us to gaze upon a chivvy like that."

"You cheeky young rotter——"

"Ain't he nice and polite, too! The Fifth Form must be proud of their Blundy—I don't think!"

"Look here!" roared Blundell. "Somebody has been and taken a set of sleeve-links off the table in my study! I suppose it was a lark; but they cost two guineas, and I don't like larks with jewellery. It's apt to lead to trouble."

"My hat!" said Bob Cherry. "There seems

Morgan. "He was twisting round and round before a glass, in evening clothes, admiring himself."

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Bob Cherry. "None of your larks, young Morgan. Bunter hasn't an evening-coat here."

"He's got somebody's evening-coat, anyway," said Morgan. "He has one on, and it was split down the back, too."

Ogilvy gave a roar.

"My coat!"

"What?"

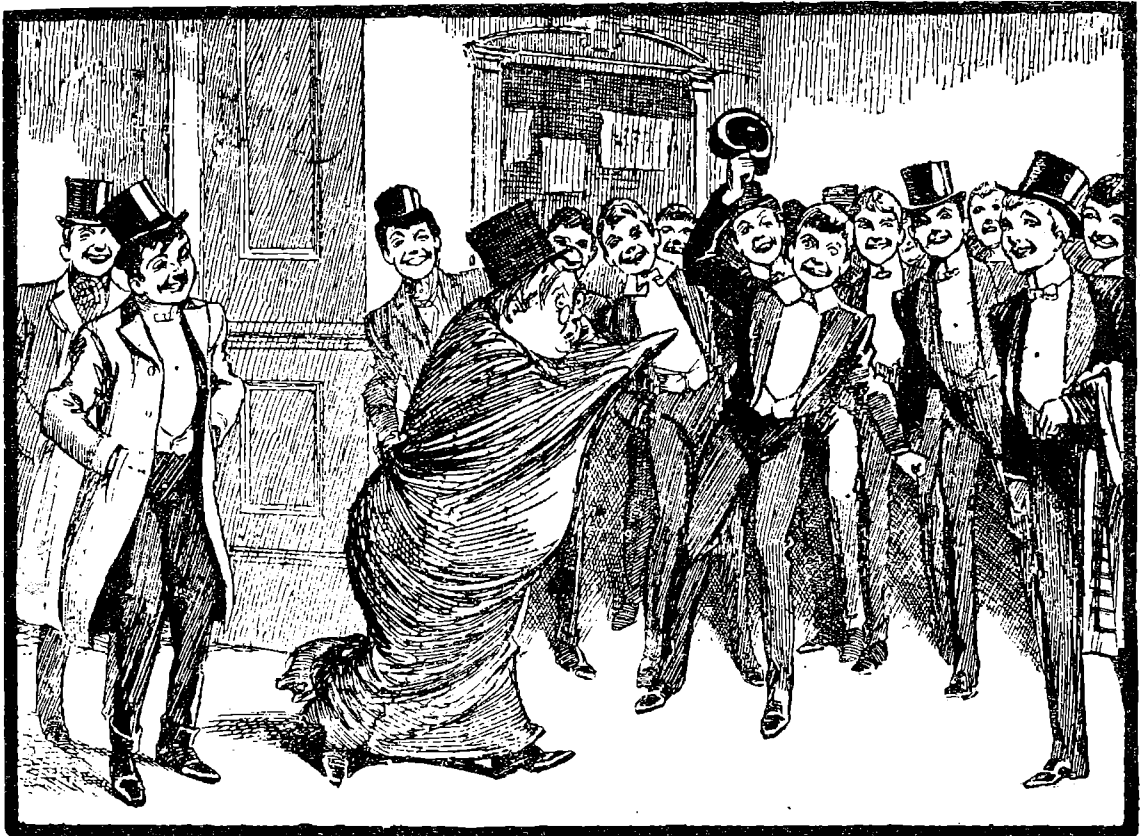
"It's my coat! It is Bunter who has been raiding the things!"

"Bunter! Of course."

"Come and sealp him!" roared Nugent, and he dashed out of the room, and led the way to Study No. 1 in the Remove passage.

The Removites followed with a rush. Blundell of the Fifth dashed along with them. In a minute or less they were swarming round the doorway of Study No. 1.

Nugent and Ogilvy and Bob Cherry rushed in, with others at their heels. Bunter spun round from the glass.



The fellows simply doubled up and roared and roared as Billy Bunter came staggering into Greyfriars.

"Is it really?"

"And there's my shirt," said Nugent. "I left it in the dormitory, and it's gone!"

"And somebody has taken a collar out of my study," exclaimed Bob Cherry, "and a pair of blessed trousers—the only evening pair I've got!"

"My waistcoat has gone, too!" said Ogilvy.

"And my evening-shoes!" said Mark Linley seriously. "They've been taken out of my study—for a lark, I suppose!"

"And my tie-box has been opened," said Bulstrode. "Somebody's taken a tie out. I had three there, and when I went to try one on, there were only two!"

Blundell of the Fifth looked into the room with a very red face.

"Here, you kids!" he exclaimed.

There was a general snort from the Remove. The Fifth Form were seniors, and they seemed to feel themselves really more senior than the Sixth sometimes. The Removites were not likely to be called "kids"

to have been some chap on the rampage, and no mistake. Who was it?"

"We've had a lot of things borrowed, too, Blundell," explained Nugent. "It's a lark of some silly ass!"

"He'll jolly well sit up when I find him!" said Blundell. "Haven't you any idea who it is?"

"Not the faintest!"

Harry Wharton was silent. He did not feel called upon to give Bunter away; though it was probably only a question of minutes before the fat junior was discovered.

As a matter of fact, the discovery was about to be made. Morgan of the Remove came into the Common-room grinning.

"Guess the latest?" he exclaimed.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What is it?"

"Bunter the beau!"

"The which?"

"Bunter, the dandy! Bunter, the dude! Ha, ha, ha!"

"What on earth do you mean?"

"I've just passed his study," explained

He smiled a sickly smile as he saw the owners of the various garments, and read the wrath in their very expressive faces.

"I—I say, you fellows——" he began.

"You fat burglar!"

"You tubby brigand!"

"You—you worm!"

"My coat!"

"My shirt!"

"My tie!"

"My trousers!"

"My hat!"

"My sleeve-links!"

"It's all right——"

"All right, is it?" roared Bob Cherry, seizing the fat junior and flopping him down in the armchair. "Take those trousers off!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Ogilvy. "I'm going to have my coat off the fat beast first! He's split it down the back already!"

"That was Wharton——"

"Yank those shoes off him——"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Hold his shoulders, Elliott, will you, while I yank at the trousers?" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Blessed if they don't fit him as tight as the skin of a sausage!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Oh, I say, Cherry—"
 "Hold him tight!"
 "I've got him!"
 "Keep still, Bunter, while I uncase you!"
 "I— I say, you fellows—"
 "Shut up, Bunter!"

Elliott and Nugent grasped the fat junior round the arms and shoulders, and unhooked the braces, and Bob Cherry dragged at the trousers.

Bunter filled them out as if he had been carefully packed into them, and it was a labour of patience and difficulty to get them off.

Slowly they yielded to the strain.
 "They're coming!" gasped Bob Cherry.
 "Ha, ha, ha! Pull, chap! Bull, baker!"
 "Go it, Cherry!"

With a final wrench the garments came off, and Bob Cherry rolled over backwards on the hearthrug, with the trousers in his hands. He bumped the back of his head on the floor, and gave a wild yell.

"Ow! Yow!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Now the coat!" exclaimed Ogilvy.
 "Oh, I say, you fellows—"

The coat was torn off, and then the waistcoat. Then the tie was reclaimed by Bulstrode, and then the shirt by Nugent. Blundell jerked out his sleeve-links, and departed grumbling, and Nugent took out the diamond-stud and laid it on the table.

Bunter's socks were claimed by another Removeite; and by that time somebody thought it advisable to close the door of the study.

Billy Bunter, thus forcibly divested of his borrowed plumes, lay in the armchair, grunting and gasping and blinking.

The juniors surrounded him with still wrathful faces.

"My coat's ruined!" growled Ogilvy. "That coat's going to be paid for, or else I'm going to slap that fat porpoise!"

"Oh, really, Ogilvy?"
 "I want thirty bob," said Ogilvy.
 "Oh, very well!" said Bunter, with dignity. "If your coat is damaged—though it's really Wharton's fault—I am quite willing to make the damage good."

"Oh, you are, are you?" said Ogilvy, looking at him suspiciously. "Hand over the cash, then. I'll take fifteen bob, as the coat wasn't new."

"Very well. I'm expecting a postal-order on Saturday, and I'll let you have the fifteen bob out of it. You'll have to wait a little longer for the five bob I owe you, Wharton." Harry Wharton laughed.

"Yes, I expect I shall; and so will Ogilvy for his fifteen bob, if it depends on the arrival of your postal-order," he remarked.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"
 "Well, if I don't have the fifteen bob on Saturday, there will be war," said Ogilvy, departing with his ruined coat over his arm.

And Bunter was left alone in the study, shorn of his feathers, and looking in a decidedly moulted state. He looked at his reflection in the glass again, and grunted.

"Jealousy!" he murmured. "All jealousy of a chap's good looks! I'm blessed if I know how I stand the Remove!"

It did not occur to Bunter that it was a little surprising, too, how the Remove stood him.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter's Raid.

DURING the next few days the Removeites thought of little but the Cliff House party. Even Bunter's rascality was forgotten in the great interest excited by that invitation to Cliff House.

Practically all the Remove and the Upper Fourth were going, so the party would be a large one. And the juniors were racking their brains to decide upon ways and means. Those who were wealthy, or had generous uncles and aunts, were likely to do very well. The others had to make the best show they could.

Evening clothes were indispensable, but, as Bob Cherry said, things a chap had knocked about in for three terms wouldn't do. Something had to be done for appearances. So there was knitting of brows and counting of cash amongst the juniors of the Remove. The most anxious fellow of all was Billy Bunter.

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Bunter, with his usual coolness, had fully decided that he would raid all the wardrobes within reach, and take what he wanted. His essay in that direction had had such disastrous results, however, that it seemed risky to repeat it.

Even Bunter did not feel inclined to borrow jewellery any more. But as for clothes, he had to have some from somewhere; and where were they to come from?

Bunter was careless with his clothes, as he was with everything. He was certainly not well provided. Bob Cherry told him that he would pass in the crowd; but passing in the crowd was not to Bunter's taste. He wanted to attract attention, to excite general admiration by his dressy elegance.

He couldn't do that in clothes that showed grease-stains, and were baggy at the knees and soiled at the elbows. That was certain.

What was to be done?
 Billy Bunter was a systematic borrower, and he set out upon a borrowing campaign with more than his usual nerve and persistence.

But he had much less than his usual success. For money was tight in the Remove; every fellow wanted all he could raise for his own expenses.

And Billy Bunter, after an afternoon spent in trying to raise the wind, having realised the sum of sixpence—which sixpence proved on examination to be a bad one—gave up the attempt. He reproachfully asked the chums of Study No. 1 what was to be done.

"Better not go," suggested Nugent.
 "Stay at home," said Harry. "After the caddish way you've acted lately, Bunter, I must say I should be glad to be rid of you for an evening."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"
 "The ridiculous would be the great and boonful blessing!" remarked Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

"Oh, really, Inky—"
 "Anyway, don't bother me!" said Wharton shortly.

"But what am I to do?"
 "Ask the Head."
 "The Head?" repeated Billy Bunter, in surprise.
 "Yes; you might as well ask him as ask me."

Bunter grunted discontentedly. There was evidently no help to be had from the chums of the Remove.

Bunter thought it over carefully. It was certain that he could not raise money by the date of the Cliff House party. His only resource was to borrow the clothes, taking an article here and an article there as he could. But even that was not easy.

The fellows wanted their things for themselves, and Bunter's round of borrowing was as unsuccessful in the case of clothes as in the case of money.

Bulstrode offered him an old pair of football-boots, and Ogilvy said he could have a pair of gaiters. These were the only offers Bunter had, and he did not accept them.

"I'm jolly well going, all the same," the fat junior said to himself. "They're all jealous of me; that's what the matter really is. They know jolly well I shall cut them out with the girls. That's why they're trying to keep me away from the party. But I'll jolly well go, all the same!"

And Bunter thought it over till he came upon a scheme.

The night of the party arrived, and it found the Remove and the Upper Fourth in a state of suppressed excitement.

Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Upper Fourth were greatly pleased with themselves, having not the slightest doubt that they would outshine the Remove.

The Removeites, however, were in fine feather, excepting Billy Bunter.

The juniors were to leave Greyfriars in two brakes at seven o'clock, and for hours before that they were busy and excited.

Bunter was excited, too, but he tried not to show it. He did not wish to awaken suspicion. The Remove were suspicious already, as a matter of fact.

Bunter had heard Wharton say that when the time came to dress for the party, every fellow had better keep his eyes open to see that Billy Bunter did not purloin any part of their wardrobe. And Billy knew that his Form-fellows would be on the watch.

The clothes were laid out in the Remove dormitory ready, and Bunter looked into the dormitory about an hour before the time fixed for starting.

The juniors were not likely to come up to change for a good half-hour yet. The slowest of them could not require more than an hour for changing.

Bunter turned up the light in the dormitory, and looked at the clothes. The juniors were not anxious about them, so far, as if Bunter had taken anything, he would be compelled to disgorge before they started.

But there was a scheme in the fat junior's mind.

Instead of going over in the brake with the others, it had occurred to him to start first, and walk the distance. It was a short walk to Cliff House, and he could take his shoes in his overcoat pockets.

By that means he would be off the scene in his borrowed plumes before the Remove could get on his track, and it would be too late for them to trouble him; they would not be able to make a row at Cliff House.

As for what might happen later, Bunter did not consider that. He never did look far into the future.

The fat junior's eyes glistened behind his spectacles as he looked into the dorm.

He listened in the passage for a moment; then he stepped into the room.

His selection of articles of attire was soon made.

He took a coat here, a vest there, a shirt and a set of studs from one place, a collar and tie from another, and so on.

As soon as he was well provided, he beat a retreat from the dormitory. In case of anyone coming up, he did not intend to change there.

He carried his prizes away to the box-room, and there, lighting the gas, he changed into evening attire.

He had selected the likeliest things to fit him, and though his fat limbs put rather a strain upon the garments, the fit was not so very bad.

He had taken a looking-glass into the box-room, and he surveyed the result of the change as well as he could in it. His fat face beamed with satisfied conceit.

"Jolly good!" he remarked. "A chap with a good figure always looks so jolly well in evening-dress. This opera-hat suits me down to the ground. Lemme see. Where are Nugent's shoes? Oh, here they are! Good! Now I'd better be off!"

And Bunter, resplendent in Elliott's trousers, and Ogilvy's waistcoat, and Nugent's shirt and coat, and Bulstrode's collar and tie, and Wharton's hat, thrust Nugent's shoes into the pockets of Bob Cherry's overcoat, turned out the gas, and left the box-room.

He descended the back stairs to make sure of meeting no one in the Remove, and left the house by a back door. He cut across the dark gardens, and reached the Close by a roundabout path, and hurried out of the gates.

He paused to look back at Greyfriars for a moment. There was not a movement nor a sound. He was not even suspected yet.

Bunter chuckled, and continued on his way to Cliff House.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

At Cliff House.

"**T**IME we changed!" remarked Harry Wharton.

He rose from the chess-table in the common-room. It was a quarter past six, and it was advisable to allow themselves plenty of time. Some of the juniors had already gone up. Harry Wharton & Co. ascended the stairs.

They passed the open door of the Upper Fourth dormitory. All the burners were alight there, and they could see the Fourth-Formers busy within. Temple, Dabney & Co. were getting ready.

"Hallo!" called out Temple. "Are you kids coming?"

"Coming?" said Harry Wharton. "Yes, rather!"

"Oh! I suppose you know that evening dress and washing one's neck are de requerr this evening?" said Temple. "Any fellow without a clean collar, too, is barred."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"You see, as you'll be with a senior Form, you'll have to be careful," said Temple. "You mustn't make things awkward for us."

"You'll probably be awkward enough yourselves," remarked Nugent. "Are you going to take both your feet, Dabney?"

"Look here—"

"Well, I was thinking that we shall be crowded in the brakes, anyway, and you oughtn't to be allowed twice as much room as anybody else."

A pillow whirling through the air caused Nugent to dodge out into the passage again.

and the Removites went on their way laughing. But they ceased to laugh as they reached their own dormitory. From within that dormitory came the sounds of surprise and wrath.

"Where's my waistcoat?"
 "Where's my collar?"
 "Where's my bags?"
 "Where's my gloves?"
 "Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as they went in. "What's the matter now? Surely Bunter hasn't been raiding again?"

"Bunter! Of course!" howled Bulstrode. "I remember now that my collars fit him; and he asked me to lend him one. He's taken it!"

"He's taken my gloves, too!"
 "And my trucks!"
 "And my—"
 "By Jove!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "I can hardly imagine his having the cheek to take them. He must know that we shall strip him of them. Hallo! Where's my hat? I left it there in the case."

"Is it gone?"
 "Yes, rather!"
 "Then it's Bunter."
 "Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "My coat's gone!"
 "And my shoes!"

Loud was the wrath of the Removites. Half the fellows missed some article or other, and there could be little doubt as to who the raider was.

"Where is Bunter?"
 That was the vengeful question that was asked on all sides. Fellows took up belts and cricket-stumps, and went to look for Bunter. Bunter, however, was not to be found.

They hunted for him in the studies, they hunted in the passages and the deserted classrooms, they hunted high and they hunted low, and they found him not.

There was no sign of Billy Bunter. It became clear at last that he was not in the house. He had left Greyfriars; and they could guess that he had started early for Cliff House, in order to save painful explanations.

"We ought to have thought of this," said Bob Cherry wrathfully. "We might have guessed that he would be up to some dodge of this kind."

"The oughtfulness is terrific," agreed the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Well, it's too late now," Nugent remarked.

"What's to be done?"

Harry Wharton shrugged his shoulders. "There's only one thing to be done—we must manage without the things he has taken, and scalp him for it later. Some of you have old things to replace what he's taken—or you can borrow them."

"Fancy going in old things while that fat bouncer goes in our new ones!"

"Yes, it's hard cheese."

"It will be harder for Bunter—afterwards!" said Bob Cherry darkly. "We can't kick up a row at Cliff House, but I'll be on his neck the moment we've left."

"Good!" exclaimed Tom Brown. "As soon as we've left Cliff House, we'll strip him of the things, and let him come home in a sack or something."

"Good egg!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And somewhat comforted by the prospect of Bunter's condign punishment, the Removites recommenced their preparations for the visit to Cliff House.

They had lost a great deal of time in looking for Bunter, and they had to hurry. Many of the fellows were now quite ready.

The juniors whose things Bunter had taken managed to supply the deficiency from older garments, or by borrowing of the other fellows.

They were not quite so satisfied with their appearance as they had hoped to be, but that could not be helped.

The whole Form was ready by the time the brakes arrived to take them to Cliff House. Hazledene was looking out of the window, and he called out as soon as he saw the lights gleaming upon the drive.

"Here they are!"

The juniors got into their coats.

There were two brakes, one for the Upper Fourth, and the other for the Remove. The juniors clambered in, pretty well cramming the two vehicles, large as they were.

The brakes rolled off down the dark road. It was a short drive to Cliff House. Ere long the lights of the girls' school came into sight, shining out over the sands of Pegg Bay.

The great iron gates were open, and rows of Chinese lanterns lighted up the drive up

The brakes rolled in, and stopped before the wide stone steps, and the juniors clambered down. As they did so, a fat form glided out of the shrubbery, and joined them.

It was Billy Bunter. The fat junior was grinning. The Removites looked at him, and Harry Wharton was greatly inclined to send him rolling into the shrubbery again.

But that was impossible. Miss Penelope Primrose was standing in the lighted hall to receive her youthful visitors, and all had to be harmony and sweet smiles.

Bunter knew that perfectly well. He intended to go in with the others, but he had not joined them until it was quite safe to do so.

"You young villain!" whispered Elliott, as they went up the steps. "You wait a bit!"

"Eh?" said Bunter, aloud.

"You've got my trousers on!"

"What did you say, Elliott?" asked Bunter, in a loud voice, for they were within hearing of Miss Penelope now.

Elliott snapped his teeth and was silent.

Bunter was safe from vengeance at the present moment, and knew he could be defiant.

The juniors entered the wide, lighted hall, and Miss Penelope received them in her kind and gracious way. Billy Bunter's face wore

"Oh, shut up!" said Nugent.

Billy Bunter blinked doubtfully at the other fellows, and slipped off his coat, hat, gloves, and boots. He donned white gloves and shoes, and parted his hair once more with a comb, and put his dress tie—or, rather, Bulstrode's dress tie—straight. He looked at his reflection in the glass, and was eminently satisfied. Perhaps that was an account of his short sight.

"I say, you fellows," he exclaimed, turning round from the glass, "don't you think I really look rather nice?"

"You look a perfect picture," said Bob Cherry solemnly.

"You really think so, Cherry?"

"You do, Bunter—a regular picture—one of those comic picture postcards, you know."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

And they went into the dance.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Dance.

MARJORIE HAZLEDENE was looking at her best. Her sweet face was lighted up with animation now, and the chums of the Remove thought they had never seen her look so charming. Hazledene gave her a brotherly grin of appreciation.

"You look stunning, sis!" he exclaimed.



"Good!" muttered Bunter to himself. "I think it looks ripping! Won't the girls look at it, too! I'll jolly well bet I'm the only chap in the Remove who will go in an opera-hat!"

a perpetual grin, as if he were greatly tickled by the way he had done the Remove.

The grin was changed a little when the juniors went into a big room to take their coats off. Bunter blinked round at the fellows a little nervously, and kept near the door.

Ferocious glances were turned upon him.

"You worn!" said Bob Cherry. "That's my overcoat!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"That's my hat!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"You've got my best socks!" said Hazledene wrathfully.

"Oh, really, Vaseline—"

"You—you worn! You mongrel!" said a dozen voices.

"I—I say, you fellows—"

"Shall we bump him now?" asked Tom Brown.

Billy Bunter skipped to the door.

"I say, you fellows, don't play the giddy ox, you know. I had to borrow some things to come in. If you touch me I'll yell. You ought to have lent me some things. I have been treated with rotten meanness by the fellows in my own study."

Marjorie laughed.

"Thank you!" she said. "I suppose if you notice it, I must."

"Well, look at Bob Cherry, then. He's looking at you as if he couldn't take his eyes off you, and he's got his mouth wide open like a codfish."

"Ha, ha!"

Hazledene's unflattering description of Bob Cherry was not quite just; but certainly Bob was gazing in great admiration at the vision of girlish beauty.

Bob Cherry had an immense admiration for Marjorie; which he showed—boyishly—by being silent and awkward as a rule when he was with her, and doing clumsy things.

Marjorie would sometimes take the trouble to draw him out of his shell, so to speak, and make him transcendently happy; which she effected simply being not at all shy herself—though, girl-like, she was shy enough when the boy was not shy.

The gaily-lighted and decorated room looked very cheerful and almost every face was bright and happy. The orchestra from Friarale discoursed sweet music, and the fellows in my own study."

boys and girls were soon "tripping the light fantastic toe."

Everybody, of course, wanted to dance with Marjorie, and equally, of course, it was impossible for her to dance with everybody; but sweet smiles and kind words compensated those who were left out.

Among the left-out ones was Bunter, and Bunter was one person whom Marjorie rejected without caring much whether he liked it or not.

Billy Bunter sailed into the room in the first place with a smile of conscious fascination upon his fat face. Billy's opinion of himself was always a good one, and he suffered from a curious delusion that he looked particularly killing in evening clothes.

That every girl in the room was dying to dance with him, that every girl would give almost anything to be seen sitting out a dance with him, that in short he was monarch of all he surveyed, and had only to pick and choose—all that Billy Bunter took for granted.

And if there had been a scarcity of boys at the dance, he might never have been undecieved, for a girl naturally prefers anything to being left without a partner, and on more than one occasion Bunter had been made much of by girls, simply because he could dance, and there was a run on the boys.

But on the present occasion the boys outnumbered the girls, owing to the excellent management of Miss Primrose and her assistant, Miss Locke, and few girls were

Billy Bunter thought he had better adjourn to the refreshment department. He was sure of some consolation there, at all events.

He found some fellows there already—fellows who did not care for dancing, or did not dance. But he found not a friendly look from them.

The whole Form was down on Bunter to-night. Elliott, whose trousers Bunter was wearing at that very moment, was there, sipping lemon-squash.

Bulstrode, whose collar and tie he had appropriated, was fizzing some soda-water into a glass of lemonade. Bulstrode had plenty of collars and ties, and did not care much for the loss of them; but he was quite as angry as the others at Bunter's raid. The fat junior smiled an ingratiating smile as he came into the room.

"You fellows resting?" he asked.

No one replied.

"I say, you fellows, I'm sincerely sorry about those things—the trousers, you know, and the tie, and so on. What was I to do?"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Bulstrode.

"I'm hungry," said Bunter. "After all, the best part of a dance is the refreshments. There are such a lot of girls who want to dance with me, too, that I don't know which to choose. You can't choose one without making the others jealous when they're all set on a fellow."

"Oh, cheese it!" said Ogilvy.

"I think I'll have some cheese-cakes to begin with," remarked Bunter, helping him-

his neck. His fat face was streaming. His spectacles were opaque with dampness.

He blinked furiously at Bulstrode.

"You—you beast! You did that on purpose!"

"Ifa, ha, ha!"

"Sorry!" said Bulstrode. "Quite an accident!"

"Beast!"

"Rough," said Ogilvy, wiping his eyes—"almost as rough as collaring a chap's clothes just before he's going to a dance. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Elliott.

"I—I say, you fellows, I'm soaked! Ow! I shall catch cold. Yow!"

"Better go and get a rub down," suggested Bulstrode. "Awfully clumsy of you to get into the way of the siphon. You always were clumsy, Bunter."

"Ow! Beast!"

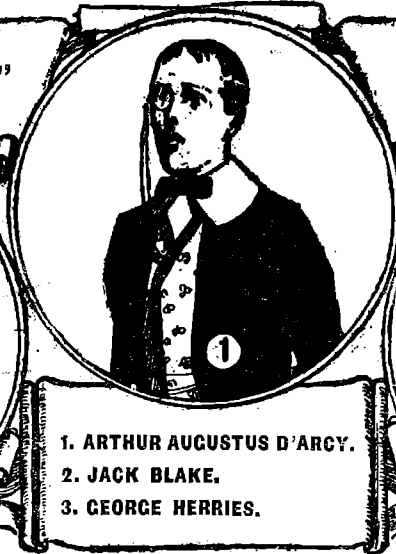
And Billy Bunter ambled away to get the suggested rub down.

He did not appear in view again for about an hour, and then he had a freshly-rubbed and beetrooty appearance, and his shirt-front was a deplorable sight.

He did not venture to appear in the ball-room again. He knew very well that it would cause merriment, and he was not fond of looking ridiculous, though he very often succeeded in doing so without intending it.

But he found a companion to share his exile to the supper-room at last, a companion who agreed with Bunter in thinking

NUMBER 2. THE "PENNY POPULAR" PORTRAIT GALLERY.



No. 3. NEXT FRIDAY. George Figgins, George Kerr, and Fatty Wynn.



1. ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY.
2. JACK BLAKE.
3. GEORGE HERRIES.

really inclined to take Bunter as a last resource.

Bunter sailed down upon Miss Hazledene first of all, with the kind thought of making the Famous Four jealous by dancing with her a great deal.

To his surprise, he found that Marjorie had no room on her card, and declined to let him put his name down.

"But you're not booked right up already?" exclaimed Bunter.

"I'm afraid I can't give you a dance," said Marjorie, who resented very much the manner with which Bunter asked for one.

"But really, Miss Marjorie—"

Harry Wharton took Marjorie away at that moment, and Bunter was left stranded. He had the pleasure of being a wallflower for a time, and he blinked indignantly at the circling couples through his big spectacles.

He returned to the attack again, however, at the first opportunity, selecting Miss Clara, Marjorie's best chum.

Miss Clara received him very coolly. "You're going to give me three, ain't you, Miss Clara?" asked Bunter, with a killing look.

"Sorry!" said Miss Clara. "I can't."

"Oh, really, you know—"

"Dear me!" said Miss Clara, looking over her card. "I'm afraid I haven't any room for you at all."

"Oh, really—"

"My dance, Miss Clara," said Bob Cherry, coming up.

And they glided away, leaving the indignant Owl of the Remove stranded again.

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self liberally. "I will say this for Miss Primrose. She does feed her visitors well."

"Pig!"

"Oh, really, Bulstrode! I suppose there's no harm in a chap getting hungry?" said Bunter. "I'm thirsty, too. Do you recommend ginger-beer or lemonade?"

"Rats!"

"I'll try the lemonade. Hand over that siphon, too, if you've done with it, will you?"

Bulstrode's eyes glimmered for a moment.

He lifted over the soda-siphon to the table where Bunter had seated himself, and at the same moment, as if by accident, pressed it.

Fizz!

A stream of soda-water shot out, and caught the fat junior full on the chest.

"Ow!" yelled Bunter, springing to his feet.

The table went over with a crash of plates and cups and glasses.

The soda-water was still streaming.

Fiz-z-z-z!

The stream sopped through Bunter's beautiful shirt-front, and then turned upward and swept his face.

"Ow! Oh! Gerrooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Elliott and Ogilvy, in wild delight.

"Groo! Gerrooh! Yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dear me!" said Bulstrode, setting down the siphon. "I wonder how that happened?"

"Yaroooh! Ugh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter was streaming with soda-water. His shirt-front was reduced to a limp rag. His collar was hanging softly about

that the supper-room was the most attractive spot. Bunter was kept busy for a long time helping her and helping himself. The strains of music from the ball-room did not disturb them.

Bunter was quite surprised when a crowd poured into the room at last, and he learned that the dance was over. He had been sitting there ever since the interval, eating all the time, and he was not quite finished yet. He kept it up till it was high time to go.

The chums of the Remove bade farewell to their girl friends, and put on hats and coats, and then the brakes came round. Bunter thought he saw vengeance gleam in many eyes that were turned upon him, and he decided not to go in the brake.

Without stopping to take his leave of Miss Primrose, who was not likely to miss one in such a crowd, Billy Bunter put on Bob Cherry's overcoat and slipped away.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Gets the Sack.

BILLY BUNTER paused to listen. There was a sound of wheels on the road behind him.

The hour was somewhat late, and the night was dark. Billy Bunter was tramping on towards Greyfriars. He hoped to get in before the others arrived, and get his borrowed plumes off. Then he would have to make his peace as best he could.

But the sound of wheels and hoofs on the road behind him showed him that he would not succeed in doing so.

The brakes from Cliff House were coming. Billy Bunter paused and looked back, and saw the lights of the big vehicles gleaming through the deep gloom of the night. He stepped out of the lane, and drew under the shadow of a bunch of trees, deciding to wait for the brakes to go by. He had a very strong feeling that if he was found on the road by the juniors there would be trouble for him.

It was better to face the angry Remove at the school, where, at all events, matters could not be taken too far. He waited for the brakes to go by.

The Upper Fourth brake came first, with Temple, Dabney & Co. in it. It rolled on past the trees where the fat junior stood.

Then came the Remove brake. The juniors were crammed in it, and some of them were singing, in the exuberance of their youthful hearts. Harry Wharton & Co. were talking about Bunter.

"The fat worm must have started first!" said Bob Cherry. "It stands to reason that he didn't remain behind."

"The reasonfulness is terrific, my worthy chum!"

"And he's not in the brake," said Nugent. "That's certain."

"He's walking home; may be there by this time," remarked Harry, with a nod.

"Not half!" said Bob Cherry emphatically. "He can't have got off much sooner than we did, and after the tremendous supper he ate he couldn't walk fast."

"Very likely."

"Keep an eye open for him. We shall most likely pass him on the road."

"Got the sack all right?" asked Nugent. "I've got it here," said Tom Brown. "I slipped round and asked Miss Primrose's gardener for it, and he gave it me like a shot!"

"Good!"

"The goodness is terrific!"

"Keep an eye open for the fat burglar."

"What-ho!"

Bob Cherry uttered a sudden exclamation. "Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

The brake was passing a clump of trees. Bob Cherry was staring into the black shadows under the leafless branches.

"Did you see him?"

"Was it Bunter?"

"Sure?" said Nugent doubtfully. "I don't see how you could see him in this blessed blackness. It's as dark as the inside of a hat under those trees!"

"His glasses, my son! I saw two round points of light. I've seen him with the light reflected on his specs before. It was Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The brake rolled on, the juniors consulted eagerly. A hundred yards farther on, Harry Wharton & Co. quietly dropped out of the vehicle behind, and it rolled on to Greyfriars without them.

Meanwhile, Bunter chuckled under the trees, and tramped out into the road again. He was quite unconscious of the fact that the reflection of the brake lamps had caught his glasses and betrayed him to Bob Cherry's keen eyes.

"My word!" he murmured. "I'll take it easy, and get in late. They won't make a row about a chap getting in late on the night of a dance. The Remove will be gone to bed, and they won't get up to go for me. It may all blow over by the morning. I—Oh!"

Bunter broke off suddenly. Half a dozen shadowy figures started out of the gloom and surrounded him, Billy Bunter started back.

They did not speak.

They collared the fat junior, and two or three of them held him in a firm grasp, while the others stripped his borrowed plumes from him.

His coat and his waistcoat and his dress-coat, his gibus hat and his collar and tie,

his gloves and the limp dress-shirt—all were jerked off in solemn silence.

Bunter struggled and wriggled in vain. Then a sack was thrown over his head. The open end of the sack descended to his ankles. In the bottom of the sack was a hole, which fitted round his neck when it was drawn down over his head.

Bunter blinked and wriggled in the sack. "Ow! Really—yow!—I say, you fellows—"

Still they did not speak.

Taking his clothes with them, they left him in the lane, and hurried away after the brake.

Bunter stood dumbfounded. He had not expected anything like this.

They had left him his underclothing, trousers, and his boots, but very little else. He began to drag the sack off, and then reflected, and stopped.

The night was cold, and the sack was a better protection than nothing. It occurred to him, too, that he could not present himself at Greyfriars in trousers and undervest. The sack was a necessity.

Bunter groaned.

"Oh, dear! The beasts! The rotters! Ow! I will make them sit up for this! This is all because they're jealous of a chap's good looks! A fellow can't be looked at by the girls without a lot of rotters starting on him like this!"

With a groan, Bunter tramped on.

The brakes were a long way ahead, and the road was lonely before him. The few lamps shed a glimmer for a yard or two here and there.

Bunter passed a countryman in the lane, as he came within the dim radius of light from one of the lamps.

The man stared at him, and gave a yell of affright. The sight of a fellow walking about late at night, with his head through the bottom of a sack, was startling enough. The man took to his heels and pattered down the lane.

Bunter grunted, and continued on his way. Greyfriars came in sight at last.

Billy Bunter hesitated at the gate, but there was no use in hesitating. He had to enter, and enter as he was, and the sooner it was over the better.

He rang a peal at the bell.

Gosling came grunting to the gate. The school porter stared blankly at Bunter as he let him in.

"Who—who are you? Wot is it?" he gasped. "What—"

"I'm Bunter!" growled Billy. "I've been japed, that's all."

"Haw, haw, haw!"

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

"Haw, haw, haw! Wot I says is this 'ere—you'd better not let the 'Ead see you in that 'ere rig!" chuckled Gosling.

Bunter snorted, and tramped off towards the house. Gosling's chuckles followed him across the Close.

The door was wide open, and the hall lighted up. As he approached the house, Bunter could see a crowd in the hall and on the steps.

His heart sank. He knew that the juniors had passed the word round, and that half the school had gathered there to see him enter. He thought of dodging round to the back of the house, but there were scouts out in the Close, and he had been already seen.

There was a shout:

"Here he is!"

"Here's Bunter!"

"I—I say, you fellows—"

"Here he is! Come on, Bunter!"

"I—I say—"

"Ha, ha! Here he is!"

A crowd of juniors gathered round Bunter, and he had to march right up to the steps, and mount them into the light streaming from the door.

The hall was full of juniors, and seniors, too. At the sight of Bunter there was a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fat junior, with his head sticking out of the bottom of the sack, and only his boots showing below it, made up an irresistible picture.

The fellows simply doubled up, and roared and roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bravo, Bunter!"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

Billy Bunter, blinking indignantly, marched in. The juniors were rocking to and fro with merriment, yelling themselves hoarse.

"My only hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Isn't he a picture? Isn't he a bute? Wouldn't he take first prize in a monkey show? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I say, you fellows—"

"What on earth's this row about!" exclaimed Wingate, coming out of the seniors' room. He caught sight of Bunter, and stopped dead. "What—why—what—"

"I—I say, Wingate—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the captain of Greyfriars. "It's Bunter!"

"Yes. I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Quelch looked out of his study with a frown. The roars of laughter in the hall, at that time of night, disturbed and annoyed him; but as he caught sight of Bunter, the frown died from his face. He tried not to smile, but he simply could not help it. He smiled, he laughed, he roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter blinked at him.

"Oh, really, sir—"

"Ha, ha! What is the meaning of this—this masquerade, Bunter?"

"It's a jape."

"What has happened?"

"I was collared on the road, and shoved into this sack, and my clothes taken away, sir!" growled Bunter. "It's a rotten jape!"

"Your clothes taken away?" asked Bob Cherry. "Yours—or somebody else's?"

Mr. Quelch smiled.

"I think I understand," he remarked. "I suppose you have been borrowing clothes without permission again, Bunter?"

"I—I really, sir—"

"I hope your punishment will be a lesson to you. Go and take that sack off at once, and go to bed. You are a most troublesome and absurd boy!"

And Mr. Quelch retreated into his study, closed the door, and had his laugh out.

The fat junior blinked round upon the yelling crowd, and tramped angrily upstairs.

The sack was on the floor, and Bunter had got into bed, when the Remove came up. They gave a fresh yell at the sight of his fat, angry face, blinking at them over the edge of the bedclothes.

"Enjoyed your walk home, Bunty?" asked Bob Cherry blandly.

Bunter grunted.

"Beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's all through your rotten jealousy of a chap's good looks—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter snorted, and turned over to go to sleep, but it was a long time before the Remove slept. At intervals for an hour or more a gust of chuckling would sweep through the dormitory.

The Remove had thoroughly enjoyed their evening at Cliff House, but certainly one of the most enjoyable incidents had been the retribution of Bunter. It would probably be some time before the fat junior raided other fellows' wardrobes, in order to shine among the dandies of the Remove.

THE END.

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THE FIRST CHAPTER. The Snow Fight.

JIMMY SILVER and his chums, Lovell, Newcome, and Raby, the Fistical Four of the Fourth Form at Rookwood School, left the little village of Coombe, and set out upon the road back to the school.

It was Wednesday afternoon, a half-holiday, and they had been for a brisk walk, and had passed through the village on the way back to Rookwood.

It had been dull and gloomy all day, and was now getting quite dark as the evening approached.

Moreover, snow had commenced to fall heavily about half an hour earlier, and the chums of the Classical Fourth buttoned up their coat collars, and pulled their caps well down on to their ears as they stepped out for the final lap to Rookwood.

"Look out for snowballs!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, as they turned on to the road which led to the school.

"Nothing to worry about round here," replied Lovell, "but we'll have to keep our eyes open when we get nearer the school."

"All the same, you never know—Ow! Yarough! Ugh!"

Jimmy Silver's observation broke off in the middle and gave way to yells as a huge snowball, whizzing from the darkness at the side of the road, caught him on the nose.

His chums turned in amazement as their leader spluttered and howled. But before they had properly realised what had occurred, another snowball, with considerable force behind it, burst on Lovell's ear.

"Yarough! Ow! What the—"

Before his remark was finished two more frozen missiles flew towards them, one breaking upon Lovell's back, and the other bursting over the features of Raby.

"I say," exclaimed Jimmy Silver, who had recovered himself and was gathering up a handful of snow, "this won't do!"

The four juniors peered in the direction of the hedge at the roadside, but could see nothing.

Another snowball, however, travelling from the direction in which they were looking, proved beyond all question that the enemy was lurking somewhere there in the darkness.

"Altogether!" yelled Jimmy Silver, raising his arm. "Straight at the spot where that last one came from!"

Immediately, four hefty snowballs whizzed towards the hedge, and the Fistical Four heard a violent spluttering a second later.

"Come on!" cried Jimmy. "They're in there!"

The Classical chums grabbed up more snow, and started towards the roadside.

They had only proceeded about half a dozen paces, however, when there was a rush from the hedge, and some eight or ten figures dashed out, several of them bigger fellows than the Fistical Four.

"Let 'em 'ave it!" yelled one, evidently the leader.

Jimmy Silver knew at once that the attackers were not Rookwood fellows, and the various exclamations which came from the direction of the crowd soon proclaimed them to be natives of the village of Coombe.

This revelation was not encouraging to the Fistical Four, as they well knew that a village party never attacked unless their forces were considerably superior to those attacked.

On more than one occasion Rookwood juniors had had encounters with the villagers, THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 271.

and very often they were compelled, through sheer weight of numbers, to retire defeated.

But they never did so without putting up a good fight.

"Pile into the rotters!" cried Jimmy Silver to his followers. "Give 'em socks!"

There was no need to urge Lovell, Newcome, and Raby, however, for they were scooping up handfuls of snow and hurling forth snowballs as fast as they could.

There was no doubt that they were inflicting severe punishment on the enemy from the yells and howls that broke forth from the mob every now and then, but they were likewise suffering severe punishment themselves.

The attacking force kept up a perfect rain of snowballs.

"Yarough!" howled Newcome, as a well-directed snowball caught him in the eye.

"Grooogh! Oooo!" yelled Raby, as one burst on his neck.

They were not to be beaten so easily as the village crowd expected, however, and stuck gamely to the fight.

Then, at last, as their opponents drew closer, they were obliged to give ground slightly, but they did not slacken their efforts. On the contrary, they threw their energy into the fray with even greater determination.

All the same, it was borne in upon their minds as the fight continued, that they could not hope to vanquish the advancing mob, and they realised that they could only stave off the inevitable defeat for a limited time.

It was for Jimmy Silver to give the word that would end the conflict, and as long as he saw fit to keep up the struggle, his chums would stand by him manfully.

Jimmy was just considering that side of the question, when a shout from the village put new strength into him and his chums.

"Hallo, there? What's up?"

It was the voice of Tommy Dodd, the leader of the Modern chums, the sworn foes of the Fistical Four.

Moderns and Classicals, however, always joined forces against a common enemy, and as soon as Tommy Dodd had tumbled to what was wrong, he rallied Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle, his followers, and the three broke into a run towards the scene of conflict.

"Come on, kids!" yelled Tommy Dodd. "To the rescue!"

It soon became evident though that they were not going to be allowed to line up with the Fistical Four without a struggle, for the village crowd were between the Classicals and the Moderns, and two or three of them detached themselves from the main body to deal with Tommy Dodd & Co.

But those stalwart chums came into the fray, fresh and keen, and they soon began to make their presence felt.

The three who had taken upon themselves what they thought to be the easy task of settling the new-comers, soon wished they had left the job to others of the party.

Then, a minute later, a huge snowball, almost as big as a football, caught one of them in the chest with all the strength that Tommy Dodd could put behind it.

The result was a distinct triumph for the Modern chums. It caused the fellow, one of the biggest in the village mob, to stagger. Then, after a frantic effort to save himself, he went down with a crash on his back.

But that was not all.

In falling, he spraddled his arms, and caught one of his supporters with such force that he, too, sprawled on his back in the snow.

Tommy Dodd & Co. followed up their

advantage, and, drawing nearer, commenced to pelt them unmercifully, until the main party turned their attention for a moment in the direction of the Modern chums, and gave the unfortunate lads on the ground an opportunity to rise.

The instigators of the fight now began to feel thoroughly "fed up." They had not bargained for a combat such as this, and the Rookwood juniors still showed no signs of throwing up the sponge.

Indeed, they were wiring into the business with even greater energy.

Then the end came suddenly and unexpectedly.

Lusty shouts and yells heralded the approach of Fourth-Formers, among them Hooker, Towle, Lacy, and Leggett.

The new arrivals quickly added their strength to the defence, and it soon became obvious that the village crowd was defeated.

Suddenly the figure of a Sixth-Former loomed up in the darkness at the side of the road. It was Knowles, who was a Modern and a prefect at Rookwood, and one of the most unpopular prefects at that.

"Better chuck it, hadn't we?" said Lacy to Tommy Dodd, as his eye fell upon Knowles.

"Not likely!" chimed in Jimmy Silver, who had heard the question.

He was not going to be robbed of the fruits of victory by the appearance of a prefect after the struggle he and his chums had put up.

"Don't see why we should chuck it up," put in Tommy Dodd, as he luried forth another snowball.

Knowles was unpopular with everyone at Rookwood, Moderns and Classicals alike, and consequently, did not command the respect which was due to one in his position.

He pulled up, and was about to address a remark to the Modern juniors, over whom he exercised his authority on every possible occasion, when a snowball, which came from the seething crowd in the roadway, burst on his forehead.

It was impossible to see whom had thrown it on account of the darkness, but one or two of the juniors had a strong suspicion that Tommy Cook had done it.

For a moment Knowles boiled with rage, and was on the point of dashing into the mob. But he was a cautious individual, and quickly realised that to plunge into that crowd would mean disaster.

Another snowball, this time thrown by one of the villagers, helped him to make up his mind. It caught him behind the ear, and burst with a great splutter all over the back of his head.

Turning on his heel, Knowles quickly disappeared, inwardly vowing vengeance on the Modern chums.

Meanwhile, the village mob had taken advantage of the temporary distraction of their opponents. They had pounded away at a weak point in the surrounding circle, and had forced an opening, through which they were hastily retreating.

Consequently, when the Rookwood juniors turned to continue the punishment, they found that the enemy had broken through the line.

"Give 'em a final smash!" yelled Jimmy Silver, grabbing up a handful of snow.

The "final smash" was given by about a dozen snowballs hurtling through the air at once.

But as they burst among the retreating crowd, there was a cry, and one of the village fellows was seen to fall.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Rookwood juniors, thinking that he had slipped in the snow.

But their laughter soon died out, for the fellow did not rise.

In a moment his chums were crowding round him, and the Rookwood juniors ran forward to see what had happened.

"What's up?" cried Jimmy Silver, as he reached the fringe of the crowd.

"One of your lot's thrown a snowball with a stone in it," replied a big fellow, who was evidently the leader of the crowd.

"My hat!" exclaimed Jimmy. He pushed in, and bent over the boy, who was lying upon the ground.

He was quite knocked out, and there was a wound on the side of his head just above his temple.

Jimmy Silver looked round with a scared expression at the rest of the Rookwood fellows, who, very considerably alarmed, were crowding round.

"I shouldn't have thought there was anyone in Rookwood who was rotter enough to do a thing like that," said Tommy Dodd, in awed tones.

The juniors looked from one to the other, although it was almost too dark to see each other's faces, and the eyes of the Fistical Four fell upon Leggett, the cad of the Fourth, who was lurking on the outside edge of the crowd.

The same thought flashed into the minds of each of them at the same moment. Leggett, they thought, was the only one among the party who was capable of such a cowardly trick.

However, they kept their suspicions to themselves, and turned to assist in carrying the injured fellow to the village.

But at that moment a stern voice, which the boys recognised with alarm and confusion to be that of Mr. Manders, the Fourth Modern master, demanded to know what was the matter.

Before anyone had time to answer, however, the master pushed into the crowd, and peered, with surprise, into the faces of the Rookwood juniors. His surprise was due to the fact that the boys should now have been at tea at Rookwood.

One of the village fellows quickly explained what had occurred, and the master, in hard and severe tones, at once ordered the Rookwood juniors to return immediately to the school.

Not one of them dared venture a remark, and, turning, moved off in the direction of Rookwood, completely crestfallen.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.
In Disgrace.

"THAT'S done it, now!" groaned Tommy Dodd, as soon as they were out of hearing of the master of the Modern Fourth.

"Absolutely!" agreed Jimmy Silver. "There'll be a proper shindy now!"

"Not without cause, either," said Lovell. "If I knew for certain who the rotter is who threw that snowball with a stone in it, I'd give him the biggest hiding of his life!"

He gave a significant glance at Leggett as he spoke. The cad of the Fourth was slinking along by himself, detached from the main body of juniors.

"It's an absolute disgrace to the whole school," said Tommy Dodd.

"Well, unless the rotter owns up, we shall all get it where the chicken got the chopper!" observed Lovell.

Thus debating, the juniors reached Rookwood, and at once betook them to their various studies.

Some half an hour later it was reported that Mr. Manders had returned, and gone straight to the Head's study.

"Now for it!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

A quarter of an hour afterwards the whole school was assembled in hall. It was a surprise to no one, however, for the story of the snow fight had speedily gone round.

The Head stepped up to the raised desk, accompanied by Mr. Manders, and with a very serious expression upon his face, at once commenced to speak.

"A most disgraceful affair has occurred this afternoon," began Dr. Chisholm severely. "A number of boys of the Fourth Form have been engaged in combat with a party of village boys, one of whom has been injured through the underhand trick of one among you."

The Head paused and looked around. Then he continued:

"The boys who took part in the snowball fight step forward at once!"

The Fistical Four and Tommy Dodd & Co.

immediately advanced towards the desk, accompanied by Towle and Lacy and the rest of the Fourth Form juniors.

Leggett was the last to leave his place, and he joined on at the end of the line.

He had thought of remaining in his place, but he soon saw that such a course of action would not do. He was so often in scrapes and troubles that he distinctly disliked coming before the Head's notice on any matter.

When the juniors were lined up before Dr. Chisholm, he eyed every one of them keenly.

"I ask that the one among you who threw the snowball with a stone in it will own up now," said the doctor, looking from one to the other of the boys along the line.

But not one of the boys spoke.

"Is dishonesty and deceit to be added to the offence?" asked the headmaster, after a moment's silence.

Still no one attempted to speak.

"Very well," said Dr. Chisholm at last, with a pained expression on his face. Then, turning to the whole school, he continued:

"A number of these unfortunate encounters among members of the Lower School and village boys have been brought to my notice during the past few weeks, and I am determined that they shall be brought to a conclusion. I am a firm believer in friendly rivalry, but it is time for such rivalry to

accuse him in this case, because there's no more evidence against him than any of us."

"That's true," admitted Jimmy Silver. "So we've all got to suffer for it."

"The more I think about the giddy business, the more certain I am that Leggett did it," said Tommy Dodd.

"Yes," said Lovell. "Notice how scarce he's made himself since we got back here?"

"Yes, the beast!"

"Suppose we collar him, and give him a good hiding?" suggested Raby.

"That's not much good," said Jimmy Silver. "But I know a way we might pay him out on Saturday."

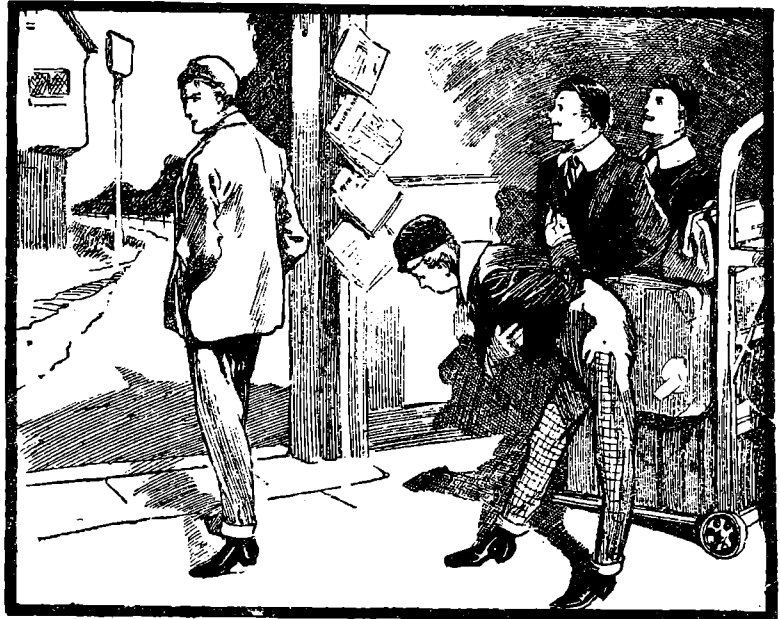
"Let's have it, then!" said Tommy Dodd eagerly. "Even if he isn't guilty this time, we've got several old scores to pay off."

"Well," continued Jimmy Silver, "my idea is to collar him on Saturday afternoon, entice him up to the box-room, and tie him up, and leave him there until we think fit to let him out."

"That's not at all a bad wheeze," said Tommy Dodd generously. "That'll give him time—"

"Shut up, fathead!" exclaimed Jimmy. "We're not going to do the thing to give him time for anything, except think about getting out again."

"Who are you calling a fathead?" de-



Ha, ha, ha! laughed Tommy Dodd & Co., while Tommy Doyle made a solemn bow behind Knowles' back as he passed out of the booking-office.

ease when low-down actions are introduced. Therefore, for the next month, the village of Coombe will be out of bounds to all members of the Lower School, and any breach of this order will be treated most severely.

The school was then dismissed, amidst expressions of surprise and amazement that the punishment inflicted was not more severe.

At the same time, the punishment was a great deal too severe for the Fistical Four and Tommy Dodd & Co., each of whom were innocent in regard to the injury of the village youth.

"In my opinion, Leggett is the only one of the crowd who would have done such a dirty trick!" declared Jimmy Silver, when he and his chums, with Tommy Dodd & Co., were seated in the end study.

"No doubt about it, I reckon," responded Tommy Dodd. "He'd stoop to anything!"

"Well, the Head must know what a rotter he is," said Lovell.

"Oh, I don't suppose so!" returned Jimmy Silver. "If he knew as much about the bounder as we do, he'd be chucked out."

"Anyway," put in Tommy Cook, "even if he had his suspicions about him, he couldn't

manded Tommy Dodd fiercely. "You're a silly ass, Silver—"

"Steady on!" said Lovell. "We don't want to start kicking up a row amongst ourselves. How about the wheeze?"

"The wheeze is settled," said Jimmy Silver. "Saturday Leggett pays the piper!"

"Good!"

Tommy Dodd & Co. took their departure, and the juniors retired for the night.

There were no developments the next day, but the snow-fight was the one topic of conversation at Rookwood.

It was ascertained during the day that the village boy who had been injured was very much better, and was out and about as usual.

To the Fistical Four and Tommy Dodd & Co., at any rate, this news was a great relief. Both parties had wished several times that they had not been mixed up in the affair.

The next morning, Friday, however, brought a surprise for Tommy Dodd & Co.

Immediately after prayers, a message came down that the Head wished to see them at once.

They were talking to the Fistical Four in the corridor at the time the message reached

them, and they opened their eyes in astonishment.

"What have you been up to now?" demanded Jimmy Silver. "You Modern asses are always getting into trouble, aren't you?"

"I'll give you a thick ear for that when I come back!" shouted Tommy Dodd, as he hastened in with his chums to the Head's study.

"Ha, ha, ha! P'raps you won't come back!" laughed Jimmy Silver.

"Rats!" called out the Modern chums, as they disappeared into the school.

Dr. Chisholm looked up from his desk as Tommy Dodd & Co. entered his study.

"Ah, Dodd," he began, "I have a letter here from an uncle of yours, who wishes me to allow you, accompanied by Cook and Doyle, to meet him in Latcham to-morrow afternoon."

"Yes, sir!" said Tommy Dodd eagerly.

"He informs me that he is passing through the town, and finds that he will have time to take you to the pantomime."

"Oh, yes, sir!" said Tommy Dodd again, scarcely able to suppress his delight.

"In the ordinary way it would have been a pleasure to me to grant his request," went on the doctor.

Tommy Dodd's face fell; but he was reassured in a moment.

"In the circumstances, however, taking into consideration the fact that you are in disgrace, it gives me no pleasure to grant you permission to go. At the same time, I do not wish your relation to suffer disappointment at not meeting you. Therefore, I have decided to allow you to go."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" faltered Tommy Dodd.

The Head held up his hand for silence.

"In view of the fact that the village is out of bounds to the Lower School at present," he said, "apply to me before you go to-morrow for a special pass."

"Yes, sir," said Tommy Dodd; and he and his chums passed out.

"My hat!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd, when he had closed the door. "How's that for a bit of luck?"

"Absolutely ripping!" said Tommy Doyle. "It's a fine time we shall be after havin'!"

"I wonder he let us go, though," said Tommy Cook.

"So do I," said Dodd.

The Modern chums returned to their study, and Tommy Dodd found a letter awaiting him there from his uncle.

His uncle had been to Rookwood on the recent sports day, and had met Dodd's chums on that occasion. Since then, however, Tommy Dodd had not seen him.

"We'd better go and tell those Classical fatheads that the wheeze with Leggett is off for to-morrow," said Tommy Cook.

"Right-ho!" said Tommy Dodd.

The Fistical Four received the Modern chums' news with perfect coolness. As a matter of fact, they were extremely jealous and envious, but they weren't going to show it.

"By the by," added Tommy Dodd, "the Leggett business is off for to-morrow, as far as we're concerned."

"But no farther!" snapped Jimmy Silver. "We are quite capable of carrying the thing through without your assistance."

"Right-ho! Sorry we can't take you—"

"Rats!"

"But, of course, it's a special privilege—"

"More rats!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Trouble for Leggett.

TOMMY DODD & CO. presented themselves at the Head's study in good time the next day for their special pass out of bounds, and, having duly received it, set off in great haste for the railway-station at Coombe.

"So-long, old sports!" they called out to the Fistical Four, as they dashed through the quad. "Hope you won't muck up that wheeze!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. offered no retort to this

passing shot of the Modern chums. But they immediately took steps to carry out their plans against the cad of the Fourth.

Jimmy Silver, Lovell, and Newcome made their way up to the box-room, and Raby was despatched to search for Leggett, and entice him up there.

This part of the programme was easily accomplished by Raby inviting him, in very friendly terms, to come and see something very interesting.

Raby did not state that it was going to be interesting to Leggett, but what was in store for him was certainly most interesting to the Fistical Four.

The two juniors made their way to the box-room side by side, and when they reached the door, which was slightly open, Raby stood back to allow Leggett to enter first.

This he did quite unsuspectingly, and immediately a rope slipped over his shoulders, and he found his arms pinned to his sides.

The cad of the Fourth was about to let out a yell, when Jimmy Silver stepped from behind the door and clapped a hand upon his mouth.

"If you yell out," said Jimmy, "you'll attract attention, and that won't be a very good thing for you, you little cad!"

Leggett struggled and tried to shout, but he was quite overpowered, and as the door was now shut his chances of being heard, even if he did yell, were not so good.

It didn't take Leggett long to see the wisdom of Jimmy Silver's remark, and he was not at all desirous of attracting a master or, perhaps, even the Head to the box-room.

"Who threw the snowball with a stone in it?" said Lovell, staring the cad in the face.

Leggett coloured up, blustered a great deal, and tried to appear very indignant at the insinuation, but he was not at all successful in convincing the Fistical Four that he was guiltless.

"I don't mind telling you straight out that I reckon you were the cad!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver boldly.

Leggett scowled blackly at the Classical chums.

"I'll tell the Head about this brutal outrage when I get loose!" howled the cad.

"Don't care if you do!" snapped Jimmy.

"But we're not going to let you loose until you own up. We'll leave you here for a while so that you can consider the matter. We'll come back presently, and if you care to own up you can go free. On the other hand, you stay here until we think fit to release you."

"Rotters!" hissed Leggett between his teeth.

Jimmy Silver & Co. withdrew from the box-room and turned the key in the lock.

"A few hours in there ought to teach him the error of his ways," said Jimmy Silver, as he and his chums returned to their study.

Meanwhile, Tommy Dodd & Co. had reached the station at Coombe, and had just entered the booking-office, when a familiar voice hailed them in angry tones from the outside.

"Where are you kids off to?"

The Modern chums swung round, and observed Knowles standing in the doorway.

"You're out of bounds!" continued the prefect. "Now I've got you!"

"We've got special permission from the Head!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd. Then, as an afterthought, he added: "And don't you interfere with us, or there'll be trouble! We know who threw the snowball with a stone in it! It was your pal Leggett!"

The result of this impudent remark was a great surprise to Tommy Dodd & Co. A startled look sprang into Knowles' face.

The three chums were quick to note the effect, and exchanged significant glances.

It was well known to everyone at Rookwood that Leggett and Knowles had shady dealings together, although one was a senior and the other a junior.

It was evident that the wind had been taken out of the prefect's sails, for he stood before the juniors as though he were unaware of their presence. Then, without another word, he stalked out of the booking-office.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Tommy Dodd &

Co., while Tommy Doyle made a solemn bow behind Knowles' back as he passed through the door.

The Modern chums continued on their journey well pleased with themselves, and discussing excitedly the effect of Tommy Dodd's words.

Knowles, anxious and very perturbed, hastened back to Rookwood at once.

Leggett had confessed to Knowles that he had thrown the snowball with a stone in it, and had appealed to him to protect him against the consequences.

The prefect immediately went in search of Leggett when he reached the school, but could find no trace of him anywhere. At last he gave up the search, and sauntered out into the quad again.

Then it suddenly occurred to him to go and look in the box-room. Why, he did not know; but it came to him as a sudden inspiration.

He quickly ascended the stairs, and was just entering Leggett's prison, when the Fistical Four appeared on the scene again.

But Knowles was already inside the room, and staring in amazement at the cad of the Fourth, who was writhing and squirming on the floor.

"What's the meaning of this?" demanded Knowles in loud tones, as he turned on the Classical chums.

"We put him there—" began Jimmy Silver, and broke off suddenly as footsteps sounded along the passage outside.

In another moment Bulkeley, the captain of Rookwood, appeared. The big, stalwart Sixth-Former stood and stared at the scene before him without a word. Then he turned to Knowles.

"Why is that boy tied up there like that?" he demanded.

"Can't say!" replied Knowles shortly. "Better ask these young cubs of yours."

"Did you tie him up?" asked Bulkeley, turning to Jimmy Silver.

"Yes!" replied the leader of the Fistical Four.

"Why?"

"Well, Bulkeley, we think he was guilty of injuring the village kid the other day, and, as we've all got to suffer for it, we took it upon ourselves to punish him."

"You had no right to do such a thing!" snapped the captain. "You will write me a hundred lines each!"

"Is there any truth in the accusation, Leggett?" demanded Bulkeley.

The cad of the Fourth looked confused and baffled, but he made no reply at once.

Then, suddenly, to the amazement of the Fistical Four, he mumbled "Yes!"

"Oh!" exclaimed the captain. "You own up, then? You admit you threw that snowball with the stone in it?"

"Ye-e-es!" faltered Leggett miserably.

The Classical chums were astounded. They couldn't think what had come over the cad of the Fourth. They thought perhaps he had suddenly resolved to turn over a new leaf.

The fact of the matter was, however, that while Bulkeley had been talking to the Fistical Four, Knowles had cautiously whispered to Leggett to own up if he was faced with the question.

His reason for doing so was that after his interview with Tommy Dodd & Co. at the station he thought that they had overheard Leggett and himself talking about the matter, and that they possessed overwhelming evidence that the cad of the Fourth was the culprit.

So although Leggett couldn't imagine why Knowles had told him to own up, he knew that there must be a very good reason behind it, and accordingly acted on the advice.

When Tommy Dodd & Co. returned that evening from Latcham they received the amazing news that Leggett had confessed, and had received a severe thrashing from the Head. And when, a little later, they learned that the Head had revoked his order, and that Coombe was no longer out of bounds, there was joy in the Modern camp—and the Classical, too, for that matter.

THE END.

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

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AT GRIPS WITH THE GRAMMARIANS!

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

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. A Very Polite Invitation.

"**B**AJ JOVE! That is certainly vewy polite."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was standing in Study No. 6 with a letter in his hand. The letter was in the handwriting of Gordon Gay of Rylcombe Grammar School, and the swell of St. Jim's had opened it rather suspiciously; but the contents evidently pleased him.

"Hallo!" said Blake. "What has Gay got to say to you?"

"You can wead the lettah if you like, deah boys," said D'Arcy. Blake and Herries and Digby read the letter. They looked puzzled. It was certainly very polite; but the politeness of the Grammarians made them distrustful. They were like the gentlemen of olden time who feared the Greeks when they came with gifts in their hands. The letter ran:

"Dear D'Arcy,—We are having a rehearsal of a new play this afternoon, and as it's a half-holiday we thought you might like to run over and see us, and you might give us some tips about the acting and costumes. Shall be very glad to see you.—Always yours,
"GORDON GAY."

"Wathah sensible of Gay, you know, to ask me for some tips about the actin'," remarked Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "I dare say he knows that I am weally the only good actor in our dwamatic society."

"Yes, he's bound to know that," agreed Blake. "It's common knowledge."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"They're going to jape the silly ass when they get him over there," said Herries.

"Weally, Hewties!"

Blake shook his head.

"No; Gay wouldn't do that," he said. "They won't touch Gussy if he goes over on an invitation. But what on earth does it mean? There's some game on!"

"Weally, Blake!"

"There must be," said Digby. "Gay knows that Gussy is as big an ass in acting as in everything else, and—"

"Weally, Dig!"

"It's a dodge to get him over there; but what on earth do they want him for?" said Blake, puzzled. "They can't jape him if he goes on an invitation. That wouldn't be playing the game. But what do they want him for?"

"Weally, Blake; Gay expresses himself plainly enough. They're havin' a weharsal, as it's a half-holiday. I iembabah they were weharsin' some Wed Indian wubbish when I weat ova there the other day. They want to have some of my knowledge of stage-managin', and so forth, and I shall be vewy pleased to place it at their service."

"Oh, rats!"

"Weally, you ass—"

"It's a lark, but I don't quite catch on to it," said Blake. "Better not go."

"I shall hardly wefuse so polite a wequest," said the swell of St. Jim's loftily. "I wegard it as my duty to stand by the youngstahs in such a mattah. They are bound to want some chap to advise them in actin' a play."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I decline to have my wemarks weceived with wibald laughtah," said D'Arcy; and he retired from Study No. 6 with his nose in the air.

"What on earth is the little game?" said Blake, in perplexity. "It's some lark up against us, I expect, and they want Gussy out of the way. But what for?"

"Ask me another," said Herries.

"Blessed if I know!" said Digby. And the juniors gave it up.

They were playing football that afternoon, and naturally soon forgot about Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and his invitation to the Grammar School.

While they were preparing for the match, Arthur Augustus donned his most elegant Etons and his shiniest silk topper, and walked elegantly over to the Grammar School. Gordon Gay & Co. received him most graciously.

"So jolly good of you to come," said Gordon Gay, shaking hands with the swell of St. Jim's. "This way—we're having a rehearsal in the gym. We're going to give the performance of the 'Belle of the Prairie' in the gym next Wednesday. We shall be glad if you'll come and bring the fellows."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus walked into the gym. A crowd of the Grammarian juniors were gathered there.

Frank Monk and half a dozen other fellows were already in Red Indian costume.

It was to be a dress rehearsal, and certainly the Red Indians looked very effective. Perhaps they would not have been mistaken for Red Indians; but certainly they would never have been recognised as Frank Monk, and Lane, and Carboy, and the rest.

They wore leggings and blankets, and head-dresses of feathers, and their faces were covered with red ochre.

"Baj Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, turning his eyeglass upon the Red Indians. "Who are those howwid-looking boundahs?"

"They're Sitting Bull & Co., the fiery Sioux," said Gordon Gay.

"Baj Jove!"

"They have to capture the Belle of the Prairie, and I rescue her," said Gordon Gay.

"It's a ripping play, I can tell you. Tadpole says it's better than Shakespeare. He ought to know, as he wrote it."

"More lively, you know," explained Tadpole.

"Young Wootton is going to be the Belle of the Prairie, and I rescue her," said Gordon Gay. "He will have to make up as a girl."

"Ugh!" said Frank Monk, waving a tomahawk—a wooden one—in dangerous proximity to D'Arcy's silk hat.

D'Arcy jumped back.

"Pway be careful, deah boy!" he exclaimed.

"Wah! What seeks the white dog in the lodges of the Sioux?"

"Weally, Monk—"

"Scalp the white dog!" said Carboy. "Scalp his topper, at any rate."

"Weally, you ass!"

"No larks, you know," said Gordon Gay warningly. "Gussy is our guest. Honour the stranger that is within the gates."

"My mistake!" said Monk blandly. "It's

awfully good of you to come over and give us some tips, Gussy!"

"Yes, rather; jolly good!"

"Not at all, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus. "I'm always pleased to place my supewial knowledge at the service of you youngstahs."

"You cheeky ass—ahem!—I mean, thanks awfully!" said Monk, grinning horribly under his red ochre. "What do you think of our make-up? Do you think anybody would know us on the spot, same as they do some fellows who go round disguised?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Monk!"

"Zat you do not ship our shum, Monkey," said Mont Blong. "It is not comme il faut to ship ze guest vizin ze gates."

"Quite right, Mont Blong," said Gordon Gay. "Now, you fellows, buck up with the rehearsal. Will you sit here, Gussy, and lock on? Don't hesitate to speak when you think anything might be improved."

"Wathah not, deah boy!"

"Put it to them quite plainly. I'm sorry that I shan't be able to attend the rehearsal. Got an important engagement," said Gay.

"Wootton major is my understudy, and he's going to take my place. If you think Wootton isn't up to the mark, you tell him plainly what he ought to do."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Gordon Gay strolled out of the gymnasium. Then the rehearsal commenced.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat in the place of honour; and he watched the rehearsal through his eyeglass with great attention.

He did not hesitate to pass criticisms upon the acting; some of them extremely personal, as a matter of fact.

But the Grammarians heard them all with the most profound attention and respect.

If D'Arcy had been of a more suspicious nature, he might have suspected that the Grammarians had some ulterior motive for their excessive politeness.

But D'Arcy was anything but suspicious.

He was there to place his superior knowledge at the service of his young friends, as he considered it; and he did it unreservedly.

The rehearsal lasted quite a long time; and when it was over, and the costumes and the paint removed, the Grammarians took D'Arcy in to tea in Monk's study.

Arthur Augustus was the guest of honour at the tea-table.

All his remarks upon the subject of acting, and making-up, and stage-managing were listened to with great respect.

By the time tea was over the Grammarians had risen very much in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's estimation. In fact, he considered that they had been done great injustice; for a more polite, reasonable, and sensible set of fellows he had never seen.

It was evident that they were quite alive to his merits, and knew how to honour a really distinguished guest.

But if Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had been able to guess what was going on at St. Jim's at the same time, perhaps he would not have been so satisfied in his mind, and his flattering opinion of the Grammarians might have undergone a great change.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 271.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. A Crowded Tea-party.

JACK BLAKE came into the School House with a ruddy glow in his cheeks, and a football under his arm. The Fourth had been playing the Shell that afternoon, and the result had been a draw. Each side considered that it had been unlucky to lose, being the best team, and so all the footballers were satisfied with themselves.

"I wonder whether Gussy's got back?" said Blake, remembering the existence of the swell of St. Jim's now that football was over.

"He wasn't playing for the Fourth," remarked Tom Merry. "Where is he?"

"He went over to see Gordon Gay."

"Oh! Another jape, I suppose."

"No," said Blake. "I can't quite make it out. They said that they wanted his opinion on their acting for some rotten Red Indian play they're getting up; but, of course, that was all—"

"Piffle!" said Monty Lowther.

"Exactly. I suppose they've been rotting him."

Blake threw open the door of Study No. 6. There was a light burning in the study. The evening dusk was falling. The room was evidently occupied.

"Hallo! Got back, Gussy?" asked Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What did they want you for?"

"They wanted my advice on pivate theatricals, deah boy."

"They didn't rag you, then?"

"No."

"Well, I'm blowed!" exclaimed Blake.

"Now then, what about tea? I'm hungry!"

"Cut down to the tuckshop and get something, Gussy."

"I wufuse to cut down to the tuckshop, deah boy! Howevah, I am weady for tea, and you can get it if you like."

"We're in funds," said Tom Merry. "I've had a remittance from Miss Fawcett—a really stunning one! Come along to my study."

"Good!"

"I will join you in a few minutes, deah boys," said D'Arcy.

"Right-ho!"

The juniors crowded out of the study.

"May I bring a friend or two to tea, Tom Mewwy?" asked D'Arcy.

"Many as you like, old man."

"Vewy good."

Tom Merry & Co. lost no time in getting tea. They were hungry after the football. Tom Merry was in funds, as he had said, and he was quite lavish with that tea. The table groaned under the goodly viands, as the novelists say, and the juniors gathered round the table, prepared to do full justice to the tea. They were just beginning, when the door opened and Arthur Augustus came in.

Wally D'Arcy of the Third followed behind.

"What do you want?" asked Monty Lowther.

"I've come," said Wally.

"Well, now you can go."

"I've come to tea."

"Rats! We don't have Third Form fags to tea!" said Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah, I had Tom Mewwy's permish to bring a friend or two, and I have invited my minah—"

"Oh, that alters the case!" said Lowther.

"Come in, young hopeful!"

Jameson and Gibson and Joe Frayne of the Third followed Wally into the study. The tea-party regarded them with surprise.

"Did you ask these chaps, too, Gussy?" asked Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, all right!"

The study was pretty well crowded by this time. But a few minutes later Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen, of the New House, presented themselves. The School House fellows jumped up, under the impression that it was a raid. But Figgins waved his hand in sign of friendship.

"It's all right!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, is it?" said Tom Merry. "What do you want?"

"We've come to tea."

"Well, of all the cheeky bounders—"

"Gussy invited us," said Figgins. "He called out to us from his study window that you had told him to bring a few friends. We're all friends of Gussy's—"

"Especially at tea-time," said Fatty Wynn.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come in, deah boys! You will find woom somewah. It's all wright."

The Terrible Three were looking a little dismayed by this time.

"They didn't want to be inhospitable; but

certainly the study was crowded now to its utmost limits, and the feed, ample as it was, was not likely to go far among so many guests. And it was not over yet!

There was a trampling of feet in the passage, and Mellish and Levison and Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth looked in cheerfully. The door was wide open now. The study was too crowded for it to be shut. Behind the new-comers appeared Reilly, and Kangaroo, and Glyn, and Clifton Dane, and Lorne, and Bishop, and Kerruish.

"Hallo! You're rather crowded!" said Kangaroo.

"But we don't mind," grinned Levison.

"Not at all," said Mellish. "I can stand."

"Look here—" began Tom Merry.

"Gussy invited us," explained Lumley-Lumley. "I guess we couldn't refuse such an invitation, as he said it was an extra special feed."

"Come wight in, deah boys!"

"Standing room only!" grinned Reilly.

"Faith, I think you may as well hand my little whack out here in the passage!"

"Same here," said Kerruish.

"Hallo! Here's some more coming!" exclaimed Kangaroo, as a dozen or more fellows came crowding along the passage.

"Yaas, wathah! I've asked quite a lot."

The Terrible Three looked grimly at the swell of St. Jim's.

The study was crammed, the passage outside was crammed, and it looked as if it would be blocked all the way to the stairs. A crowd of Third and Second Form fags were trying to get to the study, demanding to know what they had been asked for if there wasn't any room and any feed.

"I suppose this is a little joke, Gussy?" said Tom Merry at last.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Blessed if I see the joke!" growled Manners.

"I have asked a friend or two—"

"Two hundred, it seems to me!" grunted Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Here, make way, there, you fags!" shouted a voice in the passage—the sharp, somewhat unpleasant voice of Cutts of the Fifth.

"That's Cutts," said Tom Merry. "What on earth does he want?"

"I've asked him to tea, Tom Mewwy."

"What!"

"Cutts, and Pwye, and Gilmore, and Jones, and Lefevre," explained D'Arcy. "I saw them from the studdy window, you know, so I thought I'd ask them."

"Well, you—you ass!"

"You fathead!"

"It's a rotten jape!" roared Monty Lowther. "Bump him!"

"I wufuse to be bumped!"

"Here, hold on!" chuckled Blake. "You gave Gussy permission to bring some friends. He's Gussy done what you said."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Make room here, you fags!" came Cutts' voice again.

There was a sound of shoving and trampling and angry voices in the passage.

"Yah! Go home!"

"Get out of the way!"

"Don't shove!"

"Gerroff my feet!"

"Clear out!"

"Yah!"

"There'll be a blessed free fight soon!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Here, let me get to the door, and I'll explain to Cutts."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Oh, you dry up!"

"I wufuse to dwy up. I considah—"

"Rats!"

It was not easy to get to the study door; but Tom Merry struggled through the crowd, and put a red and excited face out into the passage.

"Cutts!" he called out.

"Hallo! Is tea ready?" demanded the Fifth-Former.

"It's a mistake! Gussy was rotting you!" explained Tom Merry.

Cutts snorted.

"Oh, rotting me, was he?" he exclaimed.

"Is he there?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll jolly well show him that it doesn't do to rot the Fifth!" said Cutts. "Now, then, you fellows, shove all together, and we'll give these cheeky cads a lesson! Rotting the Fifth, My Jove!"

There were five of the Fifth-Formers, all powerful fellows, and they shoved together, and drove and wedged a way through the juniors in the passage.

The juniors were squeezed helplessly to the

walls, and into other studies, and a good many of them rolled on the floor, and were walked over. Cutts & Co. drove their way to the door of Tom Merry's study, and glared in.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Quite Mad!

GET out!" roared the juniors.

"Buzz off!"

"Clear!"

"Shove in!" yelled Cutts. "If there isn't any tea, we'll turn the blessed study inside out!"

"Yes, rather; that's what I say!"

"Yaas, undah the cires, I considah that you would be justified in waggin' those Shell boundahs, deah boys."

"And we're jolly well going to do it!" declared Cutts. "Now, then, Tom Merry, is it to be tea or a rag?"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said the unhappy captain of the Shell. "If you weren't a guest here, Gussy, I—I'd jump on you! You ass!"

"I weward you as a silly fathead, Tom Mewwy! I considah—"

"Where's the tea?" roared Gilmore.

"It's jolly well all gone," said Tom Merry. "I didn't expect fifty chaps to tea. It's a jape of that howling ass, D'Arcy!"

"If you chawactewise me as an ass, Tom Mewwy, I shall wetric fwom the studdy!"

"You can retire and eat coke, you silly chump!"

Arthur Augustus struggled to the door and retired. But the juniors had no time to think of the personal-feelings of the swell of St. Jim's.

Cutts & Co. were on the warpath. They had considered that they were greatly honouring a junior study by coming to tea there at all.

And to discover that there was no tea for them, and that it was all a rag, was a little too much. Cutts & Co. wanted vengeance, and wanted it badly.

And most of the juniors, though, as a rule, they would have been "up against" the Fifth, were inclined to back Cutts & Co. up now.

Three-parts of the invited guests had not been able to get even into the study, let alone to obtain a share of the feed. And they were very excited about it.

"Wreck the blessed place!" shouted Gore, of the Shell.

"Bump those bounders!"

"Shove the table over!"

"Rag them!"

Cutts commenced operations by seizing the tea-table, and turning it sideways. Crockery and tray and cloth slid to the floor, among a forest of legs and feet. There was a roar of wrath from the Terrible Three, and they hurried themselves upon Cutts.

"Chuck him out!" panted Tom Merry.

"Wreck the blessed study!" gasped Lefevre.

"That's what I say!"

"Faith, and we'll do it!"

"Hurrah!"

Crash, crash!

The chums of Study No. 6, and Figgins & Co., backed up the Terrible Three as well as they could. But they could do little; they were overwhelmed. In a few moments pandemonium seemed to reign in Tom Merry's study.

When the din died away, the Fifth-Formers and the crowd of indignant juniors took their departure, satisfied in their minds.

But the unhappy Co. were not satisfied.

Tom Merry picked himself up out of a heap of broken crockery, and gasped.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Groooh!"

"Oh!"

"Ow!"

The study was a wreck. The juniors looked like wrecks, too. Blake was breathing wrath, as he dabbed a crimson stream from his nose with his handkerchief.

"Let's go and find Gussy," he said. "We'll scalp him! We'll snatch him bald-headed! We'll jump on him and slaughter him!"

"Good egg!"

And the dusty and dishevelled juniors rushed away in search of the swell of St. Jim's. They rushed into Study No. 6. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was not there; the study was empty. And it was not only empty; it was wrecked, and was not in a much better condition than Tom Merry's study.

The table was overturned, books and papers and crockery and cinders were scattered about, the bookcase stood wrong end up, the carpet was hanging half-out of the window and ink was smeared on the looking-glass

the window-panes. On the wall was chalked, in large letters:

"WATS!"

Blake gasped.

"He's mad!" he exclaimed. "Must be mad as a hatter! Fancy a chap wrecking his own study. He's gone clean off his dot!"

"Great Scott!"

"Must be barny!"

"Poor old Gussy!"

"We must find him!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

They rushed out of the study. There was a yell from Reilly, who had just looked into his own room. It was almost in the same state as Study No. 6.

Yells from the other fellows announced they had found their quarters wrecked. The word ran from one to another that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had become insane; there seemed to be no other way of accounting for it. And he had disappeared.

The juniors trooped breathlessly downstairs. Kildare of the Sixth was in the lower passage, and they rushed up to him breathlessly.

"Have you seen D'Arcy?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Yes," said Kildare; "he went over to the New House, I think."

Figgins gave a yell.

"The New House—my study—"

He did not finish, but tore away across the quadrangle towards the New House.

The whole crowd followed him; they rushed into the New House, and up the stairs, and into Figgins' study.

A scene of devastation met their gaze. The state of Study No. 6 was as nothing to the state of Figgins' study. Figgins collapsed into a chair, and gasped.

"Oh, my hat! He must be raving!"

"Fairly off the dot!"

"But—where is he?"

"Must find him!" said Tom Merry.

And the amazed and excited juniors rushed out once more in search of the elusive swell of St. Jim's.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
Poor Old Gussy!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY walked cheerfully in at the school gates in the dusk. He was feeling very pleased and contented with himself and the Grammarians.

The latter had given him a very good time, and he was anxious to explain in Study No. 6 that Gordon Gay & Co. had not been "japing" when they invited him over to the Grammar School to witness the rehearsal of the "Belle of the Prairie." There was a sudden yell as D'Arcy came into the radius of light from the School House.

"There he is!"

And there was a rush of excited juniors at once.

D'Arcy was surrounded.

"Yaas, here I am, deah boys!" he said, adjusting his eyeglass, and looking in considerable surprise at the excited faces round him. "Is anythin' the mattah?"

"Matter!" said Tom Merry. "I should say so!"

"You're dotty; that's what's the matter!"

"Potty, you ass!"

"We're going to get you a strait waist-coat!"

"Collar him before he gets away!"

Arthur Augustus struggled as hands closed upon him on all sides. His silk hat was knocked off, and his collar came away from its stud, and his eyeglass floated at the end of its cord.

"Bai Jove! What's the mattah? Are you all pottay?" gasped the swell of St. Jim's.

"What are you up to?"

"Got him now!"

"Yaak him in!"

"Mind he doesn't get away again!"

"But I have not the least intention of gettin' away," protested D'Arcy. "I have only just returned from the Gwammam School."

"Wh-a-at!"

"Only just returned?" said Blake.

"Yaas!"

"You—you ass! It isn't ten minutes since you wrecked our study!"

"Since I wh-wh-what?"

"Wrecked Study No. 6, and Figgy's study in the New House!" yelled Blake. "If you're not potty, what did you do it for?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Gently!" said Tom Merry. "Don't bump him. If he's potty, he can't help it, and he'll have to be taken care of."

"That's so," said Blake. "But mind he doesn't get away. Something might happen if he goes wandering about in that state of mind."

"You fidgetful ass—"

"Lost his memory," said Figgins. "Mad people do that sometimes, you know."

"I refuse to be regarded as a mad people—I mean person. I shall give you a feabful thwashin', Figgins!"

"Quiet!" said Figgins soothingly. "Take it calmly. Don't get excited!"

"You fidgetful ass—"

"We're not going to hurt you, Gussy," said Tom Merry reassuringly. "Only going to take care of you, you know, and see that you don't come to any harm."

"You burblin' duffah—"

"Let him run on," said Manners, "it may ease his mind. I've read somewhere that it's dangerous to contradict lunatics."

"Mannahs, you beast—"

"Only don't let him escape!"

"What does all this mean, you silly asses?" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "I do not comprehend in the least. Has anythin' happened while I've been away?"

"It's all right, old chap," said Kerr. "You

"Go easy, Gussy," said Herries. "Twenty minutes ago you were in Tom Merry's study!"

"I begin to think you are all wavin' mad," said D'Arcy. "Pewwaps somebody's been disguisin' himself as me."

"Oh!"

"He couldn't put on your voice," said Tom Merry.

"I don't know," said Blake, with a start. "I've heard Gordon Gay imitate Gussy's voice to a T, so that you'd think it was Gussy speaking. But Gordon Gay's over at the Grammar School. I suppose you saw him there, Gussy?"

"Yaas, he was there when I awwived, but he wasn't at the webarsal; he had an engagement somewhere else," said D'Arcy.

Tom Merry started.

"An engagement somewhere else!" he exclaimed. "How long since you met him, Gussy?"

"Two or three hours since I met him ovah there," said D'Arcy. "But I met him in the lane ten minutes ago as I was coming back, and he gave me a note for you."

"Hand it over!"



"Wah!" growled the Red Indian. "What seeks the white dog in the lodges of the Sioux?" "Weally, Monk—" began Arthur Augustus. "Scalp the white dog!" interrupted Carboy. "Scalp his topper, at any rate!" "Weally, you ass—"

haven't been away, you know; you only imagine that. But it's all right."

"Haven't been away!" ejaculated D'Arcy, almost staggering in astonishment. "I have been ovah to the Grammar School, and have only returned this minute."

"Let him run on," murmured Tom Merry. "Don't contradict him. He might begin raving."

"Speak to him gently."

"So you've been over to the Grammar School, have you, Gussy?" said Blake, in a tone of gentle humouring.

"Yaas, wathah, to see the dwess wecarsal of a Wed Indian play," said D'Arcy. "You remember Gordon Gay's lettah, I suppose? I went!"

"Yes. But don't, you remember coming back?"

"I've only just got back."

"When did you leave the Grammar School?"

"About twenty minutes ago."

"Pway welease me, then, you asses. I cannot get it out of my pocket while a set of sillay duffahs are holdin' my hands."

D'Arcy was released. The truth was beginning to dawn upon the St. Jim's fellows. They realised that D'Arcy was not insane, after all, and that they had been hoaxed by the Australian junior at the Grammar School.

Arthur Augustus felt in his pocket, and found the pencilled note, and handed it to Tom Merry.

Tom Merry unfolded it, and read it—with a score of fellows crowding round him to read it, too. It ran:

"Dear Merry,—One good turn deserves another!

"Always yours,

"GORDON GAY."

The St. Jim's fellows stared at the note, THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 271.

and stared at one another. They understood. Gordon Gay had disguised himself as the swell of St. Jim's!

The Grammarians had asked D'Arcy over to the Grammar School to get him out of the way; and while Frank Monk & Co. were keeping him there, Gordon Gay had calmly penetrated into the School House at St. Jim's.

The St. Jim's fellows had not had the faintest suspicion; indeed, how could they have had? Gordon Gay's imitation of D'Arcy's voice had been exact. The invitation to Arthur Augustus to attend the dress rehearsal was now explained.

"Done!" was all that Tom Merry said.

"Spoofed!" said Figgins.

"Diddled!" said Monty Lowther.

"Pewpaws you will kindly explain what has happened now," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sarcastically. "I am quite in the dark. Do you mean to say that Gordon Gay has been ovah here japin' you while I was at the Grammar School?"

"Yes," roared Blake; "he's come here disguised as you!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"He's wrecked Study No. 6, and Figgys's study, and brought about a free fight in Tom Merry's quarters—"

"Bai Jove!"

"And it's all your fault, you ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo! What are you cackling at?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled D'Arcy.

"The blessed image thinks it's amusing now!" said Monty Lowther. "What is there to cackle at, you dummy?"

"Ha, ha, ha! This is what comes of my leavin' you youngsters alone for an afternoon," said D'Arcy. "Somethin' was bound to happen. You have been spoofed! Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors glared at the swell of St. Jim's. They had certainly been spoofed, and badly spoofed, but it was too much to see the cause of it all laughing at their misfortunes. They closed round D'Arcy with grim looks.

"So you think it's funny, do you?" said Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha! Yaas, wathah! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gentlemen," said Tom Merry, "we've been spoofed by the Grammar cads, and it's all Gussy's fault! I think it will be agreed that it's all Gussy's fault!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Then I suggest that we bump Gussy!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Hold on! I refuse to be bumped! I uttably decline to— Ow, ow, ow, ow!"

"Bump, bump, bump!"

"Yawo-o-o-oh!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Tom Merry's Idea.

TOM MERRY came into Study No. 6 a couple of days later with a letter in his hand. It was evening, and the four chums of No. 6 were doing their preparation.

"I've got a letter," said Tom Merry.

"Well, run away and read it!" said Blake, without looking up.

"From Gordon Gay!"

Blake looked up then.

"Oh, those blessed Grammarians again!" he exclaimed. "Is Gay trying to spoof you this time, instead of Gussy?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"No," said Tom Merry, laughing. "It's a polite invitation—"

"Well, let's hear the letter!" said Blake. Tom Merry read out the letter:

"Dear Merry,—We are giving a dramatic performance on Wednesday evening in the gym. Title of the piece, 'The Belle of the Prairie,' written by Tadpole, of ours, and acted by the Junior Dramatic Society of Rylecombe Grammar School. We shall be glad if you will come over, and bring as many friends as you like. Seats free. Performance begins at seven sharp.—Yours,
"GORDON GAY."

"Well, it's civil enough," yawned Blake. "But it would be a rotten bore. The Grammarians don't come over to see our amateur theatricals, and one good turn deserves another, as Gay said himself."

"Quite twuc, deah boy!"

"Tell 'em to go and eat cokè!" said Herries.

"I've got an idea!" said Tom Merry.

"Where did you borrow it?" asked Blake politely.

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"I think it's a jolly good idea," said Tom Merry modestly. "Now, they're going to give a rotten play, and they want us to swell the audience. Some of us can go and do that, out of politeness—"

"Well?"

"Some others might go and join the actors."

"But they don't say that they want any extra supers!"

"They may get 'em without wanting 'em."

"How do you mean?"

"It's a Red Indian play," said Tom Merry. "As Gussy has seen the dress rehearsal, he can tell us all about it. I suppose a lot of them are made up as Red Indians, Gussy?"

"Yaas. Fwank Monk is Sittin' Bull, and a crowd of fellows, seven or eight, will be made-up as Wed Indians," said D'Arcy.

"What do they do?"

"They attack the camp, and cawfy off the Belle of the Pwawie. Wootton minor is made-up as a gal, as the Belle of the Pwawie. Then Gordon Gay comes in as a cowboy, with a crowd of chaps, and defeats the Wedskins, fighting against odds, you know, and divin' them before him, and he rescues the Belle of the Pwawie."

"When the kids are made-up as Red Indians, I suppose they're not easy to recognise?"

"Imposs, deah boy! I didn't know them till they spoke."

"And it wouldn't be necessary to speak," said Tom Merry thoughtfully.

"What on earth are you driving at?" asked Blake.

"A wheeze, my son—a real, ripping wheeze for getting at grips with the Grammarians, and giving them the giddy kybosh!"

"Now you're talking!" said Blake. "Go ahead!"

"They're giving this rotten show in the gym, Gussy?"

"Yaas!"

"Where is their dressing-room?"

"There's a woom openin' off the gym, where they keep dumb-bells and Indian clubs and things," said D'Arcy. "That's being used as a dressin' woom, and the stage is awwanged so that it's behind the scenes. There's a back door into it from the quad, you see. They've weally got evewythin' awwanged vewy well, consid'erin'. I was able to give them a few tips about the awwagements—"

"Yes; I've no doubt you were. When Monk and the rest are making-up as Redskins, where are Gordon Gay and his giddy cowboys?"

"They're on the stage, hidden by the forest from view. They come burstin' through the trees when the Wedskins attack the camp at the other end of the stage. The trees are made of cardboard, of course."

"Good!"

"Blessed if I see what the wheeze is!" said Blake. "It's no good thinking of rushing them on the stage; we should have the whole Grammar School on our necks in a jiffy. And there will be prefects present, you can bet your hat, and perhaps the Head, as Dr. Monk is young Monkey's pater."

Tom Merry nodded.

"I know that. I'm not thinking of a raid. Of course, the chaps who accept Gordon Gay's invitation will have to keep order in the audience—honour bound, you know. Can't accept a chap's invitation and then rag him."

"Wathah not! But—"

"But chaps who don't accept the invitation to join the audience can do as they like," said Tom Merry, with a glimmer of fun in his blue eyes; "and they can turn up, all the same, but not in the audience."

"But what—"

"Half a dozen of us might drop in at the stage-door, when the Red Indians are going on the scene," Tom Merry remarked. "It will be after dark, and as there will be a lot of St. Jim's fellows about we shouldn't be noticed."

"Yes; but—"

"If Gordon Gay can plant himself on us disguised as a silly ass—"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Then I don't see why we can't plant ourselves on him disguised as Red Indians—"

"Oh!"

"And introduce a new and unexpected variation into the scene, when the Redskins come on the stage," said Tom Merry.

Blake gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha! Oh, my hat! What a wheeze, if it will work!"

"Bai Jove!"

"I think it will work," said Tom Merry, grinning. "Anyway, there's no harm in trying. Some of the fellows can reply to this letter, accepting the invitation, and join the audience. And the rest of us can excuse ourselves, as we've got something else on—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wippih!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I will take charge of the party to go to the stage-door, with pleasnah."

"I dare say you would, old chap; but we're not looking for a leader," said Tom Merry affably. "I can do that quite well."

"Weally, deah boy, what is required for a thing of this sort is a fellow of tact and judgment."

"We'll take Figgins & Co. into it," said Tom Merry. "This is a school affair, and we're going to line up, shoulder to shoulder to give the Grammarians the kybosh!"

"Yes, rather!"

"But mind—mum's the word!"

"You bet!"

And Figgins & Co. were promptly called into council, and the St. Jim's juniors elaborated their scheme with many chuckles.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

"The Belle of the Prairie."

I THINK that's about all," said Gordon Gay.

It was Wednesday evening. The Junior Dramatic Society of Rylecombe Grammar School had done yeoman work that afternoon.

The gymnasium, the use of which for the dramatic performance had been kindly granted by the Head, had been prepared as an auditorium.

Forms and seats were arranged for a numerous audience.

At one end there was the stage, with a curtain that would really go up and down when required to do so.

This, as Gay remarked, was a great advantage, not always to be met with in amateur theatrical performances.

The company had been through a final rehearsal, and all was ready. Every fellow knew his part to a T. They were all letter-perfect—or, at least, they were satisfied that they were.

"Yes, I think it's all right now," said Frank Monk, with a sigh of relief. "The great white chief has spoken!"

And the dramatic company, satisfied with their preparations, went in to tea.

The audience were already taking their places. Most of the Grammar School fellows were going; even the seniors were turning up, in honour of the performance.

Some of the masters had promised to look in. And fellows from St. Jim's were already arriving. The Grammarians were very keen to have St. Jim's fellows in the audience.

They were not above wishing to show the Saints how things should be done in the amateur theatrical line, and letting them see that the Grammar School could handle such matters a little better than they were handed at St. Jim's.

Gordon Gay was in his cowboy costume—and very handsome he looked in it—when he received the first arrivals from St. Jim's. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Fatty Wynn were the first to arrive, and the cowboy chief showed them to the places reserved for the St. Jim's fellows.

"I hope Tom Merry and the rest will be able to come," said Gordon Gay genially.

Fatty Wynn grinned, and D'Arcy coughed. "They may drop in in the course of the evening," Fatty Wynn explained. "Figgys may drop in; so may Kerr; so may Reddy. But they've got something on for this evening, so I can't answer for them."

"Well, I hope you'll enjoy the show!"

"Oh, we shall enjoy it!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"In fact, we're looking forward to a jolly good time!" said Fatty Wynn. "It isn't often that we get an entertainment like this for nothing."

"Wathah not!"

Gordon Gay glanced rather sharply at Fatty Wynn; but the Fourth-Former's face was quite placid and innocent.

"No larks, you know!" said Gay.

TO THE BOYS AT THE FRONT.

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

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

"Larks!" said Fatty Wynn, as if he did not comprehend. "What kind of larks?"
 "No ragging."
 "Weally, Wynn, I twust you do not think that, atfah takin' places in the audience, we should think of waggin' the show," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in his most stately manner.

"No, no; of course not," said Gay. "But
 "But we're supposed to laugh in the funny places, ain't we?" asked Wynn.

"There aren't any funny places," said Tadpole. "This is a tragedy of the Far West—a thrilling drama of the Rocky Mountains, you know."

"But some of it may be funny without your meaning it—accidentally, you know."
 "My dear Wynn—"

"The drama may be a little rocky, as well as the mountains, and—"
 "Look here, if you're going to be funny—"

said Wootton major, a little aggressively. Fatty Wynn looked surprised.
 "I'm not going to be funny," he said. "I was only suggesting that perhaps you fellows were going to be funny."

"Oh, rats!"
 "Yaas, wathah! Wats, Wynn, my dear boy! Don't make jokes about a fellow's play; it's liable to be misunderstood, you know. If it's a twagedy, we're called upon as ordahly chaps to suppress our mewwiment."

"Oh, good!" said Fatty Wynn. "I'll do my best."

The Grammarians walked away. Arthur Augustus and Fatty Wynn sat down, smiling. They were joined by Lawrence and Owen and Gore and Skimpole and Brooke and Reilly and Kerruish, and a crowd more of St. Jim's fellows came in by twos and threes. But the leaders of the St. Jim's leaders were conspicuous by their absence.

Tom Merry was not to be seen, or Monty Lowther, or Manners, or Blake, or Herries, or Digby, or Figgins, or Kerr, or Redfern. But in the crowd their absence was not specially noticed by Gordon Gay & Co., who had plenty of other matters to think about at that moment.

Dr. Monk, the Head of the Grammar School, took his place with several other masters, and Delamere, the captain of the school, came in with a crowd of seniors. Gordon Gay watched the gym filling, from behind the scenes, with a great deal of satisfaction.

"We shall have a jolly good audience," he remarked.

"And the audience will have a jolly good play," said Tadpole.

"Blessed is he who bloweth his own trumpet!" grinned Wootton minor, who was already made up as Mustang Madge, the Belle of the Prairie. "The acting will be all right, at any rate."

"Yes, rather!"
 "Especially the title role," said Wootton minor modestly.

"Blessed is he that bloweth—"
 "Better get into your Redskin rig, Monkey," said Gordon Gay. "The first scenes will last nearly half an hour before you're wanted, but you may as well be ready."

"Right-ho!" said Monk.
 "You go on first, Gay," said Tadpole. "You meet Buckskin Bill—that's Wootton major—by accident in the forest, and he tells you the Sioux are on the warpath."

"We know our parts, fathead! Are you ready, Buckskin Bill?"

"I guess so," grinned Wootton major. "Got your hair on safe, kid?" asked Gay, surveying Wootton minor's golden wig. "You don't want it to come off and fall on the Redskin chief's moccasins, as it did in the last rehearsal."

"Quite safe this time."
 "All serene. May as well have the curtain up now; we're ten minutes late already."

"And the curtain was rung up."
 The scene disclosed a forest in the Far West, and Buckskin Bill lighting his pipe under the trees. Then Cowboy Jim entered with a rifle under his arm.

The rifles of the Grammar School Cadet Corps had been requisitioned for the play. Gordon Gay promptly covered Buckskin Bill with his rifle, amid a thrill from the younger members of the audience.

"Hands up!"
 Up went Buckskin Bill's hands.
 "Waal, I swear," said Buckskin Bill, "if it isn't my old pard Cowboy Jim!"
 Cowboy Jim lowered his rifle.

"Buckskin Bill!" he exclaimed, in astonishment.

"The werry identical article!" said Buckskin Bill.

"Shake!"
 And they shook.
 "Is this where we laugh, or where we cry?" murmured Fatty Wynn to the swell of St. Jim's.

"I weally don't know, deah boy." They settled the point by laughing.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Capturing the Redskins.

"MY feathers on all right?" asked Frank Monk.
 "Right as rain!"
 "You want some more red ochre on your chivvy, Lane."

"Give us a dab, then. Ow! Not in my eye, fathead!"

"I zink zat I look ze Indian brave all right, n'est-ce-pas?" grinned Mont Blong, surveying himself with much pride in a glass. Frank Monk grinned horribly under his war-paint.

"You look the part all right," he said. "But you don't talk it—don't open your mouth on the stage."

"My dear shum—"
 "Mum's the word for you, Mont Blong," said Carboy. "We don't want to have red braves talking with a Montmartre accent."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "How are they going on?" asked Monk. "Take a look on the stage, Lane; you're done."

"Right!"
 Lane pulled back the curtain which covered the doorway leading into the wings. He had a view of the forest in the Far West, and Gordon Gay and Buckskin Bill engaged in talk on the subject of the Sioux, who it appeared were on the warpath, with the wicked intention of capturing the Belle of the Prairie.

"Going strong," said Lane.
 "How do the audience look?"
 "No casualties yet, as far as I can see."

"Oh, don't be funny!"
 Tadpole looked into the dressing-room.

"Ready, Wootton minor?" he asked anxiously. "They are going off to the left now, and you enter on this side."
 "Quite ready," said the Belle of the Prairie.

"Then get into the wings."
 Wootton minor followed Tadpole out.

The Redskins put the finishing touches to their war-paint, and waited for their cue. The door into the room from the quad opened, and a well-known face looked in. It was the face of Tom Merry of St. Jim's.

The Redskins stared at him.
 "Hallo," said Monk, "is that you, Merry? You don't come in here. This is the stage-door. The audience go round to the front."

"Just wanted to have a look at the Redskins on their native heath, you know," said Tom Merry blandly. "I don't belong to the audience. I didn't accept the invitation."

"Then what are you doing here?"
 "Looking at Sitting Bull. I suppose you're Sitting Bull?"

"Or Standing Donkey?" said Monty Lowther over Tom Merry's shoulder.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 Tom Merry & Co. came in. Lowther and Manners, Blake and Herries and Dig, Figgins and Kerr and Redfern, Kangaroo and Bernard Glyn, followed the St. Jim's leader into the room.

The Grammarians stared at them. Tom Merry made a sign to his followers.

Figgins, Kerr, Kangaroo, and Lowther planted themselves before the door leading to the stage. Herries and Dig guarded the other door. The Redskins looked surprised and alarmed.

"Look here, what are you up to?" demanded Frank Monk.
 "You were going to capture the Belle of the Prairie?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes."
 "Well, you won't be able to do it."
 "Why not?"

"Because you're going to be captured yourselves."
 "What?"

"We can't allow ferocious Redskins to go round loose in a civilised country," said Tom Merry, with a shake of the head.

"Look here—"
 "Collar them!"
 "Why—what—look out! Oh!"

There was a rush.
 The half-dozen Grammarians were simply overwhelmed.

They struggled valiantly; but, taken by surprise as they were, and outnumbered, they did not have the ghost of a chance.

In a twinkling they were on their backs on the floor, and the St. Jim's juniors were sitting on them.

"Lock the doors!" said Tom Merry hurriedly.

Both the doors were promptly locked. Frank Monk tried to yell, but the handle of his own tomahawk was poked into his open mouth in time, and he only gurgled. The other Redskins were reduced to silence by means equally efficacious.

"Grooh!"
 "Ow-w-w-w!"

"Captured!" said Tom Merry, with great satisfaction. "Now, Moukey says there are only five minutes to go before the cue, so we shall have to hurry. Strip them!"

Monk gurgled.
 "Lemme up—groo— Oh!"
 "Sit on his head if he won't keep quiet."

"Gerrroooh!"
 "Now off with those Redskin things, and tie them up."
 "Gerroooh!"

"Sharp's the word!"
 The Redskins were stripped of blankets and feathers, and other appurtenances, almost in the twinkling of an eye.

Then they were tied hand and foot with cord that the raiders had thoughtfully brought in their pockets for the purpose.

Their own handkerchiefs were stuffed into their mouths, and tied there with string.

They glared at the St. Jim's juniors as they lay on their backs, looking fully as ferocious as the reallest of real Redskins.

"Don't mind us, Monkey," said Tom Merry blandly. "It's all in the game, you know."

"Grooh!"
 "I know the audience are expecting Redskins in a few minutes, but we're not going to disappoint them. Get into these things quick, you chaps."

The Grammarians writhed and struggled with their bonds.
 But in vain.

The victors had not left anything to chance, and the Grammarian juniors had not the slightest prospect of getting loose, or of calling out to their comrades.

"It's all right, Monkey," said Tom Merry reassuringly. "We're not going to disappoint the audience. We're going on in your place."

"Grooh!"
 "Is that a Sioux word?" asked Monty Lowther. "Sorry I don't speak the language, Monkey. I'll try if you like."

"Grooh!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Buck up!" said Tom Merry. "No time for jokes!"

The raiders clothed themselves rapidly in blankets and leggings and feathers. Then they daubed their faces with thick layers of ochre.

Their identity completely disappeared under the war-paint.

No one could possibly have told that they were St. Jim's juniors, or that they were not Frank Monk & Co. They might have been anybody.

The door leading into the wings rattled as someone tried to open it on the other side.

"Hallo!" came Tadpole's voice. "What have you got the door locked for?"

"Stage-manager, I suppose," murmured Figgins. "Let him in and tie him up with the rest."

"Good! The more the merrier!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Open the door, you fellows!" called out Tadpole. "It's your cue in a minute!"

Tom Merry threw the door open.
 Tadpole hurried in, and as he did so he was seized on all sides. Before he had time for anything but an amazed gasp, he was on the floor, a handkerchief was stuffed into his mouth, and a cord was being knotted round his wrists and ankles.

Tadpole, gasping and gurgling, was laid along with the plundered Redskins on the floor, too astonished to do anything but blink dazedly.

"All serene," said Tom Merry. "Now, as it's our cue, we'd better go on. Turn out the light here, in case anybody should look in."

"Good!"
 The light was switched off, and the dressing-room was plunged into darkness. In the darkness the bound Grammarians lay and wriggled and gurgled.

Tom Merry & Co.—metamorphosed into Sitting Bull and his ferocious braves—calmly stepped into the wings. The audience were expecting Redskins, and the audience were

not to be disappointed. But the Redskins who arrived were very different Redskins from the Redskins that had been expected.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Unrehearsed!

"HERE come the giddy Redskins!" said Fatty Wynn.
"Yaas, wathah!"
"Faith, and I'm blessed if I know them!" said Reilly.

The St. Jim's juniors in the audience stared hard at the new arrivals. Whether Tom Merry & Co. had succeeded in their raid they could not tell yet.

The Redskins presented exactly the appearance that Frank Monk & Co. would have presented if they had come on as arranged. The Saints could only wait for developments.

If the Redskins were Monk & Co., the play would go on as per programme. If they were Tom Merry & Co., there would be changes in the programme—decided changes.

The audience could only wait and see. As for the Grammarian crowd, they had not the slightest suspicion.

Wootton minor, alias the Belle of the Prairie, was standing alone on the stage, the cowboys being off the scene to the right, watching for the moment to rush on to the rescue.

The Redskins came creeping on in a stealthy, Redskin manner, and the Belle of the Prairie did not seem to be aware of their approach. She was making her speech, and had no eyes for Redskins.

"Alone—alone on the vast prairie!" cried the heroine of Tadpole's thrilling drama. "Oh, where is my brave Cowboy Jim? Who knows but that Indians may be lurking in these fatal woods—"

"Sure, and I should think she'd see the giddy Indians! They're not a yard off!" murmured Reilly.

"Yaas, wathah!"
"Whoop!"

It was a sudden, terrific yell from the Redskins, and they rushed at the Belle of the Prairie and surrounded her.

Wootton minor shrieked.

"Alas! The Redskins!"

"Ugh!" grunted Sitting Bull.

"Help!"

"Cry not for help to the detested palefaces!" said Sitting Bull, in a deep and husky voice. "The paleface maiden must slope with me to the lodges of the Sioux."

"You ass!" murmured the paleface maiden, under his breath. "You've got the lines all wrong!"

"Speak not to the chief of the Sioux!" said Sitting Bull. "Seize her!"

"Look here, you fathead, this is where I go down on my knees!" whispered Wootton minor, dismayed at the "bloomers" Monk was making.

"Rats!" said Sitting Bull.

"Wha-a-at!"

"Seize the paleface maiden!" said the deep voice of Sitting Bull. "I suspect that her hair is false! Ugh!"

"You—you frabjous ass!" said Wootton minor, forgetting to subdue his voice in his excitement. "Don't touch my hair! It will come off!"

There was a yell from the audience.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wootton minor was seized.

A Redskin dragged at her golden locks, and they came off in his dusky hand, and the audience shrieked.

"Egh! 'Twas as I suspected!" said Sitting Bull. "Her hair is false!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, where is Cowboy Jim?" shrieked Wootton minor. "Rescue!"

Gordon Gay & Co. had been surveying the

unexpected scene from the wings, with amazement and alarm.

"Monkey's gone off his dot!" gasped Wootton major.

"He's messing up the whole thing!"

"Come on!" said Gordon Gay hurriedly. "We'll hurry on the rescue scene a bit; and you needn't be too gentle in handling that silly ass!"

"What-ho!"

And the cowboys rushed to the rescue.

There were only five of the cowboys; but, according to programme, several of the Redskins should have been slain on the spot, and the rest should have taken to flight, leaving the rescued damsel with the gallant cowboys.

But the scene did not go according to programme.

The Redskins put up an unexpectedly good fight.

They met the rush of the cowboys, and closed with them, and a wild and whirling combat took place on the stage.

The audience yelled with delight. The younger members of the audience, especially, were overjoyed to see a real fight going on, and they jumped up in their places, and yelled and clapped and cheered frantically.

"Hurrah!"

The Indians were undoubtedly getting the best of it.

They were two to one, and they were fighting hard.

Cowboy Jim was on his back on the stage, with two Redskins sitting on him. The other cowboys were very hard pressed, and one by one they were brought down and sat upon. Then the Redskins proceeded to tie them hand and foot.

"You idiots!" bawled Gordon Gay. "Leggo! We beat you, you don't beat us! You are mucking up the whole thing!"

"I rather fancy we beat you this time, Gay, old man!" said Sitting Bull, in his natural voice.

Gordon Gay gasped.

"Tom Merry!"

"Why, you—you—you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rescue!" bawled Gordon Gay. "Rescue! It's oh—oh—oooooh!"

A fragment of a torn blanket was stuffed in Cowboy Jim's mouth, effectually stopping his utterance.

"Bind the paleface dogs!" shouted Sitting Bull. "Bind and gag them, ere we convey them to the lodges of the Sioux."

And the paleface dogs were bound and gagged, the Belle of the Prairie sharing their hapless fate.

Gordon Gay & Co., aware now that they were in the hands of the enemy, but unable to convey that knowledge to the Grammarians in the audience, glared ferociously at Sitting Bull and his braves.

"Quite a surprise, isn't it?" grinned Tom Merry. "This is where St. Jim's comes out on top." He removed the gag from Gay's mouth. "Do you want to speak?"

"Ow! You beast!"

"Is that all?"

"Yah!"

"Anything more?"

"Grooh! I'll make you smart for this! Ow!"

"My dear chap, you said yourself that one good turn deserves another," grinned Figgins. "You can't complain of the fortune of war."

"Oh, you rotters! I'll—I'll—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rescue!" yelled Gordon Gay. "Resc—ow—grooh!"

The handkerchief was promptly stuffed into his mouth again.

"Can't allow you to make a row," said Tom Merry, with a gentle shake of the head. "Now, you chaps, as we've done our little bit towards amusing the audience, we may as well get this stuff off and clear. Don't want to meet a crowd."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors washed off the war-paint, as well as they could hurriedly, and stripped off the Redskin garb. Then they appeared in their own identity, with somewhat smudgy faces, and grinning joyously.

"This is where we sortie," said Tom Merry. "Good-night, Gay. When the audience get tired of waiting for somebody to come on the stage, they may come and look for you. Good-night."

"Grooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The St. Jim's juniors departed. They made their way round the gym, and Tom Merry looked in at the big door, and gave a whistle.

It was the signal for the St. Jim's members of the audience to clear off. It would hardly have done for any St. Jim's fellow to remain within the precincts of the Grammar School, when the Grammarians became aware of what had happened.

The Saints crowded out of the gym, and Tom Merry & Co., laughing uproariously, took their way home to St. Jim's.

Meanwhile, the Grammarian audience waited in amazement, and watched the empty stage. Ten minutes had passed, a quarter of an hour—twenty minutes. The audience were getting very restive.

"Dear me," said Dr. Monk, "I suppose the play is over, or else something has gone very wrong with the arrangements. I'm afraid I cannot stay any longer."

And the Head retired from the gym, with the other masters. Most of the seniors followed. The gym was in a buzz of voices; the Grammarians did not know in the least what to make of the empty stage, and the non-appearance of the actors.

"Let's go and see what's become of the duffers?" exclaimed Carker at last, and his suggestion was adopted.

A crowd of the Grammarians invaded the stage and the wings, and passed through into the dressing-room at the back.

There was a roar of astonishment as they saw the whole dramatic company stretched on the floor, vainly struggling with their bonds, and trying to bite their gags away.

"M-m-m-my hat!" gasped Carker. "What's happened?"

Gordon Gay made frantic signs to him.

Carker stooped and removed his gag.

Gordon Gay gasped.

"Have the St. Jim's chaps gone?" he stammered.

"Yes; a quarter of an hour or more ago. But what—"

"Cut me loose, you ass!" growled Gordon Gay. "It's too late! Why couldn't some of you dummies come along before?"

"But—but what—"

"Tom Merry's been here, fathead!"

"Oh! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, shut up!"

But Carker did not shut up. He roared, and so did the rest of the Grammarians when they learned what had happened. Gordon Gay & Co. were released; and they dashed down to the gates at once, in the hope of coming upon some straggler belonging to St. Jim's.

But the St. Jim's fellows were far enough away by that time. The Grammarians returned raging, while at St. Jim's, Tom Merry & Co. were celebrating their victory and rejoicing exceedingly.

It was a famous victory; and there was no doubt that Tom Merry & Co. had scored, at grips with the Grammarians; but it was a long time before Gordon Gay & Co. were able to see the joke. The next morning Gordon Gay received a postcard with a single line written upon it—a line he knew well by this time:

"One good turn deserves another.

"(Signed) TOM MERRY."

THE END.

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